



a Kendall Hunt Company

Joseph, Spouse of Mary, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



Junior High Session

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

Opening Prayer

Let us Pray.

O Lord our God, in a world where promises are often broken, you give us the living promise of Jesus. Mary and Joseph loved each other and you and believed in your promise. Help us be as obedient as Jesus' parents and say "yes" to you even when it would seem easier to say "no." Like Mary and Joseph, help us bring Christ into the world. We pray in the name of Mary and Joseph's child and your Son, Jesus.

Opening Life Reflection

Create an advertising campaign that promotes saying "yes" to God. Before you begin, think about advertisements we see today on television, in magazines or hear on the radio. Usually ads focus on something that will benefit us. How will you use these ideas in your own ad?

- What are some of the benefits in saying "yes" to God?
- What are some things that tempt us not to obey God?
- What are some ways that we can show others the living presence of Jesus?

Allow time for everyone to reflect on these ideas and to share their advertisements with one another.

Listening to the Word of God

In words spoken to the prophet Nathan, God lets David know that God's kingdom will be established by someone born from David's house.

Read 2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Why did God remind David that David was in God's debt?
- Why does God want David to build a house for God?
- What promise does God make to David?

It is a serious problem in the society of Mary and Joseph that Mary is pregnant before they are married. Listen to how God helps Joseph.

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

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Allow for silence.

- Why was Mary's pregnancy such a problem at the time?
- How did Joseph plan to solve the problem? What does this tell us about his love for Mary?
- What did the angel say to Joseph to change his mind about divorcing Mary? What does this tell us about his love for God?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background on the reading using the Catechist Background section.

God promises that a person will be born on earth who will be responsible for establishing the Kingdom of God. God tells his plan to the prophet, Nathan, and explains that this person will come from the line of David. God further promises that the kingdom built from David's lineage will never be destroyed. David is indebted to God because God has been with the Israelites throughout their travels and also God has defeated every one of David's enemies. God, in turn, asks that David build a house for God.

In his gospel, Matthew shows that the prophecy we read in 2 Samuel is actually coming about. Through Joseph, a descendent of David and who will also become Mary's husband, the person who will create God's kingdom is about to be born. Mary and Joseph had to first overcome an obstacle. Mary was pregnant before they were married and in that day, the law allowed for a person unfaithful in marriage or the promise of marriage to be executed. Joseph loved Mary and did not want to see her punished, so he decided to quietly divorce her. Before he could actually follow through with this plan, however, an angel came to Joseph in a dream and explained the circumstances of Mary's pregnancy. Joseph understood from the angel that this was all part of God's plan and accepted his role as Mary's husband and became the earthly father of Jesus.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- How do you think Mary was feeling about the news she must give Joseph? How do you think her love for God helped her do something so difficult?
- What can we know about Mary and Joseph's faith and trust in God and each other at the conclusion of this reading?
- How do you think this reading can help people today who are engaged to be married?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Joseph is Mary's husband

Because Mary was married to Joseph, Joseph became the earthly father of Jesus. Together Mary and Joseph shared the responsibilities of parenting including worrying about him when he became lost from them in Jerusalem (Luke 2:48). According to God's plan, Joseph had

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already been chosen as Mary's husband, but Joseph knew he wasn't her baby's father. Scripture doesn't tell us about the conversation Mary had with Joseph explaining her pregnancy, but it took an angel from God to let Joseph know that Mary had conceived the child through God. In the end, the angel was convincing because Joseph went ahead with his plans to marry Mary. The Church believes that Joseph understood that Mary's virginity would always be preserved. Joseph loved God and Mary and gave himself to Mary refraining from any sexual expression of his love. Their's was a special marriage never again repeated in history and it does not in any way minimize our understanding of what marriage is. Rather it is a way of preserving the specialness of Jesus' birth. Joseph is a model for men and women who choose to live a celibate life for the sake of Jesus, and is their patron saint.

- What value does God bring to marriages?
- What signs of God's presence do you see in marriages of people you know?
- How will God be instrumental in future marriages?

Sacrament Connection

Sometimes we forget that God is the one who designed marriage and think of it as human and cultural. God planned for a woman to marry a man and with God, create children from the marriage. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a baptized man and woman become partners with one another and with God. They promise, before God, to love one another, to accept and care for children that result from their union. It is from the grace of this sacrament that two people receive the strength to love one another as much as Christ loved his Church.

The Gospel in Life

Is there someone you know who is awaiting the birth of a child? Do something for the parents to show them that God is with them. Help them see God through you.