

## SCRIPTURES FOR 12/3/06 LIFEGROUP LESSON

---

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

### **Deuteronomy 22:23-24**

If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

### **Proverbs 28:20**

A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

### **Romans 12:18**

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed



**NOTE TO LEADERS:** All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

**OPENING:**

ICEBREAKER or GET YA THINKIN' QUESTION: \_\_\_\_\_

OPENING PRAYER NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION:**

This week, Jeff talked about six qualities of harmony, drawn from Joseph's actions leading up to Bethlehem (*Matthew 1:18-25*).

**Q:** How does Joseph's initial reaction display a spirit of "harmony?"

**Q:** In today's culture, does Joseph's reaction to Mary's out-of-wedlock pregnancy have as much impact?

**DIG DEEPER:**

John Gill's exposition on Matthew 1:19 explains Joseph's legal options: "*The Greek word signifies to punish by way of example to others, to deter them from sinning; and with the ancients it denoted the greatest and severest punishment. Here it means either bringing her before the civil magistrate, in order to punish her according to the law in (Deuteronomy 22:23-24) which requires the person to be brought out to the gate of the city and stoned with stones, which was making a public example indeed; or divorcing her in a very public manner, and thereby expose her to open shame and disgrace.*"

**Q:** Why do you think Joseph was willing to risk sweeping this under the rug?

**Q:** What challenges do you think they faced when they neither followed the law nor tried to hide it?

*(Of course, technically it was not an infraction of the law because Mary was not really unchaste, only pregnant)*

**APPLICATION:**

**Here are Jeff's six qualities of harmony:**

**TRUTH & TRUST**

**Q:** If an angel told you to do something that would cast you in a negative light, what would you do?

**Q:** What's the difference between "belief" and "trust?"

**Q:** Even though Joseph knew he was part of fulfilling an ancient prophecy, what do you think he told his friends?

**SINCERITY & SURRENDER**

**Q:** Do you think Joseph ever looked over at his pregnant wife and still had doubts?

**Q:** Even though the cost to God was much greater, how would you have borne up under the cost Joseph had to pay?

**FAITHFULNESS & FAVOR**

**Q:** When it was all said and done, would it have been worth it?

**Q:** Does God always bless faithfulness? Does he always favor the faithful? (*Proverbs 28:20*)

**CONCLUSION**

Romans 12:18 encourages us to strive for harmony.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

GROUP NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

*WHO'S LEADING...*

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_