

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

Exactly as Planned

Matthew 1:20,21

An angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the child 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.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The wedding license was signed. The invitations had been sent out. Joseph hummed to himself as he was busy building another room onto his father’s house, where he and his new bride would live for the first few years of their married life. Having his parents nearby would be so helpful to take care of children that were born in the coming years.

Joseph had plans to provide for his family. And then, he got the worst news of his life: Mary was going to have a baby and it wasn’t his! Heartbroken, Joseph was ready to crumple up his plans and throw them all away. It looked like his plans had completely fallen apart.

Maybe you can feel sorry for Joseph. After all:

- You had been excited for the game... and then got a fever and a cough.
- You were looking forward to a trip to the playground, but then it rained.
- You knew what you wanted on your ice cream, but the ice cream shop ran out of chocolate sprinkles.

Sometimes our plans fall apart. Sometimes we are hoping for more—and it just won’t work, not right now. We feel let down.

Joseph had plans for his family, and it looked like his plans were falling apart. But while his plans fell apart, God’s plan of salvation was just coming together:

“An angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the child 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.’”

Joseph did his best to plan, provide, prepare—and God had something better. When it looked like Joseph’s dreams and plans were failing, God’s plan of salvation was fulfilled.

Maybe your plans have fizzled. That's okay, and it's okay to be disappointed when plans fall apart. But when they do... remember that God's Son was born into the middle of messed-up plans—exactly as God had planned!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- God told Joseph “Don’t be afraid.” Why is this important to remember?
- When we hope to do something fun—and then we can’t, for some reason—what is important for us to remember?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What did God promise about Mary’s son?
- How does the truth of a Savior (God with us) help us deal with disappointment?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.” Where do we see this truth reflected in our reading?
- When our plans fall through, what can we learn from Joseph?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, forgive me for when I get angry because my plans fall through. Lead me to see your blessing in every event, especially in your birth at Christmas. Amen.