A Portrait of Common Christianity

Matthew 1:18-25

The portrait given of Joseph is a vivid illustration of what should mark our Christianity.

1. A portrait of Christian character.

- a. Joseph <u>loved</u> the law.
- b. Joseph <u>understood</u> the heart of the law.
- c. Joseph <u>resolved</u> to uphold the law.

2. A portrait of Christian faith.

- a. The <u>content</u> of Joseph's faith.
- b. The proof of Joseph's faith.

3. A portrait of Christian sacrifice.

- a. Joseph sacrificed his <u>reputation</u>.
- b. Joseph sacrificed his <u>life</u>.

Discussion Questions:

- Read v 18-25. What can you discern about Joseph's character? Can you come up with at least 6 qualities? What do you think motivated him?
- What was Joseph asked to believe? Why would this be difficult to accept factually? Emotionally? What aspects of Christianity are difficult to accept factually? Emotionally?
- What proved that Joseph believed the angel? What proves your faith? If you were tried by a jury, would you be convicted of believing? What evidence would be used?
- What did Joseph sacrifice when he took Mary as his wife (e.g. what would his community think of him, etc.)? Why did he make the sacrifice?
- What sacrifices have you made for your faith? What sacrifices might you have to make if you resolve to live out your faith? Why does this require faith?

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A Portrait of Christian Character

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, **being a righteous man**, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.

A Portrait of Christian Character

Joseph loved the law.

Matthew 1:19-20a And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this... Joseph's deliberation indicated that his heart was deeply affected by the law.

A Portrait of Christian Character

Joseph loved the law.

Joseph understood the *heart* of the law.

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and **not wanting to disgrace her**, desired to put her away secretly. Joseph did not see the law as a sterile set of regulations but as that which involved mercy and love.

Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 23:23

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

A Portrait of Christian Character

Joseph loved the law. Joseph understood the heart of the law.

Joseph resolved to uphold the law.

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. The word *planned* denotes a determination of will and indicates resolve.

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, planned **to send her away** secretly.

To send away meant to divorce, and Joseph resolved to do this in obedience to the law.

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away *secretly*.

His resolve to do this *secretly* shows mercy and a rejection of the impulse to take vengeance.

A Portrait of Christian Faith

The content of Joseph's faith.

What is it exactly that Joseph was asked to believe?

Matthew 1:20

But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was asked to believe that which appeared to be counterfactual. Matthew 1:21 And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins. Joseph was asked to place his faith in the promise of the gospel.

What is the content of your faith?

A Portrait of Christian Faith

The content of Joseph's faith. The proof of Joseph's faith. Matthew 1:24-25 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Matthew 1:24-25

And **Joseph** arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and **kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son**; and he called His name Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he **called His name Jesus**. Joseph's actions were proof of what he actually believed.

What evidence could be brought against you to prove that you believe the Word of the Lord?

A Portrait of Christian Sacrifice

Joseph sacrificed his reputation.

Under the circumstances, taking Mary as his wife would suggest his own guilt. Are you willing to sacrifice your reputation in obedience to Christ?

A Portrait of Christian Sacrifice

Joseph sacrificed his reputation. Joseph sacrificed his life. Joseph's obedience radically reshaped the contours of the life he had planned.

Matthew 2:13

...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." Are you willing to have your hopes and dreams radically reshaped by Christ?

Joseph's story is not about a superbeliever but about a common man with a simple faith that should be common among all believers.