

**Quiet Leadership: A Profile of Joseph, Father of Jesus**  
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### Introduction

- Past tendency to minimize Joseph's importance in an effort to emphasize that he was not Jesus' biological father
- Surprise at discovery of the gospels' reference to Joseph as Jesus' (legal, de facto) father (Luke 2:33; 2:48; John 6:42)
- Relative silence of the gospels concerning Joseph
  - The gospels, not true biographies, have relatively little to say concerning Jesus' family life.
  - Joseph apparently died before the Lord's crucifixion, as attested by the fact that Jesus surrendered his mother's care to John, his beloved disciple (John 19:26-27). However, it is possible that Joseph was alive earlier in Jesus' ministry (John 6:42).
  - Most of what we know about Joseph is contained within three chapters of Matthew and Luke, outlining sketches of Jesus' birth, infancy, and childhood.
- No words spoken by Joseph recorded in Scripture

### Traits

What sort of man was Joseph? How can we characterize the man whom God chose to parent His own Son?

- Spiritually sensitive
  - Righteous – holy, yet not inclined to draw attention to others' (presumed) sin (Matt. 1:19)  
“Because he was a righteous man, Joseph therefore could not in conscience marry Mary who was now thought to be unfaithful. And because such a marriage would have been a tacit admission of his own guilt, and also because he was unwilling to expose her to the disgrace of public divorce, Joseph therefore chose a quieter way, permitted by the law itself. The full rigor of the law might have led to Mary's stoning, though that was rarely carried out in the first century. Still, a public divorce was possible, though Joseph was apparently unwilling to expose Mary to such shame. The law also allowed for private divorce before two witnesses (Num 5:11-31 . . .). That was what Joseph purposed. It would leave both his righteousness (his conformity to the law) and his compassion intact.”  
*Expositor's Bible Commentary, s.v.*
  - Faithful leader of his household – received and heeded the Lord's direction
    - Attentive to angelic revelation (Matt. 1:20-23; 2:13; 2:19-20; 2:22)
    - Obedient to angelic revelation (Matt. 1:24-25; 2:14-15; 2:21-23; Luke 2:21)
  - Obedient to the Law of Moses (Luke 2:21-24, 27, 39; 2:41ff)
- Assumed the role of a father toward a child that wasn't biologically his (Luke 2:27, 33, 41, 43, 48)
  - Consecration to the Lord (Luke 2:21-24, 27, 39)
  - Protection (Matt 2:13-15; 21-23; Luke 2:44-48)
  - Vocational training (comp. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3)
  - Spiritual direction
    - Example (Luke 2:41ff)
    - Instruction (Luke 2:51)
- Capable of handling adversity [inference]
  - Reproach of presumably tainted relationship
  - Census registration during Mary's pregnancy
  - Escape to Egypt
- Good decision-maker – objective, reflective, resolute (Matt. 1:20)
- Self-disciplined (Matt. 1:25)
- Submissive to civil authority (Luke 2:1-5)
- Limited in his understanding of Jesus' identity and mission (Luke 2:49-50)

### **Lessons We Can Learn**

- Parenting: God the Father didn't choose just any man to be responsible for Jesus' upbringing; He chose a man of godly character, one who would lead his family in a spirit of humility and submission
- Risk-taking: The angel directed Joseph to do something that contradicted common sense and thus required deep trust in God; the path he followed wasn't "safe"
- Authority: Joseph had to disown his preconceived notion of holiness; ultimately, he had to come to terms with God's authority
- Humility: In order to be the leader God wanted Him to be, Joseph had to give up regard for worldly approval
- Poverty: God didn't choose a wealthy man to father Jesus, thus financial limitations are no barrier to serving Him
- Leadership: Obedience to all legitimate authority—civil, biblical, spiritual—is the basis for leading others