

- Tell us about a recent dream you've had. What happened in your dream?
- When you were a child, did you usually obey your parents or guardian? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Recall a wedding vow you heard or made. What struck you the most about it?

WORD

²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **MATTHEW 1:20,21**

(Read also **MATTHEW 1:18,19,22-25**.)

Joseph was engaged to Mary. In their culture, an engagement was as binding as marriage, and it could only be broken by divorce. When Mary became pregnant, it was like adultery, and she could have been stoned to death. Joseph was concerned about the situation, and so he decided to divorce her. However, when the angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him how to respond to the situation, Joseph obeyed. His response shows us what our obedience should be: immediate, unconditional, and complete.

1 Immediate Obedience

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him . . . **MATTHEW 1:24**

The moment Joseph woke up from his dream, he did not spend time stressing over when to obey. He might have decided to wait until he felt better about everything, or to make Mary worry for a few days because she had made him worry. But Joseph did not let himself get sidetracked by emotions or worries. The moment he understood the situation, he got up and did what he was told to. Why should obedience be immediate? Do you think delays or excuses would please God?

2 Unconditional Obedience

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife . . . **MATTHEW 1:24**

When Joseph was told what to do, he obeyed without asking for proof, conditions, or assurances. Joseph was a practical man who thought the situation through. He was going to divorce Mary quietly because he believed she had committed adultery. When he heard from the angel and understood what was happening, he trusted God's plan and obeyed without question. Complete trust is seen in unconditional obedience. What does it mean to obey without conditions? How have you learned to obey unconditionally?

3 Complete Obedience

²⁴. . . he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. **MATTHEW 1:24,25**

The angel told Joseph to take Mary as his wife, and call her son Jesus. Joseph obeyed immediately, and without asking any questions. But more than that, Joseph *knew her not*, or did not have sexual relations with her, until she had given birth. Not having sexual relations was a way of keeping oneself pure as a way to honor God (Exodus 19:5; 1 Samuel 21:4,5). Joseph's obedience was complete because he understood that Mary's son was the promised King, and he obeyed the spirit of the command. What could happen if we obey incompletely? What can we learn from Joseph's complete obedience?
