

**Lesson Title:** Failed Expectations - Joseph

**Key Concept:** The Bible is filled with people for whom God did not do what they expected. Joseph had plans for a bride. God had plans for his coming.

**Scriptures:**

<sup>1</sup> This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and Abraham:... <sup>16</sup> Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.  
(Mathew 1:1, 16 *New Living Translation*)

<sup>18</sup> This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. <sup>20</sup> As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit."  
(Matthew 1:18–20 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Job 1:21, 2:10; Romans 11:33–36; John 16:33

**Lesson Thoughts:**

What expectations did Joseph have for his life? Here are key details from the scriptures: Joseph was a righteous man engaged to a virgin named Mary, and he was a Jew from the tribe of Judah in the lineage of King David.

As a righteous man, it is reasonable to say that he expected his wife to be a righteous woman. How shocking it must have been to find his fiancé with child! Thank God for the reassuring words of the angel, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt

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1:20b).” Although Joseph was privately assured of her integrity, Jesus was a constant reminder to Joseph that his child was not his own.

For Jewish people, genealogies were important. In Matthew 1, we find Joseph’s illustrious ancestry intertwined with that of Jesus. Joseph was certainly aware of his pedigree (Luke 2:4) and its connection to the prophecy of the Messiah. Surely he expected to live a life of dignity and produce suitable offspring. Besides, a wedding to celebrate the union to his love was supposed to be a happy public affair. Tradition may indicate the two families arranged their marriage, perhaps a bride price was paid, and certainly a joyous celebration was planned. Now he would live under the constant innuendo of a cheating wife and a bastard son. We often think of the disgrace Mary had to face, but she was not the only one who would be publicly humiliated by her presumed scandalous behavior.

Joseph could never have foreseen how the entrance of the long-awaited Messiah would clash with his life plan. Was the joyous wedding celebration curtailed to a private affair? And the wedding night—awkward! Not exactly the moment every groom looks forward to. On this emotional roller coaster, did he ever question his faith: “Why, God? Why me?”

As in Joseph’s story, there are times when our expectations and God’s plans are very different. Yet we see that Joseph ultimately submitted to God’s plan. Like him, we must remember in trying times that we are not our own, and our refrain must be “not my will, but thy will be done.”

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Did God play a significant role in your choice (or refusal) of a spouse? How did this direction fit with your expectations?
- 2) Has God ever asked you to give up something very special in return for what he has for you? If possible, share with the group.
- 3) What did you learn from these experiences?

**Next Lesson:** Mary

### **Notes and Reflections**

1. In your walk with God, what expectations have you had that didn't pan out? What expectations were exceeded?
2. Read the story of the "Rich Young Ruler" in Mark 10:17–27. Reflect on how financial expectations can affect our walk with God.
3. God says that "he'll never leave us nor forsake us," meaning that he is committed to us through all of life's ups and downs. Think about why it can be difficult for us to commit to him in the same way.