

**NEXT STEPS** Series: "The Wonder of It All" Message title: "The Wonder in the Journey" **12/1/24**

Next Steps are designed to be used in your small group settings. Need a group? Let us help!

*<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.*

Matthew 1:18-25 NRSV

Today is the first Sunday of the season of Advent. Advent is the very first season of the Christian calendar. Is the observance of Advent something that is part of your faith history? Why would be valuable about preparing for Christmas and also the rest of the year? Why should we not just rush straight into the celebration? Remember, this isn't a 50-yard dash. Let's prepare properly for long journey. Share some of ways you could prepare better.

Read Matthew 1:18-25 (printed above). This is an incredible account with a lot going on. Try to look at this text specifically through Joseph's eyes. You are all excited and looking forward to the perfect marriage to this special young lady. Then, the news. Oh my! How do you respond to this one. He was righteous. He knew rightness. He knew the rules and the law. He also understood nature and biology. He knew his nature and he also knew the nature of the people in the community. People talk. Are you there yet? Ok, so how do you respond to this situation? Now, look at how Joseph responded. Joseph received a blessing from his obedience. We too received a blessing from his obedience. Talk this through with your small group. Don't rush this one!

I don't think any of us could have seen or even understood what God was doing in that situation. Remember, we are looking at this in the rear-view mirror. Miracles happen. They did. They do. They will. Joseph found hope in his relationship with God. Now is a time to be honest. What are you hopeful for? Truly. What is that situation that has you hiding or scratching your head? What is that predicament that you are in that it seems there is no way out? What might God's messenger tell you about that situation? Rather than running and hiding, how would drawing closer to God help? How does the realization of Emmanuel – "God with us" – the presence of God Himself change your situation? How can your group join with you in prayer over this situation? He is able. Miracles happen.

The season of Advent is such a richer time when it is shared with others on the same journey.

Who deserves to join you on this journey? When will you ask?

Remember, we have gathered in worship; now it is time to go and be the church.

***"Living intentionally in a Christlike manner to bring glory to God"***  
**the Church**