

UN Sung

Hero



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

UNSUNG HERO

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

Through this Christmas series entitled *Unsung Hero*, we are going to be spending some time with a man in the Bible who has very little said about him. In fact, he is not even recorded as saying anything in the Bible. But without question, we hear his name every Christmas. And as we spend time studying him in this series, you will see he is a man who certainly deserves to be recognized. We are talking about Joseph the father of Jesus.

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Staying Faithful

Unsung Hero | Week 1 | Matthew 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

We are embarking on a three-week study of an unsung hero in Scripture: Joseph, the father of Jesus. Even though only sixteen verses in the Bible mention Joseph by name, you are going to see his influence was much stronger and much greater than what is implied, because he truly is an unsung hero who is going to teach us what it really means to follow the Jesus of Christmas. We are going learn from Joseph that commitment to the will of God will bring clarity about the will of God.

KEY POINTS

1. We Reason What We Should Do

When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant with Jesus, Joseph did what anybody would do. He reasoned out what he should do. He faced a dilemma. What almost any other man would have done is call off the marriage. He would have gone to the priest or the public square, told what had happened, told why he was breaking off the engagement, called Mary out as an adulterous woman, and at best she would be scorned and humiliated and according to the Law of Moses could even be stoned to dead.

She would be disgraced for the rest of her life and very few men would marry a woman who cheated on her fiancée. Her family would be humiliated because all that was given to the family would have to be returned, but we were told that Joseph was "faithful to the law." That is a poor translation. It literally says, "He was a just, righteous man who had in mind to divorce her quietly."

But despite the fact that he had just decided in his heart he didn't want to marry her, he chose instead to stay by her side. So who would be seen as a dishonorable person? Not Mary, but Joseph. He would take the blame. He would accept the shame. He was totally innocent. And 33 years later, his son would do the same thing on a much bigger scale. He would take the blame for something that wasn't on Him for the sake of all mankind. In this case, it wasn't like father like son; it was like son like father.

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2. God Will Reveal What We Must Do

This is where so many believers mess up, blow it, and make mistakes. We rely on our reason instead of God's revelation. We reason first and ask questions later. Joseph was about to do what he thought he should do, and what he thought was the right thing and the best thing to do. But because he was a just, righteous, godly man, and because God knew his heart, he knew he was committed to doing His will and God revealed that will to Joseph.

I firmly believe that the only person God will reveal His will to is the person who is committed to doing His will before He reveals it. God always comes through in revealing His will if we are willing to deny our own plans in order to live out His plans. This is what Joseph did, and we'd be wise to follow His example.

3. We Respond To What God Says To Do

Everything was going according to plan. Joseph just didn't realize until now he was going to be a big part of that plan. As we keep reading today's key passage, we can see what a great man Joseph was. "*When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife*" (Matthew 1:24).

Against all logic, against all reason, and even going beyond what the law said he could do, Joseph agreed to become the adoptive stepfather of Jesus. A big part of the Christmas story is about the willingness of one man to raise a child who is not his own because of what God told him to do. Make no mistake about it. This would be no easy task on any front.

At best, things were going to get very messy in Nazareth. The good news is Mary would give birth to the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and be the most blessed of all women, but becoming her husband would be a far greater task than most men would ever answer. Thankfully, that didn't stop Joseph from being obedient to God. He modeled so well what it looked like to follow God's lead even when it wasn't the most popular or most widely accepted decision.

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Staying Faithful

Unsung Hero | Week 1 | Matthew 1:18-25

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do you relate to Joseph in the Christmas story?
2. When was a time God revealed something to you that He wanted you to do, but you were hesitant to obey because of the inevitable repercussions? What did you learn from that situation?
3. What is one step of obedience you can take this week to follow Jesus, even if it's a tough or unpopular decision?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Stepping Up

Unsung Hero | Week 2 | Luke 2:1-5

INTRODUCTION

In today’s most familiar passage of the Christmas story, we are going to learn some unbelievably valuable life lessons that I pray we will never forget. If we can remember these truths when we face the difficulties of life, we will step up and be what God wants us to be and do what God wants us to do. Here is the principle to remember: No matter what is in front of you, God is always ahead of you. Let’s look at how this truth plays out in the life of Joseph.

KEY POINTS

1. We Don’t Always Understand What God Is Doing

The days that we are reading about in Luke were days of living in a corrupt dictatorship, under tremendous economic oppression and political domination under a madman who believed he was god, and where minorities and women had little to no rights.

You would be tempted back in that day to wonder “Where is God?” You are going to see, very clearly, that God was behind the scenes, pulling the levers, pressing the buttons, flying the plane and everything was going according to plan. So remember, when you don’t understand what God is doing, just know that God is doing what He wants to do.

2. We Realize Life Can Be Tough

Remember, Joseph had been betrothed to Mary, and he pretty much had his life planned out. He was a carpenter, was looking forward to marrying this beautiful girl, and would raise his family in Nazareth where his and her parents lived.

All of a sudden, his entire life comes tumbling down because of an unexpected pregnancy and the message of an angel. Joseph was in a tough spot. He had to decide if he was still going to try to make his own plan happen, or if he was going to submit to God’s plan that was very different from what Joseph expected.

3. We Don’t Always Get What We Deserve

Don’t be surprised as a follower of Jesus that life is unfair, that you get the short end of the stick, and that you don’t always get what you deserve. Some of the greatest men and women in the Bible didn’t get what they deserved. The Lord Jesus certainly didn’t get what He deserved. Perhaps the greatest Christian who ever lived, the Apostle Paul didn’t get what he deserved.

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Stepping Up

Unsung Hero | Week 2 | Luke 2:1-5

That is another trait of an unsung hero. You do what is right. You say what is right. You live what is right even when you are done wrong, even when life is not fair, and even when you get what you don't deserve. The only thing that matters in life is not getting what you deserve but giving God what He deserves, which is your obedience, your gratitude, your praise, and your faith no matter what.

4. We Can't See The End From The Beginning But God Does

There is something about this story you would not know. Joseph took Mary with him, but he didn't have to. Only the man was required to appear before the census taker. Why in the world did Joseph take a pregnant wife on a seventy-mile journey when it was not required by Roman law? Because seven hundred and fifty years before this journey took place the prophet Micah foretold the future birth of this future king.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2).

You see, we can't see the end from the beginning, but God can. He knew what needed to happen for Micah's prophecy to be fulfilled, therefore He worked in the details to make sure the prophecy came true.

5. We Follow A God That Can Be Trusted

It wasn't an accident, a stroke of fate, a piece of luck that caused Caesar Augustus to take a census and make sure everybody went to their hometown. The Christmas story reminds us there is a sovereign God in control of our lives and mine and we can trust Him.

We don't have to worry about accidents, because there are no such things as accidents – only appointments. We don't have to worry about how everything is going to end, because it is going to end exactly the way God wants it to end. We don't have to worry about what plan is in place because His plan is in place and His plan will be accomplished.

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Horizontal lines for taking notes.

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Stepping Up

Unsung Hero | Week 2 | Luke 2:1-5

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When was the last time you didn't understand what God was doing? How did you respond?
2. How is your life tough right now? What are you learning about God in the midst of your tough circumstances?
3. Have you ever been frustrated that you didn't get what you deserved? How does it encourage you to know that many notable people in Scripture also didn't get what they deserved?

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Standing Strong

Unsung Hero | Week 3 | Matthew 2:13-15

INTRODUCTION

As we wrap up this Christmas series, we are going to learn about what happens when we follow Jesus wherever He wants us to go. When you surrender to God's call you are under God's care. We already know that Joseph never had it easy. God didn't promise Joseph a rose garden. There was a high price he paid to be the father of Jesus. We learn three things that were true of Joseph all of his life that are true about you and me when we simply surrender to the will of God in our lives.

KEY POINTS

1. We Are Guided By The Providence Of God

Following God is not always easy. The flight is not always smooth. There is simply no easy, comfortable, velvet-lined highway to follow Jesus. If you want to live an easy, comfortable, safe life, whatever you do, don't surrender to the Lord, because sometimes your plans will be disrupted. Sometimes your hopes will be discarded. Your expectations will be disappointed.

But the good news is that Jesus never baits and switches. He never over-promises and under-delivers. Jesus never said it was easy to follow Him. It costs to serve Jesus. But it also pays to serve Jesus, and it always pays more than it costs.

No matter what is going on in the world around you, no matter what it's costing you to follow Jesus, everything is going according to plan. What we learn from Joseph is that when you surrender to God's call, you are under God's care. You are guided by the providence of God.

2. We Are Guarded By The Protection Of God

When God provides a way of escape you take it. When God provides a place to hide you hide. Just like He told Joseph to go to Egypt to escape Herod, we need to be diligent in taking the escape routes that God provides for us when we're in trouble. You can always know that if you are guided by the providence of God, you are guarded by the protection of God.

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Standing Strong

Unsung Hero | Week 3 | Matthew 2:13-15

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How has following Jesus cost you? How has it paid to follow Jesus?
2. When was a time that God protected you and gave you a way out when you needed it? What did you learn from that situation?
3. How has God specifically provided for you this year?
