

Significant other

Matthew 1.18-25

In a dream, an angel tells Joseph that Mary's child is from the Holy Spirit. He is to take her as his wife and name the child Jesus, the Saviour. By Joseph's adoption Jesus becomes the promised Son of David, named 'God is with us'.

Now read **Luke 1.18-25** see p.2 for text.

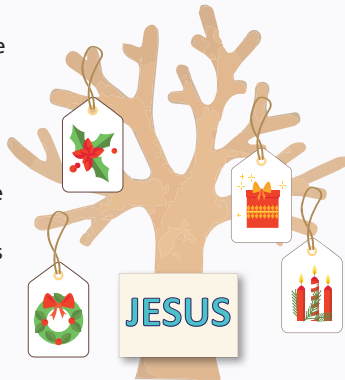
A note on the passage

Joseph is silent and possibly overlooked in the Christmas story, but his actions are a vital and significant part of God's story. This week, we explore what it means for us to play a significant part in God's story and in other people's story as we serve Him.

#ADVENT

Each week during Advent, right up to Christmas, we focus on one of the names given to Jesus, what it means and how it might connect with your daily life. You will need the Advent tree you prepared in the first Advent week, and have added to since.

This week, take a gift tag and write on it 'Prince of Peace'. Attach the tag to the Advent tree. Research this name (e.g. on the internet, using books, or by talking with others) – what does Prince of Peace mean? What does 'peace' look like in practice for us as Jesus' followers today? How might the answer to that connect with your own life? How does it feel to know Jesus is 'Prince of Peace'?



IMAGINE

What's your favourite film? Discuss with others or think about what character in any film you would like to be and why? Would you want a main part or a small part in the background? If you could be in the Christmas story, which part would you play and why? We are all invited to be part of God's story whether it's big or small, just as you are. How does that make you feel? This week remember that you are invited to play an important part in God's story. What do you think might be your part in God's story?



BAKE



Stained glass windows in churches allow people to focus on someone or something significant – often a well-known person in the Bible. Make stained glass window biscuits using the recipe at this link <https://www.asda.com/good-living/recipe/Stained-glass-biscuit-recipe>. You will need: 50g butter, 50g golden caster sugar, 140g plain flour, 1 egg, 1tsp vanilla essence, crushed clear hard-boiled sweets. As you bake, discuss or think about which person in the Christmas story or in the Bible you would choose to focus on and why.

Make a difference

Often people play a significant part in someone else's life without knowing the difference that it makes. Is there anything you might do? Maybe donating a tin of food to a food bank for someone you don't know to benefit. Alternatively, offer an act of kindness to someone else who makes a difference to others. For example, you could write a thank you card, bake some biscuits or similar, and take it to your local GP surgery, school, library or community centre to thank them for what they do to support others.

HELP



Discuss or think about someone in your life who has been important or significant to you. What is about them or what they have done that has most helped you? What are your strengths? Ask others if you are not sure. Sometimes you may not think things are 'just part of you' but they often are skills that can help others. Can you think of things that you could do to help someone you know? Could you do at least one of them this week?

HEROES



Joseph plays a key part in Jesus' story. People may play a part in someone's life for a short or longer period of time. Watch this clip, where two unknown people help a stranger and become part of his story to help him achieve his goal: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/video/2017/apr/23/london-marathon-runner-helps-exhausted-athlete-finish-race-video> Can you think of people who give their time to playing a part in someone else's story – people you know, perhaps, or well-known people? How many can you think of? Chat with others or write them down. Give thanks for the part they play. Is there a way you could be part of someone's story?

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

This is the story of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah.

A young girl called Mary was engaged to a man called Joseph. They weren't married when Mary discovered that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Now Joseph was a righteous man and always tried to do the right thing. So when he found out that Mary was pregnant, he knew the right thing to do was to cancel their marriage. Other people would be very angry if they knew Mary was pregnant before they got married. Joseph began to make plans to break off his engagement to Mary. He thought he was doing the right thing.

But Joseph hadn't understood what God was doing, so God sent an angel to tell him. The angel came in a dream, while Joseph was asleep. 'Joseph, son of David,' the angel called to him. 'Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will have a son, and you shall call him Jesus. He will save people from their sins.'

This dream changed Joseph's mind. He still wanted to do what was right, but now he knew that this meant marrying Mary. They got married and when Mary's son was born, Joseph named the boy Jesus. Everything happened as the

prophet Isaiah had said in the Old Testament: 'Look, an unmarried woman will get pregnant and have a son. His name will be Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us.'

Matthew 1.18-25



Did you know?

- Messiah means 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people, also a title used for Jesus.
- Joseph thought that quietly leaving Mary would protect them both, not just him.

Matthew 1.18-25 (NRSV)

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 with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save

his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.