

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE
God's Protections At Christmas
Part I: God's Protection With Marital Issues
(Matthew 1:18-25)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Obtaining personal protection regarding marital issues is a great need for many people today:

(1) This need affects many married people: (a) The November 26, 2025 "Dear Annie" column ran a letter with the name "Exhausted but Trying" that explained, "I'm a mother of six, and my husband has become completely irresponsible. He shows no concern for our family's well-being and refuses to contribute financially . . . Our children get no emotional care from him . . . He's selfish and manipulative, and its taken a huge toll on my mental and physical health." (Republican-American, November 26, 2025, p. B10) (b) Another "Dear Annie" letter writer "Just Over It" in the November 22nd issue of the paper reported, "I've been married to my husband . . . for over 30 years. He's never been a very good partner . . . (He) never has my back . . . I never thought I would be in such a horrible marriage where he lets our kids speak to and treat me like a second-class citizen . . ." (op. cit., November 22, 2025, p. B12)

(2) Obtaining personal protection with marital issues affects a lot of unmarried people, too: With the rise of "woke" ideology, thousands of American minors have suffered great obstacles to functioning well in marital unions. The "United States Department of Health and Human Services has delivered" a "document" that "notes that 'thousands of American children and adolescents have received' interventions including 'puberty suppressing drugs to prevent the onset of puberty; cross-sex hormones to spur the secondary sex characteristics of the opposite sex; and surgeries including mastectomy and (in rare cases) vaginoplasty.' . . . Harms detailed in the report, as well as other recent academic studies and a lengthy New York Times article, have been found in areas including 'bone mineral density and skeletal development,' cognitive development, sexual function and reproductive health. The report notes that cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes are 'among the most significant long-term risks associated with (cross-sex hormones).' . . . Despite the evidence, some states, including Connecticut, have refused to adjust their policies." ("Following the science on gender," op. cit., November 25, 2025, p. A6)

(3) Even many unwed singles who are cisgender, those who identify with their birth gender, have pressing concerns about personal protection regarding marital issues: (i) Many wonder how they can meet the "right" person to marry or (ii) how they can afford to get married with today's economic trials of high housing costs, high health care costs and high educational costs, etc.

Need: So we ask, "How can we obtain God's personal protection with marital issues we face in today's world?"

- I. After Joseph and Mary had become engaged to be married that first Christmas, their plan was upset by the Holy Spirit's causing Mary to become supernaturally pregnant with Jesus, Matthew 1:18.**
- A. In Christ's day, Hebrew marriages were arranged for individuals by their parents, and the engagement period was considered so sacred that the betrothed couple was considered married. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 20)
 - B. The bride lived with her parents for a year after the engagement was set "to demonstrate the faithfulness of the pledge of purity given concerning the bride." (Ibid.) "If she was found to be with child in this period, she obviously was not pure but had been involved in an unfaithful sexual relationship . . . If . . . the one-year waiting period demonstrated the purity of the bride, the husband would then go to the house of the bride's parents and . . . lead his bride back to his home" where they would "live together as husband and wife," Ibid.
 - C. It was in the one-year period of her engagement that Mary became pregnant, and her fiancé Joseph, unaware that the Holy Spirit had caused it, thought she had been immoral. (Ryrie S. Bib., KJV, 1978, fn. to Matt. 1:19)
- II. Significantly, Joseph exhibited seven wise, exemplary responses to this marital crisis, Matthew 1:19-20a:**
- A. First, he respected the **precedent** set by the marital contract that his parents and Mary's parents had formed, Matthew 1:19a. Joseph had accepted the contract to be Mary's "husband," so he had meant to honor that role.
 - B. Second, he was **righteous**, Matthew 1:19b. Joseph did not want to marry an immoral woman, but Leviticus 19:18 required him to love his neighbor as himself, so he aimed to treat Mary like he would want to be treated.
 - C. Third, Joseph was **considerate**, Matthew 1:19c. He did not want to "make a public show" (*deigmatizo*, Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 99) of Mary by not publicly humiliating her.
 - D. Fourth, he was **cautious**, Matthew 1:19d. The verb rendered "was minded" KJV is *eboulethe*, an aorist *passive* of the verb *boulomai*, "to intend" (Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt. Lex. to the Grk. N. T., 1993, p. 157, 119). The crisis Joseph faced left him feeling **forced** to do what would **hurt**, what he really wanted to avoid.

- E. Fifth, Joseph was **constructive**, Matthew 1:19e. His plan to divorce Mary was to do so “secretly” (*latha*, Abbott-Smith, op. cit., p. 263), making the best of a bad situation by limiting the shame Mary would face.
- F. Sixth, Joseph was **patient**, Matthew 1:20a. The expression “while he thought” KJV (“as he considered” ESV; “after he considered” NIV) translates the genitive absolute *autou enthumethentos*, a grammatical structure unique to Greek that translates literally as “(of) his (of) pondering” (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 3). This construction requires a paraphrase to render it in English and shows Joseph taking time to think on the crisis!
- G. Seventh, he was thus a **thoughtful** man, Matthew 1:20a. The verb “he thought” KJV translates the Greek verb *enthumeomai*, to “ponder in one’s mind, think of, meditate on” (Mounce, op. cit., p. 188). Joseph realized the gravity of the crisis he faced, and of the relationship fallout that would occur were he even secretly to divorce Mary, so he gave careful thought about his planned response to Mary’s pregnancy before acting upon it.

III. After Joseph had exhibited these seven quality responses to his marital crisis with his limited knowledge of it, God’s angel revealed the facts Joseph needed to deal properly with the crisis, Matthew 1:20b-23:

- A. The angel of God appeared to Joseph in “a good dream,” what in Joseph’s day in Israel was considered a mark “of God’s favor.” (Matthew 1:20b; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2004, p. 109)
- B. The angel also addressed Joseph as “thou son of David” (KJV), a very honorable term and one fitting Joseph who had descended from Israel’s king David (Matthew 1:6, 16), further implying God’s favor, Matt. 1:20c.
- C. The angel instructed Joseph not to be afraid to take his espoused wife Mary to live with him, for the child who had been conceived in her had been conceived by the Holy Spirit, Matt. 1:20d. Mary had not been immoral!
- D. Also, the angel announced that Mary would give birth to a son, and Joseph was to name Him “Jesus,” the Greek term for Old Testament “Joshua,” for He would save His people Israel from their sins, Matthew 1:21. Not only was Mary moral and Jesus not illegitimate, but Jesus would actually save Israel from her sins!
- E. The Gospel author at Matthew 1:23 explained how all of these events that had upset Joseph had occurred to fulfill the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy to prove by Joseph as a prime witness that Mary indeed had conceived as a virgin and given birth to “Emmanuel,” what is translated from Hebrew as “God with us,” Jesus Christ!

IV. Armed with this insight, Joseph awoke in the night and immediately went to the home of Mary’s parents to take her to live with him to protect the reputations of Mary and Jesus, Matthew 1:24. Joseph was not intimate with Mary until after Jesus was born out of respect for the plan of God, Matthew 1:24-25 NIV.

Lesson: *When Joseph faced the marital crisis of Mary’s being discovered to be pregnant during their engagement, he honored a key precedent, he lived righteously and he was considerate, cautious, constructive, patient and thoughtful. God then gave Joseph the insight he needed to initiate the response that would protect his marriage.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) If we face marital issues, may we rely on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16) to honor precedents, live righteously and be considerate, cautious, constructive, patient and thoughtful and see God supply what other insight or help we need for His protection in the marital issues involved.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

The root of marital problems along with our most pressing social problems in today’s America is reportedly fatherlessness. David Blankenhorn’s article, “Life Without Father” (*USA Weekend*, February 24-26, 1995, p. 4) asserted, “Fatherlessness is . . . the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to domestic violence.” From a woman’s point-of-view, Patrice Lewis’ piece, “Fatherless Girls” (January 18, 2013; wnd.com) claimed, “(F)atherless girls have a more profound and long-term impact upon society than the violence or sexual proclivities of fatherless boys. Fatherless girls are usually the ones producing the next generation of fatherless children, which perpetuates the cycle of pain, violence and poverty.”

One may then ask, “What is the solution to fatherlessness?” Scripture provides the answer in Psalm 128:1-6: A male head of household who reveres the Lord so that he orders his life in God’s Biblical ways is presented in this psalm as positively influencing first his wife (v. 3a), then his children (v. 3b), then his nation’s capital city (v. 5), then future generations of his sons (v. 6a) and then the peace of his nation and other nations (v. 6b). Fatherlessness is thus solved by men who follow the example of Joseph in Matthew 1:19-20, a man who was righteous before the Lord and who acted as a mature, responsible man in a marital crisis he faced only to see God help him solve it to God’s glory.

May we all – especially we men – revere God and follow Him to counter marital and all other social ills.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. If we face marital crisis issues, may we follow Joseph’s example and see God work to protect us.