

## Surviving The Most Wonderful Time of The Year

Matthew 1:18-25

Chances are your perfect Christmas plans will have some unexpected interruption. Even the first Christmas had its share of stress.

Let's look at 2 survival tips that can help us get through the most wonderful time of the year. Are you ready?

The first tip is, expect your best planned efforts to be interrupted. Look at verse 18. "This is how the birth of Jesus came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, BUT before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit."

Illustration: Two cars at a stop light. The officer said, "I'm sorry for the mistake.

But you see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping that guy off, and cursing a blue streak at the car in front of you, and then I noticed the "Choose Life" license plate holder, the "What would Jesus do" and "Follow me to Sunday School" bumper sticker, and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, so naturally I assumed you had stolen the car."

Our response to interruptions is very important. Look at again at the text. Joseph and Mary were planning a wedding until God told them to prepare a nursery.

Hebrew weddings have two stages: The first stage is called Kiddushin or the (engagement) legally the couple was married, but not living together, they have not consummated the relationship. This stage could last for up to 12 months.

The second stage is called Huppah, this is the marriage ceremony.

Joseph was planning on marrying his sweetheart, drawing up plans, carving their marriage bed. They had big plans. Mary was planning a wedding, picking out china patterns, BIG PLANS!

Can you imagine a 15 year old Mary going to a 20 something year old Joseph and says, "Honey we need to talk, I'm pregnant." Now Short of divorce, death or dismemberment, very few of us will have holiday plans interrupted as much as Mary and Joseph.

With that said, If God interrupted their wedding plans, then our Christmas plans are fair game too.

We can make plans on top of plans but our plans may not be what God has planned for us. Proverbs 19:21 says "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the lords purpose that prevails."

Having our plans interrupted isn't entirely a bad thing.

The second survival tip that can help us get through the most wonderful time of the year is...try to get God's take on the interruption.

Joseph could have really blown it with this news that his fiancée was pregnant. Joseph's knee jerk reaction is to divorce her. Look at verse 19. "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."

He could have chosen to do a lot of publicly terrible things to her, but he stopped and got the Lords perspective. Look at verse 20-25.

Illustration: The wife who cheated and the result of the affair was she got pregnant. The husband gave the child his last name.

Joseph was in the same spot. Our first response is usually not the most God honoring response. That's why we need to get God's perspective before we blow it.

There are three things that happened when Joseph got the right perspective. First, he got to marry his sweetheart. Secondly, He got to name the Son of God. And lastly, he was honored to help raise Jesus.

Many of us won't even consider seeing God's hand in our interruptions. All we see is dashed plans, nixed ideas, disappointments and so forth.

Here are three words to help you gain perspective when your plans are interrupted. Prayer, Perspective and Providence.

Let's look at the first one. Prayer: James 5:13 "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray."

Wednesday night during prayer service we learned that prayer affects your response to adversity. Jesus, before he was betrayed took his disciples and told them to stand watch and pray while he prayed privately. Every time Jesus checked on them he found his disciples sleeping. All night Jesus prayed. When Jesus was arrested he was calm, cool, and collected. It was his disciples that were running away into the night or cutting ears off of the guards.

Secondly, Perspective. Put the interruption in proper perspective. How bad is it really? We tend to be catastrophic in our thinking. We spend \$100.00 of worry on a \$5.00 problem.

Thirdly is Providence. God is in control. He still has all of your hairs number. Nothing can happen to you without God knowing about it. RELAX!!! Responding emotionally never ends well. Illustration: A mother of five little children came home after grocery shopping to find the house very quiet. As she entered the living room she saw her kids sitting in a circle and all of them were holding something. As she got closer she saw that each child had a skunk. The mother screamed, RUN children. Each child grabbed a skunk and ran in five different directions. The mother screamed again RUN!!! The kids were so scared that they squeezed the skunks. Skunks do not like to be squeezed.

When we face interruptions we gotta be careful. Don't react emotionally because it's just like squeezing a skunk. It gets worse as you squeeze!!

In closing, let this year's Christmas plans and failures be an opportunity for God to do unexpected miracles in your life. What good is your life if all you have accomplished was your own plans!!