

WEEK 1: TRUST AND OBEY

Mary and Joseph

I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled. – Luke 1:38

Read: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

Many of us have become so familiar with the Christmas story that we might forget Mary and Joseph were basically two young kids thrown into a tough situation. Based on what we know of the culture and customs of that time, Mary was most likely a young teenager and Joseph just a few years older. All of life lay ahead of them as they awaited their upcoming marriage. No doubt dreams of children, grandchildren, and growing old together danced in their heads. But they definitely didn't expect those dreams to become a reality so soon.

What do we do when life throws us a curveball? How do we respond when our best-laid plans get a wrench thrown in them from out of nowhere?

Angels appeared to both Mary and Joseph on separate occasions to let them know of the sudden change of plans. Though sudden to them, it was not a surprise to God. The young, virgin Mary was now pregnant, conceived by the Holy Spirit. Both were told not to be afraid. Easy for the angels to say – Mary and Joseph knew they could be facing ridicule and shame once her pregnancy became public knowledge. If they were to look at their situation from human eyes, fear would be a completely normal and expected response.

Although Mary and Joseph no doubt questioned the situation (they were humans, after all!), they chose to look at it from God's point of view. Scripture tells us that ultimately both Mary and Joseph responded with trust and obedience. Mary even praised God for the child growing inside her! Luke 1:38 says that Mary's response was "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled." And Matthew's gospel simply tells us that Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Matthew 1:24).

The next time life throws a wrench in your plans, try to remember the example of Mary and Joseph. We worship a God whose plans are always good, even when they are not what we expected or would have chosen for ourselves. Mary and Joseph responded to their unexpected "wrench" with trust and obedience – may we do the same.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. When has life thrown a wrench in your plans? What emotions did you experience?
2. How do you feel about change? How might you respond as a servant of the Lord if you paused to look at change from God's point of view?
3. What are the areas in your life where you need to "trust and obey" as Mary and Joseph did?