

Families in the Bible

Theme: Adoption

The Holy Family

Adopt - legally take (another's child) and bring it up as one's own.

In Biblical Jewish culture, there was not adoption as we know it today. When a child was without parents, someone else in the family would take the child in and raise them. However, we have a unique example of adoption in the Holy Family. We usually read this part of the Bible at Christmas, but here we will look at it through the lens of adoption.



Read it from the Bible

Part 1 - Mary's Story

Luke 1.26-38 (Good News Bible)

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. ²⁷He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. ²⁸The angel came to her and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"

²⁹Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. ³¹You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, ³³and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end!"

³⁴Mary said to the angel, "I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. ³⁷For there is nothing that God cannot do."

³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," said Mary; "may it happen to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Part 2 - Joseph's Story

Matthew 1.18-24 (Good News Bible)

¹⁸This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. ²⁰While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. ²¹She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus — because he will save his people from their sins."

²²Now all this happened in order to make what the Lord had said through the prophet come true, ²³"A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel" (which means, "God is with us").

²⁴So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

History Link

To understand this passage from the Bible, we have to understand the history and culture of the time in which it was written. To be engaged to be married was a binding agreement between the future husband and the bride's family. There would be an announcement and celebration of the engagement, but the bride would continue to live with her parents for about a year until the dowry (the price the father required for his daughter) was paid. When the agreed time passed and money had changed hands, then they would be married and the bride would move into her husband's house.

In this passage we find Joseph and Mary were engaged but she was still living with her parents when she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph knew he wasn't the father and he had to decide what to do about his pregnant fiancée. According to the laws and customs of the time, Joseph could have broken off the engagement publicly, in front of everyone, which would have disgraced and dishonoured Mary.

Joseph

Look at Matthew 1.19 and using the words in the box below, fill in the empty spaces to find out what kind of man Joseph was.

Joseph was a _____ who _____ did _____
_____.

But he did _____ want to _____ Mary _____; so he
made plans to _____ the engagement _____.

not privately what was man publicly always disgrace
always right break

Think about it

- How do you think Mary felt when the angel Gabriel told her she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit?
- How would you describe the kind of person Joseph was? Does he remind you of anyone you know?
- Joseph did not follow through with his plan to end his engagement to Mary because an angel came to visit him. What did the angel say that changed his mind? (see Matthew 1.20, 21)
- All through the Bible we see that Jesus refers to God as his heavenly father, but when Joseph took Mary to be his wife, he legally became Jesus' adoptive father.
- Why do you think God chose Joseph to be Jesus' father here on earth? Based on what you have learned about Joseph, what kind of father do you think Joseph was?

What's the order?

Number the following events 1 to 5 in the order that they happened:

- ___ Joseph is thinking about privately breaking his engagement to Mary.
- ___ The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and says she is to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.
- ___ Mary and Joseph become engaged and Mary lives with her parents until the dowry is paid.
- ___ Joseph takes Mary as his wife.
- ___ The angel appears to Joseph in a dream.

Scrambled

Unscramble the words below to tell the meaning of 'Immanuel' in Matthew 1.23.

odg si tiwh su

Faith in ACTION

Facts about Adoption in the UK

- 3,440 children were adopted last year in the UK
- 6,320 children are still waiting to be adopted

Until children are adopted, most of them are in temporary foster care and often get moved around frequently and without much notice. The children's belongings are often put into a bin bag for them to carry to the next place they will live temporarily. Dave Linton, heard about this and said,

'No child should carry their life in a bin bag.'

So, with just £480 Dave started a company called *Madlug* which makes fun, colourful and well-made bags and rucksacks. When anyone buys a bag from *Madlug*, another brand new bag is automatically given to a child in foster care; for them to keep. So far, they have given away over 20,000 bags.

Why do you think Dave Linton started Madlug? How do you think God feels about his decision to provide bags for these children?



<https://www.madlug.com/>

Happy “Gotcha Day”

Some of us are adopted or know people who are adopted. Adoptive families sometimes mark “Gotcha Day,” when they celebrate the day that the child came to live with them and the story of how that came to be.

Do you know any adoption stories from your family or friends? What is special about it?

Adoption Alternatives

We have been looking at adoption of children today. However, there are a number of charities and programmes that allow you to ‘adopt’ something as your own. Listed here are a few ideas. Do you know of others?

On the line, write how you could show that person or thing that you think they are special:

Adopt a grandparent _____

Adopt a pet _____

Adopt a mile of road _____

Adopt an endangered animal _____

Adopt a tree _____

Other? _____

Talk with your family about one of these ‘adoption’ programmes and see if there is one that you might be interested in taking part in.

More Adoptions in the Bible

When you have time, read through some of these other stories of adoption that can be found in the Bible:

- Pharaoh's daughter adopts Moses (Exodus 2.1-10)
- Mordecai adopts his niece Esther (Esther 1-10)
- God adopts **US!** - because he loves us:

Romans 8.14-17 (Good News Bible)

¹⁴ Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children. ¹⁵ For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, "Father! my Father!" ¹⁶ God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Since we are his children, we will possess the blessings he keeps for his people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ's suffering, we will also share his glory.

Let's Pray

Dear God, thank you for the example we have of Mary and Joseph trusting you and doing what you asked of them. Thank you that Joseph adopted Jesus as his son and raised him here on earth. We pray for children who are newly adopted and for those who are waiting for their forever family to come along. We also pray for families waiting to adopt. There are so many types of families in the world and we thank you for loving them all.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen!

