

Mary & Joseph (1)

Introducer: Hello, and welcome. My name's *****, and this is **NOT the Nine Lessons and Carols of Christmas**.

Introducer: We're going to take you through the story of Christmas, all the way up to Christmas eve. A period of time we call Advent. Now, much of our story is, quite frankly, made up! but the underlying story is true, and you can find that in the Bible. Just take a look in the gospel of Luke. Our story starts with our two main characters, Mary and Joseph, whom I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing recently at a Summer conference.

Compère: Tonight, we are honoured to have Mary and Joseph from Nazareth with us, and they're going to tell us an amazing story of their encounter with the living God. Welcome to both of you...and thank you for being willing to share your story with us. So, perhaps you can start by telling us how you came to know each other in the first place.

Joseph: I first saw Mary the day after she was born. My mum is the village midwife. She's also good friends with Mary's mum, so she took me to see Mary. I watched Mary grow up, and I was always very fond of her. But I was five years older than Mary, so we didn't...like...always hang out together. Of course, I knew all the girls in our village, and some were closer to my age, but....I just liked Mary the most. Maybe it was her looks. But her looks changed as she grew up. Perhaps it was her easy smile, which always seemed to return so quickly after she was upset by something. Maybe it was the way she listened to me. I mean...really listened. Or the times, in a gathering, when she would come and stand by me, even if she had nothing to say. It was as if she just wanted to be by my side, and I liked her being there.

Compère: And Mary, was Joseph prominent in your memories of growing up?

Mary: I think that pretty much all my memories of growing up have Joseph in them somewhere. As a little girl, he would tickle me in the synagogue and making me laugh when we were supposed to be quiet. Our mothers stopped sitting near each other deliberately, trying to keep us apart, but it didn't work. I adored him... My mum says, when I was very little, I used to call him Jojo, but I don't remember that.

But when we got older there were times when Joseph didn't want to play with me. I remember crying to my mum the day Joseph told me he only wanted to play with the other boys. He knew he had upset me because he came and apologised to me later that day. So we were always friends, and as we grew up we just got closer. In the end, it didn't really matter to me what we were doing or where we were. It just mattered that we were together.

But then the day came when Joseph told me we were going to be apart.

Compère: What happened there then Joseph?

Joseph: I was trained by my dad in a variety of building skills and I was thinking about how I could develop them. Then came the call from Herod's palace for men to finish the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. It paid well, and so I and a couple of my friends decided to go. For me, the money wasn't the most important reason for going. It was the idea of working in the Temple that got me excited. I mean...this is the house of God! The place where God, himself, lives amongst us!

Well, by this time, I knew I wanted to be with Mary, but we couldn't get married until she was old enough... So, I decided now was the time to get some life experience away from home.

Compère: So, did Joseph going away not put a strain on your relationship Mary?

Mary: Joseph came to our house the night before leaving Nazareth. We talked about Jerusalem. My dad gave him some recommendations of things to look out for. Things he had seen when HE was in Jerusalem as a young man. I was jealous of Joseph. I wanted an adventure like that.

But then there was this awkward silence. Joseph seemed to want to say something...but he seemed quite embarrassed. So we just waited...and then he spoke. There was Joseph was telling my parents how much he loved me. How he wanted to marry me when he got back from Jerusalem. That he wanted us to be betrothed before he left.

I mean, I couldn't speak because I would have just started crying! But my parents didn't seem surprised at all. They just smiled and nodded and listened as Joseph told them about his plans to make a home for us and provide for us through his building work. My parents knew that I loved Joseph, and I knew that they approved of him and thought of him as a godly man. So my dad said

to me, “Mary, do you want to marry Joseph?” And I said, “Yes!” So they gave us their blessing. And that was it, I was promised to Joseph! I couldn’t sleep that night, and I was really upset when he left for Jerusalem the next day.

I wouldn’t see him again for three long years!

Compère: Wow! And how was your time in Jerusalem, Joseph?

Joseph: Well, I had my adventure in Jerusalem, and it turned out to be mostly a spiritual adventure. My first time in the Temple – I’ll never forget it - I shook uncontrollably because of the fear of being so close to our Holy God. But it turns out this feeling doesn’t last long when you spend month after month doing manual work in the building. Yet, in time, my own sense of God’s presence changed. The vast but distant God I had believed in gradually disappeared, and what was left was the God who stayed with me when I walked off the Temple grounds each day and returned to the builder’s communal shelter outside the city. And it was this God that I returned to Nazareth with, and to my beloved Mary. And after giving Mary three years’ worth of hugs, I bought a plot of land outside the village and began work on building a house for us.

Mary & Joseph: We were soon to be married!