

There will be risks. Risks that may cost you, your pride, advancement, or positions in this world. But accepting those risks will bring you a wealth, a pride and a position that the world cannot give. They only come with the title of father.

Week One – Read Matthew 1:18-25

Consider the day you first learned you were going to be a father. What did you think about? Did you think about what changes you would have to make so that your child would have a good father? What changes occurred when your child was born? How well did you handle those changes? Was it the same or different from how you envisioned it to be?

For those who are not fathers yet. Think about how the announcement of the coming birth of your first child may affect your life.

Week Two – Read Luke 2:4-7

How did the birth of your children affect your plans and finances? What kind of dreams did you have about how your life would be as a father? How are you doing in the area of providing for your children? Are you providing a safe, healthy, stable place for them to live and grow? What aspects of this are under your control? What areas are not under your control? Why?

Week Three – Read Luke 2:21-28, Matthew 2:1-14

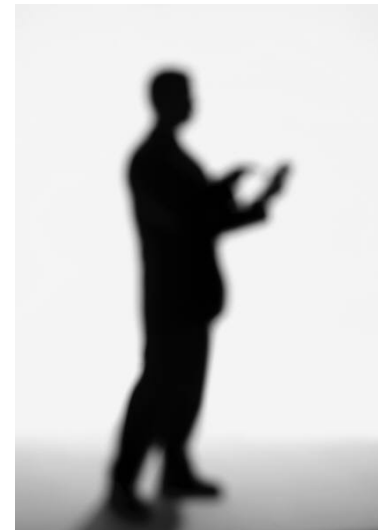
Raising a child involves learning about and accepting certain responsibilities and risks. Think about what your responsibilities are to your child. Think about the risks you could face while raising your child. What will it cost you to properly raise and protect your child in the place where you are living?

Week Four Read Matthew 13:55-57; John 7:1-5; Mark 3:20-21; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19

There was a great change in the attitude of at least one of the Jesus' siblings towards him. Think about how this attitude affected the family? How does it affect you when your children do not get along? What can you do about this as a father? How long do you think it will take to help them value each other and learn to love each other? How does your relationship with your children encourage or prevent this type of problem?

Being a father is a challenge. The key for us, like Joseph, I is this, what we are willing to sacrifice so that we will be a good father for our children?

# Ordinary Men



Studies in becoming a man of valor

Study 04  
Joseph

Words from Joseph, father of Jesus

My friends, my brothers, my fellow fathers, many have heard of the love of a mother for her child and her willingness to make sacrifices (even of her own life) to protect her child. What is said is true and to be treated with respect.

On the other hand, fathers are often discussed from the realm of their responsibility and need to be an example to their children. I want to share with you today about the cost of a father's love and the challenges one faces as a father. While my experience may be considered unique, being the father, or surrogate father of Jesus, I believe much of what I experienced can be helpful as a guide in helping other fathers understand their role and their value.

As with all young men I desired to marry and have a family one day. I never thought that the one would happen before the other. I believed, as all hopeful men, that I would find a wife, enjoy a year or two of blissful innocence before having to deal with being a parent. Blissful because one really has no idea what it will cost to be the father of any child, much less the Messiah.

For me, there was no interim time, no time of smiles and knowing nods from other men. No time to get acquainted with my wife and establish a home and income that would be sufficient to provide for her and our future family. The family arrived even before the marriage and in difficult circumstances. My child was born away from home, not in safety, not in the presence of loved ones. There were no words of praise and encouragement. No chance to be proud. Instead, only relief. Finally, we could get married and find a place where we might have some peace, a place where the child would not receive constant looks and whispers from others because things happened out of their proper sequence.

Then came the second blow. We had to flee. I had to take my family farther from what we knew into the unknown. I had to care for Mary and be a father to Jesus far from the support of our culture and in a foreign land. All the visions, all the prophecies, all the teachings did not prepare me for what it meant to be a father. I learned this as I struggled to be the father of the child who posed a threat to the king.

Finally, we were able leave Egypt, but we could not return to our home or to a familiar place. The threat remained so we went to an unknown

place and began the work of becoming a family. But how does one raise the son of God? How can one be father to the Messiah? I had no answers to those questions other than to do what every other father was doing. I taught him what I knew, taught him to respect God and the scriptures; showed him how to do honest work and receive an honest wage. I helped him learn how to care for others as well as himself. I taught him our culture and way of life.

Then the other children came. They were my children, my flesh and blood. This only made the challenges greater. Oh it was so easy to work with Jesus. He was the perfect child everyone wants, everyone hopes for. Obedient, respectful, attentive and so helpful. The others were not bad children, they just weren't Jesus. It was a challenge to keep everyone on an equal plane. It was not easy. For many years the other children resented Jesus and his readiness to do everything asked of him. I prayed many nights that someday they would understand each other.

Jesus took their teasing, their anger, and their jealousy in stride. He did not respond as they expected and at times that made life more difficult. I knew Jesus wanted to be liked by them, longed to be accepted as their brother. They just couldn't see that or didn't want to. In time I hope they will see his love for them and how hard he tried to make their life better.

My life as a father has been different. I have had to learn to sacrifice my goals and desires for the sake of my children. At times that has meant risking being attacked. I have had to think about the cost involved. The cost of placing their needs before mine. I learned much from Jesus and from having caring for and protecting him in those early years. I learned to think not about what was best for me but what was best from my family, for my wife, for my children.

Being a father has come at a price. At first I was not willing to pay that price. I almost rejected Mary and the opportunity to be the father of Jesus. I almost rejected the cost when we learned of Herod's threat to kill Jesus. It would have been so much easier to run away. I learned that being a father is about accepting the responsibility, no matter what the outcome may be.

Being a father comes at a price. You will have to give up some dreams in order to have other dreams. You will have to make sacrifices in order to earn the benefits of being a father. You will have to accept the risks.