



Joseph Takes His Family to Safety in Egypt

Matthew 2:13-23

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

An Evil Ruler

This passage describes the execution of Herod's brutal backup plan. He had hoped to single out the baby born in Bethlehem and kill him, but the Magi didn't return to Jerusalem to report the baby's whereabouts. So in an attempt to get rid of Jesus, Herod ordered the killing of all the boys in Bethlehem who fell within the age span suggested by the star's first appearance.

Joseph Obeys God

Jesus' safety was of utmost importance to Joseph. His faith in God made him realize this child's significance, and he didn't hesitate to obey God's command to flee to Egypt. It appears that as soon as he awoke from his dream, he woke Mary so that they could set out. The order in which the names are mentioned in verse 14—"the child and his mother"—indicates that Jesus was more important than his mother.

Prophecies Fulfilled

In verse 15 Matthew once again refers to Old Testament prophecy, suggesting that God would call the Messiah out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). This passage from Hosea refers to God's deliverance of his people, Israel, from Egypt. But Matthew wanted to prove to the Jews that Jesus was indeed the one they'd been waiting for. Matthew viewed the salvation that God brought to the people of Israel in freeing them from Egypt as a foreshadowing of the supreme salvation that would come through Jesus. As Moses went to Egypt to bring his people out of bondage, so Jesus went to Egypt before freeing people from the bondage of sin.

Imagine the terror in the village of Bethlehem as infants were torn from their mothers' arms and

murdered! No number is given, but some estimate that in a town the size of Bethlehem there would have been as many as 20 male infants under the age of 2 at any given time. Matthew's reference to the prophecy of Israel's sorrow (from Jeremiah 31:15) suggests that the tragedy in Bethlehem was ultimately brought on by the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel.

Our Everlasting Ruler

It appears that Herod died not long after his brutal act in Bethlehem. Herod was dead, but the child he had tried to kill would live forever! As Joseph and Mary returned to Israel in response to God's direction, they heard that Herod's son, Archelaus, had taken Herod's place. Joseph was apprehensive at the prospect of settling in Judea. God again spoke to Joseph in a dream and directed the little family to go to Nazareth. Thus Jesus survived the evil intentions of wicked kings and grew up in obscurity in a small town in Galilee.

The Jesus Connection

Jesus' life shows us that God is always faithful to guide us according to his plans and promises. Praise God for his unfailing love and guiding hand!

When has God led you through a tough situation? How did that affect the way you lived your life afterward? When we're afraid to trust God, he shows us an absolutely beautiful view of life as he teaches us to trust him. Talk to him about how you need to trust his guidance more. You can write your prayer here.



Matthew 2:13-23

► Bible Point—God guides us.

Key Verse—“The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him” (Nahum 1:7).

DIGGING
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Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- Identify something that's missing in your relationship with God, such as Bible reading or consistent prayer. Work to develop that aspect of your relationship, and listen for how God guides you as you do.
- Find out how God has shown clear guidance to a trusted Christian friend. Think of what you can learn about seeking God's guidance from that friend, and apply what you've learned.
- Share with someone else how God has guided you in the past. Let that person know that God can provide that same kind of guidance to him or her as well. It will be a good reminder to you of God's guidance, too.

Talk Topics

- Talk about ways that God guides us when we read the Bible. Choose a favorite Bible verse and talk about how that verse has helped you in life.
- Talk about ways that God guides us when we pray.
- Talk about ways that God guides us through other people. Share stories about the ways that God has used other people to guide you in tough decisions.
- Talk about any other ways you've experienced God's guidance.

Through the Week

Use the following passages to discover additional biblical insights about God's guidance in our lives.

Monday—Psalm 119:105-106

- How can the Bible be a light for your path?

Tuesday—Exodus 13:21-22

- How did God guide the Israelites through the desert? How do you think God guides you?

Wednesday—John 16:13-14

- Who did God send to be a guide after Jesus returned to heaven? How can the Holy Spirit be *your* guide today?

Thursday—Psalm 48:14

- How long will God guide you? How does this make you feel?

Friday—Isaiah 58:11

- What does God do for you when he guides you?

Saturday—Exodus 15:13

- In what ways does God lead and guide us?

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