

# Sermon Study Guide



## #2: Broken Plans, Greater Purpose

A Covid Christmas: Discovering Joy & Peace in Troubled Times

December 6, 2020 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

*The hardships caused by COVID-19 have made it difficult to see how disruptions and upheavals fit into God's plan for us. In this mini-series, we look to God's Word to help us discover that even in troubled times and amidst life's biggest upheavals, joy and peace can be found in Christ.*

### Reflect

What was your plan for this Christian break before the pandemic? How do you feel that it will not happen because of the world's present situation?

### Read and Discuss

#### Scripture

Matthew 1:18-25

#### Discussion Questions

When things don't go as planned, Scripture teaches us to do these things:

1. **Do what is right (v. 18-19).** What transpired while Mary and Joseph were engaged? What would Joseph have thought when he learned about his fiancé's pregnancy? What did he do that showed his good character? If you were in their culture, where a virgin pregnancy was unheard of, how would you have responded to Mary's situation? Looking at the present, what right thing have you done when something you've planned for didn't turn out the way you envisioned it to be?
2. **Have faith in God's greater sovereign plan (v. 20-23).** What's the reason why Joseph changed his plan to annul his engagement to Mary? What can you say about Joseph's faith? What greater sovereign plan did God have and what did He accomplish through Mary and Joseph? What does Emmanuel mean? Why is this name significant? Are you upset with God for how COVID has affected your life? Would you see this

unique year through the lenses of faith and trust in God's greater sovereign plan?

3. **Accept God's greater plan through the action of sacrificial obedience (v. 24-25).** How do you know that Joseph's faith is authentic and not dead? What is the significance of the name Jesus? Why was it "sacrificial" on Joseph's part to name Jesus, "Jesus"? What honorable thing did he do, even if God didn't command him to do so, until after Jesus was born? What does it tell you about his faith even at the expense of his own plans, ideas, and desires? Is there a time you acted in sacrificial obedience? Share with the group.

### Respond

**In Walk:** *"In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." (Proverbs 16:9).* God is in the business of changing our plans to His plan, resulting in something much better than we could hope for. Knowing this gives us peace and joy. What would you do the next time your plans don't go as you hoped it would.? Would you do what is right, trust God that He has a greater sovereign plan, and accept God's great plan through the action of sacrificial obedience?

**In Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that I may have plans in my life, but those plans are not set in stone. And so when they get broken, I don't have to be heartbroken. Instead, may I continue to trust in You because you have a greater purpose for my life. May you create in me an attitude like Joseph's, that in quietness and humility I may do what is right and sacrificially obey for your greater purpose not only for myself, but for the whole mankind and most importantly for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.