

## CHRISTMAS STORY - CHARACTER STUDY

### NOTES FROM IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS

*Notes from our in-class discussions for our character studies from the Christmas story can be added here to share with the whole group (if you're interested). See*

*[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M2GVS67f6WwG-1eHW1gzeIUKsLChgHACY1IJFIXk\\_OY/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M2GVS67f6WwG-1eHW1gzeIUKsLChgHACY1IJFIXk_OY/) for the handout with questions.*

## Mary

She was young but mature for her age.

The angel Gabriel prophecy, isaiah 7:14 and many others

Joseph may not have married her if she reacted differently.

Because of the situation she was forced to move to another country.

The social impact and weight of knowing the importance of my role would be the most difficult.

God used Mary because of her location in Nazareth and Bethlehem as well as her lineage when married to Joseph.

What is most surprising about Mary is her young age, faith, and willingness to take on that huge responsibility.

## Joseph

Joseph would have been shocked /surprised at Mary and the situation.

Joseph was calm, wise and strong.

If we were Joseph, we would feel like we weren't prepared or adequate for the task.

If Joseph had been angry or felt betrayed, and raised a fuss, it would have cast a pall on Jesus birth, raising questions about his legitimacy. It would have weakened the story. and made it harder to believe. it would have affected Jesus whole childhood.

It impacted Joseph in the near term, by adding a lot of additional responsibility, a lot of additional danger. These risks lasted for a 5ish years before life could return to normal.

It also required Joseph put aside his own dreams for a time, or at least allow God to modify what Joseph's life was going to look like.

Joseph was obedient. the scriptures make it sound like it was swift, but he may have struggled. Regardless, he did obey.

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## Shepherds

## Magi

## Herod

## Zechariah/Elizabeth

Note the parallels between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. Having Elizabeth go through a similar situation slightly before Mary may have been a source of comfort.

Compare prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 with angel's words in Luke 1:16-17. If Zechariah knew of this prophecy combined with having an angel confirm its fulfillment during his rare opportunity to burn incense, it might be enough to leave one speechless (in awe) - and in this case, Zechariah was literally made speechless (although for different reasons).

It's interesting to think about how Zechariah may have developed over the 9 months or so of his silence. We don't know exact details of his character development over this time. But if we contrast his "fault" in doubting the word of God (Luke 1:18-20) with his confirmation of the name of John in Luke 1:63 (potentially against cultural expectations) along with his praising of God afterwards (Luke 1:67-79), it might indicate something.

## Simeon/Anna

They were both old and anxiously awaiting the Messiah.

There are no prophecies that directly to either of these characters to the birth of Jesus, however Simeon does make a general prophecy about Jesus when he meets him (Luke 2:34-35).

Simeon would have felt as if he had been lied to by God. Anna's life might not have changed as it does not appear that she was expecting this particular encounter.

Both characters reacted to meeting Jesus with praise to God.

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Simeon went on to make a prophecy to Mary about Jesus, Anna went on to speak about Jesus to everyone who had been waiting for God.

Simeon saw God's promise to him fulfilled.

In both characters it would be most difficult to wait until old age to meet the Messiah.