

Idea of Christmas vs. Our Experience of It

Matthew 1:18-25

The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

Relationships never **go** like we **plan or expect**.

Matthew 1:19

So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

The Typical “Tangled” Pattern:

LAW (expectation) → OFFENSE → PUNISHMENT

Problem: We tend to **sin** when our **expectations** are not met.
(We *sin* when sinned *against*).

Examples:

React w/o the facts

Bitterness

Gossip

Anger

Vengeance

This pattern is not **Gospel**.

Law (God’s) → Offense → Cross → Grace/Forgiveness/Restored

Matthew 1:20-23

But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, **son of David, don’t be afraid** to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and **you** are to name Him Jesus, because **He will save His people from their sins.**” Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him **Immanuel**, which is translated “**God is with us.**”

Our plan for relationships vs. God’s plan

A Better Pattern:

STEP #1: Go **vertical** before **horizontal** (=First, go to **God**.)

Before it is about you and THEM; it's about you and HIM!

Problem: Handling the "tangle" **God's way**, not **our way**.

a) Step #1 gives us a greater **agenda** for our relationships.

I Thessalonians 4:3

For this is God's will, your **sanctification** ...

Relationships & Differences:

Dream Phase → don't see ...

Disillusionment Phase → all you see ... = stuck

New Dream → appreciate ...

New Depth → celebrate ...

Walking with God:

It's not just the moment of surrender in salvation; it is a commitment to surrender every moment to Him.

b) Step #1 gives us the capacity to **self-correct**.

Matthew 1:24-25

When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had **commanded** him. He married her but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him **Jesus**.

What this means:

1) I cannot replace love for **God** with love for **self**.

2) I cannot expect people to be my **"source"** ...

3) I cannot measure the tangle by its **size/duration** ... but only by **Immanuel**.