

Love Doesn't Have to Be Loud

Matt Summers · Father's Day · Matthew 1:18-20; Matthew 1:24; Matthew 2:13-14; Luke 2:48-49; Luke 2:52

AT A GLANCE

Joseph of Nazareth never speaks a word in Scripture, yet his silent, obedient presence shaped the hidden years of Jesus. This sermon argues that genuine strength is not volume, visibility, or control — it is the faithfulness to keep showing up inside a story you cannot manage, forming others for a future you may never see.

- Strength that must shout someone else's wrongs to feel righteous is not strength — it is concealed weakness performing confidence.
- Steadiness is not a calm temperament; it is the repeated choice to do the next faithful thing when circumstances keep changing.
- Formational strength releases people into who God made them to be; controlling strength shrinks them into who we need them to be.

“True strength isn't found in preventing the damage or the disruption, but in the faithful response after it's happened.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

[Matthew 1:18-20](#) — This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah happened. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, he learned that she was expecting a baby. (She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.) Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to cause her public disgrace, so he planned to divorce her secretly. But after Joseph thought about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, “Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to accept Mary to be your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit.” (ERV)

[Matthew 1:24](#) — When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel told him to do. He married Mary. (ERV)

[Matthew 2:13-14](#) — An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him. And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to

Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

[Luke 2:48-49](#) — His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. And he said to them, Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?

[Luke 2:52](#) — And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

The argument

Silence Is Not Absence: Faithful Presence as a Form of Strength — Joseph's wordlessness in Scripture is the first exegetical datum, not an oversight

The preacher opens with the observation that Joseph has no recorded words anywhere in Scripture — no sermons, no letters, no miracles, not a single line of dialogue. This is not a gap in the record; it is the record. It immediately subverts the assumption that leadership and strength are measured by the loudness or clarity of one's voice. Against the cultural backdrop of what the preacher calls the manosphere — a universe of shouting voices telling men who to be — Joseph's silence becomes a counter-testimony. As the preacher puts it, Joseph's life forces us to consider a different kind of strength, one where you show up instead of showing off. The architecture of Joseph's story is built on presence, not proclamation, and that reframing sets the entire sermon's evaluative standard.

Insight — The most formative people in a life are often the ones who said the least and stayed the longest.

Dignity Without Retaliation: Strength That Refuses to Punish Someone for Your Own Pain — Joseph's decision to divorce Mary quietly is a moral exegetical hinge, not a minor plot point

The preacher draws precise attention to the phrase 'unwilling to put her to shame' in Matthew 1:19. Joseph holds a pregnant fiancée, a damaged reputation, and the social capital to publicly expose Mary — and he declines. The preacher names what Joseph resisted: a hollow version of strength that is only ever interested in being right. It can win the argument, it can prove the point, it can show everyone who failed and who didn't. The real test the preacher identifies is not what you can lift but what you can carry without making someone else pay for it. Joseph's mercy precedes his revelation; he chooses restraint under incomplete information, which the preacher reads as evidence of character, not naivety. True strength does not need to shout someone else's wrongs in order to do what's right.

Insight — The impulse to control the narrative after public humiliation is natural — resisting it, and refusing to assign your pain to another person, is the harder and rarer strength.

Steadiness Is Not Temperament: It Is the Repeated Choice to Do the Next Faithful Thing — The Egypt flight shows that Joseph's stability is active, not passive

The Matthew 2 flight to Egypt strips away any romantic notion that steady people are simply built differently. Joseph's life is objectively chaotic: his reputation is compromised, his home is disrupted, his child is under a death threat from a violent ruler, and the angel's instruction contains none of the practical details Joseph would need. He receives just enough information to take the next faithful step — and moves. The preacher explicitly distinguishes steadiness from natural calm: sometimes faithfulness means doing the next right thing, and then when the situation changes, you do the next right thing again. The diagnostic edge here is that steadiness is formed in repetition, and so are its deficiencies — avoidance of emotional honesty, reliance on control — both of which pressure and disruption will eventually expose to the people who live closest to us.

Insight — Steadiness is not the absence of disruption; it is the habit of faithful response practiced so consistently that the people closest to you learn they can count on it.

Formational Strength Prepares People for a Calling Rather Than a Role — The temple scene in Luke 2 is the moment where fatherhood and control are forced apart

In Luke 2:48-49, Mary says your father and I have been anxiously searching for you — Joseph is present, named, but silent — and Jesus responds by invoking a Father whose house is not Joseph's. The preacher lingers on how that must have landed. Joseph trained Jesus as a carpenter, taught him to cut, measure, build and work with patience, and then watched his son announce an identity that transcended everything Joseph could offer. The preacher distinguishes two modes: a controlling strength that says I need you to be who I need you to be, and a formational strength that says I want to help you become who God made you to be. Joseph's formational work appears in Luke 2:52 — Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man — a sentence about Jesus that the preacher reads as testimony to the environment Joseph helped create.

Insight — Formation outlasts visibility: the strength that quietly shapes someone's character in ordinary moments may be more consequential than any single act of protection or provision.

Strength That Releases Is More Durable Than Strength That Retains — Joseph's disappearance from the narrative is itself a theological statement

The preacher notes that Joseph vanishes from Scripture between Jesus at age twelve and the beginning of his public ministry, and that many scholars conclude Joseph died in that interval. The implication is stark: Joseph prepared Jesus for a future he would not get to see. This is the sermon's final and most demanding claim — that if strength is built on control, releasing someone will terrify you, but if strength is being formed by faithfulness, then you can begin to release them with blessing. Formational strength, the preacher argues, does not need to be remembered by everyone to have mattered deeply. It does not need to control the future to bless it. Joseph's faithfulness did not end with his departure; it lived on in the life that he held

for him.

Insight — The people entrusted to us were never ours to possess; love that has matured into formational strength can bless a future it will never inhabit.

Cross-references

- [Matthew 6:9](#) — Invoked to note that Jesus taught his disciples to pray 'Our Father,' a phrase the preacher uses to explore how our fathers shape our earliest image of God.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a kind of strength that does not announce itself. It does not require an audience or a record. It shows up before dawn and stays after everyone else has gone. It absorbs shame rather than redistributing it. It moves when it is told to move, even when the details are incomplete. It builds kitchen tables and teaches a son to measure twice. It stands in a temple court and hears its child claim a Father it cannot follow, and it does not flinch. We are trained from early on to distrust this kind of strength — to suspect that quiet means weak, that patience means passive, that steadiness is just a nicer word for stuck. We have whole ecosystems of voices assuring us that strength is volume, that authority is dominance, that love must be loud to be real. And underneath those voices, many of us carry a wound shaped like a father — a presence that overwhelmed, or an absence that left us defining ourselves in the vacuum. But Joseph offers a different grammar. His strength is legible not in what he said but in what he bore: a reputation he did not deserve, a journey he did not plan, a son he could not fully understand, and a future he would not get to see. He held all of it without making anyone else pay the cost. And somewhere in those hidden years, a boy grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man — which means the ordinary days mattered. The repetition mattered. The presence mattered. God does not always reshape us through ideas we understand. Sometimes it is through a moment we never forget — a father who does not shame us when we deserve it, a grace that holds when everything rolls away.

Reflection

- Where in your life are you currently carrying something you did not cause, and how are you handling the temptation to make someone else pay for it?
- Think of a person whose growth you are invested in — in what ways might your desire to help them be shading into a need to control who they become?
- How has your experience of your own father — his presence, absence, or the particular shape of his strength — quietly shaped what you expect from God?

Closing prayer

God, thank you for a better vision of strength — one that is faithful rather than forceful, steady rather than spectacular, formational rather than controlling. We acknowledge that every person gathered carries the weight of their own story with fathers and father figures, and that those stories have shaped how we understand you. Affirm what was good. Heal what was not. And God, help us this week to see you in the tiny moments — the apology offered, the patience slowly learned, the person we keep showing up for. Reshape what strength means in us, so that the love we carry forms the people around us without diminishing them. In Jesus' name, amen.
