

Opening Illustration: Several years ago (7 to be exact) Heather and I made the decision to encourage the girls to try-out for the Greenville Hurricane Basketball team. By God's grace, they made the team and are already 1/3 of the way into the season. It has been fun to watch and sometimes painful to watch. Fun, because you get to see your own kids enjoy something you enjoyed growing up. Painful because sometimes they don't quite understand the game as much as you thought they did. But of course, this is their first season playing competitive sports and they are having a great time! They were super excited after the last practice when they found out that they were invited to participate in the High School National Invitational Basketball Tournament at BJU next month.

Sports is life in microcosm! You experience victory and defeat. Success and failure. Some get a ton of playing time. Others get little to none. The question is whether or not you are ready when called upon.

Daniel Ruettinger [ROO-TAGER](nicknamed "Rudy") had a hard time in school because he was [dyslexic](#). He was the third of fourteen children. He attended [Joliet Catholic High School](#), where he played for locally famous coach [Gordie Gillespie](#). Ruettinger joined the [United States Navy](#) after high school, serving as a [yeoman](#) on a communications command ship for two years; then he worked in a power plant for two years. He applied to Notre Dame, but due to his marginal grades he had to do his early college work at nearby [Holy Cross College](#). Though he was not a member in college, he was a 2009 special initiate of the [Kappa Sigma](#) Fraternity.

After two years at Holy Cross, Ruettinger was accepted as a student at Notre Dame on his fourth try, in the fall of 1974. It was during his time studying at Holy Cross that Ruettinger discovered he had dyslexia.

Ruettinger harbored a dream to play for the [Notre Dame Fighting Irish football](#) team, despite being undersized at merely 5'6" and 185 pounds.^[1] Head coach [Ara Parseghian](#) encouraged walk-on players from the student body. For example, Notre Dame's 1969 starting [center](#), [Mike Oriard](#), was a walk-on who was eventually nominated for a [Rhodes Scholarship](#) and an NFL contract with the [Kansas City Chiefs](#).^{[2][3]}

After working as hard as possible and showing that he was willing to work as much as he needed to, Ruettinger earned a place on the Notre Dame [scout team](#), a practice squad that helps the varsity team practice for games. Merv Johnson was the coach who was instrumental in keeping Rudy on as a scout-team player.

After Parseghian stepped down after the 1974 season, [Dan Devine](#) was named head coach. In Ruettinger's last opportunity to play for Notre Dame at home, Devine put him into a game as [defensive end](#) against [Georgia Tech](#) on November 8, 1975. In the movie *Rudy*, Devine is given a somewhat antagonistic role, not wanting Rudy to dress for his last game. However, in actuality, it was Devine who came up with the idea to dress Rudy. In the final play of Ruettinger's senior season with the Fighting Irish, he recorded a [sack](#),^[4] which is all his Notre Dame stat line has ever shown. Ruettinger actually played for three plays.^[4] The first play was a kickoff,^[4] the second play was an incomplete pass, and on the third (and final) play he sacked^[4] Georgia Tech quarterback [Rudy Allen](#).^[5] Ruettinger was carried off the field by his teammates following the game.

Ruettiger was one of two players in Notre Dame history to ever be carried off the field by his teammates. The other is [Marc Edwards](#).^{[6][7]}

Inside the Text:

Matthew 1:18-25 introduces some important concepts:

- Betrothal (18; Deut. 20:7)
- Divorce (19; Matthew 19:3-9)
- Divine intervention (20)
 - Angels in dreams (20a; Bible concordance on angel(s))
 - Conception from the Holy Spirit (20b / Luke 1:34-35)

I. God delights in directing His people. (18-19)

A. He has a master plan. (18a)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ^[a] took place in this way. (How the book of Matthew starts...)

The book begins with a genealogy divided into 3 sections of 14 families spanning from the time of Abraham until the time of Christ (1:17). Why groups of 14? Perhaps because the numerical value of the name "DAVID" = 14.

The Gospel of Matthew is a record of the GOOD NEWS (gospel) about Jesus. The theme of the book is presenting JESUS AS KING!

- Matthew 1:1 (the son of David; the son of Abraham)
- Matthew 1:18 (Joseph: the son of David [1:20] with legal right to the throne)
- Matthew 1:21 (the son of Abraham [Gen. 12:3: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."] with divine right to SAVE!)

Even when the way does not seem clear and apparent mistakes are made... (let's go back to the genealogy for a few more observations)

The problem of the curse on Jechoniah:

Matthew 1:2–17 (BKC): Matthew gave Jesus' lineage through His legal father, Joseph (v. 16). Thus this genealogy traced Jesus' right to the throne of David, which must come through Solomon and his descendants (v. 6). Of particular interest is the inclusion of Jeconiah (v. 11) of whom Jeremiah said, "Record this man as if childless" (Jer. 22:30). Jeremiah's prophecy related to the actual occupation of the throne and the reception of blessing while on the throne. Though Jeconiah's sons never occupied the throne, the line of rulership did pass through them. If Jesus had been a physical descendant of Jeconiah, He would not have been able to occupy David's throne. Luke's genealogy made it clear that Jesus was a physical descendant of David through another son named Nathan (Luke 3:31). But Joseph, a descendant of Solomon, was Jesus' legal father, so Jesus' right to the throne was traced through Joseph.

The problem of the assorted past of some of the women:

Matthew 1:2–17 (BKC): Another interesting fact about Matthew's genealogy is the inclusion of four Old Testament women: Tamar (Matt. 1:3), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), and Solomon's mother (v. 6), Bathsheba. All of these women (as well as most of the men) were questionable in some way. Tamar and Rahab were prostitutes (Gen. 38:24; Josh. 2:1), Ruth was a foreigner, a Moabitess (Ruth 1:4), and Bathsheba committed adultery (2 Sam. 11:2–5). Matthew may have included these women in order to emphasize that God's choices in dealing with people are all of His grace. Perhaps also he included these women in order to put Jewish pride in its place.

The problem of fulfilling the prophecy of the coming Messiah found in Isaiah 7:14 / Matthew 1:22:

Matthew 1:16 (BKC): When the fifth woman, Mary (Matt. 1:16), was mentioned in the genealogy, an important change occurred. The genealogy consistently repeated, the father of, until it came to Mary. At that point Matthew changed and said of whom was born Jesus. The "of whom" is a feminine relative pronoun (ex hēs), clearly indicating that Jesus was the physical Child of Mary but that Joseph was not His physical father. This miraculous conception and birth are explained in 1:18–25.

THE STORY (GOSPEL TRACT): Creation, Curse, Christ, Cross, Re-Creation, and Commitment

B. He ordains a variety of means. (18b)

When his mother Mary had been betrothed^[b] to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible (22-23), prayer (20), circumstances (18b), and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. (*Experiencing God*)

C. He has your best interest in mind. (18c-19)

– His Glory... The fulfillment of His Plan...

1. He wants to increase your faith. (18)

before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

2. He wants to test your character. (19)

¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

- Before they came together (18c) – **Joseph was a man of purity** (not given to immorality, adultery, pornography)
- She was found to be with child from the HS (18d) – **Joseph was a man of patience** (Mary must have told him her story because he planned to divorce her privately before the angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. Luke 1:56 suggests that she returned home after she was 3 months pregnant and thus beginning to show.)

- And her husband Joseph, being a just man (19a) – **Joseph was a man of principle.** (Just = upright, fair, equitable... or an OT allusion to Gen 6:9 [Noah was a righteous or just man] speaking of Joseph possessing a righteousness that sets him apart as a believer.
 - Unwilling to put her to shame (19b) – according to Mosaic Law (Deut 22:23-27 [punishment dependent on whether she was in the city or in the field when the violation occurred] & Deut 24:1-4 permitting divorce if he (Joseph) thought some form of indecency took place), Joseph had every right to publically divorce Mary.
 - Resolved to divorce her quietly (19c) – perhaps due to the fact that he loved Mary and didn't know exactly where the violation occurred (in the city or in the country).
 - But as he considered these things (20a) – Joseph did not act rashly. He chose to sleep on it and make a decision in the morning. A GREAT EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW!

Illustration of God's leading:

Many of you are in need of making a decision regarding relationships, financial challenges, or job transfers. I want you to remember that we are all part of a BIGGER STORY. God is doing something much bigger than any one of us. This really came to light last Sunday when I concluded our annual business meeting with a call for prayer regarding Family Baptist Church.

I. God delights in directing His people. (18-19)

II. God delights in enabling His people. (20-25)

A. He provides courage to respond. (20-23)

- Based on His presence (angel / We have the HS!)

²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream,

- Based on His character

He is sovereign (20a).

- Joseph, son of David – the angel was reminding him of his direct connection to the Davidic Throne in fulfillment of OT prophecy.

He is powerful (20b).

- Do not fear to take Mary as your wife (“Be strong and courageous...”)
- for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit (alluding to the fact that life begins at conception!)... (we should not view this as the pagans did regarding the myths of cohabitation between women and the gods... this was a miracle that ensured that Christ would not receive inherited sin COMING FROM THE FATHER TO THE CHILDREN).
- She will bear a son – this is before an ultra-sounds ☺

He is compassionate and mighty to save (21).

- You shall call his name Jesus (Jeshua = “God is my salvation”)
- For he will save his people from their sins – the purpose of Christ’s coming was to offer salvation to all of “his people”! (a possible allusion to election)

He is faithful and interested in a relationship with you (22-23).

- You must learn about His promises. (22-23)
 - All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet – Joseph knew exactly what the angel was referring to (the book of Isaiah) How well do you know the promises made about the Messiah? When was the last time you shared these promises with someone around you?
 - Direct quote from Isaiah 7:14 stating that the PROMISED ONE HAS FINALLY COME!
 - Which means, God with us – same phrase found in Matthew 28:20 (“Lo I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE)

II. God delights in enabling His people. (20-25)

A. He provides courage to respond. (20-23)

B. He provides grace to obey. (24-25)

- He responded immediately. (24)

²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him – His obedience was immediate.
 - OBEDIENCE IS DOING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD, WHEN YOU ARE TOLD, WITH THE RIGHT HEART ATTITUDE...
- His obedience was complete –
 - He took his wife – He formally embraced public scrutiny. He cared more about what God thought than what man thought!
 - He responded submissively. (25)
 - But knew her not until she had given birth to a son – He gave up his rights to ensure the direct connection between his wife and Isaiah 7:14. ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND TO OTHERS... SELFLESSLY!
 - He called his name Jesus – he didn’t attempt to hide the indiscretion by giving the baby a “family name”

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS:

How prepared are you to respond to God's leading today?

How much do you trust God to keep His promises?

How aware are you of God's abundant promises?

Remember, God still speaks today! He usually speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.

Apply the Text:

- **Be sensitive to God's leading.**

- How prepared are you to respond to God's leading today?
- How much do you trust God to keep His promises?
- How aware are you of God's abundant promises?
- Remember, God still speaks today! He usually speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.

- **Be dependent upon God's enabling.**

- Divine enablement comes to all those who believe and receive the Gospel.
 - **You are recipients of redemption. You have been adopted into God's family – saving grace.**
 - ✓ God's grace brings salvation. (Titus 2:11)
 - ✓ By grace you have been saved through faith. (Eph. 2:4-9)
 - ✓ Adoption (Rom. 8:14-17)

God's grace is the enabling power behind redemption, adoption, AND SANCTIFICATION.

2 Peter 3:18 – “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- **You are recipients of spiritual strength for your daily walk with God –enabling grace.**
 - ✓ A provision of help during your times weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
 - ✓ A provision of help during times of persecution. (I Timothy 1:8-10)
 - ✓ A provision of giftedness for effective service. (I Peter 4:10)
- **You are reminded of grace through a collection of spiritual disciplines.**
 - ✓ Reading, listening, and meditating on God's Word [personally and corporately]. (I Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2)
 - ✓ Spending time with God in prayer. (I Tim. 2:1, 8)
 - ✓ Observing the ordinances of baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:25-26). These are not inventions of man but institutions of Christ! Both beautifully picture the GOSPEL!!!

- **Be decisive for God's glory.**

While an open mind is priceless, it is priceless only when its owner has the courage to make a final decision which closes the mind for action after the process of viewing all sides of the question has been completed. Failure to make a decision after due consideration of all the facts will quickly brand a man as unfit for a position of responsibility. Not all of your decisions will be correct. None of us is perfect. But if you get into the habit of making decisions, experience will develop your judgment to a point where it is better to be right fifty percent of the time and get something done, than it is to get nothing done because you fear to reach a decision. – [H.W. Andrews](#).