

Very few people in the world have the ability to tell this story. I am one of them. Not because I am an incredible storyteller, but because I grew up in the home of the carpenter Joseph ben Heli ben Matthat¹, and his wife, Mary. I grew up with Jesus. And James². And that is what makes me one of the very few.

My name is Jude, a shortening of the common name, Judas. About the only thing most of you know of me is that I wrote the one-chapter book in the Bible that is placed just before *Revelation*. That book is named after me, but I suspect few of you know what is in the book, and fewer of you have ever quoted a verse from it. It only takes a few minutes to read, and you will find some very interesting information in it that is found nowhere else in the Bible. You may see some similarity to *Second Peter*, and may notice I used some of the *Apocryphal* writings as sources. Jesus was quite a bit older than me. As one of the younger ones, I was expected to learn as much from anyone older than me than I did from my father. Naturally, I hung on every word that Jesus, said but often he wasn't around. That meant I spent a lot of time with James.

Kids... you know how they can be. Have you ever wondered whether Jesus was ever (he pauses) "disciplined?" Kind of a funny thing to consider. I won't tell you for sure, but I will tell you that one reason God picked Joseph to raise Jesus was because he was the type of father who would be willing to correct Jesus if he needed it. Joseph certainly believed the proverb, "Whoever refuses to discipline his son, hates his son, but he that loves his son will discipline him diligently."³ So, I won't tell you any details, but I will tell you that "time-outs" had not yet been invented!

My brother, James, was the quiet, authoritative sort. He didn't waste words, and I was expected to obey him like I would have my father. We were poor, but he had a heart for those in our village who were worse off than we were. He loved to go with the adults as they took food to the poor of our village, and as an adult, he would often fix their houses and not charge anything.

Life in our little mountain town of Nazareth was calm and peaceful. We could look to the south and watch the caravans traipse down a spur of the important Via Maris trade route. We could look to the southwest toward Mount Carmel and over the Jezreel Valley. We knew we could

¹ Luke 3:23-24

² Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3

³ Proverbs 13:24

start walking east and be at the Sea of Galilee before a day went by. We even had our town synagogue where the men could study the Scriptures in peace. And that's where the trouble started.

Jesus had not been gone very long when word started filtering back that he was able to perform miracles and was teaching some radical ideas about the Scriptures. We were anxious for him to come back and show us a hometown boy that went away and did well. One Sabbath he showed up in our synagogue as if he had never been away. As was the custom, when it came time to read the Scripture, it was offered to him as a guest. I had to smile at the irony when he read from Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted."⁴

"Good news to the poor." When he read that, my heart just swelled thinking of what a great job Joseph and Mary had done teaching him that. It was part of him. You know the rest of that story and the story of his life, so I won't go into that now, but I think you're starting to get the idea of how Jesus' obedient nature and heart for the disadvantaged was formed by Joseph and Mary. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."⁵

When Jesus looked at a poor person, he was looking at his parents. When he looked at a widow, he was looking at his mother. When he looked at an orphan, he was looking at one of our neighbor's children. Literally, when you help one of those types of people, you are helping Jesus.⁶

If you think about it, you have very few facts about Joseph and Mary. Even if you know the Bible perfectly, you can't know how old Joseph was when he died, or if he had brothers or sisters, or where he was born. You can't know if they ever lost their tempers or were always perfectly calm.

You can know that they were poor, at least when they were first married. You can know this because of the type of the sacrifice they gave for Jesus, their firstborn⁷. But the most important thing you know about Joseph and Mary is that they were obedient to God.

Every reference to Joseph and Mary shows them as being fully and completely obedient to God. And, you can be assured that Jesus was taught to be completely obedient as well. You know that about Jesus because his whole life was one of obedience. One of the first descriptions about him as a very young man was that he was obedient to Joseph and Mary⁸. One of his first

⁴ Luke 4:18

⁵ Proverbs 22:6

⁶ Matthew 25:40

⁷ Luke 2:24

⁸ Luke 2:51

actions when he went to preach was to obediently get baptized, even though he was sinless.⁹ At the end of his life, Jesus summed up his entire reason for coming to earth as, “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.”¹⁰

Joseph and Mary were both from the House of David. This was one of the driving factors in their thought process. Jesus knew all of our ancestors on both sides of the family. In the Scriptures, he always preferred the books talking about David, or written by David or Solomon. If he had favorite books, they would have been *Psalms* and *Proverbs*. All of our relatives were always distinctly aware that any firstborn son could turn out to be the Messiah. Not likely, but possible. You might have noticed that in the New Testament, there was never any doubt that Jesus was of the House of David.

Joseph and Mary were not trained theologians by any means. They made every effort to keep their beliefs simple, and consistent with their actions. One way they could make things simple was to be very clear with their definitions. Mary would simply say things like, “Always do what you are supposed to do.” How simple, obedience is always doing what you are supposed to do.

Their personal examples showed the decision rules for obedience. First, the commands are inviolate. You cannot break the commands of God. Second, there are Godly guidelines to get you through your life. Proverbs are an example of those. Third, no matter what else you do, learn to know the Spirit and follow him. Wisdom is when you know how to do those types of things, and do them. Folly is when you don’t.

James was highly influenced by his childhood, but he was equally influenced by being a long-term leader of the Jerusalem church. There is nothing like watching a friend or relative starve or be tortured to death to shape your stance on theological issues. Just ask my brother, James.

Now that you know a little bit more about him you can probably understand why he thought the way he did. He knew that obedience was the bedrock for leading a life of faith. I have some selected passages for you from his little book that illustrate these things I've talked about. Perhaps you will see them in a little different light than you might have before.

Don’t deceive yourselves but be doers of the word, and not hearers only. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes his way forgetting what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deeds.¹¹

⁹ Matthew 3:15

¹⁰ John 17:4

¹¹ James 1:22-25

If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well.¹²

But above all things, my brothers, don't swear! Not by heaven, not by the earth, not by any other oath: but let your yes be yes; and your no, no; or risk falling into condemnation.¹³

Such great writing, isn't it? You can tell he knows the Psalms and Proverbs by heart! I am so proud of my brother. (he corrects himself) Brothers!

(he's emotional as his whole world comes together)

And I am so honored to have been born into the family...of a simple carpenter. And that I can share my story. And tell others about the good news. I feel...chosen. And you know what, you're chosen, too.

¹² James 2:8

¹³ James 5:12