

Obedience of Trust

George & Joe were unlikely friends, unless of course, you fully subscribe to opposites attract. While George came from a well-to-do family, he did not fit in with those in that class of society. He had no manners of any kind; felt privileged in every aspect of life and generally felt that the world owed him everything. Because of his behavior, he was naturally attracted by bullies. They would pick on him constantly in school but being careful enough not to go too far which would bring his father in to demand that the bullies be punished. His father saw this more as an opportunity for George to learn how to interact with others and to toughen up. Joe, on the other hand, came from a working-class family where both his mom and dad frequently worked 2 jobs in order to stay ahead of the bills. Joe could have easily made his way in the upper classes as he was tall, good-looking, strong and had a sense of charisma about him where others wanted to be around him.

They met for the first time on a typical day for George - he was being picked on by the kids in the lunchroom. Nothing too serious, just annoying enough that George wasn't able to eat his lunch. Seeing what was going on, Joe came over and politely asked the other kids to stop. While Joe never got into a fight with any of them, they sensed that he could easily beat them up, so they backed down and went on their way. While George barely muttered a 'thanks' to Joe, he said he didn't have to do that, he was used to it & his lunch wasn't that good anyways. Joe said that no one should be treated like that and started talking with him. From that day on, Joe would always look out for George and the bullying soon ended.

Their friendship soon became more than just about protecting from bullying. From hanging out together, George learned from Joe how to interact with others. While George didn't become a first-class conversationalist, he did learn the art of

carrying on a conversation from Joe and learned how to listen to others, how to care about others. In time, the wide circle of friends that Joe became George's friends as well. You see, George learned that he could trust Joe in all that Joe did. Since he knew that Joe would protect him from the bullies, his first inclination was to purposely antagonize them so they would pick on him and George would rely on Joe to keep his word and bail him out, thus getting back at them for all the things they got away with in the past. But George quickly learned from Joe that he shouldn't do that and so he abandoned that plan. It got to the point that if George was uncertain of what to do in a situation, he could trust Joe to show him what to do. It isn't that Joe was necessarily perfect, but most of the time, Joe knew what to do and how to treat others with respect. As the years went by and their friendship grew, George totally trusted what Joe would do in any situation. George realized that when he did what Joe would do, things would turn out good and when he would follow his natural inclinations, the situations usually went from bad to worse for George. George would often go to Joe for advice and after several years, he would know what Joe would advise, so he acted on his own more, yet kept the friendship with Joe constant. With Joe's help through the years, George's life became meaningful and George felt a purpose in his life to help others.

This simple story of trust is reflective of the Gospel reading about Joseph trusting God in his role in the birth of the Savior. Joseph was inclined to doing what was right under Jewish law but being a righteous person, a 'nice guy,' if you will, he did not want to punish Mary by publicly divorcing her. In doing so, it would have brought dishonor to her, at best, and at worst subjected her to stoning. We could probably safely presume that Joseph had learned to trust God throughout his life, though the details of how that trust formed and grew are not known. The

important part is that Joseph trusted God enough to act on the dream that he had and do what the angel instructed him to do.

In the Christmas story, Joseph is the one character that is easy to overlook. He would be considered a minor character in the Gospels, has no dialogue associated attributed to him, other than naming the baby Jesus and disappears after Jesus was found in the Temple when He was 12 years-old. Even though we do not hear much about Joseph, he is not a character whom we should easily dismiss as being not significant. Joseph knew that Mary had not been unfaithful to him, that is why he was going to divorce her quietly. Joseph knew that God's truth was above and beyond the interpretation of the law. It is Joseph who demonstrates that every-day, quiet trust that many of us have in God. He shows us that a person does not have to be a Moses or a Peter or a Paul or any other 'big-name' Biblical character in order to follow God's will. We are called to be God's servants in our everyday lives, doing everyday, normal kinds of things.

Doing these things begin with trusting in God. However, this trust does take time to develop and grow, just like George's trust in Joe in the story earlier. As George's trust changed from seeing Joe simply as a protector to a true friend and someone George can learn from, our trust in God changes and grows.

YouTube links:

Readings and Sermon: <https://youtu.be/TKNyCeMSANY>