

## JESUS' FAMILY LIFE/DAILY LIFE

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Jesus' family/daily life is relatively difficult to imagine in an ordinary context. There are many movies that depict his life, from what we read in Scripture and have pieced together by other accounts, but what was his life like before his ministry? What were his family customs? Did he get home from work and immediately take off his sandals? How did he greet Mary? What did they talk about? Did he have a favorite food? These are the kinds of questions we will discuss; however we do not pretend to have the answers. We will simply try to get an idea. We will explore, briefly, his relationship with his parents, life in Nazareth, language, education, religious practices, food and try to attempt to grasp the general idea of what Jesus' family life was like.



Family life during Jesus' time was in many ways similar to today's family life. "Family life was in a strange way traditional, so far as men would have worked outside the home and women inside the home. The father of the family would have, in a sense, run the show. Boys would have helped their fathers; girls would have helped their mothers, by and large. I think it was a society in which gender roles were very firmly rooted" (Christian Index, 2012). "Jesus spent most of his life in and around the farming village area of Nazareth. Similar to many farming villages throughout the world, life was patterned after traditions, roles and rituals passed down from many generations beforehand" (JesusCentral, 2003-2009). "One can safely assume his family as religious Jews kept the commandments; dietary laws, circumcision, tithing, laws of purity and the pilgrimages to Jerusalem" (Human Journey). That being said, Jesus would have spent quality time and learned much from his foster father St. Joseph and from His mother the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Saint Joseph is said to have been a carpenter, probably more like a stonemason or one that worked with stone as well as wood and although not wealthy, "Joseph came from a royal lineage" (Catholic Online, 2012). He is said to have been significantly older than the Blessed Virgin Mary and a man of dignity; a spiritual man, a good hearted man - one truly worthy of being called Jesus' foster father. "We know Joseph was a man of faith, obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome" (Catholic Online, 2012). The husband was in charge to provide for and protect his family, he was the "the spiritual and legal head of the house" (JesusCentral, 2003-2009).

The Blessed Virgin Mary lived as a married Jewish woman and performed all the duties that were customary. The duties entailed preparing food for her family, fetching water and mending clothes among others. Because women were not considered first class citizens, she would have been lovingly obedient to her husband and norms of their society. She was a mother devoted to her son, she is the Mother of God made man. She loved him, cared for him, protected him and at the same time allowed him to become the man he was to be. Could she not have tried to convince him not to give his life for mankind? She was humble and obedient and accepting of God the Father's plan, never a hindrance always cooperating with the redemption of man. Throughout Jesus's she was there for him but never overcrowded him and never interfered with his mission. On the contrary, she encouraged him and helped him in any way she could. However, mostly she sustained him with her prayers, with her silent presence and tender motherly gaze.

Jesus, as their son, although the Son of God was obedient to his parents and was taught to honor and respect them. Hall stated "Jesus was a Palestinian Jew. He would have grown up with stories of conquest and oppression." He would have heard ancient stories of Jewish tradition and Bible stories according to the Old Testament. Of course, none of this would have been new to Him, as the second person of the Trinity; He is all-knowing... As a child, teenager, and young adult he worked with his father, learning the family trade and helping to provide. As I write this paper, I can only imagine the father-son conversation to and from work between Jesus and St. Joseph - Jesus' presence filling St. Joseph with grace beyond words, filling his heart with love from the one who is Love; and St. Joseph, teaching Jesus about humanity and the every mundane circumstances of life and how to deal with them. Was it not from his foster-father that Jesus learned compassion? Who else could have provided such human formation? Most of us learn and follow the examples set by our parents.

Jesus lived most of his life in Nazareth, a small town or village in the area of Galilee. According to Hall, "Jesus was a Nazarene. Although a small village, Nazareth was close to the metropolitan centres of Tiberias and Sepphoris." The village was mostly Jewish in population, although there were some Greeks and Romans. Jesus spoke Aramaic on a daily basis; Hebrew, Latin and even a little Greek were common too. Education was very important for the Jewish people, it is very likely that Jesus studied "Bible at the village school (until the age of twelve) and at the local synagogue" as Hall mentioned, we also understand that both Our Lady and Saint Joseph were very familiar with the Bible and tradition which probably would imply hours spent talking about God, during meals or on a walk.

For the Jewish people, Jerusalem was the center of their world. Men were exhorted to go to Jerusalem, as Hall stated "...the three major Jewish feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles." We know that the Holy Family went; "now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast" (Lk 2:41-42). Nazareth and Jerusalem were about hundred miles away, approximately a three day journey often traveled in caravans with hundreds of people. They were faithful to Jewish customs and would have instilled these in the child Jesus. St. Joseph was a devote man, a man of faith - he would have shared the teachings of the Old Testament to his son (Jesus as a young boy). Jesus was humble enough to accept his foster father's teachings with unconditional love.

Women were in charge of preparing the food: "for example, they would grind grain, bake bread, milk the animals, and make cheese" (JesusCentral, 2003-2009) and served the meal in a common bowl. In Ancient times utensils were uncommon and most people consumed with their hands. One cannot help but wonder if they had a small farm...or a small garden of sorts. Did Mary spend time at the local market? Usually they had two meals a day, breakfast and dinner. Breakfast was light and dinner was a heavy meal. Usually dinner consisted of, "cheese, wine, vegetables and fruits, and eggs. As for meat, fish was most common, followed by chicken or fowl" (JesusCentral, 2003-2009). Typically, they used wild honey and/or syrups made from fruit to sweetened food or season it "with salt, onions, garlic, cumin coriander, mint, dill and mustard" (JesusCentral, 2003-2009). We can therefore assume the Blessed Virgin Mary spent plenty of time preparing food for her family and gathering the supplies and food she would have needed. Consequently, Jesus by today's standards ate rather healthy and natural foods, prepared with love.

Clothing is another detail to consider in everyday life, Jesus "would have worn the same kind of clothes as any other working class man of the time" (Answers, 2012). Scripture tells us, "they also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down" (Bible, 2005), he probably wore an undergarment or loincloth as was typical and "he would have worn a mantle - a large rectangle of cloth which he would wrap round himself, and also use as a blanket at night" (Answers, 2012). We also know from Scripture that he wore sandals; Matthew tells us quoting John the Baptist "...the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals." Jesus did not want to live differently from anyone else, he lived a normal everyday life, a humble and human life...he lived like most everyone lived during the time we walked in this world. Again in the Gospel of Matthew we can see he was regarded as ordinary in his native place, "they were astonished and said, 'where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son?'"

The family unit is the essence of humanity. Within the family unit we learn how to love, resolve conflicts, nurture, forgive, reconcile and compromise, love unconditionally, provide for one another, and freely give of oneself for the benefit of all. Mary and Joseph were exemplary parents. The environment provided by them is the example the modern family should attempt to achieve with their loved ones. The fiber of society is the family life and if we live as He did then society as whole strengthens.

For the most part, having a loving and supportive family is an essential for the development of a person; of course there are always exceptions. The human persons learn from his or her parents what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior, social norms, how to interact with others and resolve the different situations that come up in life. Jesus had such a family, they are the Holy Family. They are the family par excellence, a union of love, total and completely given of self for the other without selfishness, without manipulation and without the greed that often makes today's family so hostile. With the Holy Family's example he shows us how a family should be, he shows us that love knows no bounds. Jesus himself gives us the example.

His life as the son of a carpenter was simple yet an essential part of His journey. His human involvement was necessary to fulfill the Holy designs of God the Father. Jesus could not have redeemed mankind without His

humanity. He had to live like mankind so as to, not only preach about a life of virtue, but to show humanity how to live it. The details recorded of his life on earth, combined with his teachings delineate the way Christians are to live their lives. They depict a man of virtue, a man who lived a life rooted in love and mercy and a man who spared nothing for those he loved. This is how we are to live our lives, holding nothing back for those we love.

Many mysteries make up the Holy Family. St. Joseph, a simple man chosen to be the father of God, what must he have thought looking into the child's eyes? And to see Mother and Child? To grasp the mystery he was now to guard and protect.... What questions were aroused in his heart? The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception preserved from sin and prepared a fitting home for the Son of God. There are many more mysteries that surrounded and still revolve around the Holy Family, each individual and the family as a whole. However, the greatest is the love they shared.

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