



## On your marks

Only in Matthew's Gospel do we catch a small glimpse of what the miracle of Christmas meant from Joseph's perspective. The following idea offers a creative way into Joseph's story, imagining what he may have tweeted daily about what happened to him in Nazareth and Bethlehem, and later, as he and Mary had to escape to Egypt with their child, Jesus.

## Get set

There are several ways in which you might use this resource.

- You could tweet parts of it daily through Advent, to families in your church, as a way to build up to the miracle of Christmas and the days beyond.
- You could adapt some of the 'tweets' for a presentation at a carol service by grouping them as short readings and using different voices to present Joseph's story.
- You could just read it as inspiration for yourself as you prepare to see Christmas afresh through Joseph's eyes.

Matthew 1:18-25 gives us part of Joseph's story.

These Joseph tweets were originally written by Lucy Moore and Martyn Payne at the request of BRF and used with a limited audience at Christmas in 2011.

## Go!

1. Just hammered the last nail in for new shop sign: Joseph-Carpenter.com. But is Nazareth ready for wooden cherubim? #excited2. Can't believe the price of timber. OK, we're an occupied nation but is wood in short supply? Are the Romans eating it? #romansgohome
3. Six new seats ordered for the synagogue! Mr Benjamin's broke last Saturday; he's not the slimmest of synagogue-goers.
4. Great village party - I love our festivals! Better than Mother's cooking - she gets mixed up between cheese and soap. #celebrations
5. The dancing was fun, especially when Isaac dragged me to my feet next to that pretty girl. He says her name's Mary.
6. Mr Benjamin refuses to pay for a table because it wobbles. What an insult! I'm a professional. It's his wobbly floor! #furious
7. Shattered! Spent all day mending Joshua's plough to finish it before the sabbath, so he can use it first thing on Sunday.



8. Josh delighted. He sent a girl round with a bottle as a thank-you gift. It was Mary from the dance. She laughs a lot. #inlove
9. Mother and I off to Mary's parents. Mother thought we were buying cheese! Had to convince her that this was serious.
10. Told them I was sober and industrious enough to be considered a reasonably safe prospect for Mary. Mary giggled, I think #embarrassed
11. Ouch! One hammered thumb, one saw cut, one elm plank dropped on toe and one soap sandwich eaten without noticing!
12. Can't concentrate on anything except her eyes, the swish of her brown dress, and lovely laugh. What if they say no? #deeplyinlove
13. She wasn't at synagogue. Has she run away? Spent all day on the lake delivering oars to some Galilean fishermen.
14. Found a cheese sandwich on my workbench. Deliciously soap-free! Have hidden the wrapper under lathe. I keep checking.
15. Mary's parents threw a party: we're ENGAGED! All the family were there as witnesses - and the whole village came. #overthemoon
16. Met Mary's great-aunt from Alexandria at party. She says they always need carpenters in Egypt, so I'm welcome any time.
17. Mary is marrying me! Mr Benjamin's table still not done but who cares? The world can go hammer itself on the head. #oncloudnine
18. No, I've got to work and make a safe home for her. Must get on with the table. But it would be good to see her again.
19. I really must get on with that table. But perhaps first I'll just go and see if she'd like to go for a walk. #nervous
20. Later: she was in. But she told me she wasn't going for a walk or anything until I've finished the wretched table.
21. Table finished! Not a wobble! We went walking. I talked about trees and seasoning timber. She was very interested. #feelinggood
22. Making a cedar wood treasure chest for Mary to store anything precious in. A wedding present. But will she like it?
23. We danced. I never wanted it to stop. We're made for each other. Like a perfect joint. How

long do we have to wait? #soinlove

24. I'm shaking all over. I can't see straight. I'm so angry. I can't believe what I heard. Why did you do this to me?

25. They say Mary's been seeing someone. Aaron avoided me after synagogue. You can't keep secrets in a village like ours. #confused

26. Mary's been avoiding me too. If I get my hands on him... I'll... I'll... Oh, I'm so angry I could burst. #deeplyhurt

27. I took a hammer to that cursed treasure chest just now. There are splinters everywhere, even in me, and it hurts.

28. Mary has dropped by just now. It was so awkward. She went on about an angel and having God's baby. I think she's lost it.

29. Why tell me these fairy stories? As if the betrayal wasn't bad enough. It's over! I told her I'd divorce her, but quietly. #intears

30. But I can't bear to see Mary hurt and shamed. And even a quiet divorce won't stop the rumours - you can count on that.

31. Loved... let down... and now lied to... all in one week. It's too much. What did I do wrong? I can't concentrate on my work. #distracted

32. Mr Jacobs called for his new chair but I hadn't finished it. He said he'd take his custom elsewhere. I don't care any more.

33. I had a dream last night. An angel said that Mary was going to have the baby and it was God's and she needed me still. #angels

34. I can't stop thinking about the dream. This sort of thing doesn't happen to people like me, or does it? Now I'm losing it.

35. We heard about the birth of Samson today at synagogue. It was about an angel and a special baby! What's happening to me? #Samson

36. Mother is fussing. 'You're not looking well, Joey. Are you eating enough cheese? And when's that nice Mary coming round?'

37. I finally plucked up courage to see Mary. I sent a message via young Caleb. We met by Jonah's tomb near the village. #Jonah

38. That dream - that crazy dream - just maybe, it's true. But even if I believe it, others won't. Mary had to get away.



39. Mary called by. She said that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is pregnant and needs help around the house. Perfect timing! #cousins
40. I took the finished seats over to the synagogue. All Rabbi Dan said was, 'About time too.' He's a grumpy \*\*\*\*\*.
41. Mary set off early with her dad. I'm going to miss her. She'll be gone ages. I still love her so much, despite everything.
42. Work at the shop is mounting up. But what's the future for Mary and me? Can that stuff about God's child really be true? #lost
43. I have started making a cradle. It's my way of saying I believe it all. It's going to be the best cradle ever. #babies
44. I keep wondering what's happening for Mary down south. How's she getting on? I'm throwing myself into work to keep busy.
45. Yesterday at synagogue Levi read a passage from Isaiah about seeing a great light and... a baby being born. I'm losing it. #Isaiah
46. I've never seen a Roman soldier close up before. Sepphoris city is nearby. He came right into my workshop. I was scared stiff.
47. I've been asked - no, ordered - to make some wooden gladiatorial swords for use at HQ. This means I'm working for the enemy. #trapped
48. It's been almost three months now and hardly any news about Mary. I've made 30 wooden swords so far and hated every one.
49. News at last! Elizabeth has had a baby. There was some confusion about the boy's name but I'm happy for the old couple #familynews
50. Mary will be coming home. I'm really glad but also scared what people will say. Perhaps they'll believe the baby is mine.
51. Decision: I'll risk taking the blame for breaking the betrothal and perhaps this will mean we can get married quickly. #hopeful
52. The Roman came to collect the swords. He mentioned something about a census. The Emperor wants to count his subjects - typical!
53. Mary's back! She's hiding her pregnancy well. We walked up to Jonah's tomb again. 'I'll be like a whale soon,' she joked.
54. Mary says Elizabeth's baby is linked to ours somehow. God's at work and has made us part

of it. It's all so strange.

55. So the census rumours are true. We've all got to go back to our home towns. But Mother and I come from Bethlehem! #travelplans

56. Old Miriam has been talking. I knew a baby couldn't stay a secret for long. It's getting uncomfortable here in Nazareth.

57. Things are going badly. Questions are being asked; and furniture orders are drying up. What will happen to Mary and me?

58. We've got our marching orders. Everyone must go back to their family home. I have decided: I am taking Mary with me. #donkeyhire

59. I told Mother but she didn't understand. She said she'd make us all sandwiches! There's no way I can take her too.

60. Mary says her parents will have Mother to stay. Great! This means Mary and I can travel together; we'll be alone at last.

61. I've put the finishing touches to the cradle today, and to keep it a surprise I have hidden it in with the luggage.

62. Bethlehem, here we come! Great King David was born here. Some prophecies say it's where Messiah will be born too. #messiah

63. Everyone is travelling. An emperor miles away clicks his fingers and millions of ordinary people obey, like puppets!

64. It's all wrong. We were born free. We need a new Moses! These are my strange thoughts on this even stranger journey. #deliverusOLord

65. Stayed with friends last night. It's great to be ourselves and not ashamed: we're man and wife and having a baby. #proud

66. Mary's not coping well with the bumpy roads. The baby might come too soon. We must get to Bethlehem and find safety.

67. I can't go any faster; it's hurting Mary. And there are crowds of people ahead of us. We're not going to make it. #panic

68. Bethlehem at last! But there are hundreds of people on the streets, all looking for somewhere to spend the night.

69. Mary says labour pains have started. It's too soon. Surely God's baby isn't meant to be delivered in the gutter. #desperate

70. It's a boy! Jesus is here. #amazed

71. I'm so ashamed as well as excited! We ended up in a cattle shed behind one of the inns. It's no place for a baby.

72. Oh no, the cradle I made broke on the way. Jesus is in an animal feeding trough. It isn't right. Not for God's child. #manger

73. What a racket. A bunch of shepherds have just visited, talking about angels. What's going on? Mary's exhausted. #moreangels

74. We've been here a week now and I've found a small room to rent. There's no way I'm taking Mary back home; not now.

75. Jesus is beautiful. It's amazing. Mary is deep in thought. The angel must have said some very special things to her.

76. I'm doing some repairs at the inn to bring in some money. I like the landlord. He was kind to us when we arrived. #thanksbetoGod

77. Last night I noticed a very bright star. Strangely it made me feel safe, as if we are meant to be here after all. #starlight

78. Day 8: we went to the synagogue to have the baby named. He's Jesus - 'the one who rescues'. I had to say I was the dad. #namingday

79. Been busy with work at the inn, with the baby and with making sure that Mary is OK. Too busy to tweet much lately.

80. Wow, been here two months already. It's becoming like home. I saw Jesus smile for the first time. It's incredible! #firstsmile

81. Everyone is talking about it. Yesterday strangers on camels came, searching for us - or, to be precise, our baby! #easternmagi

82. Mary and I still can't believe it. The visitors gave gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. But what does it all mean? #presents

83. The landlord's wife, Ruth, overheard some guests talking about King Herod. Apparently he's furious with our visitors.

84. Herod's soldiers are on their way. Ruth says we must run. They'll be mad when they find out the strangers visited us. #danger

85. I've had another dream. An angel told me to leave Bethlehem immediately. I believe angels now, so we're packing! #anotherangel



86. We're like refugees running from a disaster and, what's worse, we are leaving our homeland behind. What's happening? #refugees

87. Everything in me says we mustn't stop. Mary says that we should head for Alexandria in Egypt, where Aunt Cleo lives.

88. We've been travelling for a week. I know I must keep Mary and this baby safe; and I think it's not just for our sake.

89. Everything is so strange - the food and the customs. Mary reminded me that our people had once been slaves in Egypt. #pyramids

90. I've traded with the gold, and the perfume makes crowded rooms in the inns bearable. I wonder what the myrrh is for.

91. After losing our way countless times in Alexandria, we finally found the street where Aunt Cleo's family live. #safe

92. She's an amazing hostess! She fusses over us like long-lost children. She's like Mother but without the dodgy cheese.

93. How Aunt Cleo talks! Today she said a terrible thing happened in a place called Bethlehem. What could it have been?

94. I can hardly believe it. We've been here a while now. I've found work and Mary is settled. Jesus is growing fast. #timeflies

95. Mary is worried. We should go home. But we daren't go where a madman is in charge. #dilemma

96. Today we received the all-clear. King Herod has died and, to confirm it, I had another dream. It's time to go home.

97. We're packed. Jesus took his first steps today and fell over one of the packing cases. We go back as a real family.

98. I'm worried. What lies ahead for us? I should have learned to trust God by now but it's hard. #uncertainfuture

99. What sort of rescuer is our Jesus? How can I be a father to him when he's God's gift to Mary? So many questions!

100. I've made some toys for Jesus. Maybe one day he will put his hands to wood and create something beautiful for others? #passover



You can follow Joseph's story daily on [Twitter](#), through December 2015 #josephstweets