

Growth Group Lesson
December 10-11
Matthew 1:18-25

Last Week: Jesus has come “to proclaim good news to the poor...proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,” both physically and spiritually. Because we have been redeemed and set free, we have also been given the mission to heal and set free by introducing others to Jesus.

Spend some time praying with your group. Ask for fresh eyes to see a familiar story. Ask for God to reveal how you should respond to this discussion of his word.

Get to know one another:

1. What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

Matthew begins his Gospel with a bang, introducing a genealogy of Jesus that reveals he is the son of Abraham, who will be a blessing to the nations by offering salvation through faith, and the son of David, who will be the Messianic King to rule forever over Israel and the nations, bringing peace, justice, and prosperity to God’s people while judging the evil nations who have rejected God. The genealogy places Jesus as the fulfillment of the entire story of the Old Testament, beginning with his coming into the world.

2. How would you summarize the story of the Old Testament in a few sentences? What are the milestones in the story that help you remember how it unfolds?

Read Matthew 1:18-25

The circumstances of Jesus’ birth are miraculous and, for Joseph and Mary, must have been very shocking.

3. How did Joseph initially handle the news of Mary’s pregnancy? What does this reveal about his character?
4. How would you handle a situation like this if you were in his sandals?
5. How does Joseph show his obedience?
6. What are the two names that the angel gave for this child?

Jesus’ name in Hebrew is Yeshua, which would translate to our modern “Joshua.” Yeshua means “YHWH saves” or “YHWH is salvation.” YHWH is the personal name that God gives to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:13-15, as God says “I AM who I AM.” This reveals God’s nature and character of eternality, existence that is not dependent on anything else, constancy, and active existence and presence, among other things.

7. Why does the angel tell Joseph to name the child “YHWH saves?” What do we learn about Jesus from the verses quoted by the angel? **Verse 21, Psalm 130**
8. What other Yeshua’s (Joshua’s) in the Bible relate to the story of Jesus? **Joshua 1:1-6, Hebrews 3 and 4, Ezra 3:1-2, Zechariah 6:9-15**
 - a. What was the role of each of these Joshua’s in the story of the Bible?
 - b. How does this connect with the story of Jesus?

Matthew is pointing out to us that Jesus will be the Davidic King, the High Priest, and Great Prophet for God's people, who will rebuild the true Temple of God, which is the place where God and man dwell together, restored in relationship and unified in Jesus. It has always been God's intention to dwell with his people, from the Garden to Revelation and beyond. God's rescue mission for humanity, restoring the broken relationship between God and humans, involves the eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity, taking on humanity. Jesus' birth was very special, designating a miraculous birth, maintaining a full human and full divine nature (**Philippians 2**), and fulfilling a sign from God in Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 7:1-17

9. What does the name Immanuel mean? **Matthew 1:23**
10. How does the child born as a sign in Isaiah 7 connect to Immanuel, God with his people? Who will this child be that will restore God's people? **Isaiah 9:1-7, Isaiah 11**

In the Gospel of John, the Word (Jesus pre-incarnation) "becomes flesh and makes his dwelling among us" (**John 1:14**). The word "dwelling" refers directly to the concept of God with his people (specifically referring to the tabernacle/temple, which we discover later in John, is the body of Jesus, where God and humanity are united).

11. Why is it so important that Jesus is both fully God and fully human? **Romans 5:12-21, Hebrews 2:14-18, 5:1-10, 7:11-28, 9:11-15, 10:8-18**
12. After Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended to the Father, how does he continue to be "God with us"? **John 14:23-27, 1 Corinthians 6:19**
13. What has been your experience of God with you recently? How near has he felt to you?
 - a. What has led to the feeling of this nearness?
 - b. How does your feeling of God's relational and physical proximity to you relate to reality (truth discovered in God's word)? **Matthew 28:20b, Ephesians 1:11-14, Romans 8:28-39, James 4:7-8**
14. How will you let his nearness change how you live this week? What is God calling you to be obedient in as you walk with him this week?
15. Name some people in your life who need to know this nearness of "God with us." When will you tell them about this nearness?

Spend some time praying together.

- For God to help you draw near to him.
- For God to continue bonding your group together.
- For God to give you opportunities to share about Jesus coming into the world!