

Small Group Guide

OUR MYSTERIOUS AND MAJESTIC KING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

December 11, 2011

Matthew 1:18-25

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

Message Outline

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Matthew 1:18-25

How Jesus Came...

- To a virgin mother.
 - Physically, Jesus is Mary's son.
- To an adoptive father.
 - Legally, Jesus is Joseph's son.
- Amidst a fallen world.
 - Ultimately, Jesus is God's Son.

Who Jesus Is...

- As the Son of man, Jesus is fully human.
 - Jesus possesses the full range of human characteristics. (Lk. 2:42)
 - Physically.
 - Mentally.
 - Emotionally.
 - Obviously.

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- Jesus is fully able to identify with us.
- As the Son of God, Jesus is fully divine.
 - Jesus possesses the full range of divine characteristics.
 - Power over disease.
 - Command over nature.
 - Authority over sin.
 - Control over death.
 - Jesus is fully able to identify as God.
- The Incarnation is the most extraordinary miracle in all the Bible.
 - Jesus' human nature and divine nature are different.
 - He was born a baby AND he sustains the universe.
 - He was 30 years old AND he exists eternally.
 - He was tired AND omnipotent.
 - He died AND he conquered death.
 - He has returned to heaven AND he is present with us.
 - Jesus' human nature and divine nature are unified.
- The Incarnation is the most profound mystery in all the universe.

What Jesus Confirms...

- God is the Creator and Re-Creator of all things.
 - In Genesis, the Spirit brings life to men.
 - In Matthew, the Spirit gives life to the Messiah.
 - In Genesis, God promises a seed from a woman.
 - In Matthew, God delivers that seed through a woman.
 - In Genesis, a man is born who would succumb to sin.
 - In Matthew, a man is born who would save from sin.
- God is always faithful to his Word. (Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14, 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4, 27:9)
 - What we don't know...
 - Is Isaiah 7:14 a prophecy with single or double fulfillment?
 - What we do know...
 - Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy with certain fulfillment in Christ.
- God is transcendent over us, yet he is present with us.
 - He came to heal the sick.
 - He came to feed the hungry.
 - He came to bless the poor.
 - He came to bind the brokenhearted.
 - He came to deliver the demon-possessed.
 - Ultimately, he came to rescue the lost.

Message Summary

Jesus' unique way of coming to earth is both mind-boggling and amazing. He came to the world through a virgin birth, indicating the power of God alone to bring salvation to humankind. The miraculous nature of his coming shows both his full humanity and his full divinity. As fully man, Jesus could fully relate to all of our human characteristics and challenges, except giving into the temptation to sin. As fully God, Jesus possessed full identification and power with God. These two natures were distinct but unified and without contradiction, although an exact and detailed description of how they worked together is quite difficult to wrap our minds around completely. However, not being able to understand all of the intricacies does not negate the validity of its truth. Instead, it speaks to the miraculous nature of Jesus' incarnation and of God's transcendence and complete sovereignty. His birth also indicates the way that Jesus came to redeem or re-create what sin, through Adam, had destroyed. He brought life and redemption from sin, which God had promised centuries before. He is God, separate from us, but He is God, present with us. He is God with us.

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Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- What did Joseph's immediate obedience to the angel's message in his dream indicate about his beliefs and his relationship with God?
- How did Joseph's obedience impact his involvement in the life of the Savior?
- What can we do in our relationship with God that would help us grow in Him to the point of immediate obedience too?
- What are some everyday decisions or life changing decisions in which we need to relinquish control and obey God?
- Although physically birthed by Mary and raised by Joseph, Jesus was ultimately God's Son, sent to redeem His people. Why was it important that his father not be a human father by birth?
- Why must Jesus have been both fully man and fully God?
- Jesus' existence as fully God and fully man is difficult to conceptualize. Does its difficulty bother us? Why or why not?
- How should the mystery of the incarnation drive us to worship God?
- How does Jesus' birth signify a new creation or a new genesis for humankind?
- In what ways was Jesus the opposite of Adam?
- Thinking about God's promises of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament, Jesus' birth fulfilled these prophecies exactly. What does this truth tell us about God and His character?
- Can we trust a faithful God in areas that we do not fully understand, like the incarnation?
- How does seeing that truth help us to trust God with other promises He has given us in His Word as Christ-followers?
- What other Biblical truths does the incarnation tell us about God and His character? How should those truths affect the way we live?
- What does the incarnation itself—God coming to us—tell us about God's desire and plan for redemption?
- Like Joseph, how can our obedience to God allow us to be a part of His plan for redemption for mankind?
- How can we focus more on the amazing mystery of the incarnation with our friends and family during this Christmas season?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church..

Weekly Prayer Focus . . . (from our worship guide)

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- *Lives and Church: Pray that as we see the glory of Christ's first coming God would increase our desire for his second coming. Pray that our hearts would treasure the fully human, fully God Jesus this week.*
- *Local: This week we are praying for the ministry of Brother Bryan Mission in downtown Birmingham as they seek to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by providing for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of economically, emotionally, and spiritually impoverished men of the Birmingham area. We are also praying for South Roebuck Community Church, Jerome Bell, Pastor.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries, Dwight and Mary Kay Martin serving in Thailand. We are also praying for our team serving in Southeast Asia.*