



## Group Discussion Guide

*For group meetings from September 6 afternoon through September 13 morning*

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

The Gospel of Matthew opens with a genealogy of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. This begins with Abraham, who was chosen by God to be the father of the Jewish nation. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob ... these are names many Christians know well. In the Bible, God is referred to as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” After Jacob, the names are little less well-known. Judah was the fourth of Jacob’s sons born to Leah, and is familiar because of his role in the story of Joseph and because of the tribe of Israel that is named after him. Several generations later, the next familiar name is Rahab, who worked as a prostitute and helped the spies who were sent to Jericho. She was the mother of Boaz, the Israelite who redeemed and married Ruth, who had been widowed and moved to Israel to live with and help the mother of her deceased husband. This section ends with Jesse, who was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth and the father of King David.

The next section of the genealogy of Jesus Christ begins with David and ends with a man named Jechoniah. In six verses, Matthew moves from the early days of the kingdom of Israel to the Babylonian exile. Each name listed represents a generation, but of particular significance is King David. The connection between Jesus and David is important because one who was not a descendent of David could not occupy his throne. One other note in this section is the mention of Bathsheba (referenced as “the wife of Uriah”). Matthew included four women in the genealogy of Jesus and all four had something questionable about their lives. Tamar committed a sin against her father-in-law, Rahab was a prostitute, Ruth was of foreign descent and Bathsheba committed adultery (of course, so did David). This, along with the fact that none of those mentioned were without sin, sends a clear message that God can and will use imperfect people to accomplish His perfect will, and that no one is beyond the reach of His grace.

The final section of the genealogy covers the period from the Babylonian exile to the birth of Jesus Christ. There are a few familiar names of people who are referenced in Old Testament books that include events of this period, but most of these names are not elsewhere in Scripture. Matthew’s genealogy contains three major divisions: Abraham to David, David to Jechoniah, Jechoniah to Joseph. This genealogy was not meant to be an exhaustive list of descendants from Abraham to Joseph. A Jewish genealogy did not need to include every single name to be considered official, and Matthew’s genealogy would give sufficient evidence that Jesus was in fact a descendent of King David. Of special interest is how Matthew changed his wording when he described the birth of Jesus. Before this point, the genealogy repeatedly focuses on the fathers with the use of the phrase “the father of.” However, he states Jesus was born of Mary, and Joseph is described simply as her husband. This of course is explained in the verses that follow.

**Matthew 1:18-24**

Matthew's account of Christ's birth is considerably shorter than Luke's, although Matthew goes on to share the story of the wise men who found Jesus roughly two years after he was born. Matthew does give the basic details of Mary and Joseph's engagement, how she was carrying a child conceived by the Holy Spirit, and how Joseph received a message from an angel telling him to marry her instead of following through with his plan to divorce her quietly. This passage also specifically references the messianic prophecy from Isaiah 7 (Matthew 1:22-23). Matthew records Joseph's obedience to God as he stayed committed to Mary and named the baby Jesus.

## Discussion Questions

1. Matthew draws a line from Abraham, to David, to Jesus. Based on what you know about these three people, what are some things they have in common? How can you draw inspiration from them as you seek to be faithful to God?
2. Through Abraham, God made Israel into a nation. Through David, God made Israel into an earthly kingdom. How did God use His Son, Jesus, to significantly transform Israel? How is all of this connected to His plan of redemption for mankind?
3. Think about your own heritage. Chances are, you would not be able to trace it as far as Matthew traced the heritage of Jesus. How are we shaped by our family history? How have you seen God work to help you move beyond your family history? How should we stay connected to our heritage?
4. The people listed in this genealogy are not perfect (except for Jesus). How does it encourage you to know God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect will?
5. What fears did Mary and Joseph each face when Mary became pregnant through a miracle of the Holy Spirit? How did they overcome these fears? How does this inspire you to overcome the fears you're facing in life right now?
6. Immanuel means "God with us." Discuss what it means to you to know that God chose to come to earth in human form. Talk about some ways that Jesus was just like us during his life on earth.