

# “Advent”

Week #2

## Introduction

In the second week of our Advent series we continue with Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth which places a unique focus on Joseph’s experience. We don’t find many details of the birth, but we can gain valuable insights from the context or circumstances surrounding the birth including: the conception, the marriage, and Joseph’s struggles. Let’s look deeper into this account and draw out key truths that can help us find our own way to living in God’s perfect plan.

### **Ice Breaker (Optional):**

Have you ever faced stunning news where you had to make a defining life decision?

## Study Questions (45 MIN)

### **Read Matthew 1:18-24**

#### **The Conception (God moves in unexpected ways)**

##### **Q1. Read Matthew 1:18-19; Luke 1:26-38; Isaiah 7:14**

The virgin conception is one of the most famous miracles of God. For the believer, it is truly a mystery of many dimensions. Joseph could only make initial sense of this unfolding mystery with what he understood at the time. It began with what seemed like a perfect match, a righteous man and a ‘most favored’ woman of God. But in Joseph’s eyes, the pregnancy was a most unexpected turn of events. What was his initial decision in response to finding out Mary was pregnant and what internal deliberations do you think he had in coming to that decision? Do you think he thought of Isaiah 7:14?

#### **The Marriage (Trusting my way or God’s way?)**

##### **Q2. Read Matthew 1:20-23; Isaiah 55:9; Proverbs 3:5,6**

Betrothal in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish culture was much more of a familial contract than it is today. Joseph likely had all sorts of great expectations for his life and their future life together. The plans may even have been years in the making and family and friends would likely have been involved. And those plans were now set in motion with the engagement. As Joseph determined to obey the angel of the Lord, what do you think it was costing him? Are there times in your own past where you knew your obedience to God would cost you your

plans? What new plan was God preparing for Joseph? Sometimes letting go of our dreams opens the door for God to create new ones if only we would trust Him (Prb 3:5-6). Are there current dreams you might have to let go of?

### **The Struggles (Embracing change)**

#### **Q3. Read Matthew 1:24; Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 8:28**

God’s message through the angel didn’t change the circumstance, rather Joseph allowed God’s message to change first his perspective, and then his response. Although there would be great struggles ahead for Joseph and his new family, to what degree do you think Joseph could have embraced, even rejoiced, in this new calling of being the earthly father and guardian of the promised savior?

Are there circumstances that come with obeying the calling of God in your life that are difficult to embrace (finances, marriage, children, work, etc.)? What does Mat 28:19-20 and Rom 8:28 say God’s presence and purposes in the midst of our struggles to follow Him?

## Wrap-Up

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus posed tremendous challenges for Joseph, yet his trust in God allowed him to obey even in the face of those life-changing circumstances. We also are not without challenges in life and our lives don’t always go the way we planned. But God’s ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than ours. May we trust Him more with each day and find His good plans for us.

## Memory Verse

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*  
Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

## Prayer (20 MIN)

*Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).*

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**Challenge:** Find a close friend or member of your small group and share with them a funeral for something in your life that needs to die in order to embrace the plan of God.

[Mat 1:18-25 NIV] 18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Q1.

[Mat 1:18-19] see above

[Luke 1:26-38 NIV] 26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

[Isa 7:14 NIV] 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Q2.

[Mat 1:20-23] see above

[Isa 55:9 NIV] 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

[Pro 3:5-6 NIV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Q3.

[Mat 1:24] see above

[Mat 28:19-20 NIV] 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

[Rom 8:28 NIV] 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

**Prayer Notes cont.**

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