

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide Teaching Plans

Session 2: The King Arrives

Text: Matthew 1:18-25

Memory Verse: Matthew 1:21

PREPARE TO LEAD THE GROUP TIME

READ Matthew 1:1-25 and Understand the Context. Underline the Old Testament promise that is reiterated in this New Testament passage.

STUDY Matthew 1:18-25, using the commentary provided. As you prepare, look for fresh details in the familiar Christmas story that you can point out to your group.

PLAN the group time using the ideas in Lead Group Bible Study and More Ideas. Make sure you leave time for the group to discuss the importance of Jesus being both human and divine.

GROW with other group leaders at the Group Ministry blog (*lifeway.com/groupministry*).

GATHER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: **PACK ITEM 2** (*Book Outline: Matthew*); **PACK ITEM 3** (*Poster: Winter 2015-16*); **PACK ITEM 9** (*Chart: Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew*); **PACK ITEM 12** (*Poster: Matthew 1:21*).

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

GUIDE: After welcoming the group, ask them to recall the birth or adoption of someone special in their family—a child, grandchild, niece, or nephew.

DISCUSS: *What emotions did you feel upon hearing the news of that birth or adoption? How would you describe the sense of responsibility felt by the parents of a newborn? How does the addition of a child into a family change the prayers of that family?*

INTRODUCE: Remind the group of last session's study and how John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming King. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Book Outline: Matthew*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Winter 2015-16*). Share the information in Understand the Context (PSG, pp. 23-24) to explain how Matthew, from the very beginning of his Gospel, laid the groundwork for his readers to understand both Jesus' human nature and His divine nature.

TRANSITION: *In Matthew 1:18-25, we will see how the miraculous birth of this baby, unlike any other babies, fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 1:18, while the group listens for both the ordinary events and the supernatural events described here.

DIRECT: Instruct half the group to read the first two paragraphs under Verse 18 and the other half of the group to read the last two paragraphs (PSG, pp. 24-25) to find the details that describe the marriage customs of that time. Then call for volunteers to share what they discovered.

ASK: *What questions does the description of Jesus' conception given by Matthew answer? How would you describe the significance of Jesus' conception?* (PSG, p. 25)

TRANSITION: *Jesus' conception was supernatural, in order that He could be both fully human and fully divine.*

DISCUSS: Read Hebrews 2:17. *How does this verse describe Jesus being both fully human and fully divine?*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Matthew 1:19-23. Invite the group to listen for Joseph's initial plan, the angel's instructions, and Joseph's response.

DISCUSS: Invite the group to turn to those sitting beside them and share responses to the following questions from the PSG (p. 26): *Can you recall a time when you faced a situation in which none of your options seemed good, but God provided a better solution? What is required of you if, like Joseph, you are to receive direction from God in times of trouble or uncertainty?* Then call for volunteers to share their responses with the group.

EXPLAIN: *For Joseph, perhaps the simplest, most compassionate choice would have been to privately divorce Mary in front of two witnesses and then send her away. Yet Joseph chose full obedience to God over his own emotions and reputation.*

SHARE: In verses 21 and 23, call attention to the two names for the baby spoken by the angel. Point out the information in the PSG (p. 27) where the significance of the names is explained.

DISCUSS: *How do the two names given by the angel complement each other? How are they different? Could Jesus have been one without the other? Explain.* (PSG, p. 28)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 1:24-25, noting Joseph's swift response to the angel's instructions.

DISCUSS: *How would you characterize Joseph's actions: as an act of obedience or an act of love? Explain. What role does obedience play in responding to the message of the gospel?* (PSG, p. 29)

SHARE: Invite the group to imagine a young child in a room full of toys spread out across the floor. The parent walks in and instructs the child to clean up the toys. Call for volunteers to name the various responses that might occur when the child is told to pick up the toys (for example: obediently responds, argues back, continues to play but later obeys, throws a tantrum, and so on).

ASK: *How do the child's different responses reflect our responses when God calls us to obey His call to action? Is partial obedience really obedience? Explain your response. How can we imitate Joseph's obedience in our lives today?*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

ASK: *Is there anything from today's study you have questions about?* Respond to the questions based on your understanding of the Scripture. If there are questions you cannot answer, work to get an answer before your group meets again.

DIRECT: Guide the group to consider their responses to the first question set under In My Context on page 30 of the PSG. (*Jesus was fully human and fully divine. What makes this statement difficult for some people to believe? How can you use verses from Matthew's account to help someone understand this truth? How would you explain the importance of this truth?*) Allow time for volunteers to share.

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to look for opportunities to share these truths as they talk about the Christmas story in the coming weeks.

DO: As time allows, call attention to the third question set on page 30 of the PSG. (*Identify specific attitudes and actions that demonstrate your obedience to God's commandments relating to His redemptive plan for your life. In what areas of your life is God*

calling for a deeper obedience? What steps are you taking to be obedient in those areas?) Read the questions and encourage the group to jot down a personal response in their PSGs.

PRAY: Thank God for this wonderful season as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the King. Ask God to give us obedient hearts that are totally committed to following and serving Him.

PRACTICE

Send an email or text to encourage the group to ponder Joseph's obedience to God as he faced Mary's pregnancy. Challenge them to examine their own obedience to God in hard situations.

Contact anyone who wasn't present for today's study and encourage them to begin thinking about Matthew 2:1-12 for next week's study.

Follow up on the ideas for service the group shared in the last session.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

To enhance the activity, invite volunteers in advance to bring a photo of a baby in their family (children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews). Display the photos and then begin to talk about the emotions we feel when a new baby arrives.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

As a supplement to Matthew 1:19-23, use **Pack Item 12** (*Poster: Matthew 1:21*) to encourage the group to memorize the verse.

To support your discussion of Matthew 1:19-23, instruct the group to work in pairs or threes to look up one of these Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah: Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6; Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9; and Psalm 41:9. (There are many other verses you could choose from, if you want to include more.) Note that from beginning to end, the Old Testament is filled with prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus fulfilled them all. Ask: *How can Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah give richer meaning to our Christmas celebration today?* Use **Pack Item 9** (*Chart: Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew*) to support the discussion.

To further demonstrate Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, encourage the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 26).

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Call attention to the second question set in the PSG on page 30. (*Reflect on the two names of Jesus given by the angel. List ways the realities of these names are being seen in your Bible study group. Discuss as a group how these two names should impact how the group functions in the future.*) Challenge the group to carve out some time this coming week to prayerfully respond to the questions. Encourage the group to use these names as they talk about the Christmas season with family and friends.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Review the words to "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," by Charles Wesley, noting that Jesus was indeed the long-promised Messiah.