

## Advent 1 Study - Adults Only Christmas Story

### Gather

### Opening prayer

### Connecting with topic

- Who is interested in their family history? How far back do you know the names of your family? What does it reveal?

### Opening the Scriptures together

Read chapter 1 verses 1-17 of Matthew's Gospel (Matt 1:1-17) using a translation you understand ( see <https://www.biblegateway.com/> for other languages).

1. Why do you think that Matthew would begin with a genealogy and such an obviously stylised one at that? (Abraham -> 14 generations -> David -> 14 generations -> Jesus)
2. The key figures in the genealogy are Abraham (the starting point), David and Jesus who is called the Messiah. What is the significance for Matthew of these three figures? [Note that there are various titles ascribed to Jesus in the Scriptures. One of these is Messiah (Hebrew *Massiach*) = Christ (Greek *Christos*) = King (English) thus Jesus Christ = King Jesus].
3. There are also four women named in the genealogy, which is unusual. They are Tamar (v3), Rahab (v5), Ruth (v5) and the wife of Uriah (v6). What is distinctive about these four women and why might they be included?

Read Matt 1:18-25

4. How does Mary fit into this extraordinary line of women?
5. What is different to the birth stories of Jesus that we are used to from Luke's Gospel (with their emphasis on Mary, shepherds, angel choirs, etc).
6. The son of Mary, Jesus, is given a unique title in verse 23 – Emmanuel – that derives from a passage in Isaiah 7:10-16. How is this an appropriate title for Jesus in this Gospel in particular?

### Praying for ourselves and others

## Advent 1 Study - Adults Only Christmas Story

### Leader Notes

Consider giving a copy of Questions (see last page) to each person or taking turns to ask questions from it.

Use as needed. Not all details may be relevant to a group. Allow others to answer 1<sup>st</sup> and use to answer questions raised. Possibly only briefly mention details of women and then come back to look at them in more detail. (NB BCE is Before Christian Era)

1. He was writing for a purpose more than just to tell a story - to explain, to a specific group, his understanding of how, what and why Jesus came.
  - a. To a particular group who were interested in genealogies
  - b. To address rumours about Jesus' supposed illegitimate birth
  - c. To position Jesus as a real person with a history linked to the Jewish people and continuing the history told in the Old Testament.
  - d. Stylised – Abraham -> 14 generations -> David -> 14 generations -> Jesus
    - i. Highlights these 3 names
    - ii. David -> Manasseh are kings of Israel so can compare with OT to find ones that were missed (1 Kings & 2 Kings)
  - e. In Jewish culture to say X is the 'son of' Y can mean
    - i. Son or grandson or descendant – Jesus is 'son of David' and 'son of God'
    - ii. Has same personality/character/family traits
  - f. If accept the Holy Spirit impregnates Mary then none of Joseph's DNA involved but adopted children had full rights of inheritance, thus Jesus part of Joseph's line
2. Key figures
  - a. Abraham (approx. 2200BCE ie 4200 years ago)
    - i. From Ur in modern Iraq – not a Jew! A non-jew just like most of us
    - ii. Father of Jewish Faith – 'Abraham trusted in God and this made him right with God' (Rom 4:3)
    - iii. Father of Islam
    - iv. God made 3 promises to Abraham Genesis 12:1-3
      1. People – many descendants
      2. Place – Land
      3. Purpose – to be a blessings to others
  - b. David (approx 1000 BCE ie 3000 years ago) see 1 Samuel for story
    - i. Shepherd boy made king and ruled in Golden Age of Jewish history
    - ii. Flawed human with flawed family – see below
    - iii. 'Man after God's own heart' Acts 13:22
    - iv. God promised David to 'establish his throne forever' 2 Sam 7:12-13 (which did not happen in the OT)
  - c. Jesus (approx 4BCE – 29CE) Earlier Christians mucked up dates of the calendar!

- i. Inherits promises to Abraham Genesis 12:1-3
- ii. Established as 'from the line of David' thus Inherits promises to David of everlasting kingdom

### 3. 4 Women

- a. Unusual as most genealogies in most cultures (including in OT) focus on men only
- b. Tamar (full story Genesis 38) (approx. 2100BCE ie 4100 years ago)
  - i. Daughter-in-law of Judah, (great-grandson of Abraham)
  - ii. Strange story of inheritance where she dresses as prostitute to trick father-in-law into giving her a child
- c. Rahab (approx 1300 BCE ie 3300 years ago) full story Joshua 2
  - i. Prostitute in Jericho who helps Jewish spies to defeat city and marries one of the spies
  - ii. Non-Jewish
- d. Ruth (approx 1100 BCE ie 3100 years ago) full story in book of Ruth
  - i. From Moab, marries a Jew and then travels with mother-in-law back to Israel due to her faith in Israel's God
  - ii. Non-Jewish
- e. Wife of Uriah – Bathsheba (approx 1000 BCE ie 3000 years ago) full story in book of 2 Samuel 11 & 12
  - i. Husband killed by King David and then she is effectively raped by David #MeToo
  - ii. Son becomes King Solomon – chosen by God to build Jerusalem temple
- f. All have dubious sexual incidents that do not disqualify them from being included in Jesus heritage
- g. All have children with ? over life
- h. 3 are non-Jews showing all are welcome to God
- i. All are honored by the ruling men for their actions
- j. All chosen by God

### 4. Mary

- a. Dubious sexual incident
- b. Child has ? over life
- c. All are honored by the ruling men for their actions
- d. Chosen by God

### 5.

- a. Luke account from Mary's perspective,
  - i. More details
  - ii. Timing positioned historically with census (familiar to 1<sup>st</sup> hearers)
  - iii. Extended account including relationship to John the Baptist
  - iv. Angelic visitation in person
  - v. Popularised and distorted in 19<sup>th</sup> century with carols and modern Christmas trappings
- b. Matthew account from Joseph's perspective
  - i. No journey
  - ii. Brief account but includes prophecy fulfilment

- iii. Angelic visitation in dream
- 6. Emmanuel = 'God is with us'
  - a. El = god thus angel names (and many others) end in el (Elizabeth = God's promise, Bethel = house of God)
  - b. Matt 28:18-20 Last words in book are 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'
  - c. Matt 18:20 'For where **two or** three gather in my name, there am I with them.'
  - d. Matthew wants to emphasize that Jesus has not left us alone. Experience of Christians throughout history is Jesus is with us in ALL things. A major reason why Christianity did not die out 2000 years ago.

There is also a book of historical fiction written about these 5 women: one section per woman. See below for the dedications of each section. <https://francinerivers.com/books/a-lineage-of-grace/>

*Unveiled is dedicated to those who have been abused and used and yearn for justice.*

*Unashamed is dedicated to women who think a past of mistakes ruins any chance of a joy-filled future. Turn to Jesus and experience the wonders He has waiting for you.*

*Unshaken is dedicated to my mother-in-law, Edith Rivers, whom I admire and adore.*

*Unspoken is dedicated to women who feel they've lost their reputation forever. God can make beauty from ashes.*

*Unafraid is dedicated to Jane Jordan Browne, a woman of faith.*