

# Christmas Bible Study

## Shocking News that Rocked Joseph's World

Ice Breaker: Think of the guys in your fraternity. If one of them found out their girlfriend or fiancée had cheated on them and was pregnant, what would be their response?

- A Smash something in a fit of rage
- B Go out with someone else to pay her back
- C Think up ways to injure the other guy
- D Get wasted or stoned to numb the pain
- E Find someone new and replace her
- F Forget about her and move on

Intro: Engagement in first century Jewish culture was much more binding than our modern day engagements. Engagements were arranged by parents, were public ceremonies witnessed by family and friends and could only be broken through divorce. Sexual relations were forbidden until after the wedding. The term “husband” and “wife” were used for engaged couples during the engagement.

### **Read Matthew 1:18-25**

1. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant and he was not the father what should have been his course of action if he followed what the Old Testament law prescribed? See Deuteronomy 22:20-27.
2. Verse 19 says, “Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.” Why didn't Joseph follow the Old Testament law and have Mary stoned? What can you learn about Joseph from this verse? What emotions do you think Joseph was feeling?
3. Verse 20 says that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. Would it not be good enough for Mary to tell Joseph? Why did God give Joseph a personal revelation?
4. What would have been the hardest part for Joseph?
  - A Trying to explain the pregnancy to their families
  - B Facing the small town gossip of people who didn't buy the virgin birth story
  - C Trying to figure out how to be a father to a child that was not his
  - D Realizing that the love story he hoped to have with Mary was radically changed
5. Jewish people were aware of a well known prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14 “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel –which means God with us.” Why were so many prophecies given about the

birth of the Messiah?

6. Immanuel means “God with us.” How have you sensed that God was with you this past year? How would this next year be different if you truly believed that God was with you?

7. Joseph is a role model of a man with noble character. Is there a place in your life that God is calling you to be a man of noble character?

## **Christmas Bible Study**

### **Shocking News that Rocked Mary’s World**

#### Ice Breaker:

Have you ever received a piece of news that completely rocked your world?

#### **Read Luke 1:26-38**

1. As the account of Luke opens, we find Mary engaged to Joseph. She is visited by an angel that announces that she will become pregnant by the Holy Spirit. What thoughts must have flooded through her mind as she contemplated the idea of being pregnant-- not by Joseph and before marriage?

2. Long ago in the Old Testament, a prophecy had been given:

“The Lord Himself will give you a sign. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14  
The virgin birth was clearly a sign from God to alert people, but why else would God choose a virgin birth to fulfill His plan?

3. It is likely that many in Mary’s home town of Nazareth did not believe the account of the virgin birth---pregnant by the Holy Spirit? I imagine that a shroud of small town gossip hung over her engagement and marriage to Joseph. Whatever dreams Mary had formed in her mind about the perfect engagement and wedding were clearly reworked when the angel announced that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit. Has God ever called you to do something that was way outside your perfect plan for your life?

4. Mary asked the angel a question, “How is this possible since I am a virgin?” The angel starts by saying “The Holy Spirit will come upon you!” and ends by saying, “Nothing is impossible with God.” What impossible situation are you facing that needs a God sized miracle?

5. I am sure many questions and concerns were whirling around in Mary's head after this encounter with the angel, yet she responds by saying "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said." Mary is the supreme example of a woman who let God be God in her life. She was willing to let her dreams and plans be radically reshaped by the Lord. Can you say this same thing to God, "I am the Lord's servant; may it be to me as you have said"? What holds you back from letting God be God in your life?

## **Christmas Bible Study**

### **The Upside-Down-Ness of God's Coming**

Ice Breaker: What was your very favorite Christmas gift that you received as a child? Why was it your favorite?

#### **Read Luke 2:1-20**

1. Look over verses 1 - 7. Joseph and Mary were required by Caesar Augustus to go to Bethlehem for the census. Who is controlling the events and circumstances in Joseph and Mary's life? How did God use the decree of a pagan emperor to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2?

2. Due to the census, Bethlehem experienced a great influx of out-of-towners. The place was overcrowded with people. It would have been something like a big football weekend between two arch rivals. All hotels were occupied so Mary and Joseph stayed in a stable. Mary's time came to deliver the baby and they used an animal feeding trough (or manger) for a makeshift crib. If God can control the events of human history, why wouldn't He have provided better accommodations for the birth of Jesus the Savior of the world?

3. The angels make an announcement to the shepherds. Shepherds were considered lower class and were dirty and dusty from living out in fields with sheep. Showers were non-existent and baths rare. Why would this great news be given to people of low status who were cut off from channels of human power and influence? Would you have chosen shepherds for Jesus PR agents? Why or why not?

4. What exactly is the message given to the shepherds in verse 10 and 11? "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord." Unpack the meaning of each significant word. Why do the shepherds go and see in such haste?

5. The word “manger” or feeding trough is found in verse 7, verse 12 and verse 16. Why is this word repeatedly mentioned?

6. As the account closes, we find Mary, who has just delivered a baby, unmarried, staying in a stable and visited by working class shepherds and a bunch of dusty sheep. How does all this fit with the angels words in Luke 1:30-35?

Looking over this text, how do you see the lowly things of earth woven together with the amazing supernatural works of God?

7. Jesus left the grandeur of heaven and came to a dusty stable so that we might have a heavenly mansion. Jesus became a member of a human family so that we might become members of the family of God. He became poor that we might become rich. How has this become real in your life?