

Community Group Discussion Questions

CHRISTMAS GIFTS – NO. 1

“The Gift of Grace for Our Brokenness” – Matthew 1:1-17

Theme: *Jesus’ family tree reveals that God loves you and cares for you very much, regardless of your past!*

As we prepare for Christmas, we’re all trying to find the right gift at the right price. God has Christmas gifts for *us*. We won’t find them under a tree or secure them by shopping online. In fact, one of God’s most amazing gifts for us is found in a very unusual place: inside a genealogy...the genealogy of Jesus Christ! It’s the gift of His grace.

To many readers, the family tree of Jesus is probably considered impractical and irrelevant. However, to Jewish Christians of the first century (and Matthew is writing primarily to Jews), this was the most natural and the most necessary way to begin the story of someone’s life, especially if that person claimed to be the Messiah and the Divine King. The family tree is arranged in three groups of fourteen people each, thus making it rather easy for early Christians to memorize. It proves that Jesus Christ has the right to reign over us as King. But it also reveals the grace and love of this King in a very powerful way.

Gathering Together (Icebreaker)

Think back to your childhood. What was your most memorable Christmas gift? What made it so special?

Growing Together (Truth/Equipping)

Read Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17:

1. Why does Matthew begin his Gospel by providing us with the names of Jesus’ descendants? What’s his point? Why was someone’s family tree important to the Jews? See 2 Samuel 7:6, Isaiah 9:6-7, Ezra 2:62, and Luke 2:1-4.
2. A critic of Christianity says to you: *“If you compare Jesus’ family tree in Luke 3 with Matthew 1, there are many differences. What other explanation can there be but that the Bible can’t be trusted. It’s filled with contradictions.”* What’s your answer?
3. Matthew’s genealogy follows a similar pattern until we come to verse 16. Instead of reading, “Joseph was the father of Jesus,” we read, “Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus....” Why the change?

4. Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah; compare Matt.1:11 with Jere.22:30) was the last king in the line of David. God announced that none of Jehoiachin’s sons was to ever sit on the throne as king. Yet the Messiah had to come from the line of David and therefore be a descendant of Jehoiachin. What plan did God establish by which Jesus would be the *legal* heir to the throne but not be in the *bloodline* of David as a descendant through Jehoiachin?
5. Verse 16 introduces us to Mary, the mother of our Lord. How does Mary illustrate the theme of God’s grace? See Mk.3:31-35; Lk.11:27-28; Lk.1:26-28, 46-47.
6. Verse 1 mentions Abraham and David. Abraham was the father of the nation that gave us the Messiah; David was the father of the kingly line. How do Abraham and David illustrate the theme of God’s grace?
7. God’s grace is evident in this genealogy by the inclusion of four women who were outcasts. Who are the four women? Which two were prostitutes? Which two were Gentiles? Which one was an adulteress? Which one was indirectly the product of incest?

Getting Real Together (Accessibility)

1. Think about the various people in Jesus’ family tree. With whom do you identify the most? Why?
2. The very people who rejected Jesus were *religious* people. They were called *Pharisees*. They were so impressed with their own devotion to God that they ended up rejecting the very Savior provided by God. How do we avoid making the same mistake?
3. The grace that God extended to the moral failures in Jesus’ family tree is the same grace that He has extended to you. What will you do this Christmas season to celebrate God’s love and grace to you?
4. What action step could you take as a small group during this Christmas season to demonstrate God’s grace to others?

Group Prayer Time (Supplication)

Pray that the Lord would use your actions and those of the group to convey grace to others during this Christmas season.