



SDG Discussion Guide

Matthew 1:18-25

December 24, 2017

For starters:

If you had to choose one vacation spot to return to for the rest of your life what place would that be?

If you could have dinner with any four persons of history, who would these be? Elaborate if you like.

Interaction with the text: (The following questions are meant to provide points of further interaction with the respective sermon text including its contextual details. Feel free to forward the questions to your small group members ahead of the respective Sunday; or, group members may find these questions in print on that Sunday.)

Read slowly and aloud the selected text in your group, taking turns as you can. Before doing so, pray and ask God to speak to your group. Note well what points and questions are raised for you. As time permits, read the passage a second time-- slowly and aloud. Notice, what may God be highlighting for your discussion and learning?

Now that you have read and reread the text, what points and questions of the text arose? Spend plenty of time in your group to address these. What else did you notice? Any angles unseen before now? Explore and see how God may steer the discussion. The following are further questions for reflection and discussion.

1. What did Joseph's response to the angel's message in his dream indicate about his beliefs and his relationship with God?
2. Although physically birthed by Mary, Jesus was ultimately God's Son, sent for the redemption of God's people. Why was it important that Jesus' father not be a human father by birth?
3. Jesus' existence as both fully God and fully human can be difficult to conceptualize. Does its difficulty concern you? Why or why not?
4. How does Jesus' birth signify a new creation or a new reality for humankind?
5. Considering God's promises of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament, Jesus' birth fulfilled these prophecies. What does this truth tell us about God and his character?
6. What does the incarnation itself — God coming to us — tell us about God's desire and plan for redemption?
7. How can you ponder or focus more on the mystery of the incarnation with your friends and family in the wake of Christmas?
8. Can you remember a time when you were almost perfectly certain that God was nudging you toward the kind of obedience of Joseph? How did you respond?
9. Does anyone in your group feel that they are currently in this kind of discernment of needing to respond to a prompt from God, perhaps in a certain relationship? What is challenging about such a response? How can your group help you?

Spend plenty of time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you to pray. Ask God to supply you insights into how you should concentrate your time here at the end of one year... and the beginning of the next.