

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of December 18, 2016

Matthew 1:18-21

These questions are to be used as a spring board for discussion.

Answers may or may not be found in the sermons.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸ *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

²⁰ *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

Connection Questions:

1. Have you ever felt what it is like to be forgotten? If so, talk about the experience.

2. Can negative relationships with others affect our relationship with God? If so, how?

3. How could growing up in a setting where your primary role models are not trustworthy cause you to develop issues with trust? How could that distrust spill over into how you perceive God?

4. Left to our own devices in dealing with our sins can isolate us from God and others. Discuss.

5. Throughout the Old Testament we read of God being faithful to his people even when they weren't faithful in return. How can we be sure God can be trusted to be faithful even when we aren't?

6. Do you think God ever gives up on us? Discuss the ways in which he reveals he can be trusted.

7. In baptism we celebrate God's consistent faithfulness through the symbols we use as we participate in this sacrament. Discuss the meaning of symbols of faithfulness of God in this sacrament and discuss why they are used. What in the service of baptism points to humanity's unfaithfulness?

8. Read our scripture text, Matthew 1:18-21. What does this passage tell us about God's intentions for his people? Can God save us even if we don't choose to participate with him?

9. Andrew Lester, in his book *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, says, "If you have a dysfunctional story, your future is not likely to turn out well. If it is negative or unrealistic, you are bound for difficulty. And if you have no hope, no healthy sense of the future being better than the present, you get stuck, you even get sick." What do you think he means? How can God being always faithful help us to change this outlook?