



GOD CAME NEAR

“When No One Understands”

Matthew 1:18-25

During the Advent season we are reading the Christmas story to see how it speaks to some of the struggles we go through. This week we will connect with how Joseph and Mary must have felt experiencing a pregnancy like none other in history!

As you work through this week’s study, avoid the temptation to view Joseph and Mary as spiritual stick figures in a story you’ve heard since childhood. They were just like you and me – real human beings with raw emotions, needs, and instincts. See if you can put yourself in their place and connect your past and present experiences with theirs.

If there’s one thing this text reveals it is that our Savior was born into a context already rife with pain and heartache. Even before his birth, Jesus was being prepared to be a perfect Savior, “tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).



KNOWING GOD

This week's passage of Scripture contains God's reassurance to Joseph that his fiancée Mary had not been unfaithful to him but was instead the virgin predicted in Isaiah 7:14. Why was it important that the Savior of the world be born of a virgin?

What does the name "Jesus" reveal about the person and work of Christ?

What does the name "Immanuel" reveal about the nature of God?



GROWING TOGETHER

Mary's pregnancy surely exposed her and Joseph to being misunderstood by their parents, friends, and others. What do you suppose were some of the things people said about and did to them?

Read Isaiah 53:3. This prophecy of Isaiah shows that the misunderstanding Mary and Joseph experienced became a theme for the life of Christ. Share about a time when you felt

misunderstood, rejected, or marginalized. How did that experience affect, shape, or change you?



SERVING OTHERS

Among other things, this week's passage of Scripture shows the danger of jumping to conclusions about other people. Have you ever pre-judged some person or situation and found out later how wrong you were? Do you need to repent of a judgmental attitude toward anyone right now?

Joseph's attitude toward Mary was admirable. At first planning "to divorce her quietly" (vs. 19) to spare her public embarrassment, after the angel's reassurance Joseph stood by Mary and endured whatever people might say about him on her account. Is there someone who needs your support and advocacy these days? What can you do to be a "Joseph" to that person?



IN YOUR FAMILY...

- a) Pick out a Christmas song or carol that contains the name Immanuel and sing it together. Then pray and thank Jesus for being with you no matter what is going on around you.
- b) Take a walk down your street as a family. Quietly pray for each home, that the message of Christ's birth will penetrate your neighborhood and change lives.

SERMON NOTES