

Week 1: *The Impossible Calling*
Week 2: *The Disturbing Dream*
 Week 3: *The Unexpected Visitors*
 Week 4: *The Desperate Journey*

APPETIZER – The Book We Don’t Follow

We read the Bible, but we follow Jesus.

NYE, 8pm-1am, The Gasworks, Hamilton

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field.
 When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.
 ~ Jesus (Luke 15:25, The Parable of the Prodigal Son)

DINE IN – The Jesus We Do Follow

Matthew 1:18-25

Q: When you hear about someone's failings, how do you respond?

Joseph had two choices			
Choice	Reputation	Bride's dowry	50 shekel fine
1. Divorce Mary for cause	Mary's reputation was harmed.	Joseph kept the dowry for himself.	Joseph doesn't have to pay.
2. Divorce Mary for no cause secretly	Joseph's reputation was harmed.	Joseph gave the dowry back to Mary.	Joseph must pay 50 shekels.

Would you make the same choice Joseph did?

* Chart by Steve Rudd

He is the God who is so for you that He can't stay away from you! So God threw open the door of this world and entered as a Baby. He came as a Baby because He was done with the barriers. He disarmed Himself so that you could take Him in your arms.
 ~ Ann Voskamp, *Unwrapping the Greatest Gift*

God's Desire:

➤ To learn the letter of the law and live the love of the Spirit (**2 Cor 3:6; Matt 12:1-8**).

God's Invitation:

➤ To leave behind the comfort of the familiar and trust God's specific leading.

Joseph's Response:

- Upon hearing from Mary ... incredulous, betrayed, hurt, restrained, honouring
- Took time to think on his course of action – wanted to quietly divorce to protect the one who he thought had betrayed him
- Sacrificial ... willing to give up his legal/financial rights and get nothing in return
- Loving ... a commitment to what is right in a way that is compassionate
- Upon hearing from the angel ... believed the unbelievable and consented to putting his shoulder to the job of supporting God's plan as a secondary character

What "yes" meant:

- Significant change in his personal plans and dreams
- Trusting in God's plan
- Events were now out of his control
- Accepting the embarrassment over what people think/say about him
- Leaving everything and starting over as an immigrant in a foreign land
- Submitting his sexual frustrations to the joy of living a more exciting life

Meditation:

- Is God inviting me to something that will turn my plans and notions of how things should be upside-down? What is my response to God?
- Or is God inviting me to take a submitted, secondary, supportive role in bringing his Kingdom to earth? What is my response to God?
- Or is God asking me to do something that would be embarrassing or humiliating to me or "beneath me"? What is my response to God?
- Or is God inviting me to release my "rights" to revenge, to justice, and to opt for mercy, compassion, and grace? What is my response to God?

TAKE OUT – Partnering with God and God's People

Dear God,
 I want to partner with you and your people to bless this world.
 I am willing to play my part, large or small.
 I am eager to hear your voice, however you want to speak.
 And until you give me more detail, I will simply follow Jesus, your Word already spoken.
 Amen.

The Golden Rule: **Matthew 7:12**

In any given moment, ask yourself, what can I do to bless those around me? What would I want if I were in their position?

Home Church Questions...

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic]

1. What kind of financial stress does Christmas put on you and your family?
2. To what extent does stress (financial or other kinds) distract you spiritually and effect your ability to rest in the grace of God?

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture]

3. Jesus taught his disciples how to do ministry, and how to take time away from ministry to rest with him. Read **Mark 6:30-32**. This home church is for us to spend time resting, talking, and being with Jesus. Our goal will be to focus our attention on his presence, invisible but real, and to let God speak to us out of Scripture.
4. Rather than discuss our primary text right away, we are going to meditate on it first. Settle into a comfortable position, yet try to be alert enough that you don't fall asleep. (But if you do, that's okay too – you obviously needed a nap.) Relax and set your intention to be quiet and listen to God, enjoying His presence. Remember that this whole time – silence, meditating, listening, and conversing – is in one sense, prayer. Begin by spending a few minutes talking to God quietly, “unloading” what is on your heart and mind so you can be attentive to God and others.
5. Now have someone read **Matthew 1:18-25** out loud and slowly. Notice Joseph's journey to “yes” with God. Spend some time in silence again, imagining yourself in Joseph's shoes – what thoughts and feelings can you identify with? Read over your notes again. Think about how you relate to God's desire, invitation, response and meditations listed in the notes. What else is God saying to you?

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together]

6. Let's debrief. How was the time of silence for you? Weird? Wonderful? Hard? Peaceful? Insightful? Was it any different than last week? Why?
7. Share what you feel comfortable sharing about your time with God. What is God's invitation to you today and what is your response?

December 7/14, 2014 // @bruxy

Quotes...

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.

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.

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. 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.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

~ The Gospel According to Matthew