

# DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

A CHRISTMAS INVESTIGATION

Week 1: *Did Jesus Exist?*

Week 2: *What about the Miracles?*

## Week 3: *The Strongest Evidence (Part 1)*

Week 4: *The Strongest Evidence (Part 2)*

### APPETIZER: How To Believe In God

1 Peter 1:21

#### JESUS IS GOD WITH US, COME TO



SHOW US  
GOD'S LOVE,



SAVE US  
FROM SIN,



SET UP GOD'S  
KINGDOM, AND



SHUT DOWN  
RELIGION,

#### SO WE CAN SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE.

*The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)*

#### HUMAN NEED

1. Safety / Security
2. Love / Acceptance
3. Forgiveness
4. Purpose / Peace
5. Self-Actualization
6. Self-Transcendence

#### GOSPEL ELEMENT

Jesus is GOD WITH US ...  
SHOW US God's love ...  
SAVE US from sin ...  
SET UP God's Kingdom ...  
SHUT DOWN religion ...  
SHARE IN God's life ...

#### JESUS' TEACHING

Beatitudes (5:3-12)  
Safe house (7:24-27)  
God's enemy love (5:43-48)  
Our Father (6:9)  
Let go of anger (5:21-24)  
Lord's Prayer (6:12, 14-15)  
Do not judge; do help (7:1-5)  
Thy kingdom come (6:10)  
Seek first the kingdom (6:33)  
Law fulfilled (5:17-20)  
Living inside out (5:21-6:18)  
Golden Rule (7:12)  
Ask, Seek, Knock (7:7-11)  
Knowing Jesus (7:23)

More on Love:

John 3:16; Romans 5:6-10; Galatians 2:20;  
1 John 3:1; 4:16-19

More on Forgiveness:

Matthew 9:1-9; 18:21-35; 26:28; Luke 17:3-4;  
2 Corinthians 5:21; Titus 3:3-7; Hebrews 1:3;  
2 Peter 1:9 1 John 1:7-9

### DINE IN: Our Search for Significance

Matthew 5-7

Psalm 51:1-4

#### GIVING FORGIVENESS...

1. Helps you gain a more balanced view of the offender and the event.
2. Gives up the right to punish or to demand restitution.
3. Decreases negative feelings and increases compassion.

#### GIVING FORGIVENESS RESULTS IN...

Decreased depression, anxiety, blood pressure, cholesterol, and cortisol.  
Increased white blood cell count. (White blood cells are an integral part of fighting off diseases and infections.)

A study from the University of California, Berkeley measured levels of cortisol, a stress hormone responsible for wreaking bodily havoc (and prompting us to retain more fat)... Cortisol levels jump up in people holding onto a past event in an unforgiving way.

### TAKE OUT: Peace & Reconciliation

**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,  
good will toward men.**

**~ Angels to the Shepherds (Luke 2:14)**

What is creating a barrier of shame or fear between you and God?  
What is creating a barrier of shame or judgement between you and someone else?

NEXT WEEK... Our series conclusion!

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## Home Church Questions

### **HANGOUT** [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. Review Sunday's teaching. What stood out to you? What questions remain?

### **HEAR** [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

2. Read the Beatitudes in **Matthew 5:3-12**.
  - a. What verse or idea stands out to you? Why?
  - b. For each Beatitude, give an example of the kind of person being identified. Then talk about how the promise of this beatitude reinforces our sense of security and safety in God.
  - c. Which group in the Beatitudes do you most/least identify with? Why?
3. Read about letting go of anger and loving enemies in **Matthew 5:21-24, 43-48**.
  - a. What verse or idea stands out to you? Why?
  - b. Why do you think Jesus takes anger so seriously? What is dangerous about anger in your experience? Can you think of other passages in Scripture that warn Jesus followers about anger?
  - c. What advice would you give a Jesus follower who struggles with anger? How have you dealt with anger in the past?
  - d. More than anything else, Jesus says loving our enemies makes us most like God. Why is that the case?

### **HUDDLE** [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Relationships that require enemy love and forgiveness can sometimes rise to the surface around the holidays. What is your experience of that? What is your plan for being God-like this Christmas?
5. Choose a question or two from your huddle questions handouts before praying for each other.