DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

Of the four Gospels, only two (Matthew and Luke) say anything about Jesus' birth. Our text is Matthew's brief account of the conception and birth of Jesus (Matt 1:18-25).

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

1. Betrothal in the first century Jewish world was not just the personal arrangement we know today as engagement. It was a legally binding agreement between two families. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant before they came together as husband and wife, he had few legal options: he could denounce her and expose her to public humiliation (if not death), or he could arrange to quietly dissolve the betrothal. As in other circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus, God used an angelic visitation to communicate His will.

   What reason did the angel give for Joseph calling Mary's Son "Jesus"?

2. Matthew is always quick to connect events in the life of Jesus with ancient Hebrew texts. Which of the Hebrew prophets does Matthew quote to show that even the conception of Jesus was anticipated in the Scriptures?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

1. There is already some tension in Matthew's account. The angel tells him to name Mary's Son "Jesus," while Isaiah's prophecy says that "they shall call his name Immanuel." How do you resolve this difference?

2. Why did Joseph refrain from "knowing" Mary (sexually) until after Jesus was born? Why does it matter whether they had sexual relations after they were married but before Jesus was born?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **Joseph is an unsung hero in the story of Jesus'** birth. We rightly credit Mary for her willingness to submit herself to the will of God, even though the risks were so high for her.

    - What risks was Joseph taking when he listened to the angel and took the pregnant Mary to be his wife?

    - Have you ever faced a moment when you knew what God wanted you to do, but the risks were high and at least partially unknowable?

2. **Joseph's obedience to the angelic vision is** summarized in four words: "he took his wife" (v. 24). But that obedience required several difficult steps that called for courage and discernment on his part.

    - Can you recall a time when simple obedience to the will of God required you to move forward in a complicated and difficult situation?

    - How did you navigate that situation?

    - What would you differently now?