

HARK

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Jesus Our Emmanuel

Matthew 1.18-27

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Share plans for future Community Group gatherings and the following happening in the life of the church:

- **Christmas Store Saturday, December 9th** | The Christmas Store is a collaboration between New City Church and New Life Temple to serve need-based families in the community. Join us by Praying, Serving or Giving! Visit The City for all of the details and don't forget to grab an ornament from the Christmas Tree in the Commons starting next week! Your unwrapped gifts should be returned on or before Sunday, November 26th. Know a need-based family who would be blessed by the Christmas Store this year? Have them go to <http://newcitycincy.org/christmas-store> for more information or to register as a shopper.
- **Christmas Eve Worship Gatherings 9a and 5:30p** | This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, the 4th Sunday of advent. We'll worship at 9a for our regular Sunday worship gathering with the Lord's Supper (note: no 10:45a service, just one morning service at 9a) and then at 5:30p we'll have our annual Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols. There will be our full slate of kids' care and classes at BOTH 9a & 5:30p. But as always, kids are welcome to stay and participate in the worship gathering. At the candlelight service kids will receive battery powered candles to participate in the candlelight portion at the end. (New Year's Eve ALSO falls on a Sunday but we'll be back to normal with a 9a and 10:45a worship gathering that morning).
- **Christmas Party & Hymnsing Friday, December 15th 6-8:30p** | Our 7th annual Christmas Hymnsing is Friday, December 15th 6-8:30p @ the church building. We'll have live music, coffee, adult beverages, fun snacks and Christmas treats to enjoy, some carol singing, plus fun activities for kids. We will have childcare 3 & under and activities in the lower level for ages 4 through 9. Please RSVP for ALL kids by 12/8 listing their name(s) and age(s) below. Parents...you're responsible to be with your children at all times throughout the evening, unless they are being cared for in the lower level for activities. We hope you'll join us and bring some neighbors/friends/co-workers/family along! Visit the event on The City for more information.

OPENING PRAYER

Open your group in prayer. Pray extemporaneously, or use this prayer: *Father, we thank you for the chance to be together tonight. As we talk and reflect on the Scriptures, may we take these things to heart. Help us to bring our lives more and more under the direction and care of your Word. Bear with us when we fail. Help us to help each other. Amen.*

OPENER

What is your favorite Christmas song? Christmas movie?

STUDY/DISCUSSION

Advent is run up to Christmas. We're using the lyrics of Charles Wesley's Christmas carol, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, as a lens to explore the message of Christmas. This week we're focusing on answering the question "Who is Jesus?"

1. Read through the words to *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. What lyrics stand out to you? Why?

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Christ, by highest Heav'n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die.*

*Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Come, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Rise, the woman's conqu'ring Seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head.
Now display Thy saving power,
Ruined nature now restore;
Now in mystic union join
Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

2. Read Matthew 1.18-25
3. **Verses 18-19** - What is the significance of Mary's pregnancy? Why would Joseph divorce her if they were only "betrothed"? (HINT: The custom of betrothal was different from "engagement" in modern society. Customarily the parents of a young man chose a young woman to be engaged to their son. A second stage of betrothal involved official arrangements and a prenuptial agreement before witnesses, which was a legally binding contract and could be broken only by a formal process of divorce. Mary's pregnancy would have been a scandal. She would have been seen as an adulterer.)
4. What do you think of the way Joseph behaves toward Mary? What would you have done?
5. **Verses 20-23** - What does the angel say to change Joseph's mind?
6. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage? (HINT: Matthew 1 mentions that he is conceived by the Holy Spirit, he will save his people from their sins, born of a virgin, called Immanuel. You might relate each of these as they come up to lines in the Christmas carol.)
7. On Sunday Josh said that inherent in the name Immanuel are three ideas: a.) Jesus is God; b.) Jesus is human; c.) Jesus is with us. Which of these do you need to reflect on most this Christmas?
8. **Verses 24-25** - Talk about Joseph's obedience. Even after the visit from the angels, would it have been difficult for him to obey? Why or why not?
9. Has God ever interrupted your plans? What was that like?
10. On Sunday Josh said "The line in the carol is *Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king*. When Jesus comes into your life, he comes as King. This means the Christian faith is not a negotiation; it's a surrender." Are there new ways God is calling you to lay your life down and serve him this Christmas?

PRAYER:

End your community group time in prayer. You may elect to just lead the group in a closing prayer, pray together as a large group, or break into smaller groups to pray. You can share requests, or simply pray about the things you discussed tonight.