

If you have limited time to prepare, this 3-step outline is a helpful tool for leading a small group discussion:

1. Read the text from Sunday's message.
2. What did you find most helpful/confusing/new/ that you did not understand from the message?
3. What were your big takeaways? How will you put these into practice in your life?

## Getting Started

- What do you anticipate most about Christmas this year?
- How might you manage these expectations to guard against a let down if your expectations are not realized?

## Discussion

Read Isaiah 7:1-17 and Matthew 1:18-25 to better understand the context of the prophesy that the "virgin would gift birth to a son, and he would have the name Immanuel".

*Context: This account took place during the reign of King Ahaz (see 2 Chron 28). An unsuccessful invasion of Judah by Aram or Syria and Israel led to a continued presence of King Tiglath-Pileser's forces in Israel. Shortly after Ahaz assumed the throne, this threat to Judah's security brought great fear to the king and the people of Judah. The Lord told Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah that God would deliver Judah if he would stand firm in his faith (v.9). To encourage his faith, the Lord offered Ahaz a sign, but Ahaz faked humility by refusing the sign (v.12). Upon hearing Ahaz's refusal, Isaiah broadened his audience beyond Ahaz to include the whole faithless house of David. The nation was guilty of wearying God. Since Ahaz refused to choose a sign, the Lord chose His own sign, whose implementation would occur far beyond Ahaz's lifetime. The prophecy of a virgin giving birth reached forward to the virgin birth of the Messiah as the NT notes in Matthew 1:23. The Hebrew word for virgin refers to an unmarried woman and means "virgin", so the birth of Isaiah's own son could not have fully satisfied the prophecy. The name Immanuel is the title applied to Jesus in Matthew 1:23 that means "God with us". Before the promised son of Isaiah was old enough to make moral choices, the King of Aram (Syria) and Ephraim (Israel) were to meet their doom at the hands of the Assyrians. Not only did the Lord use the Assyrians to judge Israel; He also used them to invade Ahaz's domain in Judah. This coming of the Assyrian king was the beginning of the end of the nation and eventually to led to her captivity in Babylon.*

*(John MacArthur Study Bible)*

- Why is the virgin birth so critical to the Gospel? If Jesus had been born in a natural way, through Joseph's seed, how would that have negated the power of Gospel?
- What hope, strength and comfort do you find in the truth that through faith in Jesus Christ, God is not only *with us* but *in us*?

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

*Zebulun and Naphtali on the northern border of NE Galilee west of the Jordan River were the first to suffer from the invasion of the Assyrian king (2 Kings 15:29), marking the beginning of the dark days for Israel. "In the past" the days were to be full of gloom, but "in the future" God would transform that gloom into honor. The NT applies this prophecy of Galilee's honor to the time of Jesus Christ's first advent (Matthew 4:12-16). Matthew 4:15-16 quotes Isaiah 9:2 directly. Ultimately its fulfillment will come at His second advent when the area is freed from the yoke of foreign invaders. The phrase "for to us a child is born, a son is given" elaborates further on the promised Immanuel, the child to be born to the virgin (Is 7:14). The virgin's child will also be the royal Son of David, with rights to the Davidic throne.*

- Reflect on and discuss the names attributed to Immanuel (the Messiah) and how they affirm the deity of Christ.
  - Wonderful Counselor:
  - Mighty God:
  - Everlasting Father:
  - Prince of Peace:
  
- Pastor John reminded us of the following promises regarding the Savior who was to come. Take time to share how these promises encourage and strengthen you during this Christmas season. How can you bring these truths into your Christmas celebrations?
  1. He will crush the head of the enemy.
  2. He blesses all the families on the earth.
  3. He will right our relationship with God based not on religious practice but actual intimacy.
  4. He will bring about the ultimate destruction to sin and darkness.
  5. He will institute a reign of peace.
  6. He will atone for our sins and impute His righteousness.
  7. He will be the new ruler of our hearts.
  8. And He will save us from our sins.

**So! What we are celebrating for the next few weeks is...**

- You are powerless to crush the head of the devil. **Only King Jesus can!**
- You can't bless all the families on the earth. Even your own family and their sinful natures. You can't transform their hearts. **Only King Jesus can!**
- You can't eradicate sin and destruction we are surrounded by. We are wicked by nature and our depravity will always be there. **Only King Jesus can!**
- You can't usher in legitimate peace! **Only King Jesus can!**
- You can't satisfy your soul! **Only King Jesus can!**
- You will never rule over your own heart well! **Only King Jesus can!**
- You can't overcome sin in your life. **Only King Jesus can!**

**Prayer**