



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
12/27/2020:
“The Untidy Aftermath of
Christmas”
Matthew 2:13-23

How to use the Study Guide During Virtual Online Group Meetings

Group life is even more critical during this incredible season. Over and over, group leaders are reporting that suddenly there is a new hunger to connect, share, pray, and meditate on Scripture together, and so we are making these guides available weekly and suggesting a new format during this season.

As you know, our Group Life’s vision is to “practice the way of Jesus.” And while Jesus never had to lead a Torah study over Zoom, he was strategic in his teaching ministry, and we want to be as well.

There are a number of differences between meeting in person and meeting online, ranging from the obvious to the subtle. One is, given our attention spans for online meetings, we want to encourage you to limit the length of your call between 45-60 minutes and we are calling this “Check-In Plus One.” Meaning, spend a few minutes checking in with your group and see if there are any new needs with them (or even amongst their neighbors). The “One” is to spend time in study. As our virtual season continues, our desire for meaningful content and interaction will grow. Given our new format, the study guides based on Sunday’s Sermon will be designed to be more application based (as opposed to unpacking the text with the Inductive Bible Study method). You might consider sharing the passage beforehand with your group in hopes that they might spend more time with the Scripture before the gathering.

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do in practicing the way of Jesus in community.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim Ghali and Pastor Rachel Keeler on behalf of the Group Life Team

For the Leader: “Check-In Plus One”

Welcome everyone to the Zoom call and outline the goal of this call being 45 minutes. Spend 15-20 minutes checking in with one another, then move into a time of prayer, and then spend some time discussing the application of the Scripture passage.

A “Check-in” question might be, “How are you doing, and is there anything new that has arisen in your life or in your neighborhood that we can pray about?”

We have arrived at the last of our sermons in this Advent series “Comfort and Joy” where we are going to look at the dark and painful text of King Herod ordering the murders of all male children under two and Jesus’ escape to Egypt. But before we jump into the deep side of that, let’s begin with an ice-breaker question first and warm up our conversation skills tonight.

Q – As an Ice-Breaker question: Pastor Adam began his intro by telling us that his family has read “Frosty the Snowman” countless times. So many that his three year old has memorized it and is able to pretend-read to his one year old sister.

- What Christmas traditions (both sacred and non-sacred) has your family established over the years?
- Are there any new practices this 2020 has brought that you hope to either keep or modify to begin a new tradition for future years?

Q – This week’s passage focused on one of the more painful and darker aspects of the first Christmas story when Herod gave orders to kill all the young baby boys in Israel. Could someone read today’s passage for us – Mathew 2:13-23

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ “A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

- What details or themes of this tragic part of the story capture your attention or provoke your mind with further questions?
- The reasons that Matthew includes this part of the story could be to capture the multi-faceted historical context of Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph fleeing with Jesus to Egypt and recounting Herod's evil to the Jewish people and its bearing to the Gospel. For what spiritual reasons do you think Matthew includes these dark features of the story?

(Among the many wonderful answers we might also see that the Bible seems to want to tell us that Jesus does not come into a happy world to bring greater improvement to it but rather Jesus enters into a painful, dark, evil world to bring salvation, healing, and love to it.)

Q – Let's spend a moment reflecting on this quote from Tim Keller – (Note to leader, it might be a good idea to read it twice or screen-share it.)

“If God has really be born in a manger, then we have something that no other religion even claims to have. It's a God who understands you, from the inside of your experience. There is no other religion that says God has suffered, that God had to be courageous, that he knows what it is like to be abandoned by friends, to be crushed by injustice, to be tortured and die. Christmas shows he knows what you are going through. When you talk to him, he understands.” Tim Keller

- What encouragement to you can you find in this quote at the end of 2020?

Q – Think of those around you who are going through difficult circumstances stemming from the pandemic and various other aspects of life. How can we as Christ-followers bless them in ways that might bring them comfort and joy?

As we finish our time in prayer, let's thank the Lord for his coming to this broken world, let's ask the Lord to remind us of the many lessons we have learned this year and let's lift up those who are in painful and challenging circumstances right now.