

## EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS LOVE

### ABOUT THIS WEEK

As we continue our series, Experience Christmas, we will discover how we can experience the same sacrificial love we see in the story of Joseph.

#### ITEMS NEEDED

- Prayer Journal                       Bibles

#### CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- Pray for the meeting     Print & Read Discussion Guide                       Clean meeting room  
 Clean bathroom                       Refreshments (Optional)                       Front door cracked open

### OPENING (5-7 MIN)

*Briefly welcome everyone and say:* To get started today, let's go around and complete the sentence:

#### WHAT'S ON THE SHORT LIST OF THINGS YOU LOVE ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

*Say:* The holiday is full of people and things we love. But today we will be talking about how you and I can experience a different kind of love this Christmas—the sacrificial love we see in the life of Joseph.

### OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

*Say:* But first, can someone start us off with a brief prayer for our time together?

### JOSEPH'S CHOICE (10-15 MIN)

*After the prayer say:* We are going to read a Bible passage about Joseph

#### WOULD SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 1:18-19 FOR US.

*After the reading, say:* On Sunday we heard how the sin of adultery was punishable by death under Jewish Law. So, Joseph was in a tough spot—

#### LET'S ANALYZE JOSEPH'S CHOICES:

- **WHAT'S THE JUST THING TO DO? (DOING WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES.)**
- **WHAT'S THE MERCIFUL THING TO DO? (NOT GIVING WHAT SHE DESERVES.)**
- **WHAT'S THE GRACIOUS THING TO DO? (GIVING WHAT SHE DOESN'T DESERVE.)**

*After discussion say:* And so Joseph decides to try to thread the needle. To do the just thing of divorcing her; but to also do the gracious thing of divorcing her “quietly” (and without accusation), so Mary won't die. But the story doesn't end there. God sent an angel to share his plan with Joseph.

**CAN SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 1:20-23 ALOUD FOR US?****NOTICE WHAT THE ANGEL CITES IN VERSE 23, WHY MIGHT THIS BE SIGNIFICANT?****FINALLY, CAN SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 1:24-25 ALOUD FOR US?****Hosts:** Since Joseph values God's Word so much, it's important to show Joseph from God's Word how Mary's pregnancy was foretold.*After the reading, say:*

Joseph's love is a sacrificial love because he took on public shame in order to care for Mary and Jesus.

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE "SACRIFICIAL LOVE"?****CAN YOU THINK OF ANY CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE?****BASED ON TODAY'S DISCUSSION, WHICH DO YOU NEED MORE RIGHT NOW—FOR SOMEONE TO SHOW YOU SACRIFICIAL LOVE OR FOR YOU TO SHOW SACRIFICIAL LOVE TO SOMEONE?****GOD'S SACRIFICIAL LOVE (1 MIN)**

*After a discussion, say:* However today's discussion hit you, the story of Joseph serves as a shadow, pointing us forward to the great sacrificial love of God. It was God who looked on us in our sin and decided to give his life to save us. He did the just thing of paying the penalty of sin; but he did the gracious thing of paying it for us.

The deeper we understand this truth, the deeper we experience the love of Christmas.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS (2 MIN)**

A couple quick announcements before we jump to our prayer requests this week:

- Don't forget to celebrate Christmas Eve at St. Mark on Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup> at 1pm, 3pm, 5pm or 7pm.
- There will be no Kids' Ministry on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Kids' Ministry will start back up on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

**CLOSING PRAYER (5-7 MIN)**

*After the announcements, say:* Are there any prayer requests today? [Write the prayer requests in your group prayer journal.]

*After writing prayer requests, say:* Today, I will close the group in prayer. Let's pray...