



## Saying YES to Christmas

*Matthew 1:18—2:23*

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### OPEN

Where or how have you experienced the peace of God this Advent season?

### DISCUSS

In the Gospel of Matthew we encounter the Christmas story where two men are in focus: Herod and Joseph. Briefly review Matthew 1:18—2:23 and record a few things you learn about each man:

Herod	Joseph

### The Challenge of Herod

Herod, though an extreme “bad guy” in the Christmas story, intersects our life more than we know.

1. Herod was consumed with control and it impacted everyone around him.
  - How has the need or striving for control shown itself in your life or relationships?
2. Herod was a master of faking devotion to God. He said one thing, but did not actually have the intention to follow through with what he professed.
  - Do you feel you “fake” devotion sometimes? Explain.
  - Do your words always align with your actions when it comes to your faith and devotion?

Part of saying YES to Christmas is confession and repentance of where we have not surrendered control and where we have not fully lived as faithful followers of Jesus. Take a moment of silent prayer and confess whatever you need before the Lord.

### **The Challenge of Joseph**

Joseph is important to the Christmas story for at least three reasons. Reflect on the reasons and questions below and share which of them challenge you.

- Joseph cultivated a lifestyle of prayer that allowed him to hear and listen to God's voice.
  - Do you need to say YES to cultivating a more intentional prayer life so you can hear and listen to God's voice?
- Joseph acted in obedience to what the Lord asked of him, even when it carried difficult circumstances.
  - Do you need to say YES to faithful obedience to what you already know you should do and commit yourself to future obedience as your highest priority?
- Joseph committed himself to the long road of discipleship (following God).
  - Do you need to say YES to recommitting yourself to greater discipleship as you follow Jesus?

What will you do to take an intentional step forward in your own faith journey?

Respond to the quote by Henry Nouwen:

"Somehow I realized that songs, music, good feelings, beautiful liturgies, nice presents, big dinners, and many sweet words DO NOT make Christmas. Christmas is saying YES to something beyond all emotions and feelings. Christmas is saying YES to a hope based on God's initiative, which has nothing to do with what I think or feel. Christmas is believing that the salvation of the world is God's work and not mine. Things will never look just right. If they did, someone would be lying...But it is into this broken world that a child is born who is called Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace, Savior (and Lord)." Henri Nouwen, *The Road to Daybreak*, pp. 104-105.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Read and reflect on the Christmas story this week. May God give you his peace.