



A MAN OF PRINCIPLES

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:1-7

GETTING STARTED

Think of a person who exemplifies “a man or woman of principle” in your life. How would you characterize or describe this person?

READ AND REFLECT

Read Isaiah 7:10-16 and Matthew 1:18-25

If you were Joseph (a faithful, respected Jewish man who took God’s law seriously), how would you have reacted to Mary’s situation (Matt 1:18)?

What would you imagine feeling in that moment?

Do you think Joseph was understanding? Do you think he was merciful or merciless in the initial situation (Matt 1:19)?

How does Joseph’s encounter with God (via the angel in the dream) impact him? How does Joseph align his attitudes and actions accordingly?

Why is this story important to the Christmas story? The Gospel? Our lives today?

ENGAGE AND DISCUSS

There are three principles in operation today that are contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of God:

- Evening Principle—*If I'm let down or hurt by others, I am going to get even.*
- Escape Principle—*If it isn't working out, get out.*
- Expedience Principle—*If the path requires sacrifice, sacrifice the path.*

Which of these three principles are most natural for you to follow?

Where do you see God's principles of Mercy, Faithfulness, and Obedience in the story of Joseph and Mary?

On a scale of 1-10 how well are you doing in living into God's Principles listed above? Why?

In your opinion, how much does the "American Dream" frustrate our understanding and obedience to the Kingdom of God?

Read Romans 12:1-3. Describe the various ways you are encouraged by this passage and what Kingdom Principles you find therein.

Immanuel means *God with us* (Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23). Take a moment in silence to let this reality settle into your souls. Christ has come to be with us.

NEXT STEPS

Reflect this week on the principles guiding your life. Where the principles of this world are impacting your life, confess this to God. Ask him to replace those principles and behaviors with His Kingdom Principles.

As you go forward into the New Year, seek faithfulness and obedience to God and expect the wonderful blessing of his transforming power in your life.

Note: There will not be a study guide for next week. They will resume in January. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your small group staff at Christ Church of Oak Brook.