

**Week Four: *Christmas Traditions: Rediscovering the Meaning Behind What We Do***  
***Matthew 1:18-25***

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions?
2. Read Matthew 1:18-19. What traditions were Mary and Joseph following? Consider the religious and cultural traditions of the first century.
3. How did the realization that Mary was with child change the expectations Joseph might have had?
4. Have you had to change your expectations for this Christmas season? How did they change? Why haven't they changed?
5. How have you seen God at work in your expectations of this Christmas season? End your FIFTEEN by asking God to speak to you about your expectations as Christmas Day draws near. Thank him for things that have or haven't changed. Ask him for grace and strength to handle what has or hasn't changed.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

6. Consider one of your Christmas traditions. How did that tradition become a tradition in the first place? When did it start? Did it happen by accident or was it carefully planned out?
7. Read Matthew 1:19-20. What was Joseph's plan and how did God speak to Joseph's idea?
8. Joseph had one idea of how to solve what he saw as a big problem with potential long-term consequences for himself and for Mary. God had another idea. Read Proverbs 16:9. When has God redirected your carefully laid plans?
9. God sent an angel to allay Joseph's fears and to give him another option. How does God speak into your life?
10. Through the angel, God's first words to Joseph were to call him by name: Joseph, son of David. God let Joseph know he was known by name by the Almighty God. Then he said, "Don't be afraid..." What verses are your favorite when you feel fearful or anxious? See Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:8-10, Isaiah 43:5, Philippians 4:6-7.

11. As you come closer to Christmas, ask God to settle your spirit to be open to new traditions and to new directions he may send your way.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

12. Traditions can serve a variety of purposes. What purpose do traditions serve in your home right now? Do they bring joy and laughter? Do they remind you of your family history? Do they bring your family together?

13. Reread Matthew 1:19-20. What purpose did God have for Joseph?

14. What purpose did God have for Jesus? (Read Acts 4:8-12 for Peter's statement of Jesus' purpose.)

15. God's purposes for Joseph and Jesus were far greater than Joseph's understanding at the time. Read 2 Peter 1:3-8. How has God used you in far greater ways than you expected?

16. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God for his purposes for you and how he uses you in his kingdom on earth right now. If you are feeling unused by God, read Psalm 139. God knows and loves you intimately. Ask God to show you how valued and useful you are in his kingdom.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

17. What are some of your traditions that have gone by the wayside? Why do you no longer continue them? Would you wish to bring them back?

18. Read Matthew 1:24-25. What was Joseph's decision concerning God's direction?

19. Joseph released his idea of what righteous behavior looked like in order to obey God's instructions. Read 1 Samuel 15:22. Samuel was speaking to King Saul about Saul's choice to do what he wanted to do instead of what God had asked him to do. What is God's desire for his people?

20. What does obedience to God's directions look like in your life?

21. Just like we outgrow and release some traditions because they don't fit our lifestyle or schedule, we can release our preconceived ideas for right behavior. End your FIFTEEN by confessing and asking God to turn your heart towards obedience instead of stubbornly holding to your own ideas.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

22. Throughout his book, the gospel writer Matthew wrote about the different ways that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Read Matthew 1:22-23. What is the first fulfilled prophecy?
  
23. Read Isaiah 7:14. How did God fulfill the prophecy?
  
24. Immanuel means God with us. Notice the lack of the verb: to be. Therefore, the name can truly be completed “God was with us,” “God is with us,” and “God will be with us.” Why is it important to you to know God named his son Immanuel, who is with us through all time?
  
25. Isaiah 9:6 also lists names that Jesus will be given. Which of these names for Jesus is a comfort to you? Why?
  
26. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, thank God for sending his son Jesus as a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Praise him for being one who keeps his promises.