



#2—The Appearance

Matthew 1:18-25

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Warming Up

1. We had some fun with the home nativity scenes. Do you have any special Christmas ornaments or decorations? What makes them meaningful?

Digging In

2. Pastor Todd said, "We can be inspired and stirred by the nativity . . . we can think it is special and feel warm inside . . . and yet still not live out the life-changing message that it communicates." What is your response? Do you agree or disagree?

What difference does the nativity make?

3. *It frames up all my difficult life circumstances (v. 18-19).* What challenging situation was Joseph dealing with? Unpack some of the emotions that he likely felt. What trying circumstance(s) are you going through currently or have you experienced previously? How could a deeper understanding and appreciation of "God with us" change your perspective?
4. *It delivers help for my deepest problem (v. 20-22).* How does the world around us attempt to explain the source(s) of our problem(s)? According to the Word of God, what, in fact, is our deepest problem? How exactly is "God with us" the solution to this problem?
5. *It marks my identity with his very presence (v. 23).* How important is a person's identity? What are some of the categories that we typically think of in terms of our identity? Pastor Todd said, "If you are a believer, you cannot separate who you are in Christ from Christ in you. The presence of Christ determines your position in Christ. And our position is our identity." What does this mean? What does Colossians 1:27 add?
6. *It provides my life with purpose and direction (v. 24-25).* What was Joseph's clear purpose following the angel's appearance? How had his direction changed from v. 18-19 to v. 24-25? How should "God with us" redirect our own purpose and direction in life? How has it impacted you personally?

Breaking Out

7. Which of these four "nativity difference makers" connects with you the most? Why? How can you allow "God with us" to have a greater impact in your life this week?