

**60-Day New Testament Journey**  
**Does My Past Determine My Future?**  
**Leader's Tips: January 5/6, 2013**

**Memorize**

King David exclaimed, "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). Help your group to learn to hide God's Word in their heart each week. Make it fun, not legalistic! Many might be resistant at first, but they will so discover the benefits that come from doing so!

This week's memory verse is from Ephesians! Pastor Rick used this verse in his message as a reminder to us all that we are all part of God's tapestry!

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. – Ephesians 2:10, NIV*

**Connect** (*choose one*)

These questions are designed to break the ice and help the members of your group get to know one another better. You probably don't have time to answer each question in this section, so either choose one for the group to discuss or let the members of your group pick which one they will share!

Have fun with these. You might even provide each member with a sheet of paper and a few crayons and have them design their coat of arms! You could probably spend your entire study discussing one of these questions, so manage the time well and keep everyone focused.

- 1. If you were to design a coat of arms for your family, what symbols would you choose? Why?**
- 2. Have you or someone in your family ever mapped out your family tree? What did you discover? Were there any "oddtities" or "black sheep" in your ancestry?**

**Commit to Growth**

*Read Matthew 1:1-18*

**1. What title does Matthew assign Jesus in verses 1 & 16? What is the meaning of each title? Why would it be important to show that Jesus' lineage went back to Abraham and David?**

The title assigned to Jesus is that of Christ! In using that term, Matthew is revealing Jesus to be the Messiah, the Promised One. Contrary to popular thought, Christ was not Jesus' last name! Matthew wants to make it perfectly clear that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and shows Jesus' lineage from the royal line of Israel!

David and Abraham are both mentioned in the introduction and the conclusion of Jesus' genealogy. David and Abraham have much in common. However, what may be of greatest significance here is that they both received special promises from God. In Genesis 12:3 God promises Abraham that "all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you." In 2 Samuel 7:12, God promises David that he will have a son who will be a king. God says that He "will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Jesus is the fulfillment of both of these promises. Jesus is the king whose kingdom is forever (2 Sam 7:12). And Jesus is the king who will be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen 12:3).

**2. Why do you think women were included in this genealogy, when it was not Jewish custom to include women's names in genealogies? What do you know about these women?**

It is very unusual that women are mentioned in Jewish genealogies! However take note here, because in their names being included, we see how God loves and highly values women! Additionally, take note because they are not the people we would think God would or could use. Check it out...

- Tamar, a "pretend" harlot who represented Judas's failure through sin and incest. That tells us that Christ is a friend of sinners, giving us hope and redemption!
- Rahab, a prostitute, one God would use even though society threw her away.
- Ruth, who was of unclean Gentile blood, but whose lineage birthed David, showing that God is a friend of the humble, poor, and obscure, and he favors faith over pedigree.
- Ruth, a non-Jew, who was under a curse ("Moab," Duet. 23:3-5) and who "corrupted" the royal blood line with Gentile blood.

**3. From this genealogy, we see that God has been writing a story and shaping the narrative of Israel for centuries so that Jesus could be understood. In the same way, you and I are part of a much bigger story,**

**written by God himself. What does it mean to you that God's promises are trustworthy over the generations?**

This is a reflective question. There are no right or wrong answers here. Help your group to connect the dots between the faithfulness of God's promises over the generations of Israel's history and that because of his track record, we can trust him with our very lives as well. Also help them realize that our faith isn't blind. It's based on historical evidence! What's interesting to note here is that since the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, no genealogies exist that can trace the ancestry to any Jew now living! Everything points to Jesus. Therefore we can trust him!

- 4. Consider some of the "cast of characters" in Jesus' genealogy. How does knowing their past and yet prominence in God's story, help you better understand God's grace and mercy? How does the fact that God uses flawed people to accomplish his will, encourage you in your relationship with him?**

Jesus comes from an incredible line of diverse people, such as Patriarchs and kings whom we might expect. In addition, listed beside him are righteous people as well as those who were improbable, dubious, and even wicked, such as captives, the obscure, and the insignificant-even traders, prisoners, adulterers, murderers, and harlots. The genealogy of Jesus is immeasurably more than a list of names! It is a beautiful testimony of God's grace! Jesus is a friend of sinners (Matthew 9:13). Help the members of your group to grasp this! This should motivate us to come to him as we are! We don't need to clean up our act to respond to him, nor do we need to be perfect to be used by him! Just look at this "cast of characters!"

- 5. From this genealogy we learn that each person matters to God! How will you try to notice each person that God writes into the story of your life? What can you do to love people one person at a time in 2013?**

This is one of the applications of Pastor Rick's message, so help people to be very specific about what they will do in 2013 to show God's love to others. Perhaps even help them to see how God may be using the difficult and unloving people in their lives to help them grown in Him!

- 6. Discuss what you hope to get out of the 60-Day New Testament Journey. What are some of the obstacles that might prevent you from keeping up with the reading? What will you do to overcome these obstacles?**

You want to encourage the members of your group to not grow weary and loose heart if they fall behind in the reading! Create some accountability buddies. Also discuss other ways they can enhance their experience, like perhaps listening to the Bible on CD or through YouVersion.