



Jesus' Family Tree Plan



Introduction

This session takes a look at some of the characters who were ancestors of Jesus - the only person in history to have had any choice over his relatives and there are quite a few surprises! It can make a good post-Christmas session for church groups. It can be covered under an hour or expanded for further sessions.

There is a similar but different session on this theme called **'Who's Up Your Family Tree?'** that focuses more on some Jesus' ancestors who themselves had to overcome the problem of having difficult parents or grandparents.

Aims

- To help people who may not know who their biological parents are, who have relatives of whom they feel ashamed or have high achieving parents feel they can't live up to them.
- To show that Jesus himself had a very mixed family tree on his human side.
- Who am I? I am part of an earthly family and I can be a child of God.

Resources – select as required

- A really old translation of the Bible or use https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvZW58LQg_k
- See 'Activity Ideas for Family Themes' from the web site for other games and starters.

Key Bible verse

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:5 NLT

Bible references

Matthew 1:1-16
Ephesians 1:5;

Romans 8:14-16
See 'Main content'

Starter

We told the group that we had a special guest that morning. The Reverend Boring from Boring Church in Boring Town had come to do the Bible reading! Someone who enjoyed drama then read the genealogy from Matthew 1 from a very old Bible in as boring a way as he could. Comment that genealogies can look very boring and that our mission (should we choose to accept it!) was to discover how interesting they can be once you find out something about the people in them.

Or use the YouTube clip above

Family history

The Jews took great pride in their family history. You would expect the Messiah to come from the most distinguished families in Israel – and some of them were. He was of the line of David and there were godly people such as Hezekiah and Josiah in his family tree but there were also some characters who were distinguishable for the wrong reasons.

It is becoming popular in some areas for people to trace their family history. My Dad used to say that you might have a shock if you did that because you could find that someone in the family had been a murderer or something like that. Well that was certainly the case with Jesus. He had at least two murderers in his family tree, Moses and David, and other notorious characters.

Jesus grew up with a step dad because he did not have a biological father. God was his 'Father' but in a very different way. It is possible that he may have been regarded as illegitimate. He may have looked and been very different from Joseph and his half-brothers.

Teaching Method

You will need a leader for this who either knows the Old Testament well or who has plenty of time to prepare. Alternatively the stories could be split between different leaders. You won't be spending much time on each story so there is no need to go into a lot of detail although you will need to know it thoroughly. Use a casual chatty style of telling about them about these people.

Leah: Matthew 1:² Abraham was the father of Isaac,... the father of Jacob, ... the father of Judah ...

Leah was not loved by her husband Jacob as much as his other wife, her sister Rachel, but she was the mother of Judah from whom both David and Jesus were descended. Genesis 29:16-35. Judah proved eventually to be one of the best of Jacob's children, prepared to offer his life to save Benjamin when he believed his brother was facing a life of slavery. Genesis 44

Tamar: Matthew 1:³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Tamar had to use a very unusual method to secure her own future when her father-in-law was withholding her family rights. Genesis 38 is not the sort of story you might expect to find in Jesus' ancestry!

Rahab: Matthew 1:⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Rahab lived in the Canaanite city of Jericho where she would have worshipped pagan gods. She was an inn-keeper and possibly also a prostitute but this is unclear. When the Israelites arrived to attack her city, she decided that she had enough faith in their God to make it worthwhile leaving her own tribe to join them. She even hid their spies. Joshua 3 and 6:25.

Ruth: Matthew 1:⁵ Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Ruth was lovely but she was descended from Moab who was the son of Lot and Lot's daughter! That was a huge scandal by any standards. Genesis 19:30-38; Deuteronomy 2:9 & 19; Deuteronomy 23:3. Ruth however, decided to live her life as a 'daughter of Israel'. Her family history was put aside and she became the great grandmother of King David.

David: Matthew 1:⁵ Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was one of the heroes of the Bible – a ‘man after God’s own heart’. But he was not always a good parent. He was often too busy to bring up his sons properly. He also took the wife of Uriah one of his war heroes with whom he would have fought in battle many times. When Bathsheba become pregnant he arranged an early death for her husband in order to cover up his crime.

Solomon: Matthew 1:⁶ David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife, Solomon should never have been born at all when you consider how his parents, David and Bathsheba got together. The fact that he was an ancestor of Jesus shows how completely God forgives us. (Remember that he was Bathsheba’s second son as her first son died) 2 Samuel 12:24-25; 1 Kings 1:15-17

Manasseh: Matthew 1:¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh was so evil he would make some modern dictators look tame in comparison. He even sacrificed his own son to the pagan god Molech. The astonishing thing is that he actually changed his ways later in life. 2 Chronicles 33

Application and reflection

- Discuss: Why was Jesus happy to have these people in his family tree?

Some of us may have a problem with our families

- We may be fostered or adopted and scarcely know our real parents.
- We may have parents of whom we are ashamed for some reason
- We may have high achieving parents or a parent in a leadership position and feel we can’t live up to them.

Give an opportunity for sharing and praying if they wish. Remind them of the need for confidentiality within the group. Be sensitive to any who may be struggling with this type of issue and seek support from other leaders if you are out of your depth.

We can all be spiritual children of our Spiritual Father, regardless of who our human parents might be. The fact that the Almighty God values us and wants us as His children is more than enough if we can grasp that truth. We belong to the most awesome family in the universe.

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:5 NLT

‘The true children of God are those who let God’s Spirit lead them. The Spirit we received... makes us children of God. With that Spirit we cry out, “Father.” And the Spirit himself joins with our spirits to say we are God’s children. Romans 8:14-16 NCV

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