



## REEL Christmas Week 2 Teaching Guide

### Key Texts:

Matthew 1:1-18

### Key Challenge:

Christmas means no matter where you come from or what you have done, God can still use you.

Before starting the message, show the clip from Home Alone.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrJzKr2EzAY&feature>

[Leader note: Begin the message with an illustration about a way that family dysfunction is highlighted around Christmas. Below, you'll see the story of my dad's cousin's bizarre family "brag letter". If you cannot find an illustration, feel free to use mine as something that happened to your friend Andrew.]

**The Real:** One of the traditions that I have a love/hate relationship with around Christmas time is the family brag letter. Those letters from relatives or family members that tell you about all of the awesome stuff they did that year, do you get those? There are a few in my family that are always fun to read; two paragraphs about the big highlights of the year, maybe a funny story, and that's it. Then there is the letter I get every year from my dad's cousin Cheryl that lives in Nebraska. Last year it was 7 pages. It was filled with weird information: like her son's PSAT scores, a really creepy story about taking her daughter to buy her first strapless bra, because she was asked, by a senior, to go to prom, and my favorite, the rundown of how their show cows did at all of the fairs they were entered into. I'm not joking. It was painful. No one needs to know that much about his or her family.

My favorite recent brag letter was from my Gaga. She doesn't send one out every year, unlike my dad's cousin, so when we received it, we knew it would have good stuff in it. She told the story about her dad leaving to buy cigarettes when she was 4, and never coming back. She never saw him

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again. When her older brother was dying, about 50 years later, he wrote her a letter saying that he had found their father years ago, but their mother, my great grandmother, had made him promise not to tell my grandma. In his letter, my great uncle told my grandma that their dad had turned his life around, become a Christian, and tried to reconnect with his kids, but their mother refused to let him have any contact with them. He also told her that my great grandfather had remarried and had two daughters. In 1980, my 55-year-old grandmother found out that she had two little sisters. She had no idea where they were, or where to start looking. Two years ago she found them. She met her little sisters, for the first time, in her mid 80s, and they clicked instantly. They are inseparable now. 2/3 of my Facebook feed is posts from my Gaga and my great aunt's.

About this time every year, your mailbox starts to fill with cards and letters from people who you rarely talk to, but that is because we all want to feel connected in some way to our extended family.

**The Rub:** Most of us, in our culture, keep a relatively small family structure. We have our parents, grandparents, and cousins, but that is about it. We don't know a ton about our families' history. I want to take a little survey, so everyone, stand up. Now stay standing if you know one of your great grandfather's names, not PopPop, Pappa, or GrampGramp, their actual full name. Now stay standing if you know what your great grandfather did for a living. (Continue with great-great grandfather and so on until most of the room is sitting.)

The fact that we don't really know all of our families' history is both a blessing and a curse. It's sad because we know so little of our family history and heritage, but we also do not let someone else's mistakes or triumphs define who we are. That wasn't the way that it used to be. Your family defined who you were. People took great pride, and great shame, in who their ancestors were and what they did. If you did something great, your whole family, for generations, got to celebrate it. But if you did something wrong, your entire family had to deal with the embarrassment. People would either accept others, or write them off completely, based on the family that they came from.

That must have been a lot of pressure. “Hey, don’t screw up, or your great grandkids won’t be able to get into the college they want to 80 years from now.” It also must have felt incredibly unfair to the people who were born into the families that had screwed up. “I’d love to give you a job here, but a hundred years ago your great-great-great- grandfather stole \$5, so you must no be a very trustworthy person.”

**The Read:** In Jesus culture, knowing your ancestors was a BIG deal. Matthew 1 Goes back 42 generations from Jesus to tell where he came from.

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: **2** Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, **3** Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, **4** Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, **5** Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, **6** and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife, **7** Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, **8** Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah **9** Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah **10** Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, **11** and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. **12** After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, **13** Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, **14** Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, **15** Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, **16** and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. **17** Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. **18** This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: Matthew 1:1-18 (NIV)

On the surface this just looks like a long list of really difficult names to say, but if you look closer, you will notice five names that are very different from the rest. These names are different because they belong to women. We have a list of 42 generations, and only five women are mentioned. In Jesus' day women were typically an afterthought, unless they did something scandalous, something that would embarrass the family, then they would be included. The women in Jesus' family weren't any different; all five of them either did terrible things, or came from terrible situations, but God used them all to eventually bring Jesus into the world. Let's take a quick look at the stories of these women.

Verse 3 mentions a woman named Tamar. If I were to tell you Tamar's entire story, I might get fired; it is very R rated. Genesis 38 tells her story though. She married one of Judah's sons, but he died before they had any children, and in that day it was the responsibility of the husband's family to provide a new husband for a wife whose husband had died, if they didn't have kids. That is kind of weird right? "Sorry your husband died, but guess what? You get to be married to his little brother now!" Tamar married her brother in law, but he died too. When she went to her father in law, Judah, looking for a third husband, he told her to go away for a few years until the baby of the family was old enough to get married. Again, this is super weird. A few years went by, she was still waiting for a husband, she was still waiting to have a baby, and her father in law was ignoring her requests. So she decided to dress up like a prostitute, seduce her father in law, and finally have a baby. That baby turned out to be Jesus' great great great great (like 30 times) grandfather.

Verse 5 mentions a woman named Rahab. Joshua 2 tells her story. Rahab didn't just dress up like a prostitute; she was a prostitute. When she realized that God's people were going to destroy her city, it was a very wicked city, she decided to leave her former life, and follow them and the God they served. When Rahab put her faith in God, her entire life changed. Despite her past, God used her greatly, and she became Jesus' great great great great grandmother.

Verse 5 also talks about Ruth. If you know Ruth's story, you might be thinking "hey, what's wrong with Ruth?" Ruth was a Moabite. God's people hated the Moabites. In fact Deuteronomy 23:3 says that if anyone had a [www.downloadyouthministry.com](http://www.downloadyouthministry.com)

child with a Moabite, they would not be allowed to worship with the rest of God's people for ten generations! Think about that, these people were so bad, that if your great great great great great great great great great grandfather was one of them, you weren't allowed to even go to church with your neighbors. The Moabites were infamous for incest, and human sacrifice. That is the family that Ruth came from, but she turned from that life. She trusted in the one true God, and eventually became King David's grandmother, and Jesus' great great great great grandmother.

Bathsheba's story (verse 6) is probably the best known of the women in Jesus' family history. She cheated on her husband Uriah, with King David. Their affair ultimately caused the death of 4 of David's sons, and one of the worst civil wars in the history of the world. Bathsheba's story starts off pretty rough, but ends with her being the mother of King Solomon and Jesus' great great great great great great great grandmother.

Then there is Mary. Now, it is pretty much impossible to say anything bad about Mary, but when Jesus was born, everyone was talking about her. The scandal of an unwed teenage mother is juicy gossip now, but 2000 years ago, in Palestine, it was a criminal offense. Mary's situation might have been the toughest of any of the women in Jesus' history. She was in that situation, not because of something she had done wrong, or because of the awful family she was in; Mary was in her difficult situation because of how righteous she was.

**The Ready:** Matthew chapter 1 is Jesus' introduction to the world, and it is kind of a strange introduction, "Hi my name is Jesus, I come from a messed up family full of messed up people who did messed up things. My great great great great great grandmother pretended she was a prostitute to seduce her own father in law. My great great great great grandmother actually was a prostitute. My great great great grandmother came from a long line of incest, perverts and idol worshipers. My great great great great grandparents had an affair, and tried to cover it up. It cost thousands of lives, and my great great great great grandfather murdered one of his closest friends over it. My own mother was accused of awful things, and called every name in the book. Guess what, God, my Father still used each and everyone of them, and he still can use you too."

**The Response:** The story of Christmas is the greatest story ever told. It is the story of God coming to earth, to make it possible for us to have a relationship with him! But it is also the story of God telling you and me, “No matter where you come from or what you have done, God can use you.” Your story is not done! If any of these people would have looked at the mess they were in and quit, the family history of Jesus would look very different. God uses people who have messed up, from families that are messed up. That is why he can use you and he can use me. Christmas means that no matter where you come from or what you have done, God can still use you.