

Crossway Life Group, Week of December 16

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Matthew 2:13-23 Sermon: "The Perfect Life"

Reading & Discussing the passage

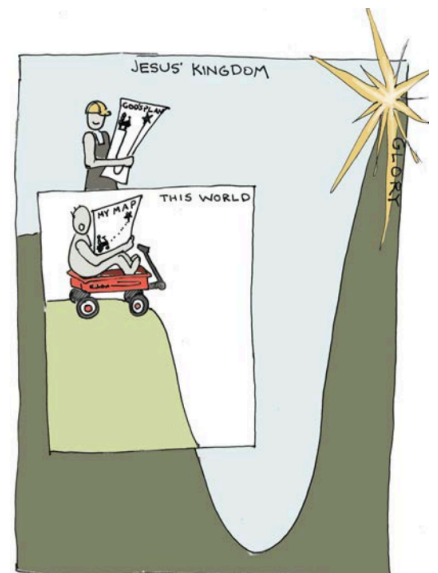
- Opening conversation: Discuss your hopes and expectations...
 - What would life be like if you **were** a perfect _____ (student, teacher, employee, boss, spouse, friend, etc)?
 - What would life be like if we **had** perfect _____? (student, teacher, employee, boss, spouse, friend, etc)?
 - What are typical reactions when people realize they (and others) are not perfect?
 - What would life be like if we were perfect Christians?
- **Read Matthew 2:13-23.** This story is told from Joseph's perspective. What were his experiences so far? (review Matthew 1:18-2:12) In what ways does the Creator of the universe continue to 'need' or rely upon Joseph?
- The Bible uses the word "Behold!" to show a moment when God interrupts. How does God 'interrupt' in this story (see v. 13, 19)?
- Matthew's story about the challenges that Joseph and Mary faced in the first 3 years of Jesus' life intentionally highlights God's plan and pattern. Three times the text says 'so it was fulfilled'. Explore those three instances. What were the circumstances in Israel's journey that Matthew describes? (Hosea 11; Jeremiah 31)? What was 'fulfilled'? That is, in what ways do the challenges in Jesus' early years fulfill the words of these ancient prophets?
- In your own words, what is the big idea of this passage?

The Big Idea

**God obtains His glory and our good
by working through all things
including trouble and trial and tragedy
in Christ**

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you need to see God's power today? Where is God working for His glory and your good in your life today?
2. Think about your life...your expectations, ambitions, challenges, trials joys...from a couple different perspectives:
 - To illustrate, consider the image (left). The person in the wagon is viewing his/her life only in this world (where trouble is sure to happen). How does that compare to seeing his/her full journey in Jesus' kingdom (where God is working all things for his glory and our good, Romans 8:28-30)?



- Draw a line for your own life between now and the end of your days on earth. Place on it significant events (including joys and trials). What does the trajectory of your life line look like?
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- Add to the line the time after death. What is the trajectory of your line for eternity? How do the joys and challenges of your life look different from a perspective of faith in Jesus' kingdom?
3. How have you seen God's power made perfect in weakness?
 4. How do you need 'faith-filled wisdom' in your life today?

Growing in Cultural Understandings

The ways and the kinds of challenges and weaknesses that people share about themselves is highly influenced by personalities and by cultures. For example, some people and cultures highly value transparency and vulnerability which might make it more acceptable for a person to share their weaknesses, mistakes, and challenges. Other kinds of personalities and cultures might find it more difficult or less appropriate to share such shortcomings, for instance, in order to preserve the honor of the larger group or family to which that family belongs.

- Considering your own personality and culture, is it more or less acceptable to share personal challenges and weaknesses? Does it matter with whom the weaknesses are shared? (close friend, small group, large gathering like church service). How might your personality or culture shape your expectations for others?
- Do you ever feel pressure to live a 'perfect life' or to be a perfect student, spouse, employee, etc? What do you sense are the reasons for that pressure? In what ways does the story of Jesus' early years help you respond?

Serving beyond ourselves

Especially in the Christmas season, how might your group spur each other on to love and good deeds, and perhaps even serve together?

Matthew 2:13-23 - New International Version

The Escape to Egypt

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.