



IMMANUEL CHURCH

Discussion Guide: Just Branding December 10, 2017

Opening Questions:

- Have you ever thought of yourself as a brand? Does that idea sit well with you? Why or why not? If it isn't something you like, how might you live life in today's society without it becoming the case regardless?
- Talk about your need for approval, affirmation, and applause. How do you see your desire for those things as coming from a place of fear? Is negative self-talk or self-criticism something you ever struggle with? In what ways?
- Do you agree that Christmas has become somewhat of a self-branding machine? Why or why not?

Looking at Scripture:

- Read **Matthew 1:18-24...** Put yourself in Joseph's shoes; can you understand why he'd think about leaving Mary? Can you blame him for wanting to make sure his reputation wasn't ruined because of a scandal like this? Explain.
- The angel tells Joseph to not be afraid and to go ahead with his marriage to Mary. Why do you suppose the angel doesn't promise there won't be public backlash or gossip about them? Why not make this whole thing easier?
- While all of the humans in this story are thinking negatively about the situation, what is God thinking? In your own life, where are you sensing God could be thinking something different from what you and others in your life might be thinking? Is it with a job? A move? A relationship?

Application Questions:

- This week's bottom line was **STOP THINKING WHAT GOD'S THINKING IS THE SAME AS WHAT EVERYONE ELSE IS THINKING.** What might God be thinking about your brand these days? Explain what you'd say your brand is—what's the label? What is that label based on? Would others give you the same one?
- Do you know anyone whose story is like Gretchen's? How might you come around them and encourage them in their efforts to focus on what God thinks of them?
- Spend time brainstorming as a group a list of Daily December Declarations to remind you what Christmas is all about. What phrases will draw your attention away from yourself and onto God? Next, establish an accountability mechanism to remind everyone about spending time praying through those declarations.

End your time together praying for one another, asking God to help you make your brand all about Him. Ask for courage and focus in this effort. Take turns praying for each other's December and asking God's blessing on their Christmas celebration.