KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 1:18-25

(Sermon from Sunday 5 March 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

How to use this guide

This year we are encouraging you as CG's to continue with the 'transformation equation' in the structure of your CG time:

Information + Activation + Implementation = Transformation

CG leaders thus do spend time imparting '**Information**', which may be a short recap of the sermon, but will likely be more spent on unpacking other aspect to the text that didn't make it into the sermon.

However, the foremost priority of CG's, is the '**Activation**' part. This is where the Information learned is activated into real life. 'Application' is also relevant here, but most sermons will include an 'application' portion. What makes activation different is that it is applied uniquely to the individuals in your group (in ways that could never be done in a sermon!)

Lastly, '**Implementation**' would be 'resolutions' the group makes to declare intent on following-through on some of the activation elements. The word 'accountability' is also relevant here, as wise CG leaders will also ask the group how they have 'implemented' the resolutions from the previous week.

It is only through all these elements that true transformation takes place, and **CG's play a prominent role in this, particularly in 'Activation' and 'Implementation'**. So don't just let the group default to another teaching time - lets be like those who 'build upon the rock' by being doers of Jesus's words, not just listeners! (Matthew 7:24-27).

These notes will assist you with 'Activation' by providing suggested questions that could apply the sermon in deeper ways. It will also point you to other 'information' points in the text that could be discussed.

1. **<u>Information</u>**

    a) **Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions**

    b) **Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.**

- There is additional information in the CG guide on page 20-22.
- In particular you may want to highlight the following points, which were not expressed in the sermon:

    i. On Joseph's 'righteousness' (v19):
        - This could be a rabbit-trail, so be intentional if you want to go here, but you could talk about Joseph balancing obedience to the law with grace & mercy, something which Jesus will speak deliberately about in Matthew 22:23-24.

    ii. On fulfillment (v22-23):
        - The structure of the section, placing the citation from Isaiah 7:14 in the middle, and thus in focus.
        - Talking about the general idea of 'fulfillment' in Matthew and,
        - The unique historical context of Isaiah 7:14 and it's near (the sign to Ahaz) and final (the virginal conception of Jesus) fulfillment. *Note: don't get bogged down here, particularly if you haven't got your head around it yet! We have plenty time to get this down!*

    c) **Answer any questions the group might have**

2. **Activation**

- I made a Pastoral decision to spend substantial time in the sermon unpacking the idea of 'sin' (sg) & 'sins' (pl) - their distinction & connection.

- I did this because I truly believe it's the only way to make sense of the difficulty and destruction of the world (and our country) around us at the moment.

- I sense, generally, people are anxious, angry & afraid, and I think we need hope.
- Matthew 1:21 is the greatest good news right now: "he will save his people from their sins"

- **I would strongly encourage you to digest this as a group**. Plainly ask the group if the idea of being 'saved from sins' = hope?
- *This could be a tender time of shepherding your people by allowing them to express their fears, and reinforcing the 'solution' of Jesus as our primary means of hope.*

- **I would then urge a time of reflection & personal confession** (or corporate, if your group is already up for it) for our own sinfulness, and sinful actions.
- *Again, this could be a tender time, so think through how to meaningfully lead your group in prayer through this.*

- **I would then urge a strong time of intercession** for the gospel to be spread through our community, even if only for own benefit of being saved from the sins of others (1 Tim 2:1-2)!
- *This could truly spark hope!*

- If you would like to do further study on this, you could read and reflect on:
    - Romans 6:1-14
    - Ephesians 2:1-10

3. **Implementation**

- The 'transformation equation' can similarly be described as:
    i. What? (Information)
    ii. So what? (Activation)
    iii. **Now what? (Implementation)**

- This third step is crucial! Think about the answer to the question '**Now what**'? As it relates to **the story of Jesus's birth** (perhaps some more practical applications like how Joseph embodied both justice & mercy?) and make some commitments to each other as a group, that you can follow up on next week.

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