

# **CHRISTMAS UNWRAPPED (Week 1): NAZARETH**

## *The Home of Jesus: family and surroundings*

*Here are some questions you might like to consider—it is not necessary to cover everything!*

1. What did you find particularly interesting in the video? What new things did you discover?
2. Read together these Bible passages about Jesus' family:

Matthew 1:18-19: 'Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph but before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.' (Matthew then relates how he changed his mind as a result of God's intervention.) Luke 1:38: 'Mary answered the angel, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said."' Luke 2:51-52: 'Then Jesus went down to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men.'

- a. What do these references tell us about the character of Joseph and Mary? In what ways does it appear that Jesus was brought up in the right family? What can Joseph and Mary teach us about parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  - b. To what extent have factors relating to family and upbringing influenced your own life for good or bad? Are there any factors that are still influencing your life? Have these factors helped or hindered you in following Jesus?
3. Read together this Bible passage about where Jesus was brought up:

Matthew 2:22-23: 'Joseph left Egypt and, being afraid to settle near Bethlehem, he withdrew to the district of Galilee ... and lived in a town called Nazareth.' Evidently, it was a safe place out of the public eye—in fact, a quiet village, nestling in a hollow of the Galilean hills, and 'on the road' to nowhere! It was so insignificant in the eyes of Nathaniel that he quipped, "Nazareth! Can any good thing come from there?" (in John 1:46).

- a. Is place important in your Christian experience? Has God spoken to you in a particular place? Have we ever experienced the presence of God (who is everywhere!) in a particular place?
  - b. We also learn from Luke 4:28-29 that Jesus was rejected in Nazareth. Not being accepted is difficult. Have you ever felt as an 'outsider' whilst wanting to be an 'insider'? How did you deal with this?
4. What does it mean to be a follower of 'Jesus of Nazareth'? Paul, for example, was put on trial for being a leader of the 'Nazarene sect' (Acts 24:5). And, during the Isis takeover in northern Iraq, homes and businesses were marked with the Arabic letter 'N' as a signal that the Christian occupants should convert, pay taxes or be killed. (See #WeareN.) How committed am I as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth? What do I find difficult as I seek to live my Christian life? Where do I find help?

### **Concluding Prayers**

- Pray the 'family' prayer together – The Lord's Prayer.
- Pray for members of your family, particularly those who are having a tough time at the moment.
- Pray for your church community and the place where you come closer to God.

**During the Week:** Read again the story of the Annunciation and the 'Birth of Jesus Foretold' (Luke 1:26-38) and then Mary's Song' (also known as the Magnificat: Luke 1:46-55). This song challenged the social norms of the day and would have been politically counter-cultural—a theme that Jesus often repeated in his teaching. Is there an area of social justice where you might need to take a stand?