DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

Matthew's account of the life of Christ opens with an extensive genealogy. His aim is two-fold:

1. to show that Jesus can lay claim to the title of Messiah in that He was the "son of David" Israel looked for
2. to show also that the line of David included not just heroes but also the wicked and the marginalized: Rehoboam, Joram, Amon, and Jeconiah were all wicked men; Rahab the prostitute and Ruth the laborer were both Gentile women.

INTRODUCTION (observation):

1. How many names do you recognize from this list of Jesus' ancestors? What do you know about them?

2. Matthew divides his genealogy into three main sections. What are the two major characters and one major event that mark the beginning of the three sections?

3. Notice the way the wording changes in v. 16. Why is this so?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

If we were first century Jews (Matthew's target audience), we would read the opening of Matthew's account of the life of Jesus with different eyes. How would these expectations make Matthew's genealogy come alive?

- Lineage is a non-negotiable credential. No matter how charismatic or talented you are, your family background is the most important thing about you.

- The Hebrew Scriptures point forward to someone who will fulfill God's purposes in Israel.

So what? (Application):

Someone once said that culture is what goes without saying. Matthew wrote his account of the life of Jesus in a culture that was vastly different from our own, informed by different unspoken assumptions (see Discussion).

- It was communal rather than individualistic. Individual achievement didn't matter as much as the success of the family and tribe.

- It was preoccupied with Messianic expectations (see Gamaliel's summary of failed messianic movements in first century Israel, Acts 5:35-37).

Taken on its own cultural terms, Matthew's genealogy has much to teach us about God's work in the world.

1. **As the Text Summary indicates, Matthew's genealogy doesn't try to hide the miscreants and outsiders in Jesus' family tree.** In His wisdom and sovereignty, God has often used wicked and dissipated people (like the corrupt disciple Judas, the corrupt high priest Caiaphas, and the ineffectual Roman governor Pilate) to bring about His own wise and good purposes. As you think about the men and women God has used to form your outlook and habits, how has He used not just good but also difficult people and circumstances to create good fruit in your own life?

2. **Matthew's genealogy reminds us that God is always playing the long game.** He was at work preparing the way for His Son to come into the world centuries before He was born. How has God played the long game in your life… in the lives of people you've observed… in the life of your family?