



Week 2 The Christmas Legacy
Dec 14-15, 2013 Part 2 of 3
Pastor Tom Mercer
"Act 2- The Legacy of the Fall"



Leaders: Here are your notes for the second week on The Christmas Legacy. You will see the stuff your folks have are in **bold** text and the leader insights are in the *italic* text.

Here are a couple things to do this week and over the next few weeks.

1. **SG Curriculum:** This is the last weekend for our SG notes for 2013. We will start again on January 11/12 with the book of Hebrews.
2. **If you aren't meeting this holiday season, please ignore the emails.** If you are still meeting please update your SG roster and take attendance.
3. **As always, don't answer all the questions!**

1. **We often think of the word "legacy" in a positive light, but what are some sinful legacies that have been passed down through your family?**

Some of the negative legacies can be things like alcoholism, a poor self-esteem, poor money management, a overbearing desire for approval, not being told "I love you", verbal abuse, etc. This isn't a time to bash our parents or family, but it's a great time to think through how our family history has shaped our current family life.

2. **Read Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 2:1-20. Which part of the Christmas story is the most interesting to you?**
3. **Read Matthew 2:1-12. The magi pursued the star and eventually found Christ. As you pursue Christ what has He asked you to do for him that you have been hesitant in? In what ways can you pursue Christ more this next year?**

God asked the Magi not to return to Herod and although that might have been easy for them, it came with the potential of great negative consequences from Herod. Perhaps God has asked you to quit your job, lead a small group, stop drinking, start reading to your kids, to lead your family, to pay your back taxes, to start giving, to finally forgive that certain person, etc., etc.

4. **How does the fall narrative in Genesis 3:7-12 help you understand the legacy you've been given? What behaviors can you change in order to pass on a Godly legacy to your family?**
5. **When it comes to sin we minimize it, hide it and blame others for it. Why do we tend to minimize certain sins over others? Are there areas in your life that you are minimizing right now?**

Generally if the sin isn't public like sexual immorality or drunkenness we minimize it. If it's things like a little bitterness, or laziness or lack of leadership or a bad attitude we don't think it's that bad. But of course the minimization of sin is the tendency of our mortal nature. "It can't be that bad." "All I did was..."

In the history of the church, different categorizations of sins came about. Some may even recall hearing about some of these, for example, mortal sins and venial sins. Mortal sins were understood to be "larger" or "more damning" sins than venial, which came to be understood as less so. However, in making any such distinctions of sin, it must be remembered that sin before God is sin; regardless of how you define it.

Have fun with the group and make a list of sins people generally consider "lesser" sins and then ask if anyone is guilty of those sins and how they can repent and change their legacy.

Follow up question: Read Ephesians 5:11-13. Can you remember a time when God exposed your sin to you by shining His light on it (even publically)? How did this experience shape your worldview and behaviors since?

- 6. Read James 5:16, 1 John 1:5-10 and John 12:35. Bringing your sins to light brings freedom. Do you have someone whom you feel safe to confess your sins to? What other strategies have you set up as boundaries for accountability?**

In Christian fellowship, people should experience authenticity. Authentic fellowship is not superficial, surface-level chit-chat. It's genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level sharing.

It happens when people get honest about who they are and what is happening in their lives. They share their hurts, reveal their feelings, confess their failures, disclose their doubts, admit their fears, acknowledge their weaknesses, and ask for help and prayer.

Authenticity is the exact opposite of what you find in many churches. Instead of an atmosphere of honesty and humility, there is pretending, role-playing, politicking, superficial politeness, and shallow conversation. People wear masks, keep their guard up, and act as if everything is rosy in their lives. These attitudes are the death of real friendship. It's only as we become open about our lives that we experience authentic fellowship.

Someone once said to confess your sins to God for forgiveness and confess your sins to each other for healing. Healing comes when we bring things out of darkness and have the support of our Christian family,

Follow up question: Are there any sins you need to bring to light so that you can be healed?

- 7. Read Exodus 34:1-7. List the character traits of God in this passage (v. 6-7). How do they frame His dealings with the sinful behavior of the guilty? How does this give you hope when you are caught up in sinful behavior?**

The traits listed: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. They help us understand how and why God punishes or disciplines his kids. Even in His discipline he is compassionate and he is slow to anger. He could have punished us many times but because he is slow to anger, he gave us many times to repent before he brought his discipline. There are many more insights I'm sure you can think through as it relates to this passage. Have fun and enjoy your group.

- 8. Generally, over the Christmas season, we begin to reflect what our year has been like. As you reflect, how has God revealed His light to you this year?**