



TOGETHER *with* GOD  
THE  
GOSPELS

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# Name upon Name

MATTHEW 1:1–17

*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

MATTHEW 1:1


Dalton Conley, a sociologist at New York University, and his wife, Natalie Jeremijenko, have two children. Several years ago, they sought permission from the city to change their five-year-old son's name to Yo Xing Heyno Augustus Eisner Alexander Weiser Knuckles Jeremijenko-Conley. Actually, much of that name was already his, but his parents added three of the middle names. They had specific reasons for each one.

Names are important, even to God. I believe He had specific reasons for the names He included in the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. It may seem like a long, boring list of meaningless names, but those names served at least two purposes. First, they provided the framework by which true Hebrews could establish their family roots and maintain religious purity against outside influences. Second, the names reflected the sovereign work of God. They revealed God's dealings in the past, which resulted in the birth of the Messiah. The Lord used all kinds of people in Jesus's lineage—farmers, kings, a prostitute, adulterers, liars. When we read this list, we are reminded of God's faithfulness.

As you think about being a part of God's family through faith in Jesus Christ, remember His faithfulness to you—no matter what your background—and His desire to use you to bring about His purposes.

MARVIN WILLIAMS

**Life's purpose is found in a person—Jesus Christ.**





# Another Hero

MATTHEW 1:18–25

*Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

MATTHEW 1:19

For most of my life, I missed the importance of Joseph in the story of Jesus's birth. But after I became a husband and father myself, I had a greater appreciation for Joseph's tender character. Even before he knew how Mary had become pregnant, he decided that he wasn't going to embarrass or punish her for what seemed to be infidelity (Matthew 1:19).

I marvel at his obedience and humility, as he not only did what the angel told him (v. 24) but he also refrained from physical intimacy with Mary until after Jesus was born (v. 25). Later we learn that Joseph was willing to flee his home and travel to a foreign land with his little family so he could protect Jesus (2:13–23).

Imagine the pressure Joseph and Mary must have felt when they learned that Jesus would be theirs to raise and nurture! Imagine the complexity and pressure of having the Son of God living with you every moment of every day—a constant call to holiness by His very presence. What a man Joseph must have been to be trusted by God for this task! What a wonderful example for us to follow, whether we're raising our own children or those born to others who are now entrusted to us! He was truly another hero of this remarkable true story.

May God grant us the strength to be faithful like Joseph—even if we don't fully understand God's plan.

RANDY KILGORE

**The secret of true service is absolute faithfulness  
wherever God places you.**





# A Given Name

MATTHEW 1:18–25

*“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

MATTHEW 1:21

Most families have their own family stories. One in our family has to do with how I got my name. Apparently, when my parents were in the early days of their marriage, they disagreed about what to name their first son. Mom wanted a son named after Dad, but Dad wasn't interested in naming a son “Junior.” After much discussion, they reached a compromise, agreeing that only if a son were to be born on Dad's birthday would he be given Dad's name. Amazingly, I was born on my dad's birthday. So I was given his name with “Junior” attached to it.

The naming of children is as old as time. As Joseph wrestled with the news that his fiancée, Mary, was pregnant, the angel brought him insight from the Father about naming the Baby: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Not only would Jesus be His name but it would also explain the reason for His coming into the world: To take on himself the punishment we deserve for our sin. The redemptive purpose behind the babe in the manger is wrapped up in the perfectly given Name above all names.

May our heart's desire be to live in a way that honors Jesus's wonderful name!

BILL CROWDER

**Jesus: His name and His mission are one and the same.**





# Someone to Celebrate

MATTHEW 2:1-12

*Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

PSALM 95:6

Many manger scenes depict the wise men, or magi, visiting Jesus in Bethlehem at the same time as the shepherds. But according to the gospel of Matthew (the only place in Scripture where their story is found), the magi showed up later. Jesus was no longer in the manger in a stable at the inn when they arrived. By then, He was in a house. Matthew 2:11 tells us, “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

Realizing that the magi’s visit happened later than we may think provides a helpful reminder: Jesus is always worthy of worship. As the season of remembering Jesus’s birth is over and we head back to life’s everyday routines, we still have Someone to celebrate.

Jesus Christ is Immanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), in every season. He has promised to be with us “always” (28:20). Because He is always with us, we can worship Him in our hearts every day and trust that He will show himself faithful in the years to come. Just as the magi sought Him, may we seek Him too and worship Him wherever we are.

JAMES BANKS

**When we find Christ, we offer our worship.**





# Be a Star

## MATTHEW 2:1–12

*Those who lead many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars for ever and ever.*

DANIEL 12:3

Many today seek stardom by trying to get into the media spotlight. But a young Jewish captive achieved “stardom” in a better way.

When Daniel and his friends were taken captive by a ruthless invading nation, it was unlikely that they would be heard from again. But the godly young men soon distinguished themselves as intelligent and trustworthy.

When the king had a dream that his wise men could not repeat nor interpret, he condemned them to death. After a night of prayer with his friends, Daniel received from God the content of the dream and its interpretation. As a result, the king promoted Daniel to be his chief advisor (see Daniel 2).

If the story ended there, it would be remarkable enough. But some scholars believe that Daniel’s influence in Babylon made people aware of messianic prophecies about a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Daniel’s teaching may have been the reason that five hundred years later wise men from the East followed a star to a remote and unfamiliar part of the world to find an infant King, worship Him, and return to their country with the good news of God’s incredible journey to earth (Matthew 2:1–12).

By leading others to righteousness, we, like Daniel, can become a star that will shine forever.

JULIE ACKERMAN LINK

**You can attract people to Jesus when you have His light in your life.**





# Out of Egypt

MATTHEW 2:13–21

*“Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.”*

MATTHEW 2:13

One year when our family was traveling through Ohio on the way to Grandma’s house, we arrived in Columbus just as a tornado warning was issued. Suddenly everything changed as we feared that our children might be in danger.

I mention that story to help us imagine what it was like for Joseph’s family as he, Mary, and their young child traveled to Egypt. Herod, not a tornado, threatened them as he sought to kill their little boy. Imagine how frightening it was for them, knowing that “Herod [sought] the child to kill him” (Matthew 2:13).

We usually take a more idyllic view of Christmastime—lowing cattle and kneeling shepherds in a peaceful scene. But there was no peace for Jesus’s family as they sought to escape Herod’s horror. Only when an angel told them it was safe did the family leave Egypt and go back home to Nazareth (vv. 20–23).

Consider the awe we should feel for the incarnation. Jesus, who enjoyed the majesty of heaven in partnership with the Father, set it all aside to be born in poverty, to face many dangers, and to be crucified for us. Coming out of Egypt is one thing, but leaving heaven for us—that’s the grand and amazing part of this story!

DAVE BRANON

**Jesus came to earth for us so we could go to heaven with Him.**







# Unlikely Giants

## MATTHEW 3

*“Among those born of women  
there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”*

LUKE 7:28 (NKJV)

The famous evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) was greatly moved by a lay preacher’s statement that the world has yet to see what God could do through a person fully yielded to Him. Because an attitude of submission is far more important than outward appearance, some unlikely people have become spiritual giants.

The first time I met Pete, he had a two-day growth of stubble, a missing front tooth, and a suit that looked as if he had slept in it. But I discovered that God was using him in an unusual way to reach disadvantaged people.

Philip Yancey described the late Bill Leslie as “disheveled,” “disorganized,” and one who “laughed uproariously at his own [bad] jokes.” But he points out that as pastor of the LaSalle Street Church in Chicago, this man had led many people to Christ and brought great social and economic changes to that part of the city. This unlikely spiritual giant died at age sixty after three decades of work in the inner city.

Pete and Bill remind me of John the Baptist. Although he lived as a recluse and wore a rough, camel’s-hair garment, he had a ministry to thousands. Jesus called him the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28).

God uses ordinary people, and He wants to use you and me. Let’s serve Him humbly, zealously, and expectantly.

HERB VANDER LUGT

**God uses those who are small in their own eyes.**

