

# MAX LUCADO

## Because of Bethlehem

**Focus** We were all born with a sin nature. Jesus came into this world to take away our sin. When we receive Him, He works in our lives and makes us more like Christ.

**Fun** If you could be in the movie of your choice, what movie would it be and what character would you play?

**Review** Key Scripture: Matthew 1:20–21

**1. We all have a sin nature.**

The sinful nature is all about self: pleasing self, promoting self, and preserving self. Sin is selfish. Under the right circumstances, you will do the wrong thing. You won't want to, and you'll try not to. But you will because you have a sin nature. We are born with it. Just like kids tell their parents "no," we sometimes tell God "no" in our rebellious sin nature.

**2. God entered the world to take sin away.**

Because of Bethlehem, we know the day and the way God saved us from ourselves. Matthew 1:21 says that Jesus would come into the world to save His people from their sins.

**3. Jesus does a work within us.**

Jesus not only did a work for us, He does a work within us. Just like Jesus grew inside Mary's womb, when we are born again, He comes into us and grows. When Jesus grows in us, our sin nature is driven out so we sin less. If we do sin, His grace provides a net for us. The grace that saved us preserves us.

**\*Group Dynamics Idea\*** The Gateway Christmas production is just around the corner! Now is a good time to make an intentional list of people you can invite. It always has a powerful salvation message, and during this season, people are often more open to accepting an invitation to church. Be intentional about connecting with the outreach opportunity the

Christmas production provides to reach friends, neighbors, and coworkers with the gospel message.

## Discuss

1. We were all born with a sin nature. What are some things you see kids do that prove this to be true? How do adults do those same things?
2. Max Lucado told a story about a bad driving experience that revealed his sin nature. What types of circumstances cause your sin nature to rear its ugly head?
3. Read Matthew 1:20–21. How is the world different because of what happened in these verses?
4. Imagine if the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem had never happened. What would the world look like today? What impact would that have made on history? What impact would that have made on your life?
5. Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit and He grew. How does this parallel what happens in our life when Jesus comes into our hearts through the Holy Spirit? How does His life grow within us?
6. Many of our lives resembled a Bethlehem stable before we found Jesus (e.g., crude in some spots, smelly in others). What was your life like before Jesus? How did it change after He came into your life?
7. If Jesus was willing to come into the world in a smelly stable, He is willing to come into every area of our lives. Take a moment to reflect: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What area(s) of your life do you need to invite Jesus into?

## Take Home

As we conclude, remember the following:

- We were all born with a sinful nature.
- Jesus, fully God, came into this world to take away our sin.
- As Jesus grows in us, we become more like Christ.
- Jesus will come into any situation, no matter how bad it is.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, even though we all have a sinful nature, we thank You for sending Jesus to take away our sin. We invite Jesus into our hearts and into every area of our lives. We pray that the life of Jesus would grow in us so we would become more like Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**\*New Leader Tip\*** It may seem like a simple thing, but people like to connect around food. Creating a sign-up list for people to bring food and drinks to your group ensures the sole responsibility doesn't fall on you. When people are eating, they are usually more comfortable to talk and connect. You may even want to plan one of your group meetings at a restaurant and make it simply a relational time.