



Leader's Guide for the Sermon, "The Family Tree"

Matthew 1:1–6 | Pastor Nick Engle | Series: *Unprecedented* | November 30, 2025

Session Overview

This week launches our Advent series, *Unprecedented*, exploring the ways God breaks patterns, shatters expectations, and accomplishes what has never been seen before. Pastor Nick's sermon on Matthew 1:1–6 highlights the shocking, intentional inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba—women whose stories carried pain, scandal, and outsider status.

Matthew begins the story of Jesus not with angels, shepherds, or a manger scene, but with a genealogy that feels boring at first glance. Yet hidden in this "family tree" is a radically good announcement: Jesus came **from** people like us and **for** people like us. This week's discussion invites your group to see how God's grace breaks every precedent of race, morality, and status—and how that truth speaks into their own stories.

Session Flow (60–75 minutes)

1. Welcome and Icebreaker (10 min)

Example Question:

"Share a time when something small and unexpected produced a much bigger outcome in your life."

Purpose:

To help the group begin thinking about how God often works through surprising, humble, or unlikely beginnings.

2. Scripture Reading (5 min)

- Read **Matthew 1:1–6** aloud.
 - Optional: Read it again in a paraphrase (NLT or The Message) to hear the rhythm and feel of the genealogy.
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3. Discussion (40–50 min)

Use **6–8** of the following questions depending on time and group size.

Encourage honest reflection and space for people to connect the genealogy to their own stories.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you from the introduction to the *Unprecedented* series (stories like the Rockefeller tree, Salvation Army kettles, first electric tree, etc.)?

Leader Note: Draw a line between those small, unexpected beginnings and the way God works—simple acts that turn into something much bigger than anyone imagined.

2. Why is it surprising or “unprecedented” that Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy instead of a more dramatic scene?

Leader Note: Help the group see that in the first century, a genealogy was normal, but *this* genealogy is not. Emphasize that it looks boring on the surface, yet Matthew is doing important theological work right from verse one.

3. Matthew intentionally includes Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba—women, likely Gentiles, and people with painful or scandal-marked stories. Why might this list of women have shocked the original readers?

Leader Note: Explore the culture: patriarchal society, lineage traced through men, Jews vs. Gentiles, and how these women didn’t “fit” the expected mold. Let this discomfort surface how radical Matthew’s choices are.

4. Pastor Nick said that God’s kingdom breaks every precedent of race, morality, and status. Where do you see that truth in Jesus’ family tree?

Leader Note: Invite people to name specific elements: gender, ethnicity, social standing, moral history. Help them see that Jesus’ genealogy intentionally crosses every barrier.

5. How does knowing that Jesus came from a family line that includes moral failure, trauma, and scandal encourage you in your own walk with God?

Leader Note: Create safe space for people to think about their own past, family, or regrets. Emphasize that God is not embarrassed by broken places—He steps into them to redeem.

6. Matthew highlights women who endured injustice, exploitation, or marginalization (Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba). What does their inclusion reveal about God’s heart for people who have been wounded, used, or overlooked?

Leader Note: Encourage empathy and care, not theological debate. Draw out God’s compassion, His refusal to erase hard stories, and His desire to honor and restore.

7. Pastor Nick said, “Jesus came *from* people like us and *for* people like us.” What does that statement mean to you personally?

Leader Note: Invite personal application. Some may talk about shame, family history, or feeling like an outsider. Affirm that worth and identity come from what Jesus declares, not from anyone’s résumé or reputation.

8. Which part of this genealogy helps you better understand God’s grace—and why?

Leader Note: Use this as a wrap-up question. Encourage each person to name one specific insight or picture of grace they want to carry into Advent.

4. Application and Prayer (10–15 minutes)

- Invite group members to identify **one area** where they need to believe that God can work through their story—even the unexpected, painful, or “messy” parts.
- Ask: “Where do you most need to hear, ‘You are worth it to God’ this Advent?”
- Spend time in prayer, allowing a moment of silence before anyone prays aloud.

Closing Prayer Suggestion

Lord, thank You for writing stories that break every human precedent.
Thank You for using Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba—and people like us.
Thank You that Jesus came from a family tree filled with imperfect, complicated people,
and that He came *for* imperfect, complicated people, too.
Help us see our worth through Your eyes and trust that You redeem every part of our story.
As we enter this Advent season, open our hearts to expect the unexpected work of Your grace.
Amen.