

## The Faith of Family

He was a handsome man,” said Alisa. “I can see the Dixon resemblance.”

Duane Dixon smiled at his wife and reached for the old photo. It was a picture of his grandfather’s brother, Elijah Dixon, who had been a pastor of a small country church in Arkansas. Duane had found the photo and some old family journals in his grandparents’ cedar chest.

Duane was having the photo copied, enlarged, and framed. He was giving it to his older brother, Calvin. Calvin had been preaching for the past seven years, but only recently confided to his younger brother that he felt the Lord was calling him to pastor.

“But that’s silly, isn’t it?” Calvin had asked. “There are too many churches as it is. Why would the Lord call me to pastor? I don’t come from a preaching dynasty or anything.”

So, Duane felt it was by design when he came across the family journals. He remembered seeing this photo of his grandfather’s brother, but never realized Elijah Dixon was a pastor. He couldn’t wait to give the photo and information to Calvin for Christmas.

“Won’t Calvin be surprised to learn that his granduncle was a pastor?” said Alisa.

“Yes, he will,” said Duane. “I was surprised and grateful to know. Spiritual ancestry is important. I’m going to tell Calvin that this photo should one day hang in his pastor’s study.”

**1. Whose legacy has touched you in a powerful way? Explain why and how.**

**2. Why do the legacies of people of faith inspire other Christians?**

**3. How does your faith in Jesus affect the legacy you want to have?**

**LESSON FOCUS:** Remember our unexpected legacy of faith.

## Jesus' Genealogy

*Matthew 1:1, KJV*

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

*Matthew 1:1, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The Gospel of Matthew introduces us to the anticipated “Messiah” (1:1), Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew selected the material he included in his account of Jesus’ life and ministry to show that Jesus was the Jewish nation’s long-awaited Redeemer. The Jewishness of Jesus is emphasized in Matthew’s Gospel perhaps more than in any other. “Jesus” is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “the Lord saves,” so Matthew began his account by presenting the birth record of the Messiah. According to ancient Jewish custom, God’s people exercised great care to preserve records of family trees.

Matthew’s genealogy goes back to “Abraham,” the forefather of the faith, then is traced through “David,” the great king, to show that Jesus was the lawful heir to the throne. This was important because the Old Testament prophets said that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Further, Matthew’s emphasis on Jesus being a “son [descendant] of David” (1:1) and a “son of Abraham” all point to Jesus being the promised Messiah.

### 4. *What is Matthew’s Gospel mainly about?*

## Prior to the Babylonian Exile

*Matthew 1:2-11, KJV*

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares

*Matthew 1:2-11, NIV*

<sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

<sup>3</sup>Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron,

begat Esrom; and Esrom  
begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat  
Aminadab; and Aminadab  
begat Naasson; and  
Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz  
of Rachab; and Booz begat  
Obed of Ruth; and Obed  
begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David  
the king; and David the  
king begat Solomon of her  
that had been the wife of  
Urias;

7 And Solomon begat  
Roboam; and Roboam  
begat Abia; and Abia begat  
Asa;

8 And Asa begat Josaphat;  
and Josaphat begat Joram;  
and Joram begat Ozias;

9 And Ozias begat  
Joatham; and Joatham  
begat Achaz; and Achaz  
begat Ezekias;

10 And Ezekias begat  
Manasses; and Manasses  
begat Amon; and Amon  
begat Josias;

11 And Josias begat  
Jechonias and his brethren,  
about the time they were  
carried away to Babylon.

Hezron the father of Ram,  
<sup>4</sup>Ram the father of Amminadab,  
Amminadab the father of  
Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,  
<sup>5</sup>Salmon the father of Boaz,  
whose mother was Rahab,  
Boaz the father of Obed, whose  
mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,  
<sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of King  
David.

David was the father of Solomon,  
whose mother had been Uriah's  
wife,

<sup>7</sup>Solomon the father of  
Rehoboam,  
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,  
Abijah the father of Asa,

<sup>8</sup>Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,  
Jehoshaphat the father of  
Jehoram,

Jehoram the father of Uzziah,  
<sup>9</sup>Uzziah the father of Jotham,  
Jotham the father of Ahaz,  
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

<sup>10</sup>Hezekiah the father of  
Manasseh,

Manasseh the father of Amon,  
Amon the father of Josiah,

<sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of  
Jechoniah and his brothers at the  
time of the exile to Babylon.

Verses 2-11 trace Jesus' ancestors from Abraham until the "time" (vs. 11) God's people were deported to "Babylon." The patriarchs "Isaac" (vs. 2) and "Jacob"

are likely familiar names, along with “Boaz” (vs. 5) and “Jesse.” From “Rehoboam” (vs. 7) through “Jechoniah” (vs. 11) is a list of the names of the kings of Judah.

What’s fascinating is Matthew’s inclusion of women: “Tamar” (vs. 3); “Rahab” (vs. 5); “Ruth,” (vs. 5); and Uriah’s “wife” (vs. 6), Bathsheba. While Rahab and Ruth displayed great faith, they were not Jewish. Also, Tamar and Bathsheba were known more for their sinful situation, not their faith.

One reason for the inclusion of these names may be that God’s love and purposes are not limited to “perfect” people or those of a particular ethnicity or character. Also, perhaps Matthew wanted to show that Gentiles and women played a significant role in the Messiah’s birth. The women are also evidence of God’s surprising workings in the past to prepare for the Messiah’s coming.

**5. What major historical event does Matthew 1:11 spotlight?**

**6. What connection did Jesus have with the patriarchs?**

**7. Who are the four women recorded in the geneology, and why are they there?**

## After the Babylonian Exile

*Matthew 1:12-17, KJV*

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

*Matthew 1:12-17, NIV*

<sup>12</sup>After the exile to Babylon:

Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel,

Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

<sup>13</sup>Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,

Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,

<sup>14</sup>Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim,

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar;  
and Eleazar begat Matthan;  
and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph  
the husband of Mary, of  
whom was born Jesus, who is  
called Christ.

17 So all the generations from  
Abraham to David are four-  
teen generations; and from  
David until the carrying away  
into Babylon are fourteen gen-  
erations; and from the carrying  
away into Babylon unto Christ  
are fourteen generations.

Akim the father of Elihud,  
<sup>15</sup>Elihud the father of Eleazar,  
Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
Matthan the father of Jacob,  
<sup>16</sup>and Jacob the father of  
Joseph, the husband of Mary,  
and Mary was the mother  
of Jesus who is called the  
Messiah.

<sup>17</sup>Thus there were four-  
teen generations in all from  
Abraham to David, fourteen  
from David to the exile to  
Babylon, and fourteen from  
the exile to the Messiah.

Despite the disruption of the exile and the end of the line of Judean kings, God continued the ancestral line to Jesus. Of note is the inclusion of “Joseph” (vs. 16), along with his wife, “Mary,” the birth mother of “Jesus.” Here Joseph is the “husband” of Mary, not the birth father of Jesus. There is also the threefold mention of Jesus as Israel’s Messiah in Matthew 1:1, 16, and 17.

Matthew divided his genealogy into three groups of 14 “generations” (vs. 17): from Abraham to King David, from David to the exile, and from Jeconiah’s family after the exile to the Messiah. The Greek adjective rendered “all” does not mean the list includes every one of Jesus’ ancestors. For example, in the second grouping, Matthew omitted the names of four Davidic kings. However, there are other examples in the biblical record in which names were intentionally omitted from the genealogical listing (1 Chron. 6:3-15; Ezra 7:1-5).

**8.** *How does Matthew’s genealogy handle Jesus’ familial connection with Joseph and Mary?*

**9.** *How does Matthew 1:17 summarize Jesus’ detailed genealogy?*

## Surprised by Faith!

In the genealogy of Jesus are Abraham and David. In many ways, Abraham demonstrated his deep faith in God, such as leaving his ancestral homeland at the command of God and honoring God's request that he sacrifice his son Isaac. But at times, Abraham showed a lack of faith, most prominently when he yielded his wife, Sarah, to the Egyptian pharaoh out of fear for his life.

David was a man after God's heart. He also trusted the Lord with his life, particularly when he was in grave danger. Yet he, too, violated his faith when he seduced Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, killed.

Unexpectedly, two non-Jewish women are also identified in Matthew's genealogy: Rahab was from Jericho, and Ruth was a Moabite. Although Rahab was a harlot, God chose her to protect the two Hebrew spies because she believed that the God of Israel was truly God. And when Naomi told her daughter-in-law to remain in Moab, Ruth declared that the God of Israel was her God. Thus, in both cases, not only did the Lord reward them by having them marry into His people, but He also placed them into Jesus' lineage.

With imperfect "heroes" of the faith, such as Abraham and David in the list, along with unexpected women, such as Rahab and Ruth, we can see that God uses all people who will serve Him for His purposes. From their examples, we should not be discouraged either at our failings to always follow Him nor our social status. God's grace uplifts us by His surprising faith in us.

**10.** *Why is it surprising that God should choose imperfect people to perform the most important tasks for His Kingdom?*

**11.** *Despite your failings, why does our heavenly Father still love you?*

**12.** *How does the Lord show His faith in you?*

## Impacted!

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus is a story of faith, both by the faith of the people who believed in God and by the Lord's faith in them in the way He distinguished and exalted them. Abraham and David are giants in the Jewish and Christian faiths, but Rahab and Ruth are also remembered for their marvelous faith in the God of Israel. Their stories are surprising and yet impactful in how we understand the ways God's faith in us affects our faith in Christ.

► *In the past, how has God's faith in you affected your walk with Him? Look for ways it affects your faith this coming week as you continue to create a legacy of faith with your words and actions.*

### KEY VERSE

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. —Matthew 1:1, KJV

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham. —Matthew 1:1, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

**Week of December 18 through December 24**

**(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)**

- Mon.** Philippians 4:10-19—Contentment in Every Situation.
- Tue.** Psalm 91—God Is My Refuge.
- Wed.** Joel 2:18-27—The Lord Has Done Great Things!
- Thu.** Luke 1:5-17—The Annunciation to Zechariah.
- Fri.** Luke 1:18-25—Zechariah Doubts but Elizabeth Rejoices.
- Sat.** John 20:19, 24-29—Believe!
- Sun.** Luke 1:36-45, 56—Mary and Elizabeth Express Faith.