

Growth Group Lesson
December 17 & 18
Matthew 2:1-12

Last Week: Joseph is visited by an angel in a dream, who revealed that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. The Messiah (Christ) was given two names: Jesus (YHWH saves) and Immanuel (God with us), pointing to God's rescue plan through humanity enacted through Jesus.

Spend time praying with your group. Ask God to help you see Jesus with new eyes, removing all the Christmas traditions, pageantry, and classical painting depictions of the Christ child to truly see him for who he was and is.

Get to know one another:

1. Share about a meaningful gift you have received. Explain why this gift was so meaningful to you.

Read Matthew 2:1-8

After reading this passage, you could be reminded of the Christmas Carol, "We Three Kings". According to Matthew 2, they were not kings, nor does it say that there were only three of them. The scriptures record three gifts given, and there were likely many more magi than what is commonly assumed. The wise men were called Magi ("magicians"), and were interested in astrology, the supernatural, and telling the future. They often held religious offices and counseled political officials. These magi were from the east, so were neither Roman nor Jewish, possibly coming from Babylon or Persia.

2. List the responses of the different people or groups to the news of Christ's birth.
 - a. Wise men
 - b. King Herod
 - c. Religious leaders
3. Why is it ironic that these different characters reacted the way they did?
4. How has your response to Jesus been similar or different from these responses at different times in your life?

The Magi coming to witness the birth of the Messiah calls us back to a classic Messianic image, that the nations will come to worship God in the Messianic Kingdom. Matthew picks up on this theme and quotes the prophet Micah and Samuel. **Read Micah 4:1-5:9, 2 Samuel 5:1-2**

5. How are the current shepherds of Israel (Herod and the religious leaders) portrayed in Matthew 2?
 - a. How will the Messiah shepherd his people? **Micah 5:4-5, 2 Samuel 5:2**
6. What title did the Wise Men use for Jesus in their question to King Herod? **Verse 2**
 - a. What titles are given for the Messiah in **verse 6**?
 - b. Read **Isaiah 9:6-7**. What other titles are given to Jesus, the Messiah?
 - c. Which titles of Jesus do you identify with in your life? Why?
 - d. What circumstances or timing cause you to reflect differently on the titles of the Messiah?

7. Why was King Herod so opposed to the Messiah? What troubled him regarding the Messiah's kingdom vs. his own?
 - a. What was the state of Herod's heart? **Jeremiah 17**
8. Many times in our lives, Jesus confronts us with this same question. Who's kingdom do you value, yours or Jesus'? How would you answer that question now?
 - a. Are there certain areas in your life where this is easier to do? Why?
 - b. Are there certain areas in your life where this is harder to do? Why?

Read Matthew 2:9-12

Worship can be defined as our response to what we value most. The wise men worshiped Jesus by traveling a long distance to find him. They bowed down and brought valuable gifts, giving him dignity and authority in these acts.

9. What can the Wise Men teach us about worshipping Jesus?
 - a. What can Herod's lack of worship teach us about worshipping Jesus?
10. The Wise Men showed up to worship the new King, and came bearing gifts. What gifts do you bring to God in worship?
 - a. What are some ways that you really enjoy worshipping God?
11. We know that worship is more than just singing songs and giving gifts, so what else might be included in that list?
 - a. How does your life reflect a life of worship? **1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 12, James 1:27**

Finish the evening praying.

- Ask God to give you the wisdom to know Jesus and the desire to worship and serve Him more than yourselves.
- Thank God for the opportunity to worship him freely because of what Jesus did on your behalf.
- Ask God what gift(s) you can give him this Christmas to worship him and to further the kingdom.
- Ask God to lead your group to actively love others and share the Good News of Jesus with others this Christmas season.