



REJOICE IN GIVING OF OURSELVES

Read aloud the passages for this week:

MATTHEW 2:1-12



LOOKING BACK TO LAST WEEK

Provide support, encouragement, and accountability to one another for putting the Word of God into practice. Together, find ways to live out the Scripture.

- **What did the Holy Spirit impress upon you from last week's study?**
- **What, if anything, got in the way of you living out the Word of God studied last week? For example, how difficult was it for you to extend an invitation to neighbors and friends to attend services and Advent events this season? How will you follow up in the New Year?**

Head

OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR'S MAIN POINTS.

1. Of the persons or groups named in this narrative, how does each find out about a new King's arrival and how do they respond?
2. What do you know about King Herod? Why did he meet with the Magi secretly?
3. Why were those who knew Scripture best not the most eager to worship the new King? How is this a warning to those of us who are well-acquainted with Scripture?

Heart

ENVISION HOW THE TEXT—WHEN APPLIED—MIGHT TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE IN TERMS OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS.

1. As you reflect on the Magi story, who do you find yourself most like: Herod, the religious leaders, the Magi?
2. God's control of history and His sovereign care of the Magi is evident in this passage. How does this increase your confidence in God?
3. Mastering the Bible is not a guarantee of true worship. Ask the Holy Spirit to take your knowledge of Scripture and use it in your life for transformation into Christ-likeness leading to true worship of Him.

Hands

APPLY THE TEXT BY MOVING FROM INWARD REFLECTION TO OUTWARD ACTION LOOKING FOR WAYS TO LIVE THE TEXT OUT IN OUR LIVES. THESE ARE SPECIFIC, CONCRETE EXAMPLES BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY WAY—THEY ARE IDEA-STARTERS FOR HOW TO PUT THE WORD OF GOD INTO PRACTICE.

Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- What steps are you willing to take to give up the comfort around you to follow God? To interrupt your plans like the Magi who had to return home a different way?
- God has given you all the time, talent, and resources you have. How willing are you to surrender those to Him?

Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors

- Pray for God's guidance for all the people who have attended Alpha or other outreach events this year. Ask that the seeds that have been planted will grow the life of God within each person.
- With the relationships you have nurtured over the holidays, who comes to mind as someone who would be interested in Alpha in 2024? Begin keeping a list and praying for those people.
- The Magi's plans changed, and they went home a different way. What are the needs of your nearest neighbors? What practical things can you do to help them? What plans are you willing to change, and comfort are you willing to give up to help a neighbor?

Reaching Beyond

- Make 2024 a year to get to know FPC local mission partners. Each one has a number of volunteer opportunities. Calendar the January 25, 2024, (12–1 PM) local Mission Field Trip to learn more about FPC local ministry partner, Prestige Learning Institute (PLI). The Institute offers accessible resources in the context of deep and trusting relationships so that refugee families can know true peace in Houston. Contact Madie Weir, Missions Coordinator at mweir@fpchouston.org to RSVP or for more information
- Volunteer opportunities with one of FPC's local ministry partners are updated regularly. Make it a 2024 practice to visit fpchouston.org/serve regularly and participate in opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus in Houston.
- In what other ways is God stirring you to action as a result of this Advent study? How will you respond?



GOSPEL-CENTERED PARENTING TAKE-AWAY

Jesus is born! The natural response of the wise men was to do whatever it took to meet King Jesus and worship Him. But those most acquainted with the Scriptures were not compelled to meet the King of whom they had read. This Christmas, you may have begun to implement some new spiritual practices in your home (praying blessings over your children, engaging your kids in conversations, leading your family in praise throughout the day). Yet, if all of this isn't because of our love for King Jesus, we are merely resounding gongs or clanging symbols (1 Corinthians 13:1). Take time this week, each day, to pray for a deep and abiding

love for Jesus, the King who has come in the most ordinary moments to be with you. If physically kneeling on the ground helps to engage your heart and mind, then by all means, follow the example of the wise men and kneel. As you kneel (or sit or stand), you can begin praying Scripture from our passage... “Oh Lord, I fall down and worship you. Please use my life to be an offering of love to my children and those around me. And may my love increase more and more as I behold your glory with each passing day.” (Taken from Matthew 2:11).