



# THE CHRISTMAS STORY

# DIGGING DEEPER



FAR & AWAY

DECEMBER 15

The magi traveled a great distance to find Jesus, offering their gifts in worship. But what do we withhold from God when we finally encounter Him? This message explores the journey of faith, the distance we sometimes travel to find Jesus, and the decision to surrender what God truly wants: our hearts and lives.

Work through the following questions and scriptures on your own or get together with your group, spiritual running partners, or family to talk through what you are learning.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have an example from your life where you've misremembered an event or picture (Mandela effect)?
2. What part(s) of the Christmas story, as we are going through it at church, are standing out to you this year? Why do you think that is grabbing your attention?
3. Read **Matthew 2:1-11**.  
Make some observations about this passage (What does the text say?):
  - What do you notice and what are you curious about?Make some interpretations (What does the passage mean?):
  - What do you learn about God?
  - What do you learn about humanity?Now make some applications (what's my response?):
  - How are you encouraged, challenged, or convicted by this passage?
  - What should be our response to this passage?
4. There were Jewish religious leaders who had been waiting their whole lives for the arrival of the Messiah AND yet when He came into the world, they missed Him. At the same time there were people who lived in a culture that wasn't waiting for the Messiah and they noticed and went to Him.
  - How are you living in a way so you don't miss God? Asked a different way, are you open to and watching for God in your life (ways He might be speaking, pointing, convicting, challenging you)?
  - If you can't think of anything, what could you change that might help you seek Him?

## KEY SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 2:1-11** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."vWhen King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of My people Israel.'" **(Continued)**

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and learned from them the exact time the star had appeared. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said: "Go and search carefully for the Child, and when you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with great delight. On coming to the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they withdrew to their country by another route.

## PRAYER

This is a prayer from an early church father, Basil of Caesarea (329-379AD). Maybe make a commitment to praying this daily.

Steer the ship of my life, good Lord, to your quiet harbour, where I can be safe from the storms of sin and conflict. Show me the course I should take. Renew in me the gift of discernment, so that I can always see the right direction in which I should go. And give me the strength and the courage to choose the right course, even when the sea is rough and the waves are high, knowing that through enduring hardship and danger in your name we shall find comfort and peace.

## PRACTICE

1. Commit to praying the prayer above daily and when you are finished praying sit in silence for 5 min and just listen for anything God might say. Even if you don't get any personal nudges, just relish in the fact that you are in the presence of God telling Him you are His and you want to be guided by Him!
2. How are you preparing your heart for Christmas? I'm not talking about presents, decorating, and meal planning - but preparing spiritually to remember and re-receive the coming of the savior of the world! He came for you, to bring you back into relationship with God the Father and restore what sin and brokenness has stolen. Maybe consider:
  - Daily advent readings (suggestions from Gateway Staff)
    1. [\(Practicing the Way Advent](#)
    2. [The Songs: Tell a Story](#)
    3. [Honest Advent](#)
    4. [Lectio 365: Daily advent](#)
    5. [First Born by Poor Bishop Hooper: musical/ visual story of Jesus](#)
  - Watch this [Bible project video on Hope](#)