

# GIFTS OF Christmas

## Gifts of Christmas: The Story of the Magi

Week 1 | November 26th, 2023  
Community Group Discussion Guide

*The following is a guide to help structure your time as a group together. Community Groups exist first and foremost to help us know and follow Jesus together.*

*Our groups organize their shared life together around four essential practices - Studying the Scriptures, Care and Prayer, Family Hangouts, and Missional Hospitality. Our hope is that our presence together, as a people of practice and patience will aid in our spiritual formation over time.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Lessons & Carols Christmas Service

Friday, December 22 | 6pm-7pm  
Matthews Community Playhouse

On Friday, December 22nd, we will be gathering at the Matthews Playhouse with other local churches across our city to celebrate the birth of King Jesus together. This will be a traditional Lessons & Carols service, where we will sing traditional Christmas worship songs, hear the story of the birth of Jesus read through various passages of Scripture, and take intentional time to reflect on the meaning of this season.

Childcare will be provided for ages 6 weeks - 2 years old. The service will be family-friendly, and should last about 45 minutes.

This is a small part of a citywide collaboration of like-minded churches in the Harbor Network, seeking to partner together to launch, lead, and multiply thriving churches.

### Holiday Gathering Schedule

At the end of December, our schedule will change just slightly. Please note the following schedule updates:

- December 22 - Lessons and Carols - 6pm @ Matthews Playhouse
- December 24 - No Gathering
- December 31 - Prayer and Worship - 9:30am @ Dowd
- January 7 - Citizens 3rd Birthday! - 9:30am @ Dowd

## REVIEW THE MISSION

Take some time to review who various people are building relationships with and seeking to share the gospel with. **Pray for these individuals - that God would open their eyes to the good news of the gospel.**

## PRAYER + SCRIPTURE

**Open with a brief word of prayer:** "God, we thank you for this time together. We open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us. Come Holy Spirit."

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

### **Read Matthew 2:1-12**

*1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."*

*7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.*

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

**Close with this short prayer:** "Lord, we pray for hearts of anticipation, thankfulness, and joy in this advent season. Help us to celebrate the coming of our Messiah and King this Advent season and prepare to worship and glorify Him in our daily lives. Amen."

**As you reflect on Matthew 2:1:12, what is the Holy Spirit showing or teaching you?**

# SERMON DISCUSSION

## THE STORY OF THE MAGI

The story of the wise men, or the Magi, is often told and depicted throughout our culture. Though we may have heard it many times and are very familiar, or are hearing it for the first time, it is easy to make assumptions or believe things about the story of the Magi that are not accurate.

In this sermon, we heard that the Magi were a prestigious and well studied group, who traveled in large schools, and likely came from a great distance away in the east to get to Jerusalem for traveling to Bethlehem, to meet the prophesied King promised to the people of God.

**What aspects of the story of the Magi stand out to you or encourage you about the story of Jesus' birth?**

## THE RESPONSE TO JESUS

People in this story respond to the birth of Jesus in different ways. The chief scribes and priests of Jerusalem are indifferent and don't travel to see Jesus, Herod is opposed to Jesus' reign and sees Him as a threat, and the Magi fall to their knees in worship of the newborn King Jesus.

**As we step into this Advent season, which poor response (either indifference or opposition) do you sense a temptation to within your own soul? What does repentance look like in light of that?**

## SACRIFICIAL GENEROSITY AND WORSHIP

The Magi had traveled for months, bringing expensive gifts, and bowed to worship King Jesus. They went through great lengths to sacrifice time, comfort, money, and power to meet the newborn baby Jesus and to give Him the honor and worship He deserves.

In an effort to step into sacrificial and generous worship this advent season, we are doing our 3rd Annual Christmas Missions Offering. This year, we are seeking to raise \$10,000 to go towards three ministry initiatives:

- Harbor Network – Supports church planting across the United States
- The Leipzig Projekt – A church plant in Leipzig, Germany
- Citizens Church – The beginning stages of setting aside money for a long-term home in our city

More information can be found here – <https://www.citizenscharlotte.com/christmas2023>

***Take some time to discuss the Christmas Missions Offering as a group, and then spend some time in prayer asking the Lord how He might be calling you towards sacrificial generosity this Christmas season.***

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Pray over what was shared in the discussion, for your group to be united in the gospel, and for help from the Holy Spirit to be shaped to be more like Jesus as we put God's ways into practice.