

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of January 3, 2016

Matthew 2:1-12

These questions are to be used as a spring board for discussion.

Answers may or may not be found in the sermons.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

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

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Common English Bible (CEB)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. ² They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

³ When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. ⁴ He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,
because from you will come one who governs,
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.” ⁹ When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Connection Questions:

1. The gospel of Matthew is considered to be the most Jewish of the synoptic gospels. Why do you think scholars describe it as such?

2. Magi were considered outsiders. Who are the people in our modern day culture that might be compared to the magi of Jesus' time? Do you think the church welcomes these people? If not, how could we be more welcoming?

3. It has been said that Sunday morning worship is one of the most segregated hours of the week. Do you agree with this statement? If so, should the church address this issue and how?

4. The text says the magi were looking or seeking. How important is it in a Christian pilgrimage to be always seeking and searching to grow closer to God? Describe what seeking means to you in our faith development.

5. In Rev. Adkins' sermon he says, "One of the biggest steps toward healing from a broken place in our lives is admitting we need help." How does asking for help apply to our faith?

6. Jesus says in Matthew 7, “Ask and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock, and the door will be open to you.” Reflect on this passage as it relates to your own faith.

7. When the magi saw the star, Matthew says they were overwhelmed with joy. Describe what joy means to you. How does finding or experiencing joy apply to our faith? How is joy different from being happy?

8. When the magi came to visit the baby Jesus, the text says, they knelt down and payed him homage, meaning respect. What does showing respect look like, especially in our relationship with God?

9. Church is a place for sinners. In light of the story about the magi in Matthew’s gospel, how does the church today communicate this message to our culture?