

## Small Group Guide THE MAGI AND THE MESSIAH

The Church at Brook Hills

David Platt

December 18, 2011

Matthew 2:1–12

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

### **Relate . . .**

*Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:*

*Welcome*—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

*Review*—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

*Prayer*—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

### **Reflect . . .**

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

## THE MAGI AND THE MESSIAH

Matthew 2:1-12

### The Magicians...

- What we don't know...
  - Their number.
  - Their names.
- What we do know...
  - Their setting: the east.
  - Their significance: high-ranking officials with power and influence.

### The Constellations...

- Numbers: A man from the east prophesying a star and a king among the Jews.
  - Matthew: Magi from the east following a star to the king of the Jews.
- Isaiah: Nations will come to the light of God's people.

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- Matthew: Nations are drawn to the light over God's Son.

### The Opposition...

- A world leader intimidated by Jesus.
- Religious leaders indifferent to Jesus.
  - Chief priests: Representing Jewish worship.
  - Scribes: Representing Jewish law.

### The Quotation...

- The place where King David was born becomes the point where King Jesus is born.
- A relatively insignificant village becomes area an extremely important city.
- The One who reigns as the king will rule as a shepherd.

### The Deception...

- Herod pretended kindness.
- Herod intended murder.

### The Introduction...

- Exceeding gladness!
- Extravagant gifts...
  - Gold, emphasizing Jesus' royalty.
  - Frankincense, emphasizing Jesus' deity.
  - Myrrh, emphasizing Jesus' humanity.
    - He was presented myrrh as a king in a cradle.
    - He would be offered myrrh as a king on a cross.

### The Conclusion...

- The global purpose of God is the glad praise of Christ among the peoples of the world.
  - He directs nature.
  - He draws nations.
  - First, He sends the Christ.
    - The beginning of Matthew: Come and see the king!
    - Joyfully offer your life as a worshiper.
  - Then, He sends the church.
    - The end of Matthew: Go and spread the kingdom!
    - Passionately spend your life as a witness.

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#### Message Summary

*While we don't know the names or the number of Magi who came to worship Jesus, we do know that they came from the east and were men of power and influence. The star that pointed them from among the nations to Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, as did the place of Jesus' birth (Bethlehem).*

*When King Herod heard about the birth of "the King of the Jews" from the wise men, he was secretly intimidated and troubled, while the religious leaders seemed to be indifferent. Herod even tried to deceive the Magi about his intentions in order to murder Jesus.*

*Matthew begins his Gospel portraying the exceeding joy of the Magi (the nations) as they come to worship Jesus and present Him with extravagant gifts. God directs all history and nature to point to His Son's birth. Like the magi, we are invited to come and see the Christ and worship Him. Then, God sends us, the church, to go be His witnesses to the world. As we study this passage, we conclude that the global purpose of God is the glad praise of Christ among the all of peoples of the world.*

#### Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- What do we know about the Magi from Matthew 2:1–2? Is there any other mention of them in the Bible? How do these men stand in contrast to the shepherds mentioned in Luke? What is the significance of the "good news" coming to both groups?
- Read Numbers 24:17 and Isaiah 60:1–6. Does Matthew 2:1–12 fulfill these prophecies? How? Could mere man orchestrate these events? What does the fulfillment of prophecy lead us to conclude about God's sovereign rule over nature, people, and world events?
- Have there been times in which you've been "upset" by the sovereignty of Christ? How should we respond in those situations?
- Read Matthew 2:3–8. Why is Herod troubled by the birth of Jesus? How does he react? Why are some people today likewise angered by the kingship of Jesus??
- The religious leaders seemed indifferent to the Magi's news. They knew the Scriptures, especially the prophecies regarding Messiah's birth, but did nothing in response. How does this example speak to whether biblical knowledge can save us? Can we have knowledge yet lack faith? What are the differences between knowledge, intellectual assent, and saving faith in Jesus?
- What should be the proper response to the news of Matthew 2:1–12? What action(s) should we take?
- Read Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2. Why is it important that Jesus was born in the line of King David? What do you think it means for a king to also be a shepherd? In daily life what does it mean for Jesus to be our shepherd and our King?
- What meanings and significance can be interpreted from the gifts the Magi brought to Jesus? How do the royalty, deity, and humanity of Jesus bring us joy and provoke us to worship? Why do all three gifts represent good news for us?
- The Magi worshipped Jesus. How does worship honor Christ and bring us joy? How does worship fuel witness? Can we be effective witnesses without first worshiping? What is the ultimate global purpose of God?
- Why do you think Matthew essentially began his Gospel with the Magi and concluded with the Great Commission? What significance would these events (and their organization within the book) have held for a mainly Jewish audience in the first century? What significance should they hold for us today?
- Far from Jerusalem and Bethlehem, God drew the Magi to Jesus. Have you seen God draw to Himself people from various backgrounds and people groups? Did it surprise you? Did it encourage you that God is at work around the world among all kinds of people?
- How can you be a witness to those in your neighborhood, in Birmingham, and among the nations, especially during this Christmas season?

### Respond . . .

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*Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:*

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church..

### **Weekly Prayer Focus ...**

- **Lives and Church:** Spend some time this week thanking God for sending Jesus to save us from our sins. Thank Him for giving us the privilege of worshiping this great King. Pray that He would use us to bring all nations to worship Him.
- **Local:** This week we are praying for Shepherd's Fold, a Christian ministry located in the West End area of Birmingham. They provide a safe haven and mentorships for men making transitions from jail, prison, and correctional centers back into society. We are also praying for First Baptist Fairfield, Robert Twyman, pastor.
- **Global:** This week we are praying for our long-term missionaries Greg, Kathy, Hannah, and Haleigh Brown serving in Guatemala.