

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ give their gifts to the Lord.

## SCRIPTURE

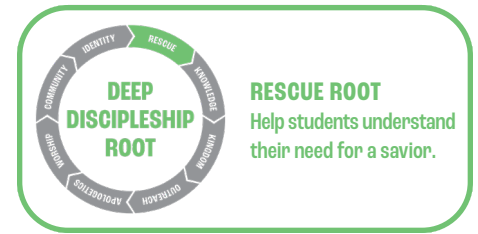
MATTHEW 2:1–12

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

We don't know much about these wise men who searched for the King of kings. We don't know precisely where they were from. We don't know how many of them there were. We don't even know their names. We do know they were from the "east" and tracked the special star, so many people believe they were Asian astrologers, which also means they were Gentiles. So, while God's own people missed out on the birth of the Messiah, Gentile representatives were out searching for him with an offering of gifts to worship the King. Wise indeed.

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/933475613>

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** We've giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.



## OPENING

### PRAYER

1–2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

**OPTIONAL:** Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

### OPENING QUESTIONS

3–5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What's the worst gift you have ever received? Why was it so bad?



## EXPLORE

### EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3–5 minutes

Today we are in the first lesson in the *Christmas Gifts* series. We will study the importance and opportunity we have to give Jesus our gifts. When God came to earth as a baby in a manger in the little town of Bethlehem, the whole world had the opportunity to notice! A special star in the sky signaled far and wide that something spectacular had happened. The Magi from the east came to Jerusalem to find and worship the King. When they met the miraculous child, they bowed down and worshiped him. Whenever we encounter our Savior Jesus, we should respond in the same way by giving him everything we have to give—a life full of worship and praise!

## Read Matthew 2:1–2 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- A star in the sky and an ancient prophecy announced Jesus' birth. What does that tell us about him?

Jesus is who he said he was! Jesus will prove it throughout his life, but even the circumstances of his birth show us that he was no ordinary child.

- The Magi came from a land far away. They weren't Jewish people on the lookout for a Messiah. Why do you think they put so much effort into finding a baby they had no connection to?

Jesus was Jewish and the prophesied Messiah of the Jewish people, but he brought salvation to the whole world. The Magi are some of the first to show us how worshiping Jesus is open to everyone.

- The Magi were led to Jesus by the special star. What has led you to encounter Christ?

Allow students space to share how various people, experiences, sermons, etc., have led them to encounter Jesus in meaningful ways. Share some stories of your own to help get the conversation going.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

*Say something like:* When Jesus came to earth, his presence made an impact. The night sky let everyone know a King was born! The Magi weren't Jewish, but they clearly knew this child was something special. The birth of Jesus was an occasion of celebration for all people.

## Read Matthew 2:3–8 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- The text says King Herod was "troubled." Why do you think he felt like that?

Not everyone was excited about the arrival of a new king—especially those who felt threatened by this child of prophecy! Those who are unwilling to acknowledge Jesus' kingship and authority will never be able to appreciate the excitement of Jesus' birth.

- This passage includes a verse from the book of Micah. Why does it do that?

Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by prophecy! This book connects the dots with all the prophecies from the Old Testament that Jesus fulfilled.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

*Say something like:* All the fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah prove God worked out his perfect plan for salvation over hundreds and hundreds of years! When the King arrived, it happened exactly how God said it would happen.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

## Read Matthew 2:9–12 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- When the Magi met Jesus, the Bible says, "they fell down and worshiped him." Why was this their response?

When you encounter a miracle, sometimes all you can do is respond in simple, straightforward worship. The Magi were overwhelmed by meeting the child marked by a star and foretold by prophets. All they could do was worship!

- The Magi put a lot of effort into finding Jesus. How do you pursue encountering Jesus?

Following Jesus is an active lifestyle, not a passive accident. Like the Magi, we have to make seeking Jesus a priority!



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

*Say something like:* The Magi were some of the first people on earth to realize an important truth—the natural response to meeting King Jesus is worship and praise! When we recognize Jesus as King, we should give him our lives, including our praise and worship.



### CONNECT & APPLY

#### CONNECTION

5–7 minutes

*Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how you gave or received a really thoughtful gift. What happened? How did it make you feel?*



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

*Example:* The Magi gave Jesus gifts of great monetary value. Those items were worth a fortune for any person, especially a child! But the value of gifts isn't always determined by how much they cost. Parents are familiar with these kinds of gifts. Sometimes, young kids like to "make" special gifts for their parents—macaroni art, finger painting, special drawings, sculptures made from clay, etc. Those gifts may be worth \$0, but many parents will tell you they are worth more to them than an expensive watch or a brand-new TV.

Jesus isn't worried about the "value" of the gifts we give him. He's more concerned about the heart of the giver. An honest heart that pours out real worship and praise is all we can give. Don't worry about giving Jesus the "right" gift. Just be yourself. He's already made it clear he loves you!

- What kind of gifts can you give to Christ?

Nothing will ever compare to what Christ gave us, but we can return to him our lives, worship, and praise. When we follow him in discipleship, we give a valuable gift to the Kingdom!

#### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2–3 minutes

Disciples of Christ give their gifts to the Lord.

*Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.*

#### APPLY IT

5–10 minutes

The Magi were the first to do it, but we can still follow their lead every day by seeking out our Savior Jesus to offer him our lives full of worship and praise. What will you give Christ this week?



MAKE LIFE APPLICATION

*Be specific:*

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



HOLD STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



### CLOSING

#### PRAYER

2–3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that we would all come humbly to our King, ready to give all we have in worship and praise.

*Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

#### MEMORY VERSE

*Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.*

"I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."

Psalms 146:2 (ESV)

#### NOTES

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