

Bible Study notes for groups

Epiphany – What can I give?

Matthew 2:1-12

Part 1: Watching and Listening

Q1: What was your highlight of the Christmas holidays and why?

This passage is full of individuals watching and listening. For many different reasons and motivations they see and notice things that others missed.

Q2: From the passage, what do the Magi, Herod, the Chief priests and Mary see or hear and how do they respond to it (You'll have to use your imagination with Mary or references from previous visitors to piece her reaction together) and why do they respond as they do.

Q3: Jesus birth signifies huge change in the lives of all these individuals. Thinking about your own life when faced by change (in relationships, circumstances, work role, a new boss or staff member, stage of life) who do you think you behave most like in the passage?

(Leader: If you need help prompting discussion, Herod is threatened by change because of loss of control, loss of his own position; The magi seem to embrace it wholeheartedly; The chief priests carry on regardless with no sense that change is even coming because they are too involved in their own duties / world perspective; Mary – cautious but receptive).

God was speaking to all the people in this passage but it seems only the Magi and Mary were really listening.

Q4: Do you think God is saying anything to you at the start of this new year (or perhaps has been speaking to you last year) from circumstances unfolding in your life (locally or even globally), through times of bible reading or prayer or a moment or conversation when you weren't expecting it?

Q5: How can we grow in our ability to watch and listen for God?

(Leader: there are probably the obvious ways which start with setting time aside in old and creative new ways but also think about how we can be God-centred as we live out our day to day; recognising God in our conversations with each person we meet, in our journeys, even as we watch the news that He would prompt us – it happened to me this past week watching Little women at the cinema with Jane – a phrase just leapt out at me and made me pause to think and pray – first why did that stand out and then pray into what it meant.)

PART 2: GIVING

If this passage is full of watching and listening, its also full of giving – BY GOD..... The whole nativity story is full of gifts – wise people’s gifts / the gift of a baby to Mary & Joseph / angels appearing to Mary, shepherds and Joseph but even more than that – ‘She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins’.

Q6: What gifts does God provide in this passage? (Leader: Not just the obvious ones, a star, a dream to avoid Herod, directions for the Magi, etc)

[If time: What gifts has God given you in your life?]

Q7: Why do you think God does all this? Why is he so generous?

Q8: Does our giving mirror God’s in terms of motivation or do we ever give for other reasons? (i.e. feel we ought to, coerced to give, etc.)

Q9: Is there anyone / a situation you feel prompted to give to based on your watching and listening (time, prayer, finances, help, etc) How can you take this from an idea to an action? Remember the Magi’s response to seeing the star was to go and bring gifts, gifts that blessed and spoke volumes to Mary, Jesus and even us).

N.B. Giving motivated by love for God and love for others is critical not some of the more negative motivations we looked at earlier (guilt, being coerced, etc)

As a church we want to do that..... be generous with what we have

- a. Our people - A group left for St Johns
- b. Our time & energy – working with other initiatives in the church (many groups / outside the church – some of the social action initiatives /
- c. Our money - Give our finances to fund projects around the world
- d. Our leaders – Ruth as Area Dean / Graham & Jenny and Jeff & Oli serving in other churches

Giving is not always easy.....

Mary & Joseph gave Jesus their lives (a scandal, a difficult journey / homeless / a threat / fleeing to Egypt) But God never fails to provide.

There is always a cost but there is also joy and a greater hope before us. We follow a Servant King, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Enjoy your journey of listening, watching and responding by giving