

# The Available Gifts

FP Small Group Study Guide for Advent 2017

Week 2

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Matthew 2:1-18 (NLT)

1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men\* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,\* and we have come to worship him.” 3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. 4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: 6 ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities\* of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” 7 Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. 8 Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

9 After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped 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 his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

13 After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” 14 That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, 15 and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”\*

16 Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance. 17 Herod’s brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 18 “A cry was heard in Ramah — weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.”\*

**\*Footnotes:**

**2:1** Or royal astrologers; Greek reads magi; also in 2:7, 16. **2:2** Or star in the east.

**2:6a** Greek the rulers. **2:6b** Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2. **2:15** Hos 11:1. **2:18** Jer 31:15.

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1. Have you ever received a gift that you disliked or even hated? Describe why you didn’t like it and how you handled the situation.
2. Read the passage and pray for your time in scripture.
3. In verses 1-2, what do the wise men know, how do they know it, and what do they do about that knowledge?
4. How do the different characters in verses 3-8 respond to the wise men’s news?
5. Why do you think Herod and the others in Jerusalem were so disturbed about it?
6. What verbs are used to describe the wise men’s actions in verses 9-12? What does that tell us about these men and what they believe about God?
7. Compare their response to Jesus’ birth with Herod’s response in verses 13-18.
8. Despite Herod’s deathly rampage, how do you see God at work in this passage?
9. How have you seen him working in your life recently?
10. What action of the wise men would you like to imitate as we approach the Christmas season and the birth of Jesus?