



**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

**Theme: Epiphany Moments**

**Bible Reading: Matthew 2:1-12**

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## PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please remember to contact your group beforehand to remind them of the date and time of your meeting especially after the Christmas break. Please make yourself familiar with all the material and the Bible passage. You may like to provide some A4 lined paper for the activity later.

## PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

**Epiphany** is not just a day but a season that runs from 6<sup>th</sup> January right through to Candlemas (2<sup>nd</sup> February), but there is a distinct danger that in some churches we miss the Feast of the Epiphany because of the timing of the Covenant Service, or we get confused with the timing of the events that we are remembering and think that the shepherds and the Magi all visited Jesus on the one night.

The season of Epiphany is all about those 'light bulb' moments when we glimpse something of God at work or something about the nature of God. As you prepare for this session, please read the Bible passage ([Matthew 2:1-12](#)) by either reading your Bible at home, or borrowing a copy from the church. Think about what surprises you in the reading and how through your life you have discovered more about God.

## STARTING THE SESSION: FINDING OUR ROOTS

As you gather together, talk about your answers to the following questions:

- 1) *Do you like surprises?*
- 2) *What is the biggest surprise that you have encountered?*
- 3) *Have you ever found yourself going the wrong way on a journey, or in life? How did it make you feel? How quickly did you change direction?*

## A PRAYER

God of surprises,  
awaken us as we gather,  
that we may see those epiphany moments  
that help us to see and understand more of you  
and who you call us to be.  
Forgive us when we have looked in the wrong places  
or have failed to follow your call or example.  
Be at work within us by your Spirit, that we may know  
more of your love and your light at work in us and through us,  
and that others may see Jesus in us. **Amen.**

## READING THE SCRIPTURES

Read together the Bible passage: [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

**Background Information:** In this *Good Soil* we think about the Wise Men or Magi. We don't know how many there were. Logic says because three gifts are mentioned in Matthew's account, then there are three carriers of those gifts, and tradition has even given them names: Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. However, the Bible doesn't say how many there were, or how they travelled. What scripture records is that they turn up at King Herod's Palace looking for a new King because they have seen a new star which they believe symbolises the birth of the King of the Jews. This revelation throws Herod into a panic and he soon hatches a plan calling in the chief priests and scribes who search the Hebrew scriptures to discover in the prophet Micah that Bethlehem is mentioned ([Micah 5:2](#)).

The journey of the Wise Men was long: they looked for Jesus initially in the wrong place and when they finally got to Bethlehem they encountered him as a toddler and presented their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Tradition has given an explanation for these gifts: gold for Jesus the king, frankincense for the priest, and myrrh looking towards Jesus' death. After such a journey it doesn't sound like they stayed around for long, because having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod to report what they have seen, they returned to their home country by another route.

What an amazing journey the Wise Men go on, which demonstrates something of the growing revelation of who Jesus is for them: from the star that appears announcing his birth (which leads them on their journey) to the discovery that the King that they seek is not to be found in a palace, to their face-to-face encounter with the Christ-child. Their reflections would surely continue too on the journey home.

## DIGGING DEEPER

*What has surprised you most about the nature of God?*

*Where do you find that God continues to surprise you?*

*Have you had an 'epiphany' (or 'light bulb' moment) about yourself? A revelation that has perhaps come from a greater knowledge of who God is or what God has done?*

*Do your revelations come from deeper reflection on the scriptures, from life's experiences, or from the wisdom of others (or perhaps all three)?*

The Magi followed a star. *What or who are you following at the start of 2025?*

There is always more that we can discover about God. *What are you hoping to discover about God this year? How might you discover it?*

## AN ACTIVITY FOR THE NEW YEAR (in the group or at home)

Take a piece of **A4 lined paper**, and fold it in two leaving the margin clear, or draw a line down the middle. On the column to the left of centre, write the 12 months of the year, leaving two lines between months. Write in known key events within the year, e.g. birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, festivals, etc. In the right-hand column think about what and when you may like to discover or explore something more about God: is there a book that you particularly want to read, or something that you want to do to get closer to God? In the margin, from the bottom to the top, write "*Jesus is with me all the year through.*" Place this piece of paper in a prominent place so that you can keep looking at it throughout the year as a prompt for action, and perhaps make a note of any 'epiphany' moments as they occur.

## PRAYING TOGETHER

Thank God for the opportunity to be together to learn and share once more.

Aloud or in the silence, pray for one another, praying prayers of blessing on the year ahead, and that everyone would see and know God's love and light.

Pray a blessing on your church or group, and for your local community: for harmony, tolerance, wisdom and peace for the year ahead. Bring to God any particular needs in your church or group.