



Our faith is not just something we check in with on Sundays, our faith is how we live lives of meaning and purpose everyday, if we will learn to notice and respond to how God is moving. But this awareness, like anything worthwhile, takes practice. Which is why a weekly discipleship practice of Reading, Reflecting, and Responding to scripture in the context of community is so important. The following devotions have been written with this practice in mind. Use them with friends or family to help you deepen your experience of faith.

Week: The Epiphany

Adult and Littles

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Reflect: After Jesus was born, the three wise men traveled from far away to visit Him. They asked Herod, who was king at that time, where they could find the Child who had been born “King of the Jews”. Herod became very afraid and called together all the people who could tell him where the Messiah was to be born. They told him of the words spoken by the prophet Micah, that said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Herod figured out when the wise men had seen the star and asked them to tell him where Jesus was once they found Him. They followed the star until it stopped, and there they found Jesus with His mother Mary and they worshiped Him. They brought Jesus gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense. After visiting, the wise men took a different path home, because they had been warned in a dream not to return to king Herod.

Respond: Go outside with a parent or approved adult and look up in the sky at night. Do you see stars? Can you imagine yourself as one of the wise men who followed the star to find Jesus? What would you do? After thinking about what you would do, draw your best star Bethlehem star picture.

- Quantrilla Ard

Adult and Middles (Elementary)

Read: Matthew 2:10-11

Reflect: Today, we celebrate the Epiphany. On this special feast day in the church, we remember when the three wise men visited Jesus. They traveled from faraway lands, and their visit is the first time that people outside of Jesus’ neighborhood learn about the birth of the Son of God. The wise men bring Jesus special gifts fit for a king. Just like today, gold was valuable and precious present. Myrrh was a special ointment or oil that was used to bless kings and important religious objects. Later, after Jesus dies, two of his friends, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, bring myrrh to wrap around Jesus’ body. Frankincense, an expensive perfume, is known to have healing powers.

Respond: Epiphany brings to an end the Christmas season. During Christmas, many of us exchanged gifts. What is a favorite gift that you have received? What made that gift special?

The three wise men gave gifts that were valuable and precious. Can you think of any gifts that you can give that are special but don’t cost any money? Together, create a coupon book with some of these gifts that both adults and children can redeem. These gifts might include: reading a book together, playing Legos, dolls, action figures, or tea parties, helping clean up a room, walking a pet, or volunteering your time for an important cause. These gifts of time and love can be as valuable as gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Include in your coupon book a gift of love that you can give Jesus. This might include a promise to pray before every meal or read stories from the Bible or give to the church a portion of your treasure (allowance or other savings).

- Richelle Thompson

Adult and Bigs (Youth)

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Reflect: Do you pay attention to your dreams? Sometimes my dreams seem like a movie – I can see everything so clearly, and some mysteries are solved by the time I wake up. Other times I wake up in a fog and can feel that the dream was important, but I can't grab hold of anything concrete to remember. I've heard that dreams are our subconscious mind trying to work on the problems we struggle with when we're awake. I believe this; I also think that dreams can bring us closer to God and the voice of the Holy Spirit. God used a dream to convey critically important information to the wise men not to return to Herod. I wonder what would have happened to Mary and Jesus if the wise men ignored this dream? Did all of the wise men have the same dream? What would it be like for you to listen for God's voice in your dreams?

Respond: Have all family members keep a notebook near your beds to record your dreams for a week. Don't worry if you don't remember everything that happened in your dream. Use descriptive words including colors, smells, and images that you can recall as soon as you awaken, even if they don't seem to make sense. Share your dream journals and share insights about your dreams as individuals and as a family. Notice where your dreams intersect.

-Miriam McKenney

Adult and Adult

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Reflect: While most of our western family has put away their Christmas tree and opened all of their gifts, a vast majority of Latino America prepares to open gifts today, our day of Epiphany. It is also known as Three Kings Day, in which families celebrate the three wise men who came to visit Jesus delivering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Before their trek to pay honor to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the three wise men met with King Herod. He wanted the wise men to tell him if Jesus really was where the star indicated He was. The wise men had a dream that God wanted them to act on the contrary. After their visit with Jesus, they went back to their countries leaving King Herod outwitted.

The wise men did not have GPS, nor did they have an app to get them to Jesus. They arrived at Bethlehem because of a star. God had ensured that the wise men would be able to arrive at the exact place where Jesus was born. By their profound faith, they made it with their gifts. They did this with absolute joy. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that they were filled with joy to know that the star was still guiding them even after they met with King Herod. As our Central American family south of the United States border makes their way into our cities like traveling wise women, men, and children, let us trust, honor, and welcome the gifts they have come to share.

Respond: Have you put away your gifts? Take time to write down a gift you see in someone else. This person could be your friend, family member, or lover. Share with them this gift. Tell them how much their gift or gifts mean to you. This is how we honor Imago Dei in one another and we reveal each other's gifts. We often hide or put away our gifts when God wants us to go the extra mile to share them with our friends and family. How will you honor your neighbor on this day of Epiphany?

- Carolina Hinojosa -Cisneros

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