

STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

Matthew 2:1-12 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

The word epiphany means an appearance or manifestation, particularly of a divine being-- or an illuminating discovery, especially one that comes unexpectedly. Epiphany marks the first manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles. It signals that God loves Gentiles as well as Jews--that God's plan of salvation includes Gentiles too. That might seem a moot point now that most Christians today are Gentiles, but Epiphany is much more. It is a celebration of the breaking down of dividing walls between groups of people (Ephesians 2:14). Epiphany challenges us to reconsider all the people whom we see as outsiders--outside the boundaries of God's love. It challenges us to welcome even those whom we would prefer not to love--but which Christ makes possible. That is the Epiphany message. All people are now given the ability to have a relationship with God through Christ Jesus.

Matthew's sublime story of the adoration of the Wise Men shows how Christ enriches those whose hearts he touches. The Wise Men came with joy in their hearts to see the Christ child, and God allowed them to see wondrous things. The Wise Men foreshadow how the Kingdom will be a collection of people from every tribe, race, and nation. Matthew tells a very different story than Luke:

- + Instead of shepherds, Matthew gives us Wise Men from the East.
- + Instead of a stable, Matthew takes us to Herod's palace.
- + Instead of a manger, Matthew shows us gifts fit for a king.
- + Instead of angels, Matthew tells us of dreams.

Mary and Joseph remained in the vicinity of Bethlehem and Jerusalem until Jesus had been circumcised and presented in the temple (Luke 2:22-38). Mary also needed time to recover from the delivery before traveling to Nazareth. Presumably the wise men visited during the latter part of Mary and Joseph's visit to Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ?* It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *Like the Wise Men, we too look for Christ in Jerusalem (formal religion) instead of God's kingdom in everyday life.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God?* It may be helpful to circle those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *The Wise Men "were overwhelmed with joy (v.10)" This joy is not just an optimistic outlook, but instead a joy rooted in the gift of faith as the in-breaking of God's Spirit.*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "Gold" "Incense" "Myrrh"