



SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

December 29, 2024

“Excited and Hopeful”



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we gather in the afterglow of Christmas - memories of a quiet Christmas or loud celebrations fresh in minds. With the year winding down, we look to the future with uncertainty. Remind us of your steadfast love, bring us peace amid life's chaos, and let your light shine in our darkness. Knowing you are good and that your mercy endures forever, let us be excited and hopeful for our individual and collective ministry. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 2:1-2 (NIV)

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Matthew 2:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

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INTRODUCTION

In reflecting at the end of a year we can find ourselves celebrating accomplishments or wrestling with goals that were not met. As Jesus followers, we find renewal in the stories of God’s faithfulness in the past and have assurance that the Lord will guide in in the present. In exploring the story of Epiphany, we see how Jesus’ birth brought together not just Mary and Joseph or the shepherds but people from afar. Let us bask in the light of Christ and prepare for a New Year of mission and ministry in Jesus’ name. Amen?

QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Scripture to read around Christmas?
2. How has God been leading you recently? What do you need to accomplish this calling in the season of your faith journey?
3. If you don’t feel a special calling or leading from God, are you looking and listening for God’s calling? What spiritual practices do you utilize to hear and see God? (Examples include prayer, fasting, meditation, Bible study/devotions, etc.)
4. Do you find it easy or difficult to talk to someone who asks you about your faith? Why do you think that is?
5. This week, what is a goal you will set for this New Year? Who will help keep you accountable to this goal?

FINAL APPLICATION

The New Year is coming. We give thanks for this year of mission and ministry, for the joys we have experienced, and the lives that have been impacted. We release to the Lord those things that we no longer can change. We place our hope in the God who called the saints to great works and who is working through and within us to do the same. Let us be excited for what 2025 will mean for us individually and as a faith community.