



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Four

On the fourth weekend in the season of Advent, Pastor Gary brought a message based on the Magi's pursuit of the Christmas star and the One it pointed to. At several points in their journey they would have reason to ask, "Do you see what I see?". They might have asked this question of one another. And they might have asked King Herod. Their pure pursuit of a King that would rule over a people that they were not yet a part of, reveals that we too can be light in a dark world...even while we seek.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional question at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

*Almighty God and Author of Light,
a child is born to us and a Son is given to us
Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven
in the silent watches of the night,
and now your Church is filled with wonder
at the nearness of her God.
Open our hearts to receive His life
and increase our vision with
the rising of dawn,
that our lives may be filled
with His glory and
His peace, who lives and reigns
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ISAIAH 9.2

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.*

- In this darkest part of the year, we can easily identify with “the people walking in darkness”. But more than a lack of sunshine, we have seen what seems like increasing spiritual, emotional and societal darkness in our time. We are the people who have to remember that a great light shines. We can’t turn into and accept the darkness. A light has dawned!
- *Pray that you would walk as one who has light even in the darkness of this world.*

TUESDAY: MATTHEW 2.1-2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² 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.”

- The Magi arrived in Jerusalem and began asking around, “Where is the one we are looking for?” They asked this question of Jews, “Where is your king?” As non-Jews (Gentiles), it seems reasonable to ask the Magi in return, “What is compelling you on this journey towards a king that is not your own?” The answer could be dreams, visions, instinct. But we learn from the story that it was really the light. The star that had risen in the sky. It led them to travel, and it led them to worship.
- *How is the light of Christ showing up in your life? Where is it compelling you to go? Pray for a desire to move towards the Light of the world.*

WEDNESDAY: MATTHEW 2.3-6

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

*⁶ “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

- The Magi shared a question and news that disturbed Herod. News of the light breaking through the darkness will always be a threat to those who call darkness home. A big part of our calling as people who have seen a great light is to reach out to those stuck in darkness.
- *Pray for those near and far that are stuck in darkness. Are you experiencing darkness? Pray for the illumination of your soul.*

THURSDAY: MATTHEW 2.9-11

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.

- The Magi had a clear sense that the star was guiding them. It wasn't just a marker or a sign, it lit up the way and "stopped over the place where the child was." A dramatic star in the sky might seem like an easy thing to follow, but only a handful came to worship Jesus in the days after he was born.
- *Pray that you would be among the growing crowd of worshippers who notice the signs of God's rescue plan unfolding in your life.*

FRIDAY: MATTHEW 5.14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

- While we imagine what it would be like to follow a star in a dark sky to see Jesus, Pastor Gary reminded us that we already are light in a dark world. We just have to be more of who God made us to be! In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that "You are the light of the world." We have to let it shine and give glory to God.
- *Pray through these words of Jesus, let Jesus speak them over you.*

SATURDAY: ISAIAH 60.1-3

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.*

²*See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.*

³*Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

- Do you ever have trouble getting out of bed on a dark morning? Sometimes we might be tempted to roll over and wait for the light. The prophet Isaiah declares that our light has already come. There is also a promise that the nations and kings of the world will come to that light. Arise, shine!
- *Pray for the nations and rulers of this world. Pray that they might come into the Light that has come.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In his message, Pastor Gary shared these words from a classic hymn of the church, “Open my eyes that I may see.”

*Open my eyes, that I may see
Glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That shall unclasp and set me free
Silently now I wait for thee
Ready, my God, thy will to see
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

- How is God working to illumine you?
- How do others see that light in you?
- What commitments can you make that will allow the light of Christ to shine more brightly through you this week?