

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US, HARK THE HERALD/KING OF HEAVENS, O COME LET US SING, HIS NAME SHALL BE, SHOUT TO THE LORD

WELCOME

What's your favorite Christmas carol/song? What's the main focus of the song?

WORD

MATTHEW 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, ¹magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." ³When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the ⁵Messiah was to be born. ⁶They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written ⁷by the prophet: ⁸'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'" ⁹Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them ¹⁰the exact time the star appeared. ¹¹And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." ¹²After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was. ¹³When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹⁴After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they ¹⁵fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹⁶And having been warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Songs and carols signal the approach and celebration of Christmas! There are also "musicals" in the Christmas story! Here are some of the "main characters" of these musicals: the angels, Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna. The Magi (Wise Men) traveled 2,175 kilometers from the east (Persia) to worship the baby Jesus in Bethlehem (**Matthew 2:11**). They brought gifts: gold (which represents kingship), frankincense (which represents divinity), and myrrh (used for burial). Symbols of the kind of life that was ahead for the baby Jesus. Today, what gifts fit for a King should we bring?

As Christ-followers, our journey today is all about being conformed and transformed into Christlikeness (**Romans 8:29**). The following three "gifts" are most appropriate for us to give Jesus. He modeled all of them for us to follow!

1) HUMILITY is Golden

There is a direct connection between humility and obedience, that we can see as we read through the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, including in the Christmas account in **Luke 2:8-9**. Here, some shepherds were the first ones to hear about the birth of Christ through an angel. The magi and the shepherds are two very different groups of people in the Christmas story found in the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote about the same event from different perspectives for different audiences (**Luke 1:3**).

The shepherds were directed by the angel to the manger where Jesus was born (**Luke 2:10-14**). Unlike the magi who had expensive gifts for Jesus, these lowly shepherds did not have anything to offer---except their adoration, praise, and testimony to others about what they had heard and seen about Jesus (**Luke 2:15-18**). The shepherds

must have been transformed by what they witnessed that night, that's why they went out to be witnesses for Jesus! It's not enough for us to be transformed; respond by sharing Christ to others. The shepherds had a "musical" of their own as they glorified and praised God for all that they had seen and heard (Luke 2:20). Our worshipful response to God is golden to Him! We worship Him through our faithful service wherever we may be and to be His witnesses in whatever we are doing (a ride-hailing service driver, a janitor, etc.). God says that the least is the greatest among us (1 Corinthians 12:22-23).

Zechariah is our next Christmas character (Luke 1:5-17). He doubted what the angel told him and consequently became mute. He later named his son "**John**," just as the angel told him. Zechariah was able to speak again, he sang a song (Luke 1:67-79), known as the "Benedictus" (praise be). Prayers can be set to music; prayers are songs we offer God from our hearts. Even the praise of children and infants is music to God's ears (Psalm 8:1-2)! Elizabeth also breaks out in song because of what God has done (Luke 1:5-7).

After receiving the message from the angel Gabriel about the Savior being born through her, Mary visited Elizabeth in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:26-38). "The Magnificat" is Mary's humble response to God as His "bondslave", and as someone who needs a Savior --- the greatest act of humility is to acknowledge that we need a Savior because we all have sinned (Luke 1:46-48). None of us can earn credits or merits to save ourselves---we need Jesus to save us!

John the Baptist was also a humble man who acknowledged that Jesus was greater than he (Mark 1:6-7). Even as an unborn baby, John was already exalting Jesus (Luke 1:39-44)! What a profound thing it is to know that even without a voice, "a fetus was the first to rejoice at the news of Jesus"!

2) GRATITUDE is Worship

Righteous and devout, Simeon is the next character to burst out in song after he has seen Jesus, the long-awaited "consolation of Israel" (**Luke 2:25-33**). The prophetess Anna breaks out in song upon meeting Jesus (**Luke 2:36-38**). Praising and singing is

worship, that's why we have the Book of Psalms! Gratitude can infect so many people and may even be rewarded by man. What more our Heavenly Father? For God, our gratitude is worship and thanksgiving.

3) OBEDIENCE is Sacrifice

Joseph was an obedient person; Matthew opened his gospel with Joseph's story, where we see Joseph obeyed what God commanded him to do (**Matthew 1:19-25, 2:13-14**). This reminds us of Abraham, another man who obeyed God right away to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Joseph continued to obey God at a later time when he took his family back to Israel from Egypt after Herod had died (Matthew 2:19-21).

But so what if we know all of these stories about Christmas? So, what about you? What obedience is required of you? Remember Noah's ark and how everyone on earth perished except Noah and his family, who heeded God's warning about the flood and entered the ark? Once the door of the ark was shut, no one else could be saved.

God sent Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. There is an urgency to share about Jesus with everyone around us before it is too late. People will perish in the "lake of fire" if they are not in Jesus, our only Savior. Those of us who are in Christ need to realize that all the good gifts we've received and knowledge we have about God are for nothing if we do not love people enough to reconcile them to God through Christ (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

The Old Testament pointed to Jesus; once He was born, the clock to the end times began ticking; thus, we are now living in those days (Hebrews 1:1-2). This Christmas, let us offer the gift of humility, gratitude, and obedience to Jesus. Let's bring others to Jesus, though it may not be easy to tell them their need to repent and humbly come to Jesus (2 Timothy 4:1-2, Luke 15:10).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What do you think others will say about you in the areas of Humility, Gratitude, and Obedience?
2. Have you been obedient to the commission to share and disciple others?
3. When you stand before Christ at the end of your life, will He be pleased with the new you that you present to Him?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Lift in prayer those who may be celebrating Christmas but are missing the true reason for the season --- Jesus, in their lives. Take time in this joyful holiday to share the gospel through the Christmas story with your family and friends!

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 8:29

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; tension in the West Philippine Sea to be peacefully resolved.

- Continue to pray for the rest of Israeli hostages to be restored to their families safely. Pray for Israel and the war with terrorists to end according to God's purpose and for His glory.
- For the civil war in Syria to end peacefully, protection for Christians and other minorities; that there will be freedom from oppression for Syrians. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly throughout the country.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.