

Week 1: *The Impossible Calling*

Week 2: *The Disturbing Dream*

Week 3: *The Unexpected Visitors*

Week 4: *The Desperate Journey*

APPETIZER – Welcome Home

Offer hospitality [*philoxenos*] to one another without grumbling.

~ The Apostle Peter (1 Peter 4:8-10)



DINE IN – Getting To Where God Wants Us

Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12

SHEPHERDS – from wonder to “yes, let’s go!”

Represent those who struggle to live right but fail to fit in to religious structures. They are your good neighbours who might believe in God but have given up on religion.

God’s Invitation:

- To come and see the fulfillment of the greatest promise

Shepherds’ Response:

- Fear, then wonder
- Let’s go! (The sheep will be okay attitude.)
- Searched and found the precious gift
- Glorified and praised God

What “yes” meant:

- Believing the craziest thing – the Messiah in a manger – might be true
- Receiving the incredible grace that God should tell the news to lowly shepherds
- Witnessing the most profound moment in history
- Telling anyone who would listen without worrying what people would think

Meditation:

- Is God asking me to believe the unbelievable in some way?
- Or is he inviting me to take some time out of my busy life to just come away and notice him anew? To worship him afresh?
- Or is he asking me to believe that I really am that important to him that he entrusts me with spreading the Good News through my ministry/vocation and relationships?
- What is my response to God?

MAGI – from curiosity to “yes, let’s worship!”

Represent the spiritual “other” – people of other religions and worldviews. God can reach them through the miraculous, and when he does, will you be ready to welcome them?

God’s Invitation:

- To seek and find deeper meaning and fulfillment in what the star represents

Magi Response:

- Respected the mystery and believed that revelation would come
- Embarked on a long and arduous journey to a foreign land
- Brought meaning-filled gifts and worshipped the child
- Wisely avoided Herod on the way home

What “yes” meant:

- Keeping minds and hearts open to the “signs and wonders” regardless of how unbelievable or how foreign they may be
- Respecting and worshiping the Revelation as it was given – the King as a young child in a humble home
- Asking for help when needed, especially to understand and interpret Scripture
- Defying the orders of the local authority and risking punishment

Meditation:

- Is God inviting me to seek and find him somewhere new – beyond my comfort zone, in “strange territory”? Am I willing to sacrifice the comforts of how I’ve always known him and embark on the journey to seek and go deeper no matter what it involves, or how long it takes, or what the outcome is?
- What is my response to God?

THREE WAYS TO GET WHERE GOD WANTS US...

- Look for signs! (Shepherds)
- Interpret prophecies! (Magi)
- Live in submission and support of others. (Mary and Joseph)

TAKE OUT – Practicing Hospitality

Mary and Joseph model what the New Testament teaches for all believers, especially leaders – hospitality, the ability to welcome others into our lives in a way that makes them, even briefly, feel like family. (**Matthew 10:40; Luke 90:48; 15:2; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9**)

How can you practice hospitality with...

- Your home (hospitality versus entertaining)
- Your car (groceries, commutes)
- Your cottage, trailer, camper, gear
- Your tools
- Your toys
- Other possessions



Home Church Questions...

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic]

1. How do you show hospitality (beyond family and close friends) during this season? How have you experienced hospitality shown by others?

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture]

2. Jesus taught his disciples how to do ministry, and how to take time away from ministry to rest with him. Read **Mark 6:30-32**. This Home Church is for us to spend time resting, talking, and being with Jesus. Our goal will be to focus our attention on his presence, invisible but real, and to let God speak to us out of Scripture.
3. Rather than discuss our primary text right away, we are going to meditate on it first. Settle into a comfortable position, yet try to be alert enough that you don't fall asleep. (But if you do, that's okay too – you obviously needed a nap.) Relax and set your intention to be quiet and listen to God, enjoying His presence. Remember that this whole time – silence, meditating, listening, and conversing – is in one sense, prayer. Begin by spending a few minutes talking to God quietly, “unloading” what is on your heart and mind so you can be attentive to God and others.
4. Now have someone read **Luke 2:8-20** and **Matthew 2:1-12** out loud and slowly. Notice the response of the shepherds and Magi's journey to “yes” with God. Spend some time in silence again, imagining yourself in their shoes – what thoughts and feelings can you identify with? Read over your notes again. Think about how you relate to God's invitation, response, and meditations listed in the notes. Also take a moment to imagine what all this would be like from Mary and Joseph's point of view. What kind of things might they be feeling when strangers come to visit their child? What is God saying to you through these stories of faith, journeying, evangelizing, and hospitality?

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together]

5. Let's debrief. How was the time of silence for you? Weird? Wonderful? Hard? Peaceful? Insightful? Was it any different than last week? Why?
6. Share what you feel comfortable sharing about your time with God. What is God's invitation to you today and what is your response?

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Quotes...

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

... So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

~ The Gospel of Luke

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

... and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

~ The Gospel of Matthew