

# Advent Conspiracy: Week 1

## Discussion Guide



### Read Together

This week we started a new series called *Advent Conspiracy*. We're exploring four ways that we can make Christmas meaningful again in a cultural moment where it's marked by consumerism, distraction, and stress. We want to know what it could look like to worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all. This week we're starting with "worship fully" and the story of the magi in Matthew 2:1-12.

<sup>1</sup>After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup>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."

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "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."

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## Discuss Together

*As a discussion leader, your goal is to foster a conversation that leads people a little bit closer to everyday life like Jesus—using this week’s scripture text as a basis. Always feel free to add in additional questions of your own, and don’t feel like you need to get through every single question. If you have a big group, it can be helpful to let people discuss a question in groups of 2-3 so that more people get a chance to talk.*

- As we’re headed into the Advent season, it can bring up lots of memories about Christmas. **What’s one of your favorite Christmas memories or traditions?**
- *Advent Conspiracy* is about making Christmas meaningful again. **What are some ways you think that Christmas has lost its meaning in our cultural moment?**
- The first practice for making Christmas meaningful again is *worship fully*:
  - In your own understanding, **what does the word *worship* mean?**
  - **Why do you think worship is the first step in making Christmas meaningful again?**
- In Matthew 2:1-12, we see two conflicting modes of worship: Herod and the magi.
  - Herod claimed that he wanted to worship Jesus, but **what do you think Herod was actually worshipping more than anything else?**
  - It’s hard to know who the magi were. They might have been scholars, sorcerers, or just really good with telescopes. What we do know is that they weren’t who you might have expected to be some of the first to worship Jesus. In this story, **what are some things that mark the worship of the magi?**
- There’s a contemporary, non-Christian philosopher who said, “There’s no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what we worship” (David Foster Wallace). It doesn’t matter if you’re religious or not; we all worship something. If someone could see how you spent your time, how you spent your money, and what you thought about most this Advent season, **what would they think you worship: God or something else?**
- The magi barely knew how to worship Jesus, but they show us what a posture of worship could look like. **What are some practical choices we could make to help us worship fully this Christmas season?** (And, no, it doesn’t involve snootily saying “Merry Christmas” whenever someone says “Happy Holidays.”)

## Pray Together

We worship because of what God has done for us. He sent us Jesus when we didn’t deserve it and did nothing to earn it. More than anything else, Christmas is an opportunity to recover worship. As we close tonight, let’s spend our remaining time together worshipping and thanking God for all that he’s done for us.