

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Wise men want to be by him

Matthew 2:10,11

When [the Wise Men] 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. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Four-year-old Gabriella and her older brother Justin loved the nativity set under the Christmas tree. They would gaze at the figurines of Mary and Joseph with Jesus in between them. Standing off in the distance were the shepherds. Justin liked to add his superhero figurine to help them keep watch over the sheep by night. Gabriella positioned her Barbie doll dressed in pink to join the heavenly hosts adorned in white singing their angel praises. Meanwhile, on the other side of the nativity set, Hot Wheels cars were carefully positioned next to the camels in order to get those wise men to Bethlehem at top speed.

Gabriella and Justin's mom didn't mind their playing. That's why she gave them the Fischer Price toy nativity to play with. The gift was on the condition that they would leave the Precious Moments porcelain nativity set exactly the way it was. You see, the previous Christmas, she carefully set out the fragile porcelain figures. But she would find all the pieces crammed inside a very crowded stable. Finally, the frustrated mom grew tired of resetting the pieces and confronted her daughter. Gabriella replied, "But Mom, they all want to be by Jesus!"

In Matthew 2, we see the great lengths that the wise men went to in order to be by Jesus. We don't know exactly what or who they left behind to take this trek. We don't know exactly how long their trip was or how long it took to pack for this journey. We do know that when they saw the star that led them to Jesus, "they were overjoyed" (verse 10). And when you have that feeling where the joy you feel is spilling out into every aspect of your life, things like time or money don't matter. All that matters is being with Jesus because he is the source of our joy.

The wise men brought their treasures to present before the baby. In the same way, we present our treasures before the baby. Not gifts of gold, but perhaps talents on the athletic field or good grades in the classroom. Not gifts of myrrh, but maybe time spent baking treats to share others. Not gifts of frankincense but time spent practicing music that makes worship beautiful.

Give thanks, we get to be by Jesus! Let's live for him this new year!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Do you have a favorite nativity set in your house? Why is it your favorite?
- What figurines are included in a nativity set? Tell the part that each piece plays in the nativity set.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- The wise men knew how to look up at the night sky and use stars to guide them. Instead of “wise” men, what would they be called today?
- Name all of the gifts the wise men brought to Jesus. Then, think of an equivalent to them in 2023 (Gold - money; incense - essential oils; myrrh - body lotion).

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Recount a time when you were absolutely overjoyed. What happened? Describe how you felt and the actions that followed.
- Not everyone wanted to be by Jesus. Read Matthew 2:3-8. Identify who that was. Then discuss what it means to be “two-faced.”

Closing Prayer:

Dear newborn Savior, no matter what our age—we all want to be by you! While we are still here on earth may we sing with the hymn writer: “Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to thee; Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.” (*Christian Worship* 695:1) Amen.