

Get in the Word

- **Matthew 2:1-11** - The nativity narrative featuring the magi.
- **John 3:1-20** - The purpose of God's coming.

Warming Up the Ice

What would the slogan for your life be?

Summary and Lead-Ins

We get offended when we aren't invited to things. On the flip side, if we invite people and no one shows up, we get offended. Meanwhile, the God of the universe came to earth and wasn't invited to be with His family and was rejected by His people. How would you react? How did Jesus react?

Pre-Work and Responsibility

As the leader, you should have a habit of preparedness. Read this document and think of some examples that you can use if the conversation is flagging or needs more insight to help it along. Make sure you have read the passages before group and encourage everyone to participate in reading aloud. As a facilitator, it is your job to create and maintain a safe place for your small group to share and discuss that which is on their hearts.

Some Things to Talk About

It's invitation week at Branches (this is every week)! To capture some of what the feel may have been like at Jesus's birthday party, invite your group to talk about some of the most awkward party moments (preferably their own) that they have experienced. Describing the feelings, the tensions, and the results of those events will help each member come to grasp what is being talked about in **Matthew 2**. Explore what your group thinks Mary, Joseph, and even Joseph's family may have been feeling and thinking during their own awkward birthday event for Jesus.

What does your group think about the magi (or magos) mentioned in the text? How would Mary and Joseph have reacted to their sudden arrival? How would you have reacted? What about when they started handing out extraordinary gifts? Think back to your own awkward party moment and what would have changed if you, or someone else, started receiving gold and other expensive gifts?

While the magi show up to anoint a king, acknowledging Jesus's position in the world, Jesus is actually inviting us to a party he is hosting. What do you learn from reading **John 3** about Jesus and his invitation? Is it something you want? Do you think others want it to?

Wrap Up

Make sure to set a standard of communication with your group so that you, as the leader, can touch base with them. Personal touches like a "midweek digital high five" can be just the thing to encourage someone through a tough day.

Read back through your prayer journal periodically and celebrate the spiritual growth that is happening in your group. Encourage each other!

