



GREAT LENGTHS

GREAT LENGTHS, PART 2: GREAT LENGTHS

In the vast darkness. Deep in a cloud of gas and dust, a sovereign work begins. Within this distant nebula, gravity causes collisions of hydrogen molecules and atoms begin bouncing off one another. As the collection of molecules grows the temperature begins to rise. When this sphere of super-heated matter reaches seventy centimeters in diameter, the temperature climbs to ten million degrees. At this point, the boiling natural process known as nuclear fusion begins. Hydrogen fuses together to form helium and matter converts to pure energy. Finally, at eighteen million degrees a transformation occurs light bursts forth and a star is born. The light from the infant star races across the cosmos at one hundred and eighty six thousand miles a second. Taking hundreds, if not thousands of years to finally reach our planet, to pierce the night sky—illuminating where Jesus—the gift of salvation—lies for religious outsiders.

BIG IDEA: God goes to great lengths to get us to choose the gift of salvation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Christmas song? What is your favorite Christmas carol? Why?
2. When Chris was sharing about how many stars there are in our solar system—300 sextillion (that’s 23 zeros)—what did you think about the night sky? What did you think about God? About you and how you fit in to all of that?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read the following verses about stars: [Psalm 19:1-2](#), and [Psalm 8:3-4](#).*

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. [Psalm 19:1-2 \(NLT\)](#)

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? [Psalm 8:3-4 \(NLT\)](#)

4. What is David saying about God? What do the heavens and the skies do? Look at the verbs in 19:1-2. (*Proclaim, display, speak, make him known.*) Who else are supposed to do these things besides the heavens?
5. When David looks up at the 300 sextillion stars, what does he feel about God? About himself?
6. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read [Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11](#).*

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” The star they had seen in the east 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. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. [Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 \(NIV\)](#)

7. If you listen to popular Christmas songs and our culture, what information (mostly dis-information!) do you deduce about the Magi / Wise men? Did you know that our culture has even given them names? *Google it and share it with the group.*
8. The Magi travelled 900 miles from Babylon (modern-day Iraq) to Jerusalem to do what? ([Matthew 2:2](#))

9. Chris says, “We all worship something” and even people who don’t know God worship something. What do people today worship? What is competing against God for worship in your own life?
10. Chris says that, “God cares deeply about you—no matter your categories or labels you place on yourself.” What were some of the categories that these wise men fit into? What are some of your labels and categories that you wear?
11. Chris said that, “God came at Christmas to destroy categories. That Jesus came just as much for the lowly shepherd as He did for the wealthy and wise king.” What do you think he means by that? How would we treat people differently if we saw everyone as an *image bearer of God*?
12. Chris also said that, “God cares deeply about your pain.” Do you believe that? That God doesn’t waste an affliction?
13. With your Bible or YouVersion, read [2 Chronicles 36:17-20](#) and [Daniel 1](#).

So the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them. The Babylonians killed Judah’s young men, even chasing after them into the Temple. They had no pity on the people, killing both young men and young women, the old and the infirm. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. The king took home to Babylon all the articles, large and small, used in the Temple of God, and the treasures from both the Lord’s Temple and from the palace of the king and his officials. Then his army burned the Temple of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed everything of value. The few who survived were taken as exiles to Babylon, and they became servants to the king...

[2 Chronicles 36:17-20 \(NLT\)](#)

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. He took some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god. Then the king some of the young men of Judah’s royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives to be taken to Babylon. They are to be, “Strong, healthy, and good-looking young men who are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.” Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah.

[Daniel 1:1-2, 3, 6 \(NLT\)](#)

14. Daniel and his friends had to determine which parts of Babylonian culture they could live with and which parts they should stand against. How do you make that determination in your own culture?
15. What is an example of an area where you have said, “I draw the line here and I will not cross it?” What has happened as you have made this stand and maintained your integrity?
16. In Daniel 2:48, God promoted Daniel to be in charge of all of the Magi / Wise men and for him to use his influence to train all of the wise men in astronomy, astrology, and the Hebrew scriptures! How can you influence the culture where you live *for God* and *for good*?

MOVING FORWARD

God used *Daniel* and the *pain he experienced* centuries before as a travel agent to prepare the way so that one day, the Magi would look toward the sky and recognize the star that would point them toward Jesus born in Bethlehem.

God cares deeply about your pain, and He never wastes an affliction. If all of us could see how God is working behind the scenes to not only bring us to the point where we begin a relationship with God through Jesus, but even use our pain and problems to redeem them so others can come to Jesus? How would that change our attitude towards the pain we experience?

WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on [Daniel 1](#), [Daniel 2](#), [Matthew 2](#), [Numbers 24:17](#).