



This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).

Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

Expecting

Read Matthew 1:1-6 & Matthew 2

- **In Matthew 1 & 2: We see that God's future is based on redemptive love, not our failures.** Jesus' family tree includes "murderers, cheats, cowards, adulterers and liars". God purposefully remembers the unspeakable actions of the past to show that His love is greater than any generational sin or family dysfunction. Do you feel defined by your family history or past mistakes? How does knowing that Jesus came from a messy lineage change your expectations of how God can work in your life?
- **The "Outsiders" saw it first.** The Magi were stargazers from a foreign land who had the courage to leave home and name a new power to the existing power. While the religious insiders missed it, the outsiders recognized who Jesus was. Who are the people in your life that seem "furthest from God" but might actually be seeing God more clearly than the insiders? What is an area of belief about people, yourself, or God that seems to be rising to the surface for you?
- **A Different Kind of "Mighty God."** We often expect a "Mighty God" to accumulate power, money, and armies. Instead, Jesus' origin story involves fleeing as a refugee to Egypt to escape the violence of Herod. Jesus disrupts the "Pax Romana" (peace through power) with "Pax Christi" (peace through love). Does your version of a "mighty God" require everything to be good or right in your life? How does the image of Jesus as a vulnerable refugee challenge your view of power?
- **Suffering with us, not just for us.** Jesus is not mighty because he avoids death, suffering, or fear. He is mighty because he suffers *like* us and *with* us. His power is found in identifying with our struggle for good. Where are you currently expecting God to simply "fix" a hard situation? How might your perspective shift if you expected Jesus to meet you *in* the suffering rather than just taking it away?
- **We are shaped by the people who love us.** Take a moment to name the relationships, with God and people, who have loved you into being. How can you be that presence for a neighbor this week, helping them to know love is worth the effort?