

# Near...

Part I: Letting Go of Christmas

Pastor Grant Fishbook

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## **We fear releasing our lives to God because we fear a loss of control.**

### **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 in the east 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 Christ 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 be the shepherd of 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 make a careful search 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 in the east 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 and of incense and of 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.

## **A journey toward intimacy with God begins with a decision to release.**

- A release of a season (verse 1)

**Application:** *What would it take for you to release your Christmas back to God?*

- A release of worldly wisdom (vs. 2)

**Application:** *Where can you find "the king of the Jews" in your Christmas?*

- A release of "normal" (vs. 2b)

**Application:** *Are you looking for God in Christmas?*

*(Continues on back)*

- A release of the “rule” (vs. 3-8)

**Application:** *What Christmas “rule” are you willing to break this year?*

- A release of worship (vs. 9-11)

Gold = a gift for a King

Frankincense = a gift for a Priest

Myrrh = a gift for the dead

**Application:** *What gifts are you giving to Jesus this Christmas?*

- A release of my plans (vs. 12)

**Application:** *If Christmas isn't working for you, is it time to find another way?*

**Whenever we release our hearts to God,  
the reward is a deeper intimacy with God.**

*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.  
– James 4:8, ESV*

## Next Steps

Take a few moments and plan your Christmas schedule around Jesus. Our weekend services, Candlelight Communion and Christmas Eve are strategically planned to allow you to draw near to God.

### Small Group Discussion Questions



- 1) Tell the truth about yourself:
  - I decorated weeks ago because I love Christmas!
  - I think people who decorate early are nuts.
  - I don't like Christmas at all.
- 2) Have you ever had a huge Christmas disappointment? What happened?
- 3) The wise men had to release a season of their life in order to find Jesus. Thinking of all that the Christmas season demands of us, is there something practical you need to release in order to experience the nearness of God?
- 4) How do you draw near to God? How can you tell when he is near to you?
- 5) Look at the application questions in the outline. Choose one and answer it for the whole group.
- 6) How can we pray for you tonight?