

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 12/30/18

Monday – Read Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 2:1-6, and Matthew 28:16-20. **Epiphany.** Epiphany means an illuminating discovery, especially of something divine. For Christians, Epiphany is the way Jesus is revealed to be the incarnate Son of God. The visit from the Wise Men is celebrated on Epiphany Sunday, which is on January 6. The Wise Men represent the central idea of Epiphany which is that Christ came for all, Jew and Gentile. Early in his Gospel, Matthew foreshadows his final paragraph, when Jesus commissions his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. As you pray today, ask God to remind you that Christ is the Savior for all: for you, your family, and even your enemies.

Tuesday – Read II Corinthians 5:16-21. **New Year, New You.** Today marks the beginning of a new year, another year to hear God's voice and follow God's leading. This is a fitting time to remind ourselves that God is always at work in seasons of newness and change. As we read in II Corinthians 5, through Christ we are a new creation. The allure of New Year's Resolutions is the same as the truth of our faith: we have been freed from what has held us back, and we are free to be new creations. As you pray, ask God to make that feeling of newness inspire you.

Wednesday – Read Matthew 2:7-12 and Revelation 21:15-26. **Gold.** The Wise Men gave gold to the Christ child. Gold signifies Jesus' status as the King of kings. Gold, then as now, is one of the most precious elements, something kings amassed. The gift of gold looks ahead to the end of time, when a new city will come out of heaven to a new earth. As Revelation 21 says, the city and the streets will be made of pure gold and yet clear as glass. In prayer today, find something you own that is gold. Pray that it might be a reminder to you that Jesus is the King of kings.

Thursday – Read Matthew 2:7-12 and Leviticus 2:1-3. **Frankincense.** The Wise Men gave the gift of frankincense, which is an oil, representing Jesus' divinity and priestly role. That is, Jesus mediates God to us. The way to God is through Christ, fulfilling the role of the priests of old. As a priest, Jesus speaks to God on our behalf. In Leviticus 2, we hear the Lord's instruction to use frankincense in offerings. As you pray, thank God for the work of Jesus bringing us back to God.

Friday – Read Matthew 2:7-12 and John 19:38-42. **Myrrh.** Lastly, the Wise Men gave the gift of myrrh, a perfume. This gift foreshadows Jesus' sacrifice and death on the cross. In John 19, after Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus, the Pharisee who had come to believe Jesus, brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloe to prepare Jesus for burial. The death signified by the myrrh is no ordinary death. Through Jesus' work on the cross, and his subsequent resurrection, he paid the price for our sins, restored us in the eyes of God, and offered us eternal life. As you pray, thank Jesus for the way he gave his life for you so that you might live for him.

Saturday – Read Matthew 2:5-6 and II Timothy 3:10-17. **The Promise of Scripture.** The Wise Men completed their search for the Christ child only after consulting Scripture. Their wisdom and passion gets them within miles of Jesus, but only Scripture gives the final direction. The same is true for us. Our wisdom and passion are God-given, but as Paul says, Scripture is the key to righteousness. Through prayer and the study of Scripture, we can follow God's direction for our lives. As you pray, ask God to guide you in the path of righteousness.

Lectionary Readings: I Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52.

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