

Daily Devotions



Day 1

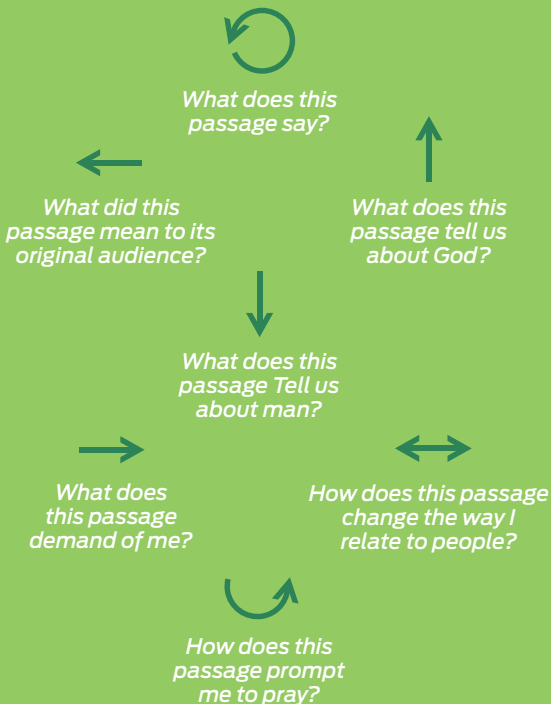
Matthew 2:1-12

The account of the wise men is often pictured with everyone in similar clothes, sometimes even with similar skin tone. Lest we forget, these were pagan astrologers from the Far East. So, the journey of these non-Israelites to Jerusalem to worship the King of the Jews was a bit out of place.

That is, unless you remember the vision proclaimed by Isaiah years before, namely all nations and people will seek God and learn to walk according to His ways (Isa. 2:1-4). Matthew's account is a reminder that the God of the universe desires all people to worship Him. And He will draw all peoples to Himself in Christ (Isa. 49:6; John 12:32).

God still seeks to bring all humanity to Jesus. This is the good news of the gospel. God takes the initiative in bringing those far away to Him. Once people find Jesus, like the wise men did, by God's grace they will also worship Him as the treasure of their life.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What are some ways we can be involved in bringing those far away closer to God?

Matthew

2:13-23

It is interesting that Jesus' family flees to Egypt to save His life from the destruction of Herod. It was Jesus' ancestors who fled from Egypt after God spared them from the destruction He brought about because of Pharaoh, another selfish and violent ruler.

Once Herod died, Jesus returned to Israel. The prophets often recounted how God had faithfully brought Israel out of Egypt in the exodus. Here, Matthew makes this connection, comparing the rescue and deliverance of Israel (God's "son"), to Jesus', who is the true Israelite who will rescue and deliver all of God's people (v. 15).

How amazing it is that the sovereign God of the universe orchestrated events years apart to allow His people to see connections and recognize His power in bringing dual fulfillment to His promises. This is the same God who works His will in your life day to day. He knows where you will go and what you will do.

How does God's control over historical events as depicted in the Bible encourage you in your personal relationship with Him?

Luke

2:39-47

Jesus' family made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover each year. Not an easy journey, the travelers would cover around twenty miles a day. This was a journey that exemplified the faithfulness of Jesus' parents.

The journey itself was formative to them as they remembered the Passover from the Old Testament, which commemorated God's deliverance, or exodus, of His people out of slavery in Egypt. As Exodus 12–13 remind us, the night before the exodus of God's people, the death angel (or "destroyer") visited firstborns in the last plague of judgment over Egypt. However, when he came upon the household of an Israelite family, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the door frame and "passed over" those homes.

For Israelites, the journey to celebrate Passover was done in thankfulness and remembrance for God's grace and mercy to their people. Little did Joseph and Mary know, that as they traveled to Jerusalem this time, their child would one day return to Jerusalem as our Passover lamb, to take away the sins of the world.

What feelings emerge within you as you read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' childhood knowing He later became our Passover lamb?

Luke 2:48-50

We all need reminders of who God is and what His purposes are. The mother of Jesus wasn't any different. When Mary finds Jesus in the temple after searching days for Him, she stated, "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Note that Mary speaks to Jesus as a child and references Joseph, His earthly father. However, Jesus responds with His first words in this Gospel account, words that identify the God of the temple as his Father: "Why were you searching for me? ... "Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?"

This not only confirms His unique relationship with God the Father, it also reminds Mary of the same. Jesus must be about His heavenly Father's business—after all, that is His priority and mission. It had been twelve years since the angelic messenger had proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, and this incident served as a needed reminder to His earthly parents.

How have you seen your pursuit of God's mission lead to tension with others, family or friends?

Luke 2:51-52

Once again, we are told of Jesus' obedience to the law in 2:51, namely, that He was obedient to His parents. God's law mandates that children do so, but it is worthy of note considering who Jesus actually is.

Being born under the law, Jesus fulfilled the law even toward honoring ones father and mother (Ex. 20:12). In this sense, Jesus demonstrated His perfect allegiance to God the Father in expressing His obedience to Joseph and Mary.

Jesus' obedience and allegiance to the heavenly Father in this passage is a pattern of what's to come. We often wonder why the Gospel writers did not include more about Jesus childhood, don't we? Yet here, we are given plenty to ponder if we pay close attention.

This chapter in Luke began when Jesus was a baby (Luke 2:16), moved through His boyhood (v. 40), made special note of when He was twelve years old (v. 42), and finally He is referred to by His name, Jesus (v. 52). This is the Jesus who would say to the Father, "Not my will, but yours, be done," in the shadow of the cross (22:42).

How does our experience as middle and high school students teach us about our responsibility to submit to personal authority over us, especially God's?