



Small Group Study Guide for January 4, 2026

Our Savior Lutheran Church and School

Theme: God chose Israel to be a light to the nations so they would see the Savior of the nations. The Wise Men were evidence of that. Jesus brings together Jews and Gentiles into one body, the Church, through faith, by grace.

Getting Started: (sharing with each other)

1. Share your God-sightings from Christmas and New Year's. Where did you see God at work these past two weeks?
2. Do you know any Jewish people, and if so, do you know what they think of Jesus/Christianity?

In the Word: Read Matthew 2:1-12

3. The Magi (often called 'wise men') were from the eastern provinces near Babylon and Persia. These cultures were known for advances in astronomy and star gazing. We are not sure what exactly they saw that led them to Jerusalem, but it must have indicated the birth of a Jewish king of some significance. Why was the appearance of the wise men 1) a surprise, and 2) an act of great faith on the part of the Magi?
4. King Herod oversaw tremendous building projects in Judea. There was the temple in Jerusalem, which took 40 years to build, and many other monumental structures, fortresses, and religious sites that were built during this time. He was called Herod the Great because of this. But there was a cost to his greatness. He was also known as a ruthless tyrant, who murdered his own family members for fear they might take his throne. How does King Herod contrast with the newborn king in this account?
5. It took several months for the Magi to reach Jerusalem and then Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary may have stayed in Bethlehem up to a year or more after Jesus' birth, and were in a house by this point. Mary is specifically mentioned as being present when the Magi arrived. What do you think Mary thought of these strange visitors and the precious gifts they brought for her Son?

Read Ephesians 3:1-12

6. Paul was commissioned by Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles. This was surprising since Paul was trained as a Pharisee and devout Jew. Jews and Gentiles were so distinct, and the Jews were so separate from Gentiles, since Moses and the Exodus made them a distinct nation. In the Old Testament, there were always clues that the Gentiles would be included in God's salvation plan, but how that was to happen remained a mystery. How many times does Paul use the word "mystery" in verses 1-9?
7. The mystery that Paul speaks of is revealed in verses 6 and 10-11. What is it?
8. Through the Gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel. What was Israel going to inherit that Gentiles now get to inherit through the Gospel? Read **Isaiah 25:6-9**, **Isaiah 65:17-25**, and **Isaiah 66:19-22**. What do we (Jews and Gentiles) inherit by faith according to these prophecies?

Pulling It All Together

9. Jews could not even eat with Gentiles, let alone associate with them. But now the Jewish believers in Jesus were welcoming Gentiles into the church! Read **Romans 9:6-8**, and **11:1-6**. For both Jew and Gentile, the means of salvation is the same. How are we (Jews and Gentiles) saved and brought into the family of God?
10. Who are people today who are always separate, and rarely mix? How does the Gospel invite even them to become one in Christ?
11. How does our church welcome people who are different than us when they come to faith in Jesus, and how could we improve in this area?

Prayer: Thank God for including the Gentiles in the Gospel. Pray that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, would know Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, and that our church would continue to make disciples of all nations, bringing people together in the family of God.

Next Week: The second Sunday of Epiphany is the Baptism of Our Lord. We rejoice in the gift of Baptism!