



Practicing Love (Matthew 2:1-12)
Practicing Christmas pt. 4
Pastor Tim Peck

THE BIG IDEA

The Magi were on a journey of love. The practices of persistent worship, extravagant giving, and spiritual discernment can help us learn to love well.

OPENING

- What's the furthest you've traveled to go to church?
- What are some legends about the Magi that you've heard?

DIGGING DEEPER

- The Magi from the East represent the very first non-Jewish people to encounter Jesus. According to Bible scholar Leon Morris, "*Matthew may well have included this story to bring out the truth that Jesus is Lord of all peoples; since this is so, it was appropriate that at the time of his infancy people came from a distant Gentile country to pay their homage. In this narrative the Jews and their king are enraged against the infant Jesus, but Gentiles do him homage.*"¹ Why do you think Matthew includes this at the very beginning of his account of Jesus' life?
- The New Testament assumes that Christians will engage in persistent worship with God's people. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. How do you think "holding on to the hope we profess" is connected to "not giving up meeting together"? How could this become a habit? What can a person do to break this habit?
- Read 1 John 3:16-18. How does John connect generosity with love?

¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 34

- Pastor Tim defined spiritual discernment as distinguishing truth from error, right from wrong, wise from unwise, and helpful from unhelpful. What sources do you turn to in order to distinguish these things?
- Pastor Tim quoted from Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* which says that discernment arises out of a relationship with God in prayer founded on the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence within us.² How can you grow in your spiritual discernment?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- Picture someone who's currently hard for you to show love to. Spend time praying, asking God to show you how to express God's love to this person.
- Give an anonymous gift to someone this week. As you do, pay attention to what happens in your own heart.

PRAYER REQUESTS

²Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), p. 100.