

Small Group Guide

January 14, 2024

1. Time for community and sharing (10 minutes)
2. Short opening prayer
3. Does anyone remember the sermon from last Sunday?
4. Go over the sermon
 - a. What was it about?
 - i. Explain if they don't know. Was about the Magi who came to visit Jesus. However, the focus was not on Magi, but Herod the Great. We talked about how evil he was and how much evil seems to always be in our world (maybe we even choose evil decisions every now and then).
 - b. What did the scripture and sermon make you think about? Discuss out loud.
 - i. From Pastor Matt: It didn't strike me until the middle of the first sermon that part of the evil that I'm harping against might be in me because of the poor decisions I make.
 - ii. Do you think that we deal with evil because there is a devil and evil spirits in our world or because God gave us free will and we often choose the evil or wrong thing?
 - c. Everyone read scripture on your own and turn Bible over when you're done. What stood out to you from this scripture? Go around and tell.
 - i. Take a few minutes of silence to pray to God for this scripture and whatever stood out.
5. Scripture notes
 - a. 1.3 Blessed be the God. Jewish prayers often opened with "Praise be to God." The Ephesian church included both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19.17; Ephesus was founded by Greeks and Greek culture dominated there). heavenly places. People in the ancient Mediterranean world believed that there were multiple heavens (many envisioned three, others seven, and some many more). They believed that the highest heaven (in view here) was purest; the purest and greatest deity lived there. Nearer the earth, the atmospheric heaven, where birds fly, was also inhabited by many demons or semi-divine spirits (depending on the thinker). Paul thus adapts this language to speak of God's realm and exaltation over other spirits; cf. vv. 20–21; 2.6.
 - b. 1.9 mystery of his will. In Jewish circles, a mystery sometimes referred to secret information now revealed only by God (Dan 2.28–30, 47; Dead Sea Scrolls). The mystery that God purposed includes bringing Gentiles into the fold of God's people (3.6,11).