

Wednesday, January 7

Read Matthew 2:1-12. Matthew's Gospel is the only place in our New Testament where we read about these Gentiles (Non-Jews) travelling to see the Christ Child. The two major take aways from this passage this week is that the Magi persevered in their task of seeking out, finding and adoring the newborn Messiah. They were from Persian (Modern Day Iran) and traveled at least 800 miles to more than 900 miles. The second take away is they had to change their plans in going home to avoid dealing with King Herod again. They persevered. What do you think of when you hear the word "perseverance?" Meditate on that question and write your thoughts here.

Thursday, January 8

During the Message, Pastor Jack mentioned four principles of Perseverance: Purpose, stepping into the Unknown, dealing with Disappointment and working with Limited Resources. Review your notes on these four principles and think about each one, defining what that principle means to you. How do these principles relate to the concept of SMARTO Goals? How have you persevered in the past? What vision do you have for yourself in 2026? What do you need to do to make that vision a reality? Meditate on these questions and write your reflections here.

Friday, January 9

The key to achieving any Goal is daily attention to that Goal. How will you make your resolutions or goals for this year a daily discipline? How will you remind yourself each day of what it is you want to achieve? Praying for God's wisdom, write your ideas here.

Message Notes January 4, 2026

Positive Perseverance^{*}

- I. Doesn't the very concept of making a resolution mean that you have entered into a _____?
 - A. The success of your resolution is measured not _____ or by a single _____.
 - 1. Research shows that making resolutions is _____.
 - 2. People who explicitly make resolutions are _____ times more likely to attain their goals than are people who don't explicitly make resolutions.
 - B. The Magi were almost certainly _____ visitors, coming perhaps as long as _____ after Jesus' birth.
 - 1. These visitors from the East are _____, illustrating well the thought that the Christ is for _____ people.
 - 2. The Magi _____, they _____ and they _____; they _____ their mission.
 - C. In the hallway that leads toward the vestibule where Michelangelo's "David" is displayed are a bunch of statues that were left _____.
 - 1. Those unfinished works are considered _____.
 - 2. Wouldn't it be great if our _____ projects were also considered very _____ in their uncompleted states?
 - D. The Magi finished their work of _____. How about us?
- II. I'm not trying to heap a pile of _____ on us about our _____.

^{*}Matthew 2:1-12

- A. However, if we want to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, that means _____ on intended good deeds.
 - B. It means doing the right thing _____ - _____ and following Jesus as consistently as we can in the situations of _____.
 - C. One of the signs that we are _____ in faith, however, is also a matter of _____ perseverance.
- III. The four _____ that can help with perseverance.
- A. First, have a _____.
 - B. Second, step into the _____
 - C. The third principle is deal with _____.
 - D. Fourth, work with _____.
 - E. The life of faith is not a 100-yard dash; it's a _____. It's not a tourist jaunt; it's an ongoing _____.
- IV. In this New Year, how can you build _____ into your life to encourage _____ discipleship?
- A. When God _____ us to a task, God gives us the help we need to _____ it.
 - B. Know that if _____ brings you to it, _____ will bring you through it!

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, January 5

Five days into 2026 and if you made a New Year's Resolution, it's time to evaluate how you're doing! This is because a goal

doesn't mean anything if you don't work out a daily plan. One way to work out that daily plan is to create SMARTO Goals. SMARTO stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely and Owned. Some models of the goal-setting process say that the R stands for Realistic. But I (Pastor Jack) always believed that Achievable and Realistic are pretty much the same thing. Also, most models don't have the O tacked on the end. "Owned" means, especially in a group setting, that someone has to be responsible for the goal. Let's quickly work through an example. Don't say, "I want to lose weight." rather say, "I want to lose 20 pounds in 3 months." Be Specific. That goal is Measurable by simply weighing yourself. Is that goal Achievable? Most experts tell you that you can safely lose 1.5 to 2 pounds a week, so over a 12-week time frame (roughly 4 weeks in a month) the answer is yes. The Relevant part gives you a purpose, you will be healthier at a lower weight, possibly able to stop using some medications. In this case, who Owns the goal? You do! Praying for God's strength, resolve to create your own SMARTO Goal and write it here.

Tuesday, January 5

Yesterday, you were introduced to the SMARTO Goal concept. Today, work on a goal that is related to your faith. You could set a goal to worship more in community; You could say, "I want to worship in person at Central Church three times a month over the next year." This goal as stated contains the what, where and when within it. It would be your task to determine the questions around Achievability and Relevance parts of the goal. The Ownership might be shared if you have an accountability partner to work with. Perhaps you want to read more scripture this year or volunteer more. Praying for God's guidance, write your faith-related SMARTO Goal here.