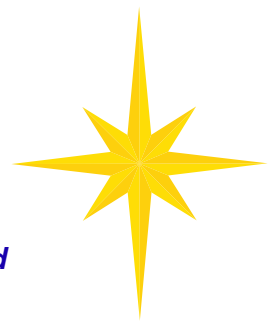


## Westover Reflections - January 2026



***“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw His star as it rose, and we have come to worship Him.”***

***-Matthew 2:2***

I recently saw a rather funny, or it was to me, posting on Facebook that had to do with **gender reveal** baby showers. I say that it was funny to me because I realize that my sense of humor is a bit like the old **Farside** comic strip—a bit odd. Thus, there are some things that I find humorous that others might not. (By the way, my wife, Mo, is among those who occasionally gives me **the eye** for things that I say. And I have had few church members begin to slide under the pew, thinking that I was going to share something that I found funny. One member, thinking that I was going to share a joke **that he had told me**, leaned over to Mo in the choir loft and said to her, **“I am going to kill him,”** which made the moment even funnier to me.)

With that said, I am somewhat amused by these popular **“Reveal”** or **“Big Reveal”** parties, these carefully choreographed celebrations during which happy couples announce the gender of their expected babies. Oftentimes, these are elaborate productions to capture the moment and broadcast the happenings in real time of social media.

These episodes often combine elements of surprise with joyful readiness, and the personal with the communal. Personally, I tend to think of them as a bit over-the-top. But that is just me. And what do I know of these things? Mo and I had baby showers, but I don’t recall blue balloons sent heavenward to announce what God already knew. We had **both boy and girl names** picked out because we didn’t know until the day of delivery what we were having. We wanted to be surprised, I suppose.

The positive side of **gender reveals**, however, is that they do reflect recognition by the couples that something wonderful is about to happen: **a blessed event that will change them...and their lives forever.**

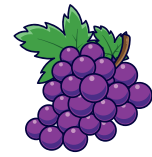
It is **a New Year upon us**. Epiphany comes on the first Sunday of the year. Pondering on **gender reveal parties** and Epiphany **Sunday**, it occurs to me that **Epiphany** is God’s **“big reveal.”** God the Father introduces his Son to us: a Child who is fully human and fully divine He is given to us not as a ruler who judges and condemns or a celebrity guest out of our reach...but as part of our family.

Beyond the Baby Jesus, this **“big reveal”** also speaks to the intimacy of a relationship: God **“with us”** as brother, **breaking bread** at our tables and **sharing intimately in our joys and our sorrows**. Epiphany reveals something important about us as well: **how loved we are by God.**

In real time, personally and communally, this season of **Epiphany** changes us, too; for whatever we do to celebrate God’s **“big reveal,”** it could never be **“over-the-top.”**

Still in His Peace,  
William





Why Worship?  
Part 4 of the 4 Part Series

*For the past three months we have been exploring the benefits of worship and have discovered three significant blessings we receive from engaging in the worship of the King of Kings. First, we have seen that worship lifts our head and our perspective, then we found that worship heals our brokenness, and this past month we explored how worship re-directs our path, attention and desires. In this final installment, we find one of the most kinetic advantages of our devotion to God.*

***Worship "Renews"***

We are a people easily beaten down by the hectic pace of our lives. Stress, time management, and the toils of work bring stress, and as a result, a desperate need for refreshing and renewal of energy and purpose in our lives. Spending time in focused worship of Christ, we find that spiritual oasis that refuels our heart and passion for each day. When we love on God, He returns to us the renewal of...

**1. Our Energy** - How many times have you awoken on Sunday morning (or any morning, for that matter!) and said "I'm just too worn out to worship today!"? It is a false premise that we are too tired to worship. In fact, worship invigorates our lives. We are brought back to life with restored energy, understanding of God's plan, and an answer for our fatigue. In fact, God promises to make a new creation out of us when we fall at His feet in worship.

***"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."  
Psalm 51:10***

King David wrote this Psalm when he was at the lowest, most vulnerable and "whipped" moment of his life – when his adultery and murder was discovered and he was confronted with his indiscretions. He was beaten and ashamed, but when he asked God to renew a right spirit within him, God did just that! And He will do it for us, when we come to Him in our weaknesses and fatigue. He will renew the energy we need to get back up and face life with all our (and His) strength.

***Worship Renews...***

**2. Our Passion** - God wants us full of passion – but that passion should be focused in the right direction. Worship not only reveals our passions, it will define the direction and path of that passion. God wants to inspire us to new things in the midst of worship, and in doing so, He reignites that fire in our belly for inspired ministry. Once again, King David, a man after God's own heart, cries out in Psalm 69...

***"Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me! My zeal for God and his work burns hot within me. And because I advocate your cause, your enemies insult me even as they insult you." Psalm 69:8-9***

God wants to use that zealousness we possess for His kingdom, but too often our passions get transformed into worldly actions that can be self-glorifying. It's easy to see how these worldly passions can get out of control and we engage in unhealthy and even dangerous expressions of that passion. God wants to renew purposeful passion within us, and He will renew that purpose when we meet Him in worship.

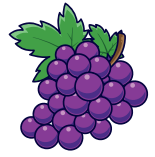
***Worship Renews...***

**3. Our Plans** - We tend to own those words – "our plans". When we do, we can miss the fact that these are really God's plans that He has entrusted to us. Because we are humans, we get off course and need course correction. And God will often change our plans (His plans for us). In the midst of our focused worship, He will reveal those plans and the changes He has for us. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us...

***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." Jeremiah 29:11-12***

***Continued on page 3***

## *First Fruits of Worship (cont.)*



Look at what God's plan promises – prosperity, hope, and a future. And the results of revealing His plans for us are – (1) Calling on Him, (2) Coming and praying to Him, and (3) Him listening to us.

We need to get on His plan, and worship brings us into the heavenly war room where we get to see and be a part of God's battle plan. Worship renews the vision of God's plan for our lives, and that's exciting stuff for us to experience.

Worship, as we can see, is a powerful tool and resource for our lives. It brings heavenly perspective, healing power to our lives and relationships, the re-direction of our path, and a renewal of our energy, passion and God's plan for us. The wonderful truth about this incredible tool is we carry it around with us 24/7. There is never a moment when we cannot stop, pray, and adore the living God. And in those moments – no matter how brief or extended, God is there to bring all of these blessing to us. If we will just – WORSHIP!



### *Did you know...*

#### **Westover has its own library...as well as a puzzle library?**



Check out the Builder's Classroom in the Education Building...at the back of the room are three bookcases filled with almost any type of religious/spiritual book you can imagine. There are many reference books; Christian novels; books from David Jeremiah, Max Lucado, Billy Graham, to name a very few of the authors. There are books on prayer, on Methodism; there are numerous devotional books.

As we start a new year, perhaps you would like to "check out" the books available... feel free to take one (or more) home to read. There's a comfortable chair near the books if you just want to browse.

The "Puzzle Library" is found in a smaller bookcase in the room. There are all kinds of jigsaw puzzles, ranging from 300 pieces to 2000 pieces (for the brave puzzle solver). Feel free to take a puzzle home...and return it if you wish, or pass it on to someone else. Do you know someone in a nursing home who might enjoy a puzzle? Please feel free to take some to them.



***These books and puzzles are meant to share – so please do!***



## *Game night returns*

After a few months hiatus, game night returns on Friday, January 23.

We'll enjoy a spaghetti and salad dinner at 6:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall. We'll have Bingo and prizes starting about 7:00 PM. If you have a board game you love and want to share, bring it! Game night is always a lot of fun and fellowship!



Dinner and games are free! Donations are much appreciated to cover the cost of dinner and prizes and to support our blessing box.

## *The adult Sunday School class has a spot for you!*

We are finishing up our study of the Gospel of Mark (full disclosure –it's been a challenge). Our next study will be the Gospel of Luke which will end our study of the four Gospels.

We meet at 10:00 each Sunday morning in the Builders Classroom in the Education Building. This is a great opportunity for a small group get-together with fellowship, sharing, supporting each other, and learning together about the Word of God. We've had some interesting discussions through our studies and encourage those attending to speak up and share thoughts!

*Come join us - there's a chair waiting for you!*

## *Mark your calendar*

Jan 3 - Craft Circle 10:00 AM  
Jan 3 - lunch (bring your own) 12:00 PM  
Jan 3 - UWF book study 12:30 PM  
Jan 23 - dinner and game night 6:30 PM  
Feb 8 - "Souper" Bowl lunch

*Happy  
New Year*



## *Craft Circle*

Craft circle will meet at 10:00 AM on January 3. We'll start the new year by making cozy blankets as part of our ongoing blanket ministry. This is a simple craft and one that makes a difference! Bring your lunch and join us for fellowship after crafting.

## *United Women of Faith book study*

United Women of Faith will meet after Craft Circle on January 3. Bring your own lunch for a time of fellowship. Afterward, we'll continue our book study with Chapter 9 "Mary of Magdala."

## *Blessing box*

Please remember donations for our blessing box are always, well, a blessing! Most needed items include tuna, peanut butter, ready-to-eat soups, canned pasta, canned fruit, cereal bars and personal hygiene items. Questions about the blessing box or donating? Please contact Kent or Sharron Gibson or Les Watkins.

## *Happy birthday to:*



6 Fran McDonald  
7 Der Ksor  
9 Adam Holt  
12 Barbara Smith  
14 Aaron Jones  
14 Joni Medlin  
17 Andrew Mitchell  
27 Max Danskin  
30 Hayleigh Denny

*Questions or information for the newsletter? Please contact Sharron at [Sharron.Gibson9194@gmail.com](mailto:Sharron.Gibson9194@gmail.com)*