

Encounters with Jesus, Week 6

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of Dec. 4th

DECEMBER 4TH SERMON SUMMARY

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS: THE MAGI (WISE MEN)

The encounter of the Magi with the baby Jesus shows us that the Gospel is for everyone. The message of Christmas can compel the most unlikely people to come and worship Jesus.

1. The magi are the people you would least expect to be the first to come worship Jesus, but somehow the Holy Spirit leads them.
2. Herod and the chief priests and teachers are the ones most equipped to respond to Jesus, but they are absent from the nativity.
3. There are people in our lives who are like the magi, unlikely to come to Jesus. As a church, we have a mission to participate in what the Spirit is doing in the “magi” in our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you like most about the Christmas season?

READ MATTHEW 2:1-11

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

2. Describe the response to the news of the baby:

- By Herod?
- By the chief priests and teachers of the law?

3. What is the significance of Bethlehem? See also Micah 5:2.

4a. What do you think the response of Herod, the priests and teachers should have been? Why?

b. Why do you think they responded in the way they did?

c. How are people today like them as they respond to Jesus and/or to Christmas?

5a. What do you know about the Magi? Use the Bible verses and/or the sermon.

b. What are some misconceptions people have about the Magi?

c. Discuss the journey the Magi took to follow the star. What obstacles or hardships might they have encountered?

d. Do you think they thought it was worth the hardships after they met Jesus? Explain.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

6. In the message, Brandon said: *One of the greatest barriers to evangelism is our sense of certainty about who will respond to Jesus and who won't. It is so easy to look at people, especially the people that we know well, and say that person isn't interested in God.*

- How is this true (or not true) for you?

- Share an example.

7. Describe “the magi” that comes to mind for you - the unlikely person in your life, that you want to pray for and seek to invite to church.

8. How is God speaking to you through the message or the small group discussion?