

Because of Bethlehem Viewer Guide Session 3: God Guides the Wise

Discussion Questions:

- What part of the teaching had the most impact on you?

A Good Road Trip

- Ever since the magi first went in search of Jesus more than two thousand years ago, it seems that Christmas and “road trip” have gone together. Whether it’s during the holidays or at any other time, what makes a good road trip for you? Briefly review the list below and place a check mark next to the statement that best describes your response

It’s only a good road trip if ...

- ☐ I can anticipate need and keep everyone happy and content.
 - ☐ I succeed in getting there faster than ever and/or with better gas mileage.
 - ☐ I can see something unique or beautiful along the way.
 - ☐ I can have some quiet to think my own thoughts, and some conversation to talk about ideas that interest me.
 - ☐ I feel assured that everybody knows and will follow the rules.
 - ☐ I’m with fun people and we have exciting things to do and see.
 - ☐ I can defy the speed limit without getting caught.
 - ☐ I can keep the atmosphere relaxed and smooth over any conflicts.
 - ☐ I can keep everybody in line and on schedule so things go the way I think they should.
 - ☐ Other: _____
- Share the statement you checked. Why is this important for a good road trip? To illustrate your response, share any stories from previous road trips that come to mind.
 - What similarities might there be, if any, between how you overall? Or, is there another statement on the list that come closer to describing how you approach your life overall? Share the reasons for your response.

Signs and Wisdom

- Max made a connection between how the magi approached their journey and what it means to be wise in the way we approach our lives. “Their story is our story,” he said “We’re all travelers in need of direction, and God gives it. The magi show us how to respond with wisdom.”

Journey CHURCH

Pastor James Greer

James@jcpineville.com

www.jcpineville.com



Beginning below, read together the full story of the magi's journey recorded in Matthew 2:1-12. Go around the group and have each person read aloud two or three verses at a time. As the story is read pay particular attention to the differences in how Herod, the priest/teachers, and the magi respond to signs that point to the Messiah.

All three characters – Herod, the priests/teachers, and the magi – not only had access to the same signs from God, but all three also appear to have believed the Micah prophecy. Herod took it seriously enough to defy it; the priests/teachers knew it chapter and verse but did nothing; and the magi committed themselves to following it.

- Given that all three has access to the same signs and share the same belief, what accounts for the radical differences in their responses? In other words, why might news of the Messiah make Herod defiant, the priests/teacher complacent, and the magi joyful?
- Max said that the ultimate aim of all God's messages is to shed the light of heaven on Jesus. The magi never had a complete road map to Jesus, but at each point along their journey, they kept moving toward the light they had. What kinds of things did responding with wisdom require of the magi? What does their example suggest about what it means to navigate our own lives with wisdom?
- To better understand the demonstrations of wisdom (and lack of wisdom) in the magi story, read aloud the following passage in which the apostle James contrasts two kinds of wisdom. As you read, think about any words or phrases that stand out to you in connection with King Herod, the priests/teachers, and the magi. Have someone from the group read James 3:13-18 NLT.
- What parallels do you recognize between this passage and the magi story? Specifically, how do Herod and the priest/teachers illustrate earthly, unspiritual wisdom? How do the magi illustrate wisdom from love?
- James used vivid words and phrases to describe wisdom from below and wisdom from above. To gain deeper insights into both kinds of wisdom, work through the passage and consider the opposite of the words and phrases he uses. For example, to better understand wisdom from below, describe the opposite for words like *pure*, *peace*, *loving*, *gentle at all times*, ect. To better understand wisdom from above, describe the opposites of words like *jealousy*, *selfish*, *ambition*, *disorder*, ect.
- What does James' teaching – and considering the opposites – reveal about what Godly wisdom looks like in everyday life?

Walking Together though Advent

- Christmas celebrates God breaking through to our world. He is the pursuer, the teacher, and he doesn't leave us in the dark. He uses Scripture, the natural world, and our personal experience with him to send us signals and message: *Hope. Life. Love*. As you continue to journey through Advent to

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Christmas, what word or phrase would you use to describe the message you most need to hear from God right now? Or how do you hope he might shed light of heaven on your path?