

The Magic of the Magi | Matthew 2:1-12 Sermon Discussion Leader Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To explore how fear leads us to serve our own kingdom rather than Christ's kingdom.

Icebreaker: In Dave's sermon he explored the history behind Herod and the Magi. Share one new thing you learned.

Discussion:

Read:

Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^[a] 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,

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and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

1. What do you learn about Herod from this passage?
2. What do you learn about Magi from this story?

In his sermon, David gave additional historical background on Herod:

"He was called Herod the Great for his great building accomplishments. Many of the most popular tourist sites in Israel today were Herod's building projects: amphitheaters, monuments, pagan altars, fortresses and other buildings. But the greatest work of all was the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem — part of which still stands today in Jerusalem as the temple wall. But he was also ruthless: murdering his wife, two of his sons, his mother-in-law, brother-in-law, uncle, and many others. He even arranged to have hundreds of Jewish leaders executed on the day of his death. For more than thirty years of tyranny, Herod the Great made himself the richest person in the entire Roman empire through intimidation and violence."

3. Consider Herod's life and choices. What do you think Herod feared?
4. How did Herod serve his own "kingdom of self" over the kingdom of God?
5. Why do you think fear often causes us to become self-reliant and serve our own personal kingdoms?

Digging Deeper: In his book *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, Steve Cuss writes about the anxiety that fear produces in all of us:

"Anxiety is generated when we think we need something in any particular moment that we don't actually need. ... Anxiety shrinks the power of the gospel because it presents a false gospel—one of self-reliance rather than reliance on God. The gospel of self-reliance is always bad news because it always leads to more anxiety."

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6. What do you think you need that you don't actually need? How does that generate self-reliance? How does self-reliance make you more anxious?
7. How are you tempted to build a "Kingdom of Self" to secure the things you think you need?

Read:

Matthew 2:9-12 (NIV)

⁹After [the magi] 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. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On 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. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

8. How is the response of the Magi to Jesus different than the response of Herod to Jesus?
9. At the end of his sermon, Dave asked, "Have you ever bowed down to Jesus? What keeps you from that? What keeps you from opening up your whole life and presenting it to him?" How is God calling you to surrender to him? What do you need to trust him with?

Sharing and Prayer: Break up into smaller groups of 2-3 and share what fears you need to give to Jesus. Spend time praying for one another to trust the good news that Jesus loves us and provides for us *over* the false gospel that we must provide for ourselves.