

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"THE ROAD OF WORSHIP" | MATTHEW 2: 1-12 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is the longest journey you've ever taken around Christmas?

"The Road Begins With a Restless Search" Matthew 2: 1-2

Wise men from the east arrive in Israel looking for a new king announced by a star. They want to worship Him. **What are other ways people begin their investigation into spiritual truth? How can sincere curiosity be a form a worship?**

"The Road Requires Pushing Through Darkness" Matthew 2: 3-8

The religious experts know the new king would be born in Bethlehem. King Herod is troubled and sends the wise men, asking them to return so he can find the new king too. **How is Herod's curiosity different than the wise men's? How can indifference of others be an obstacle for people who desire to worship God?**

"The Road Leads to Joyful Encounter" Matthew 2: 9-10

The star leads them right to the place in Bethlehem, and the wise rejoice with great joy. **What are signs that someone has joy? Why is that part of worshipping God?**

"The Road of Worship Ends with Bowed Hearts and Open Hands" Matthew 2: 11-12

The wise men find Jesus and bow and give pricey gifts to Him. Then they obey a dream and go home a different way to avoid Herod. **What gifts can we offer Jesus today? Why does meeting Jesus often change our path?**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

After Jesus was born, wise men followed a star, searching for a new king. Despite obstacles and a long journey, they rejoice when finding Him and worship Him with humility and sacrifice. **What is hindering you and trying to distract you from seeking Jesus? When was the last time your heart lit up with joy spiritually? What treasure is God inviting you to give Him today? Take time to rejoice in God and give Him your time, treasure and talent in worship.**

The Road to Bethlehem

12-21-25

6 The Road of Worship

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online (2nd).
- B. Slide1 Christmas Eve: Please come and join on Wed, Dec.24 at either 1, 3, 5pm for our *Christmas Eve all church service*. *Invite someone!
- C. Slide2 Church Office Closed: Due to the Christmas and New Years Holiday *the church office will be closed* beginning Wed 12/24 and will reopen on Mon 1/5.
 - 1. In addition, we will NOT be having *our midweek service* on Wed 12/31.
- D. Slide3 Baby Dedication 3rd - Salma Noelle Galvan. (Salma=safe, peaceful, secure. *Salam* or *Shalom*)
 - 1. Parents: Emanuel & Vanessa.
- E. Prayer: Jer.29:13 *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me w/all your heart.*

II. Slide4 Intro:

- A. *The Road of Worship* - The Wise Still Come to Worship.
 - 1. Every road that seeks Christ, leads to worship. The ultimate destination of every heart that follows the Light.
- B. Every Journey Leads Somewhere. Every true journey of faith eventually bends the knee in worship.
 - 1. The wise men started far from Bethlehem. Wrong nation. Wrong background. Wrong religion. But the right hunger.
 - 2. If you follow the Light you've been given, it will always lead you to Jesus.
 - 3. Worship isn't about location or tradition - it's what your heart does when it stands in the presence of the King.
- C. Slide5a In 1865, Phillips Brooks preached a powerful sermon on the death of Abraham Lincoln. Most people don't remember a word of that message. But later that same year, while visiting Bethlehem, Brooks wrote words the whole world still sings ...

1. Slide5b O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep - The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth - The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years - Are met in thee tonight.
 2. For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above;
While mortals sleep, the angels keep - Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars together - Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, - And peace to men on earth.
- D. Why do we still sing it? - Because 2,000 years ago in that small, obscure village, a baby was born who *changed the world*.
1. More books, poems, and songs have been written about Jesus than anyone else in history. The Bible, His story, is the most printed, most read, most translated.
 2. Even the Quran mentions Jesus by name *more times than* Muhammad (Isa 25 x's; Muhammad 5).
 - a) At Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus ruled Rome. We know very little about him, and what we do know was written a century after he died. The writings about Jesus come from eyewitnesses just decades after His life. In other words, we know far more about a baby born in Bethlehem than the most powerful man on earth at the time. - A global movement was named after Jesus/Christianity. What was named after Caesar? - A salad (casino).
 3. All of history bends toward Bethlehem, because the child born there *changed everything*.
- E. Slide6 Read Matthew 2:1-12.

III. Slide7a 1 THE ROAD BEGINS WITH A RESTLESS SEARCH (1-2)

- A. Where is He...? We have come to worship Him.
1. The wise men felt a pull, a God-given curiosity.
 2. They had limited revelation (a star) but enough to get them moving.

3. Worship starts with hunger, a heart that says, *There must be more... I need to find Him.*

B. **First let's address these wise men.** (not necessarily 3, nor kings)

C. We call them *wise men*, but that doesn't mean they scored high on their SAT's, or ancient **astronomers**. They weren't **astrologers** either, caught up in *superstition*.

1. The translators use *wise men* because these were members of **the Magi** (men who studied the stars, believing cosmic events influenced **life and history**). Their observations **weren't** just **scientific**; they carried a **theological** dimension. They were sincere seekers, using both their minds and their curiosity to understand **the world and the divine**.
2. That's important, because **true faith** doesn't ask you to set your brain **aside**. The Magi used their thinking, their questions, **and** their longing for truth (and that's what pushed them onto **a 500-mile journey** that would take around 40 days by *camelback*). They followed **a sign** they didn't fully understand, **but** it was enough **to move them**. Think of the magi's thinking then, "*not as casual speculations, but sincere investigation.*"

D. **Slide 7b** Dan.2:1-2 *In the 2nd year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams*(royal insomnia); *his spirit was troubled, & his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.*

1. Dan.2 places Daniel in direct contact with the original Magi. The **magicians and enchanters** were part of **the same class of wise men** later known as the **Magi/magoi**. Daniel was not only *grouped* with them, **he** eventually became their leader (2:48). This means Daniel's influence, teachings, and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures would have shaped generations of eastern wise men long after his lifetime.

E. During his leadership in Babylon, Daniel taught about a coming divine King and an eternal kingdom (Dan.2:44; ch.7). He also would have passed down **prophecies** like Numb.24:17, *A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.*

- F. Fast-forward 500 years, and the Magi in Mt.2 suddenly appear in Jerusalem saying, *Where is **He** who has been born **King of the Jews**? For we saw **His** star.* Their expectations, their reference to a star, and their journey to find a Jewish King all make the most sense when viewed as the long-term fruit of Daniel's influence. In a beautiful continuity of Scripture, *Daniel sowed truth among the wise men of Babylon* (priestly cast of Medes/Persians), *and centuries later, the wise men of Babylon followed that truth all the way to Bethlehem.*
- G. Their search blended cosmic signs with scriptural truth, and it led them to **Jesus**.
1. It's a reminder that people begin their search for God **from all kinds of places**. God often uses **unusual starting points** (curiosity, questions, longing) to awaken a journey that ultimately leads to **Christ**.
- H.(2) The Wise Men weren't content w/just **seeing the Star**. *They Must see **Him**.*
And not only see Him, but **Worship Him**.

IV. Slide8 **2 THE ROAD REQUIRES PUSHING THROUGH DARKNESS (3-8)**

- A. Not everyone is excited about a new King. **Herod** is *threatened*. **Religious leaders** are *indifferent*.
1. **So, the religious professionals** knew the scripture in **Micah**, and yet *wouldn't travel 5 miles to look into it?* These were the people that had answers to the question!
 2. **No one finds Jesus just with their intellect**. They needed the scriptures. They needed the scriptures to point them in the right direction.
- B. (4-6) Some religious people may become well instructed in their Bibles, & yet be all the worse for what they have discovered. [**Jews** wouldn't come but **Gentiles** did (wisemen)]
1. **May it never be charged against us** that we were a genius in **Scriptural Geography, Prophecy, Theology**, yet miss **Him** of whom the Scripture speaks.
 - a) Slide9 *"Never be **inoculated** with a mild form of Christianity so as to be rendered **immune** from the real thing."*
- C. **Worship costs something:** *distractions, pride, fear, convenience.*

1. Believers aren't exempt from trials: **Mary/Joseph** had to flee for their lives. Multiple **innocent babies** were killed by a mad puppet king. **Wise men** had to deal with/Herod, and pushed through *confusion, danger, and political tension*, but kept going.

D. What right now is trying to pull you off the road? Worshipers fight through whatever tries to *dim the Light*.

V. Slide10a **3 THE ROAD LEADS TO JOYFUL ENCOUNTER (9-10)**

A. They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

B. Slide10b This **star** stopped and pointed out a specific house. (Shekinah light?)

1. A supernatural light that glowed around religious objects or in natural things like clouds. This light represented *God's presence*. (aka, the glory of God)
2. Following the star leads to joy, not duty. And Joy is the emotion of a heart getting close to Jesus.
3. God always confirms your journey with moments of unmistakable grace.

C. When was the last time your heart lit up spiritually?

1. Joy is not optional in worship, it's a sign you're near His presence.

D. Like when the GPS that says, "You've arrived." Their emotional reaction shows the relief and joy of finally getting where your soul belongs.

VI. Slide11a **4 THE ROAD OF WORSHIP ENDS WITH BOWED HEARTS & OPEN HANDS (11-12)**

A. Note: and going into the **house** (11) not manger scene! Yes he was born in a stable, but he didn't stay there. This is 13-24 months later. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (1). (we don't know how long). [baby/Bray-phos. Child/payDee-own]

B. They fell down and worshiped Him... and opened their treasures. - When kings, dignitaries, or presidents, walk into a room we **Stand** to honor them. But if you come into a room w/ **Jesus**, you **bend your knee** to honor & worship Him.

1. **Slide11b The Christus Statue** is an 1833 white Carrara marble statue of the resurrected Jesus by *Bertel ThorValdsen* located in the Church of Our Lady, *an Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark* in Copenhagen, Denmark. - ***You cannot look Christ** in the face without actually **kneeling down**. You cannot observe him from a distance.

C. **Slide11c Gold/King** – giving Christ our best (poss *provisions* for trip to Egypt-God guides/provides)

D. **Frankincense/Priest** – offering our prayers, our devotion. (aroma only when crushed)

E. **Myrrh/Prophet** – laying down our pain, grief, and brokenness (to mask *smell of death*).

1. The journey of faith always ends with **bowed hearts and open hands**.
2. **Note:** They didn't come to **get** but to **meet & give...** their worship & gifts. Come to Christ to **Give Him your worship, your substance, and your-self**.
a) What treasure is God inviting you to open before Him today?

F. **Slide12a CONCLUSION** – *Every Road Meets at the Manger*

G. Tie back to the entire series: *The Road of ...* Promise → Preparation → Surrender → Obedience → Wonder → Worship.

1. **Slide12b** All roads lead to **one moment:** *the presence of Christ*.
2. **Worship** is the finish line... but also the starting line of *a new life*. Which leads to our Christmas Eve Service: *The Road Ends and Begins in Bethlehem*.
3. **Slide12c (12)** *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.* *Just like the wise men, **we** leave **changed/transformed** by *another way/a different road/a new path*.

H. Jesus still appeals to the educated/uneducated. He appeals to the rich/poor. He appeals to those who are **really near** to coming to Him, and he appeals to those who **feel very distant** from Him. He appeals to those who **run to him quickly**, and those who **need more help** finding him. [God's never changed - He came to *rescue* sinners!]

1. What is hindering you today from putting your trust in **Jesus**?

- I. **Prayer:** Lord, TY that like the wise men, we can rejoice w/exceedingly great joy. TY for the moments along our journey when You confirm **Your presence** with **unmistakable grace**. Draw us near. Fill us with wonder. Let our worship overflow with the joy of Your presence. - *Glory to the Light of the world*.
- J. Keywords: wise men, worship.