

## Walking With The Characters Of Christmas

### “Wise Men: Genuine Seekers of Jesus”

(Part 5)

**Intro:** The first of the year usually marks the beginning of something I just love to pursue...winter steelhead. Now, in order to pursue something effectively so that you have some success, it takes a certain level of commitment. Why else would you give up a warm bed to stand in an icy stream in the middle of winter at the crack of dawn? Some people simply won't embrace this insanity. BUT, this pursuit also requires a sacrifice of resources...in fact, I like the term “investment” better. You must invest in the proper gear in order to be successful on this quest. Finally, it requires some perseverance. State catch surveys indicate it takes the average angler 20-50hrs of fishing to catch one steelhead! To some this looks like insanity. To others, we know the pursuit is worth it!

- Today, we have a story of another group of men who were on a pursuit to find Jesus. They are commonly called The Wise Men. These guys represent genuine seekers of Jesus. And we can still learn much from them today about what it means to genuinely seek after Jesus.
- Summarize Matt. 2:1-12: The arrival of the wise men from the east takes place during the time of Roman occupation of Israel. Even though Israel had a very powerful and influential King named Herod the great, he was still under Roman authority. The wise men were scholars (astronomers) probably from the Persian empire some 1000 miles away. They were familiar with some Hebrew scriptures – 586 BC Jews were deported
- There were not 3 wise men and they probably didn't arrive on camels. The group was probably large with a military escort. WHY? Journey was perilous. Summarize story:
- The wise men are a great example of what it means to genuinely seek after Jesus. The same steps that they followed will work for us as well. If any of us want to experience Jesus more, the wise men are a great example how.

### I. Be Willing To Embrace The Journey

#### A. The journey of the wise men

*Matt. 2:1-2 “About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” (NLT)*

1. The journey from ancient Persia to Jerusalem could often be a perilous one. It was over a 1000 miles / would have taken several months / and was on the major trade route from east to west.
2. The trade routes were notoriously dangerous. This was the place raiders would wait to kill and plunder caravans as they traveled with their goods.
3. The journey of the wise men wasn't an easy one and it came at a risk to their own personal safety.
4. Their motivation must have been intense. They risked time / resources / and even

their lives in order to discover Jesus. There was a tremendous investment and risk into making the journey.

5. They also risked barging into another Kingdom's capital city unannounced. King Herod wasn't known for his gracious hospitality.
- Yet...they embraced the journey anyway. Finding Jesus was worth it.

B. Are we willing to embrace the spiritual journey? (to experience more)

1. I believe God calls everyone to this journey. It's a journey to discover Him. It's a relational journey towards God. We are made in the image of God with the ability to connect with the eternal. Therefore, we are designed for this journey.

*Jer. 29:13-14 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD..." (NIV)*

2. God wants to be the source of our quest...the motivation of our search...the greatest destination of our life. He wants us to experientially find Him. In fact, this is the greatest desire of His heart for us. Relational discovery!
3. Some of you have been believers in Christ for years, so it may be easy to say..."I've already found Him...journey accomplished."
- Back in 1976, there was a national evangelistic campaign called "I Found It!" (Bumper stickers / T-shirts / pamphlets / buttons / sermons on this. People would ask, "What did you find?" "I found Jesus!")
- God used this back in the 70's, but it implied that we find Jesus and the searching is over. The reality is that we discover Jesus and then we continue finding Him. It never stops.
4. So, unlike the wise men who found Jesus and returned home, our journey continues. The relational discover goes on.

*Phil. 1:6 "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." (NLT)*

5. Notice 2 key words in this verse. "Began" and "Continue". God begins a work in us...the spiritual journey starts...But it continues throughout our lifetime. The relational discovery with Jesus never ends!
6. So where are you at in your spiritual journey?
  - Some of you haven't started yet. You're still trying to decide if the journey is worth it or not.
  - Some of you started years ago and then got sidetracked by other pursuits (career / marriage / family / responsibility / stress / pain / guilt)
  - Some of you started well, but you've stalled out. You haven't experienced anything new with Jesus in years. (I see this a lot with Christians today)
  - Some of you have embraced this journey. You see life as an adventure with Jesus every day. You are learning and experiencing more on a consistent basis. You are like the wise men...on a pursuit!

- If you're ready to experience more in your relationship with Jesus, we need to embrace the next thing the wise men did.

## II. Be Willing to Earnestly Inquire

### A. The inquiring of the wise men

*Matt. 2:2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"*

1. Not only do I like the fact that these guys have absolutely no fear in asking the current king where the new king of the Jews is located, they expect everyone in Jerusalem to know. "He's your King...don't you know where He is?"
2. Searching for something or someone just requires the asking of questions. I think that's what made these guys wise men. They had inquiring minds that searched for answers.
3. They were more than likely searching the Hebrew Scriptures they knew; searching the signs in the heavens, and now they are asking the King of the Jews where they can find Him.
4. This resulted in the Jewish scholars coming in searching the Scriptures in order to discover the location being Bethlehem. Question answered. Their questions led them to discovery!

### B. Are we willing to earnestly inquire?

1. I think sometimes we don't discover more in our relationship with God because we simply don't ask...we don't search for answers. We're not like the wise men who keep asking questions until they have the answers.

*Matt. 7:7-8 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."*  
(NLT)

2. I realize that these verses are used almost exclusively in regards to prayer. BUT, these verses reflect our relational journey with Jesus. They tell us to keep on asking / keep on seeking / keep on knocking relationally. There is also a promise if we do...everyone who asks, receives!
3. Our spiritual journey requires some effort on our part. It doesn't just happen all by itself. We have to give ourselves to it. How do we do this? The same way the Wise Men did.

- They asked questions and searched the Scriptures (in Persia and in Jerusalem)
  - They asked questions as they saw circumstances and interpreted them correctly (star in the night sky)
  - They asked questions from others who could provide them the answers they searched for. (the scholars in Jerusalem)
4. How can we earnestly inquire like the wise men? (So we can experience more)

- Do you have questions about life; this world; even God that you'd like answered? These answers are found in God's word. Our spiritual journey will always be connected to our understanding of the Word of God. Do you read it every day looking for answers...wanting to discover..."Lord, what do you say about..." Go find it! (Online concordance like – Biblegateway.com.
- God speaks to us through events and circumstances. To not ask questions regarding these things is to miss out on the spiritual discovery. To go through life thinking that everything is simply random is to miss God entirely. (Takes practice and maturity) He reveals Himself to us through life!
- Are you willing to be taught by others who are farther along on the journey than you are? Often, it can be our pride that hinders our spiritual journey the most. Are you willing to take a class (101-301 – Foundations – Men / Women's Bible study / home group / consistently come to church – read books from others)
- 4. One of the biggest problems that I see plaguing followers of Christ on their spiritual journey is simple laziness. We just want the journey and the spiritual discovery process to be easy.
- 5. The process the wise men embraced required significant effort. Becoming a person who is going to inquire earnestly and then search for those answers is going to require effort from us as well. BUT, remember who we're searching for!
- There is one final step the wise men took to experience Jesus.

### III. Be Willing To Sacrificially Worship

#### A. The worship of the wise men

*Matt. 2:11 "They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (NLT)*

1. The worship of the wise men cost them something. They came prepared to worship and give. Much has been said about the three gifts of the wise men over the years.
2. **Gold** as a symbol of kingship on earth, **frankincense** (an incense) as a symbol of priesthood and **myrrh** (an embalming oil) as a symbol of death. All were very expensive, valuable gifts of the day.
3. Somehow, the wise men knew who Jesus was because they understood that He was Worthy of their worship and their treasure. This was the culmination of their search...the pinnacle of their journey...the destination of their quest and worshipping Him with gifts and devotion was an experience worth the investment.

#### B. Are we willing to sacrificially worship Jesus?

1. There are choices that we make in our spiritual journey that unleashes a fuller experience with Jesus. Sacrificial worship is one of these issues.

*Heb. 13:15-16 “Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.” (NLT)*

2. Worship isn’t just what we do on Sunday morning during our services, it is what we choose to do with our lives despite the circumstances. Look at the “sacrifices” that please God from this verse.
  - Sacrifice of praise
  - Sacrifice of goodness
  - Sacrifice of meeting needs
3. Why are these considered sacrifices in our relationship with God?
  - Because praise isn’t always easy when things are hard / painful / and the circumstances are against you. Some of you may have found yourself struggling with this issue this Christmas.
  - Because sometimes it’s difficult to do the “good” thing. It’s hard to choose goodness when others have wronged you / wounded you / gossiped about you / taken advantage of you. Choosing good feels sacrificial in those times.
  - Because meeting the needs of others is not always convenient is it? It requires time and resources. (Christmas food boxes – many of you....
4. God’s word says that these are the sacrifices God is pleased with. These are choices we make that cause our lives to be worshipping God 24/7 not just on Sunday. And because He is pleased with these sacrifices, He blesses these choices.
5. I believe the greatest blessing He gives us is Himself. He allows us to experience more of Him. The entire point of our spiritual journey is all about relationship. It’s all about us experiencing Him more. This is what we are designed for.
6. If all we do is choose these behaviors when they are easy, we will end up with a pretty superficial relationship with God. It is when in the darkness we choose to give God our sacrifice of praise / sacrifice of goodness / sacrifice of need meeting when God draws up close to us and say, “Well done...now, here’s the reward for genuinely seeking Me...Here’s more of Me.”

Sometimes, I see how excited and committed I can get to pursue something like a fish and then see how unmotivated and sometimes, uncommitted I am to pursue my relationship with Jesus. Maybe there are times you feel like this as well. If you do, we need to remember basics of the our experience with Jesus...

- We need to embrace the journey again
- We need to keep asking the questions and keep seeking Him
- We need to keep worshipping, even if it requires sacrifice.

The reward is worth it...because the reward is more of Him.