

Weekly Cell Guide

Leader's Copy

Series - Matthew 2:1-12
Topic - When You Follow Your Star

Date - 13-Dec-2020
Speaker - Ps Lionel Goh

WELCOME [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)

WORSHIP [15 min]

You may select songs like

1. Build My Life
 2. Reward
-

WORD [45 min]

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Learn not to give up, when reality turns out differently from what we have envisioned.
2. Learn how to grow stronger spiritually when we are able to see God through the eyes of faith in the midst of personal disappointment.

Sermon Summary

The following are the key points of the sermon:

1. We often have our beautiful dreams as we start out to follow our star. However, in real life, harsh reality often bursts our dream bubble and we feel disappointed about life.
2. How we respond to God in our disappointment will determine how well we will grow in maturity and in our relationship with God.

Sermon Recap (Full Summary)

1. An Exciting Start

- Pastor Lionel opened his sermon by sharing about his friend, James, who had followed the star of success, but his personal dreams had shattered. Likewise, if we find ourselves in the same predicament, what should we do and how should we move on?
 - Drawing from the lessons from the Magi, we read in v2 that there was a group of Magi (a group of highly respected and influential scholars) who were guided by a star rising towards Jerusalem. They knew that this must have been a divine phenomenon, heralding the coming of the Messiah, and they started on a journey to follow the star.
-

2. A Rude Awakening

- The question to ask: What do you do when you follow your star and your dream doesn't match up with reality?
- The Magi encountered several signs of a rude awakening:
 - When the Magi arrived at Jerusalem, they realised that no one knew whether the Messiah had been born.
 - When they enquired of King Herod, he was deeply disturbed as he was a selfish and insecure king who wanted to destroy the Messiah.
 - Then, the Magi heard from King Herod's priests that the Messiah will be born in humble Bethlehem, a small and sleepy town, instead of a prince being born in the rich capital centre of Jerusalem.
- Yet, the Magi decided to still follow the star, which led them to a simple house where there was an ordinary baby being tended to by an ordinary couple.
- Many of us today have a similar experience in life, when we follow our star of ambition or fame or power, but our dreams don't end up matching our reality. What will we then do?

3. A Divine Encounter

a) You look for God through the eye of faith (v 11)

- *"They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him."*
- The Magi could have easily turned away and gone back empty handed, when they faced their rude awakening. Yet, the Magi saw divinity in the ordinary.
- For Magi to bow down to worship a baby, they must have seen something far more powerful in baby Jesus' eyes.
- Pastor Lionel's personal testimony: My Disappointment with God – loss of a baby son.

b) You continue to give your best to God (v 11)

- *"Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."*
- Because they knew who Jesus really was, they decided to give all their treasures to God.
- This must be the attitude that we have.

c) You obey God's prompting and make changes (v 12)

- *"When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod."*
- The Magi's obedience gave Joseph and his family time to flee Bethlehem and get to Egypt.

In conclusion, when you follow your star and reality turns out differently, don't give up!

Discussion Questions

1. **How do you tend to respond when you start to pursue your dreams or visions, and then are met instead with setbacks and unexpected disappointment? What are some emotions and questions which come to mind?** [10 min]

Leaders' Notes

This is a relate question. Many Christians today find it hard to take personal setbacks and life disappointments. Often the first questions that come to Christians when things are not looking bright, are "Why me?" or "How can a good God allow bad things to happen to me?" – or they tend to be confronted with the lie that there is no purpose to their suffering, and that they should give up on their vision from God. Many blame God or others, withdraw themselves from society, fall into depression, or lose their faith. This question allows us to examine how we navigate through our setbacks, and if our responses draw us further from God, or closer to God.

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

When we meet with personal setbacks in life, oftentimes we are tempted to harbour disappointment with God and entertain feelings of discouragement and fears of the future. When we turn to reflect upon the simple story of the Magi, we can draw invaluable lessons on how to meet God in the midst of setbacks and grow in our spiritual maturity.

2. **Read Matthew 2:11. What does it mean for us to look for God through the eyes of faith, in the midst of disappointing circumstances?** [15 min]

Leaders' Notes

From this simple passage in Matthew, we learn that, even after their encounter with the evil King Herod, the Magi were not deterred from their plans to seek out the Messiah, but were instead able to see divinity in the most ordinary and humbling of circumstances – vs 11 "They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him."

Today, we celebrate the manifestation of God's light revealed to the Magi of the East through a bright and glimmering star. But we must not forget that the Magi's passage to baby Jesus was one fraught with many hardships. They had encountered serious trouble in Jerusalem - instead of rejoicing at their search, anxiety and foreboding had troubled King Herod and all of Jerusalem with him, and Herod had prevailed upon them with deviousness and malice. And yet in the midst of the inconveniences and detours of their journey, the Magi were not deterred from their search, and persevered until they found Him.

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

In the same manner as the Magi, let us be encouraged not to give up in midst of personal setbacks, but to pray to ask God to grant us eyes of faith to continue to seek Him in our storms, and come up higher to see things from His perspective.

3. **Think of a personal setback that you are currently facing. How can you continue persevering to still give your best to God, and obey His prompting, in midst of the setback?** [15 min]

Leaders' Notes

This is a reflect question. When we are facing disappointments and troubles in our lives, Pastor Lionel encourages us to continue to give our best to God, by continuing to serve and continuing to sow financially in God's kingdom. When we do this, we will surely experience God in a different way, and our setbacks and disappointments will turn into joy.

The following are some practical application steps we can take to persevere through our current troubles:-

- a) Find comfort, encouragement and strength in your spiritual community (cell and church).*
- b) Focus on the destination (Christlikeness) and not the immediate situation.*
- c) Remind yourselves of the teachings of Christ that are relevant for your difficult situation. Have an unshakeable conviction in your heart, that God is loving, powerful, and real.*

Closing

In this life, we should commit to loving God at all times, even when things don't look bright on this side of heaven. When we choose to search for God's prompting and obey Him in our times of disappointment, we will find that God will give us the grace and strength to grow deeper in our experience with God and this is indeed the greater glory!

WORKS [10 min]

1. Response to Message
2.
 - Pray for those who are going through a tough time living out their faith in their workplaces/ families because of their beliefs, that they will be given strength to persevere and God will grant a breakthrough in their workplaces/ families during COVID-19 – Phase 3
 - Pray for a smooth transition to Phase 3 in the coming weeks, and that people will not let their guard down while continuing to keep the infection at bay.
 - Pray for God's protection over RiverLife and other churches as they carefully return to onsite services in stages.

Church Vision

"A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations."

Mission

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.