

Navigating The
UNKNOWN

LESSONS FROM THE WISE MEN



'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king (Herod the Great), magi (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem....' Matthew 2:1

In this study series we will be exploring this well-known chapter in the Bible from a different perspective, looking specifically at the lessons the Lord has made available to teach us about how to navigate the unknown.

We pray the Lord blesses, guides and equips you to successfully navigate the coming days.

Stay connected.



Day 1

1. Understanding the seasons

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. 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.””

Matthew 2:1-2

The wisemen were also known as magi, meaning they were astrologers/star gazers. During their stargazing they observed a star that was different from others. They must have had some knowledge of the scripture for them to know that the star in question represented the location of the king of the Jews. So they set out on a mission to find the king and worship him.

“All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.” 1 Chronicles 12:32b

The wisemen had an understanding of the times. They understood that something important and powerful was going to take place and they set out to seek the one that was going out change the course of history. Like many of us they started on a journey that they may not have had full knowledge of how it would go or what the end result would be. They just knew they had to find the king of the Jews. Similarly we will have periods in our lives where we may not fully understand what is going on at a specific point in time.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” Psalms 119:105

“We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Colossians 1:9b

“And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know and cherish the hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God’s people),” Ephesians 1:18

When we don’t know what to do, God has made three avenues available to us to guide us: His word, prayer and the Holy Spirit. The more time we spend in the Bible, we begin to get more clarity about God’s character, how He works and His expectations of us. Through prayer and divine guidance from the Holy Spirit we receive specific counsel for our lives and situations.

Reflect: When you’re in doubt, the first step should be to see what the Bible says concerning what you’re going through and then ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding of what God is doing in your life at that point so you can respond accurately.

Day 2

Making Assumptions

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king (Herod the Great), magi (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”” Matthew 2:1b-2a

When the wise men saw the star they knew it would take them to Israel based on their research and assumed the star would take them to Jerusalem which was the capital city. The wise men made a critical assumption – that the king of the Jews would be born in Israel automatically meant that he would be born in the capital city of Jerusalem, not in a little town called Bethlehem.

“After this, David asked the Lord, “Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?” “Yes,” the Lord replied. Then David asked, “Which town should I go to?” “To Hebron,” the Lord answered.” 2 Samuel 2:1

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6

When we need to step into the unknown it’s fairly normal to make some assumptions based either on opinions from experts, our past experience and expectations. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with any of these, however the Lord’s expectation is that we seek His counsel First, before jumping into what we think we should do. David gives us a template of how to proceed as he was known as a man who always inquired of the Lord. In the scripture above and others where David inquired of God, he always asked the Lord very specific questions and also asked for further clarity. This tells us that God is okay with us asking questions on what to do and clarifying how we should go about it.

“The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.”
Psalms 37:23

God is interested in the details. We could be exploring relocating from one city or country to another, changing jobs, starting a new ministry or business because it seems like a good idea and the indices seem to be in favour of that move. However, we don’t know tomorrow so it’s important that we seek clarity from God early enough before diving into activities. If God has said you should move to a different location for instance you should also ask Him where specifically in that city you should live. If you believe God is asking you to move to a business area you need to ask Him what specifically should you be doing in that space.

Reflect: Don’t make assumptions based on popular opinion, ask God first not just what He would have you do, but also when and how He would have you do it.

Day 3

Revelation

'King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem.'
Matthew 2:3

The wise men went around Jerusalem asking about the king of the Jews and naturally Herod who was king at the time was very disturbed when heard this. As far as he was concerned, this was a clear threat to his leadership position as a nation could not possibly have two kings. We can understand Herod being disturbed. But why was everyone in Jerusalem disturbed? Let's explore two perspectives.

'When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.' Proverbs 29:2

First is that emotions and mindset are transferrable. We must be mindful of the fact that we influence the atmosphere wherever we find ourselves either positively or negatively. When you're not happy about something, you can transfer your unhappiness to others and the opposite is also true. Herod was troubled so as the leader he made sure everyone in Jerusalem was also troubled.

'And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'" Isaiah 6:9

'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better' Ephesians 1:17

Second is that those in Jerusalem should have rejoiced knowing the messiah had been born, since there had been several prophecies concerning this. Rather than rejoice because of the promise, they were still deeply disturbed because of Herod's insecurities. This tells us that it is one thing to be aware of a promise and another thing entirely to have a personal revelation and conviction concerning that promise. It's the revelation we have concerning something that forms our expectations and attitude regarding whatever we're facing.

Reflect: When we don't have a personal revelation concerning God's promises, it's easy for us to be swept up in whatever is troubling everybody else and lose out on what God has in store for us.

Day 4 Diligence

'He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born? In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:' Matthew 2:4-5

Since the pharisees, priests, teachers etc. knew where the Messiah was to be born, why weren't they looking for him? Could it be that they had become so engrossed in what they were doing that they had taken their eyes off what they should've been focusing on? The first set of people to look for the king of the Jews should have been the Jews, not magi from the East. Sometimes we take God's word for granted so it takes someone else to point out what we already know.

'Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!" Matthew 2:7-8

Herod was devious but he was extremely diligent and knew how to prioritize. First, he questioned the pharisees, scribes, etc, then he secretly met with the wise men and questioned them as well. He left no stone unturned in getting to the bottom of the issue.

'Where there is no [wise, intelligent] guidance, the people fall [and go off course like a ship without a helm], But in the abundance of [wise and godly] counselors there is victory' Proverbs 11:14 (AMP)

'The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) is able to accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power].' James 5:16b

Herod did his homework and demonstrated a practical illustration of Proverbs 11:14. He didn't take any chances and was determined to get to the root of the matter troubling him. Do we imbibe this trait, or do we just accept what we're told without digging deeper? When we don't know what to do concerning a matter do we doggedly pursue the Lord for an answer until we get some form of tangible result?

Reflect: As we do our part in searching out a matter, the Lord will do His part in revealing the answer to us.

Day 5

Discernment

'Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."
Matthew 2:8

We know now that Herod was lying to the wise men but without the spirit of discernment there's no way the magi would have known this. In Herod's heart he was sending the wise men on a mission that would aid his plan in eliminating the child. But looking at his earnestness you'd probably be thinking, how wonderful and humble Herod is. In navigating the unknown we cannot afford to function solely on what we see/hear alone. We need divine sensitivity and discernment.

'So the men [of Israel] took some of their own provisions [and offered them in friendship], and [foolishly] did not ask for the counsel of the Lord. It happened that three days after they had made a covenant (treaty) with them, the Israelites heard that they were [actually] their neighbors and that they were living among them.' Joshua 9:14,16

Because Joshua and the Israelites did not ask the Lord's counsel, the Gibeonites were able to successfully deceive them through false representation. We do not know what tomorrow holds so whenever we are delving into unknown terrains, we need to ask the Lord for discernment. Otherwise we can easily be deceived by those who are pursuing their own agenda. We can avoid getting ourselves into dangerous pursuits or exercises in futility when we actively ask the Lord for discernment.

'There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.' Proverbs 14:12

When we're trying to navigate the unknown, we need to rely heavily on the Lord for direction because we really cannot determine how things will turn out based on our limited knowledge and understanding. The plan you have may be good, but that doesn't automatically mean it's also God's plan.

Reflect: Regardless of what venture we may be exploring and how well we think we know the people we plan to work with, don't take anything for granted. Seek God's counsel and ask for discernment first. The Lord who knows the plans and intents of the heart will guide you aright.

Day 6

Divine Direction

'After hearing the king, they went their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them [continually leading the way] until it came and stood over the place where the young Child was.' Matthew 2:9

After the wise men left king Herod, the Bible tells us that the star they had seen in the east led them and it took them to the exact the location of the child. Question: where was the star all along? Did it disappear? Or did they just stop looking for it because they felt they already knew where they were going? The star led the wise men out of their country to Israel, but at a point it appears they decided they knew what to do and took their eyes off the star.

That's when the wise men began asking people about where the Child would be born and eventually ended up before Herod. The star represents the Holy Spirit – when we take our eyes off the Holy Spirit we begin to resort to flesh (relying solely on our intellect, connections, etc.) and the arm of flesh will fail. Not only will it fail, there may be several unnecessary hurts and detours along the way.

... so that you may [be able to see the ark and] know the way you are to go, for you have not passed this way before.'" Joshua 3:4b

When the wisemen started following the star again, it led them to the exact location of the Child, the very thing they were looking for. The Lord knows our needs and the exact answers we need at any point in time. When we begin navigating the unknown, we need to pay close attention to and follow the only One who knows the way 100%. When the Israelites were crossing the Jordan, the Lord gave them an interesting instruction – the ark (representing the presence of God) was to go ahead to show the way they should go to successfully navigate the journey. This instruction hasn't changed – we still need to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit to successfully pass through all the unknowns we will face in life.

Reflect: The Holy Spirit never stops leading – the question is do we always follow His leading?

Day 7

Choosing to Rejoice

'When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.' Matthew 2:10

When the wise men saw the star, they started rejoicing **even before** they physically saw the Child. They weren't casual about it, the Bible records that they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. They had the assurance that the presence of the star meant they would see what they had been searching for.

'You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.' Psalms 16:11

'Rejoice in the Lord always [delight, take pleasure in Him]; again I will say, rejoice!'
Philippians 4:4

'For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.'" Zephaniah 3:17

There's something about God's presence that just causes joy to erupt in us. Not only do we rejoice in the Lord, He also rejoices in us. While happiness is externally focused, joy is internally focused. The joy of the Lord is a weapon against discouragement. When we choose to focus on God's presence, His goodness and mercies we shift our focus from what we're chasing and being grateful for who He is and what He has already done. It also means engaging a mindset that acknowledges we have already won even before the success manifests before us.

Action Step: What are you trying to tackle right now? Start rejoicing about it now. Rejoice even if you don't feel like it, rejoice even when it doesn't all appear to have come together yet. Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!!

Day 8

Choosing to Worship

'And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.' Matthew 2:11

When the wise men came into the house where the Child was, the first thing they did was to worship the Child. These men were professionals, experts in their field who had enough skill to identify the importance of the star they followed. The wise men must have been captains in their industry. They were also clearly wealthy for them to present the valuable and expensive gifts to the Child. They didn't pay attention to the humble surroundings, or the fact that the king in question was still a baby. They acknowledged who he was and worshipped him. They cast their crowns as it were, humbled themselves and worshipped.

'the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they worship Him who lives forever and ever; and they throw down their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they exist, and were created and brought into being.'" Revelation 4:10-11

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; Tremble [in submissive wonder] before Him, all the earth. Psalms 96:9 AMP

'But a time is coming and is already here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit [from the heart, the inner self] and in truth; for the Father seeks such people to be His worshipers.' John 4:23

When we're seeking God we need to ask for grace to recognize and reverence His majesty so we do not get caught up in the web of who we think we are or what we think we know. It's important we come before the Lord with child-like innocence and dependence, trusting that we are going into the presence of our heavenly father who has all the answers we need. This may mean laying aside our expectations of how we think the Lord should respond to us and trusting that He will lead us in the way that He know is best for us.

Reflect: Don't get so caught up in who you believe you are, know or have accomplished that you are unable to come before the Lord with an open childlike heart and trust.



Day 9

Divine Direction

'Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.' Matthew 2:12

After the wise men presented the Child with gifts, they were ready to return to their base as they had satisfied the reason for their journey. Perhaps they were planning to Herod first as they had earlier discussed, but the Bible tells us that they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod. The Holy Spirit saw through Herod's duplicity and guided the wise men accordingly.

'But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.' I John 2:20

'The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.' Psalms 37:23

'And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him— The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and strength, The Spirit of knowledge and of the [reverential and obedient] fear of the Lord' Isaiah 11:2

The Holy Spirit led the wise men to the baby Jesus and also warned them not to return to Herod and divulge the location of the child. When we accept Jesus into our lives and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we have access to the Holy Spirit who helps us on our life's journey. He is the Spirit that gives us counsel and directs us in the ways we should go.

Why do we need the spirit of counsel? Because the Holy Spirit knows all things and we don't. This makes it all the more critical for us to lean on Him for His guidance and obey His promptings as He leads us along the best pathway for our life.

Reflect: We are functioning in a very interesting period in time. None of us have been this way before and so there are no human experts who can provide us guidance with 100% accuracy as to what we expect. But we have access to the one who laid the foundations of this earth and knows the end of all things. We need to lean on Him for divine direction in this season, trusting that He will order our steps and perfect everything concerning us.



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