

## **LIFE Group Sermon Handout**

December 13, 2015

### **Find Your Place in the Story**

Pastor Mike O'Connor

#### **Scripture—Matthew 2:1-12**

[2:1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

[6] "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel."

[7] Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. [8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." [9] After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. [12] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

#### **Main Idea—God Sought the Wise Men. They Responded in Faithful Worship**

Who were these guys and what did their visit show about them? *They were pagan Gentiles, probably sorcerers.*

How is does their response differ from others? *The religious leaders were indifferent; Herod was hostile.*

Five markers that show that they had connected with the living God—

1. *They dropped everything and traveled a long distance to meet the King.*
2. *They brought costly gifts*
3. *When it got confusing, they did not give up.*
4. *They crossed boundaries of race and culture.*
5. *They continued to follow after they met their King and Lord*

How is God using their story? *To show that God is on a quest for worshippers and that the "unworthy" are not outside His love and grace.*

"Sehahbrate" the season! *Take time to "Selah" (pause) & respond to the One who is calling you to Himself.*

#### **Application—**

- How does your story show that God was on a quest for you before you responded to Him?
- How are you making time to "Sehahbrate" with Jesus this year?

Undoubtedly, Jesus was the greatest disciple maker...ever. He was perfect in all that He did and was perfect in His disciple making. One of the things that Jesus used in the disciple making process that we'd do well to do ourselves, is to use encouragement when making disciples.

Multiple times in the New Testament we're told to encourage one another. There's a great reason for this. Encouragement builds up and ultimately leads to the person being disciplined fully embracing their identity in Christ. This is a breakthrough that every disciple maker takes note of as it is at this point that the one being disciplined has overcome the debilitating whispers of the enemy and is holding fast to the powerful name of and the presence of Jesus. The enemy's stronghold has been overcome and in the disciple's newfound freedom, growth will occur that may have been stunted in the past.

Jesus seemed to use three types of encouragement when disciple making. Check out the three types of encouragement Jesus used to grow Peter.

**Encouragement to move forward in faith**--In Matthew 14 Jesus comes walking on water. He approaches his disciples who had gone ahead of Him in the boat. When Peter sees Jesus he cries out, "Lord, if it's You, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus encourages Peter to move forward by simply stating, "Come!" Scripture then describes what Peter did, "And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus." Disciple makers who aid those they're discipling to become mature disciples don't keep them in their comfort zones, they encourage them to move into dangerous places in faith.

**Encouragement to embrace new identity**--Matthew 16 describes a moment in time when Jesus called Simon by his new name, Peter. The HCSB Study Bible describes what took place, "Although Matthew previously referred to Simon as Peter, this is the first time in the Gospel that Jesus did so. Jesus identified Peter as the rock on which His church would be founded." Jesus revealed Peter's new identity. Peter, a man who once flagrantly and outrageously spastic in his ideas and actions, went on to lead the early church. Jesus gave Peter a new identity and it changed Peter's perspective of himself and his role in the Kingdom of God. Each time a discipler reminds a disciple of their new identity in Christ, that they are Jesus' ambassador, His child, His priest, and His bride, the disciple steps up and lives the life of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

**Encouragement to forgive themselves**--As we all know, Peter denied Jesus three times. What many people don't realize is that Jesus made certain that Peter understood the forgiveness he received by speaking of his forgiveness to Peter three times, what many call Jesus' Threefold Restoration of Peter. This occurred after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and is described in Matthew 21. Just as Jesus had done when asking Peter to join him on the journey of a lifetime, to become one of His disciples, Jesus once again says to Peter, "Follow me" Peter's sin of denying Jesus was forgiven and Peter was now ready to go, once again, and make disciples himself. Every disciple sins and every discipler has the opportunity to remind them of Jesus' grace. This kind of encouragement is a must as none of us will ever fully escape our sin nature til Jesus comes to take us to our new home in heaven, where there will no longer be any sin of any kind.

