

## **Jan 4/26 - Led to Worship – Matt 2:1-12 (Leader's Guide)**

1. Are there any particular 'stars' that God has used in your life to help guide you to him? Are there signs of God's movement that we tend to overlook because they don't fit into our patterns of how we think God speaks?

*Invite the group to think about guidance that became clear only in hindsight. You can acknowledge that God often uses ordinary people and events, not just dramatic spiritual moments. Hold space for the idea that God's movement can be subtle, patient, and easily missed.*

2. What might we be afraid of losing if we were to truly welcome Jesus as king? It might not be as obvious as Herod's clear insecurity... but think for example of St Augustine's prayer: "Lord, make me chaste – but not yet!" What do we hold on to, that we are afraid of God taking from us?

*Resistance to Jesus' leadership is a normal part of growing in faith – all of us resist his lordship on some level! You can connect fear with trust: what we cling to the most often reveals where trust is hardest.*

3. Why is it significant that the magi offer themselves before they offer their gifts? What does this look like for us?

*You can note that worship begins with surrender, not usefulness. The temptation is always to define our faith by what we do, rather than by who we are becoming. Availability, obedience, and attentiveness are offerings in themselves. At the same time, you can acknowledge that it is impossible to have perfect motives, and that God is able to take our broken offerings and makes them into something beautiful.*

4. Once the magi encountered Christ, the star that had guided them is no longer mentioned. How do we live faithfully when we may no longer feel clearly guided?

*Uncertainty is a normal part of spiritual maturity, as is learning to trust in the darkness what has been revealed in the light. Mother Theresa is a good example of someone who remained faithful through many years of not hearing God's voice clearly.*

5. What does freedom mean to you - really? Where are you longing for freedom in your life right now? How might following Christ lead us not just to personal freedom, but to freedom for others?

*Help the group distinguish what following Christ brings freedom from (fear, reliance on wealth or status, etc) and freedom for (serving, loving, etc). The Blackburns showed that freedom from slavery gave them an opportunity to use their freedom for good – bringing others out of slavery and making safe havens for people both physically and spiritually.*