

**“...Committed To Seeking God’s Will...
November 25, 2007 * Matthew 2:1-12**

*We are members of God’s family, dedicated to the teachings of Jesus, and **committed to seeking God’s will**. In our church, we glorify God through worship, reach others through evangelism, assist our community through service, care for each other through fellowship, and equip our members through Biblical instruction.
(Grace Baptist’s Mission Statement)*

I. “Seeking”

- A. What does it mean to “seek”?

- B. Who were the wise men and what do we know about them?

Lessons From The Magi

Lesson 1 – God _____ you and me to seek him.

- A. *Scriptures that call us to seek God:*
 - B. *Why do we have to seek God in the first place?*
 - 1. *Our _____ separates us from God.*
 - 2. *By asking us to seek him, God honors the _____ he gave us and finds out who really _____ him.*

- C. *Why does it seem that God appears one minute and hides the next – like he did with the wise men?*

Lesson 2 – God calls us to seek him through _____, through His _____, and through His _____.

- A. *Why won’t anyone have an excuse when standing before God?*

- B. *Why is seeking God through His people not always easy?*

- C. *To ultimately find what I’m looking for, what will I need to do?*

Lesson 3 – Seeking God requires waiting for _____.

- A. *How is the modern world trying to suck the life out of our faith?*

- B. *What’s different about how Christians celebrate Christmas compared to the world?*

- C. *If I want to have a relationship with God, will he accommodate himself to my timetable?*

Lesson 4 – God promises that we will _____ him if we seek him passionately.

- A. *What happens if the ‘finding’ never comes?*

- B. *Why do you think the wise men responded as they did when at last they found Jesus?*

- C. *If it’s true that each life recreates in some way the journey of the Magi, then where am I at today in this journey? And what is God speaking to my heart this morning?*

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I. “Seeking”

A. What does it mean to “seek”?

Websters dictionary offers these definitions: *to go in search of, to try to discover, to make an inquiry.* ‘Seeking’ is not just as simple as looking for something with your eyes, like looking for the remote while you’re laying back in the Lazy-Boy recliner, or scanning the table for the salt and pepper at dinnertime. Seeking suggests a real effort is being made, a real hunt is going on.

B. Who were the wise men and what do we know about them?

Now whether or not there were three of them, nobody really knows – we surmise that because three gifts were brought. And they probably weren’t kings – they were Magi, perhaps counselors in a kings’ court, trained astrologers, members of a high priestly caste. So they were men of great importance and high rank, and were obviously accustomed to strolling through the courts of kings, so casually they come into King Herod’s court, and they obviously possessed great wealth by nature of the gifts they brought Jesus, and by nature of the fact that they were gone from home for so long, and only wealthy people could undertake great pilgrimages like this. They saw Jesus’ star “in the East” and though we’re not told what this means, obviously Matthew is hinting at a very great distance here.

Lessons From The Magi

Lesson 1 – God expects you and me to seek him.

A. Scriptures that call us to seek God:

Psalm 27:8 – “My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, Lord, I will seek.” Psalm 42:1 – “As the deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you, O God.” Psalm 63:1 – “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” David’s son Solomon understood the importance of seeking after God. Proverbs 2:3-5 – “If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” The prophet Isaiah understood the importance of seeking God. Isaiah 55:6 – “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.” Jeremiah understood it as well, for God said through him in 29:13 – “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

B. Why do we have to seek God in the first place?

1. Our sin separates us from God.

2. By asking us to seek him, God honors the freewill he gave us and finds out who really desires him.

C. Why does it seem that God appears one minute and hides the next – like he did with the wise men?

God draws us out, woos us like a lover, he throws pebbles on the windows of our souls, and sings us love songs from below, hoping that we’ll open up the window, listen to his song, lower down a rope and run after him. And that way, God knows whether you really want to have a relationship with him or not. God isn’t playing hide and seek with us. In fact, we could never even seek him in the first place, if he hadn’t already thrown grace-dust in our eyes, and softened our hearts, if I can put it that way. Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.” But God never forces you to come all the way. You come part way, then he hides. Not because he doesn’t want to be found, but he wants to draw you out further, he wants to know if your heart desires him or not. He pokes his head out from behind the tree.

“Oh there you are!” you say, and run after him some more. He disappears again. But this is no game. This is the way God woos us into the deepest love relationship of all.

Lesson 2 – God calls us to seek him through **creation**, through His **people**, and through His **Word**.

A. *Why won't anyone have an excuse when standing before God?*

Because creation is God's calling card – it proves that God exists.

B. *Why is seeking God through His people not always easy?*

Sadly, no two churches are the same. And just like in politics, there is a conservative to liberal spectrum within Christianity, with congregations occupying every point on that spectrum. And some churches are healthy and some are not. Some churches are phoney and some are not. King Herod claimed to be a true worshipper of God, but he was far from it. And so it will not necessarily be an easy thing seeking God amidst those claiming to be his people. But if you don't give up, and keep doing your homework, and never unplug your brain, or disconnect your heart, God will reward your efforts, and bring you into a group of people with whom Jesus is present.

C. *To ultimately find what I'm looking for, what will I need to do?*

Ultimately the seeking of God will bring you to opening the pages of the Bible. Ultimately, all of the answers you are seeking for, all the comfort you are looking for, all of the guidance and power and purpose you are needing – are right here. It wasn't till Herod and his advisers opened up God's Word that the wise men found what they were looking for. And the same will be true for you.

Lesson 3 – Seeking God requires waiting for **His timing**.

A. *How is the modern world trying to suck the life out of our faith?*

By trying to sell you on the notion that if you want something, you should be able to have it here, now, today, without working for it, without waiting for it. My friend, if you buy into this mentality,

you will never, ever know God. If the wise men had believed this about life, they would have quit early on in their journey.

B. *What's different about how Christians celebrate Christmas compared to the world?*

The weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas is a representation of how life really is, that the best things in life are never had without struggle, without sacrifice, without waiting, without working, without aching for it. That the best things in life come at us in seasons, and in stages. What makes Christmas magical is the waiting and longing of Advent. So at last, when December 25 dawns, it's the culmination and consummation of a beautiful longing. That's how God wants it to be for us.

But the modern world has no concept of this. If there is something good out there to be had, then have it now. No waiting. No sacrifice. Here's Christmas – no waiting! And if it's good after Thanksgiving, then it'd be even better after Halloween. Let's show the Grinch on TV two weeks before Thanksgiving. (I nearly wrote my congressman when I saw that.) And then we wonder why when we come to December 25, we're sick of it all, we're exhausted, wrung out, broke.

C. *If I want to have a relationship with God, will he accommodate himself to my timetable?*

You're going to have to learn how to wait on his. If you say you're committed to seeking God's will, then you're going to have to follow where he leads you. And it's not going to be one glorious, titillating experience after another. Sometimes the star will appear above your heads, and sometimes you'll be left for a time to grope in darkness. There'll be sacrifices expected of you, and discipline that you will have to learn, there'll be days of waiting, and days of fulfillment; days of aching, and days of comfort.

Lesson 4 – God promises that we will **find** him if we seek him passionately.

A. What happens if the 'finding' never comes?

Seeking after all is pointless if we do not eventually find. The fun of playing "Hide and Seek" is to at last discover where they're at. To be able to scream out, "I see you." But if their hiding place is just too good and you don't find them, the fun of it starts to sour, and pretty soon you want to quit.

B. Why do you think the wise men responded as they did when at last they found Jesus?

Can you imagine the joy the magi felt when at long last they came to the house where the Christ-child dwelt, after this complicated, twisting and turning journey of theirs? Is it any wonder that they responded as they did, falling on their faces before him, and worshipping him, and opening up their treasures and laying them at his feet.

C. If it's true that each life recreates in some way the journey of the Magi, then where am I at today in this journey? And what is God speaking to my heart this morning?

Welcome to the journey friend. You may be in the middle of your journey, and the star has hidden behind the clouds, and you're wondering if it's all worth it in the end, and maybe you should give up and go back. No, my friend. Don't look back. Keep on keeping on. You won't be in this place forever. Christmas Day is coming. You may have already found Jesus, but have now discovered that God wants to take you further on and higher up – and so in a way, you're doing it all over again, following his leading, but not really sure what awaits you at the end.

Occasionally, you get the star, occasionally there you are in darkness again. The difference this time is your love for Jesus is so much stronger than before, and you are stronger; in a way it's like taking a long hike with a best friend. Don't give up. Let God do his wonderful work inside your heart. Friends, wherever you're at today, let's commit ourselves to seeking God's will.