

## Light In The Night | Matthew 2:1-8 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To develop a tangible way to be a better light in dark times.

**Sermon Refresher:** Keith gave a sermon unpacking the difference between Herod as a king and Jesus as king and asking us to consider to whom we pledge our allegiance.

**Icebreaker:** What was a highlight of your Thanksgiving holiday?

### **Discussion:**

1. What has been hard or difficult for you or others around you in 2020?

*The first Christmas was set in the middle of dark and difficult days...*

2. Read the following verses:

#### **Matthew 2:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

**Background:** Herod was an Edomite who was given power to rule over Judea by the Roman Empire. He was jealous of his power, suspicious of any potential rivals, and ruthless and vindictive towards any perceived threats even having his beloved wife, mother-in-law, and two of his sons killed.

He wanted to be perceived as being great, so he set out on several ambitious building projects which he funded through heavy taxation which made life unbearable for the average worker.

He was dubbed "Herod the Great" and was considered so by many.

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

Why would the Magi's request to see the baby disturb Herod? Why would it disturb Jerusalem?

3. Read the following verse:

## Matthew 2:4-8

<sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.<sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

*Bethlehem was a mere three miles from Herod's palace named Herodium where he likely was when the Magi met with him.*

What might be some reasons that only the Magi made the 3-mile journey?

4. Jerusalem was given a choice as to which king to whom they were going to be loyal: Herod or this baby. What are the people or things that we are tempted to pledge our loyalty to rather than Jesus?
5. Why pledge your allegiance to Jesus instead of the famous or the powerful in this life?

6. Read the following verse:

## Matthew 2:16

<sup>16</sup> When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

Herod here resorts to great evil to keep power. What evil might we be tempted with to keep power?

7. What does loyalty to Jesus and following his way lead us to do differently?

## **Sharing and Prayer:**

Share a way that you feel compelled to be a better light in dark times and pray for each other.