

WEEK 4: WORSHIPPING WHEN IT'S HARD

The Wise Men Visit Jesus

When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! – Matthew 2:10

Read: Matthew 2

Sometimes it's just plain hard to worship. We tend to think we need to feel a certain way (happy, joyful, reverent) before we can begin to worship. We think we need to be in a certain frame of mind, and if we're not feeling it, we often just decide we can't or won't worship. We forget that worship is a choice.

It is easy to think of the wise men as just some minor players in the nativity scene. We know they came a long distance, following a star, and they offered Jesus extravagant gifts as an act of worship. We don't really think about the difficulties that they faced or the sacrifices they made. Their worship cost them something.

Biblical scholars tell us that the wise men, or "magi," were scholars who studied astronomy and astrology. They left what appeared to be positions of prestige and comfortable lives to take a long, difficult journey through the desert. The trip would have not only been physically difficult, but risky as well. Along their journey, they met the king of Judah, King Herod. King Herod was fearful of any other coming into power over him, so with news of a newborn king, he conspired to use the wise men's journey as part of his plot to kill Jesus. The wise men's choice to disobey the king and protect the one they were sent to find was a dangerous one.

But even still, they charged ahead on the journey. When they saw Jesus, their immediate response was one of worship. They bowed down at his feet and gave him gifts. They recognized his worth and holiness. They were overjoyed and chose to do what they were sent to do – worship him.

It's easy to worship when things are going well and life is overflowing with blessings. But we really show what our faith is made of when we choose to worship when life is hard: when we're tired, when the journey has been long, or when the world feels dangerous. What a blessing it is to worship the one who has sacrificed so much for us!

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Have you ever experienced a time when you didn't feel like worshipping but chose to anyway? How did that time impact you? How were you changed?
2. When was the last time your worship cost you something? What was it?
3. What are things that remind you to worship when it's hard?