

What To Do When Your Star Trek Ends With Nothing

Matthew 2:1-12

Our conduct is usually controlled by our expectations. We do certain things in anticipation of certain results. But what happens when you've been following a star with the idea in mind that it will lead you to something spectacular but, instead, it leads you to something humble and unassuming? What do you do when, after dreaming that you will find a pot of gold at the end of your rainbow, you end up beside a rusting, empty pot? Instead of finding the pomp and ceremony of a regal king in a palace, the wise men that followed a promising bright star for so long found themselves in a humble dwelling with a little toddler in the arms of his teen-aged mother.

Think of the disappointment those magi must have experienced when their journey ended up in the little town of Bethlehem! They had stopped at the most logical place to find a King - the Palace in Jerusalem. But the only king they found was Herod, who, after a brief consultation with his sages, re-directed them to nowhereville. And now what? The star they had been following stopped suddenly and hovered over a peasant dwelling. Surely this couldn't be the place. Their expectations had been so high! How do wise men react when they follow a shining star faithfully only to see their fondest hopes dashed and their desires unfulfilled?

Although Wise Men may not find exactly what they anticipate, they do several things that we ought to emulate. First of all, they...

- 1. Rejoice with exceeding great joy.** We tend to gauge happiness on getting things we want or experiencing certain pleasures. It is illusive and transitory. Joy, however, is an inner, deep-seated emotion that is not based on outward circumstances, things or people. The world can't give joy. If your shining star causes your heart to leap for joy despite the long, arduous journey and regardless of the plainness of the place where it leads, embrace it. Get off your high horse (or camel, as the case may be) and enter in expectantly. What you find inside may be far better than a pot of gold. In fact, it may move you to open your treasures and invest yourself in something that the world views as not at all promising so far as yielding a return is concerned. They who are wise will not only find cause for rejoicing when their star stops suddenly, they will also...

- 2. Fall on their face and worship God.** Wise men always believe, “God is somewhere in this situation.” Whether that wise person is Joseph in prison, Moses in the desert, Job on an ash heap, David in the wilderness, Daniel in a lion’s den, or Paul in prison, he looks for God’s fingerprints and, finding them, he worships. The difference between a weak Christian and a strong Christian is right here. Weak Christians see God only in the good and the grand and the place of blessing, but the mature believers see God also in the bad and the mundane and the place of cursing. Worship is not predicated on “Look what the Lord has done”, but on “I see the Lord, and he is high and lifted up”. Full of joy and with a heart of worship, the wise will...
- 3. Offer the very best they have.** When we find something humble and ordinary instead of grand and sensational, we may be tempted to hold back from giving our best. Wise Men don’t give any less because it is a baby in a peasant house as opposed to a King on a throne. They give their all and they offer their very best, withholding nothing. As wise men open their treasures and present them to Christ, they...
- 4. Experience a change of direction in life that will spare them a lot of heartache down the road.** Have you ever had a ‘trails end’ experience that humbled and changed you? After the Wise Men followed the Star to Bethlehem, they received a divine mandate – a summons to change direction. As a result, their lives were spared. They were saved from being destroyed.

During this Christmas season, we need to have a fresh realization of what God did for us. The great and glorious God of all creation allowed Himself to be born of a virgin. He looked through human eyes so that He would understand and relate to us. Simeon and Anna clung to their star of hope through anxious days and long nights of waiting. Notwithstanding the “two turtledoves” offered by a poor young couple with an eight-day-old babe in arms, their eyes beheld the salvation of the Lord. Lowly shepherds had an angelic visitation that burst through the darkness of their Judean night and directed them to a manger scene where a babe lay wrapped in swaddling clothes. And when the wise men followed his Star, it led them to a little child who was destined to be the savior of all mankind - the Lord of glory and the King of kings.

Go ahead, wise guy. Follow your star. Pursue the distant glow. And don’t be surprised when it leads you to a place and a person and an experience that

awakens great joy in your heart, elicits true worship from your soul, moves you to empty yourself of earthly treasures, and changes your direction in life. Follow your dream relentlessly all through the long night “until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” – 2 Peter 1:19b.