

DECEMBER DEVOTIONAL: *Following a Star*

There is something about a star at Christmas.

We put one on top of the tree. We hang stars in our windows and from our porches. They appear on Christmas cards, ornaments, and decorations.

But the star in the Christmas story wasn't just something beautiful to look at.

It was something to follow.

Matthew tells us about Wise Men who saw a star and set out in search of the One who had been born King of the Jews. Their journey took time. It took effort. And it didn't unfold exactly as they might have expected.

But it led them to Jesus.

When we look closely at their story, there is a wonderful progression:

They saw.

They rejoiced.

They followed.

They found.

They worshiped.

They gave.

They went home differently.

Maybe there's something in their Christmas journey that can help us with ours.

1. THEY SAW!

The journey began because the Wise Men were paying attention.

Other people may have seen the same night sky, but these men noticed something that caused them to act. They were watching. And when God put something in front of them, they saw it.

Sometimes following God begins with simply noticing what He has put in front of us.

Perhaps a person who needs encouragement. An opportunity to serve. A chance to make a difference in someone's life.

But in order to notice, we have to be watching.

The Wise Men were looking up. They were paying attention. And I think that's a good reminder for us, especially at Christmas when it's so easy to get busy looking at everything else.

What might God want you and me to notice this Christmas?

The Wise Men saw the star because they were watching. Let's make sure we're watching too.

2. THEY REJOICED!

Matthew 2:10 NIV says: "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."

I love that.

They didn't just quietly acknowledge that they were headed in the right direction. They celebrated!

Christmas gives us permission to do some celebrating too.

Enjoy the lights. Sing the songs. Eat the cookies. Laugh with people you love. Tell the old stories again. Make some new memories.

And don't overlook all the reasons God has given you to rejoice.

We've lived enough life to know that every day isn't perfect.

But we've also lived enough life to know that God has been very, very good.

So rejoice!

3. THEY FOLLOWED!

Seeing the star wasn't enough. The Wise Men had to do something about it.

They followed.

They left what was familiar and began a journey without knowing every detail of where it would take them. They trusted God enough to follow.

That's faith.

Most of us can look back over our lives and see times when we didn't know exactly where the road ahead would lead. We simply took the next step we believed God was asking us to take.

And here we are.

Not because we always knew where the road was going, but because God did.

We may not know every detail of the road ahead of us either.

But that's okay.

We don't have to know where every road leads as long as we know the One we're following.

4. THEY FOUND!

But found what?

They were looking for a king.

Naturally, they went to Jerusalem and to the palace of King Herod. But the King they were seeking wasn't there.

Our traditional Christmas pictures often place the Wise Men at the stable with the shepherds. Matthew actually tells us that when the Wise Men arrived, they entered a *house* and saw the *child* with His mother Mary.

But I've always liked the picture that comes to my mind when I hear the expression "they followed a star but found a stable."

Have you ever felt like you followed a star and ended up in a stable?

Maybe the job you were excited about wasn't quite what you expected. Maybe a relationship did not turn out as you hoped. Maybe you planned the perfect vacation and everything that could go wrong did.

The point is that even when we find ourselves in our own "stable"—somewhere we never expected or wanted to be—God is still there!

We've lived long enough to know that life doesn't always follow the plans we make for it. But we've also lived long enough to look back and see that some of God's greatest blessings came wrapped very differently than we expected.

That's why I love the picture of following a star and finding a stable.

Sometimes the greatest gifts God gives us are found in stables we never would have chosen, through circumstances we never could have planned, and along roads we never expected to travel.

You may not find what you expected. You just might find something better.

The Wise Men did.

They found Jesus!

5. THEY WORSHIPED!

When the Wise Men finally saw Jesus, Matthew tells us that they bowed down and worshiped Him.

That's the heart of Christmas.

The lights are wonderful. The music is beautiful. The gatherings are fun. The traditions are precious.

But ultimately, all of it should lead us to the same place the star led the Wise Men: to Jesus.

Christmas is our opportunity once again to stop, look toward Him, and remember:

This is why we celebrate.

6. THEY STILL GAVE!

If I had been one of the Wise Men, I might have wondered if it was worth giving such expensive gifts to a child in an ordinary house instead of to the king I had expected to find in a palace.

But the Wise Men had traveled a long way to find Jesus, and when they found Him, they still opened their treasures.

They gave Him their best. Gold. Frankincense. Myrrh.

We have treasures to give too.

Maybe our treasures look a little different.

We have our time. Our resources. Our prayers. Our encouragement. Our experience. Our love.

There is still someone who needs the gifts God has placed in your hands.

Let's give them generously!

7. THEY WENT HOME DIFFERENTLY!

And then comes my favorite part.

Matthew 2:12 NIV tells us that God warned the Wise Men in a dream not to return to Herod, so "they returned to their country by another route."

They literally went home by a different road.

But I like to think they went home differently in another sense too.

How could you possibly encounter Jesus and go home exactly the same?

They had followed a star.

They had found the King.

They had rejoiced.

They had worshiped.

They had opened their treasures.

And now there was still another road ahead of them.

I think that's a wonderful place for us to end our Christmas journey.

No matter how many Christmases we've celebrated, God isn't finished with us.

There are still people to love, gifts to give, prayers to pray, opportunities to serve, and perhaps even a few roads we've never traveled before.

So when you see a star this Christmas, remember the Wise Men.

They saw.

They rejoiced.

They followed.

They found.

They worshiped.

They gave.

And they went home differently.

May we do the same.

Keep your eyes open for what God wants you to see this Christmas.

Keep following wherever He leads.

And if the journey doesn't look quite like you expected, don't be too quick to decide you've taken a wrong turn.

You just might be about to find something better than you expected.

Because the greatest thing the Wise Men found at the end of their journey wasn't the kind of king or palace they may have expected.

Instead, they found THE King.

They found Jesus.

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us that You are with us not only in the places we hoped to be, but also in the places we never expected to find ourselves. When life doesn't turn out the way we planned, help us to look for You instead of giving up.

Like the Wise Men, may we worship You wherever You lead us, give You our best, and trust You for the way forward. Give us faith to believe that the stable is not the end of the story and that You are still at work, even when we cannot see what You are doing.

This Christmas, help us keep our eyes on Jesus—the greatest gift we have ever received—and follow Him faithfully wherever He leads.

In Jesus' name, Amen.