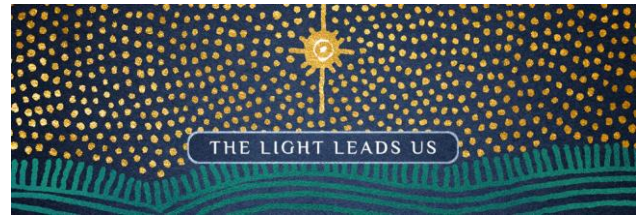


Weekly Message Study Guide

ChristChurch.us/SmallGroups



Date _____ Speaker _____

FROM FEAR TO FAITH | The Light Leads Us | Week 4 | December 20

Matthew 2:1-6; Psalm 9:10

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

CONTEXT | This week we start with the impact of the news on Herod the Great and ask "How Is that like me? Should I be afraid or concerned? What possibly could Impact me?" Ponder that for a moment before you begin. Reflect on what you are feeling this holiday season, apprehension, fear, expectation, excitement?

Read Matthew 2:1-6 | We begin with a focus on Herod the Great. Herod who ruled Judah for 40 years was a master politician. Rome called him "King of the Jews".

- Why was the thought or possibility of the birth of a child concerning to Herod?
- Why would this news trouble "all of Jerusalem?"
- Consider for a moment the lapse in the perceived presence of God, hundreds of years, between the end of the Old Testament and the new story beginning with Wise Men looking for a new born child. What are the Jews in Jerusalem thinking?

The Threat of Change | We all have experienced change. New bosses, new jobs, face-masks in stores, children, teenagers, the list goes on. Human nature in general does not like change. So what if the "change" (represented by the birth of a child who, as yet, is unseen) is world changing?

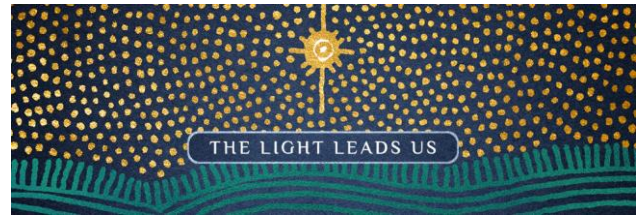
- How do you respond to change? Give an example of a difficult change you have been through.
- What was difficult? As a group make a list of words that strike fear in you when you think about change; words like control, power, reputation, position, prestige, etc.
- What in our nature causes us to fear those kinds of changes? Why do we protect what we "know" so much?

Homage: Received or Given | Our culture has many things that we pay homage to: sports heroes, entertainers, affluence and success. And when we are honest with ourselves, we each desire to receive homage in the form of respect and affable relationship, fair pay for our work and maybe even promotion and status. But what if an event (Christmas) blew the doors off all that?

- How do you comprehend the incarnation of God on Earth?
- How can we describe, enter into, pay homage to, the PRESENCE of God among us? The magnitude of that question is scary. It is an awesome way to think about Christmas—going from the absence of God to the presence of God on earth.
- What is God's intent?

Weekly Message Study Guide

ChristChurch.us/SmallGroups



God's M.O.?? | The Jewish people – especially the more educated ones -- figured they understood God's M.O. pretty well. They believed God was mostly active in ancient times. They felt God's primary interest was in whether people went to religious gatherings and observed rituals. They thought God was very high and mighty -- which is to say, extremely distant and not particularly related to daily life."

- Are we concerned with, afraid of, exchanging an “extremely distant God” for an Emmanuel—God with us? How do you respond to that idea?
- Do you try to keep this revolutionary difference contained within some seasonal rituals and then box it up and put it away until next year? These are extremely challenging questions. What do you think God wants?

Read Psalm 9:10 | Our Lord appropriately deserves our terrified respect as well as our wondrous worshipful awe. The birth of Jesus shows us that God is more present and more unpredictable than we many think.

- Which truth of the good news of Christmas do you need most this season?
 1. We don't have to carry the weight of the throne.
 2. We can relinquish the exhausting struggle to win prestige in the eyes of others.
 3. There is no dark stable in our life that the Light of the World can't enter.
- God comes to earth—Emmanuel—for our sake. How have you heard or felt God's affirmation this week?
- Close in prayer thanking God for His gracious intent and the affirmation He has given you in the past week. Pray that you will see “the beginning of wisdom” in the coming week. Pray that we all will see the light that can lead us from fear to faith.

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK | “Wait, you can have my room!” As you enter the rush and excitement (or perhaps disappointment and chaos) of the coming week—remember the PRESENCE of Christ is with you. Will you invite Jesus into your life, your frustrations, your joys, your trials, your worship? Jesus was born in a manger. There is no place the presence of Christ is NOT. Welcome Jesus in quiet prayer each morning asking for an awareness to His presence throughout the day.