

ENCOUNTERS WITH
Immanuel

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
WEEK 1

CONNECT

- Talk about a time when you had to let go of control of something. How did that go?
- Do you find a lack of control stressful? Why or why not?

INTRODUCTION

This week we'll be looking at two different groups of people and their encounters with Jesus: king Herod, and the wise men or "magi." Each of them responds to Jesus in a different way: Herod tries to wrest control from Jesus, but the magi worship him. We face the same choice, even if it seems less dramatic. Will we try to cling to our own control over our lives, or will we worship Christ and bring him the gift of our trust? That's the dilemma

we face: when Christ shows up, we can respond in control or in worship.

READ & DISCUSS

READ

Matthew 2:1-12

DISCUSS

The magi see Jesus for who he is—a good and righteous Lord—and they bring him gifts suited to a king. They respond with joy as well, because they are grateful that a good king has been born. Do you experience Christ's kingship in your life as a cause for joy and worship? Are you glad to hand over control to him? What do you think the wise men saw in Jesus that made them glad he was their king?

READ & DISCUSS

READ

Matthew 2:16-18

DISCUSS

Unlike the magi, Herod responds to Jesus' arrival by trying to secure his own kingship. The tragic, bloody imagery here is a scaled-up picture of the costs of clinging to control rather than responding in worship. Christ is a good king, and he makes his followers good kings and queens; but when we try to rule without him, when we refuse to hand over control to Christ, we become petty tyrants.

Rather than bringing life, we bring death and suffering to the people around us. Have you ever met

someone who wouldn't let go of control? How did things go for that person? Do you see any of yourself in them?

READ & DISCUSS

READ

Matthew 2:13-15

DISCUSS

Because Mary and Joseph trust God, God leads to safety. If Herod is like a tiny Pharaoh, oppressing God's people and slaughtering the vulnerable, this is a retelling of the Exodus story, where God leads His children out from the control of the tyrant and into a land where they can worship Him freely. God's control is not like Herod's. Where Herod kills the vulnerable, God raises them up.

Is there a part of your life that you know God wants control over? What "Herod" might He want to rescue you

from? What blessing might He want to give you if you'll give him the gift of your trust?

PRAYER

Read Matthew 2:6 and meditate on the image of Christ as “shepherd,” someone who uses their authority for the good of the people they rule. Thank him that he is the good shepherd, and ask him to grow your trust in him.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN

- Have you read your Bible and prayed consistently the past week?
- Who is one lost person you’re praying would come to faith?



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