

# ENCOUNTERS WITH *Immanuel*

Group Guide: Week 2

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## CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- 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?

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## READ & DISCUSS UNDERSTAND & APPLY THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

Continuing our Encounters with Immanuel series, 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
Matthew 2:1-12	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 <i>joy</i> 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?
Matthew 2:16-18	Unlike the magi, Herod responds to Jesus' arrival by trying to secure his <i>own</i> 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?
Matthew 2:13-15	Because Mary and Joseph trust God, God leads to safety. 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?

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## PRAY RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN 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 your good shepherd, and ask him to grow your trust in him.

### **Discipleship Check-In**

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?