

## Joy

Pastor Ken

December 28, 2025

As your pastor and spiritual coach, it is my responsibility to you grow in your life with Jesus.

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. (Matt 2-NIV)*

How many are prone to misplace or lose things? I lose my car at Royals games. I lose my keys and phone at Bethel. I have lost my hair, if you find it, let me know. Someone will find my phone at church and go, "oh, that is Pastor Ken's phone."

Well, I did it again this Christmas. Kenny our oldest son in Idaho, gave me some gifts to wrap for mom, but only 1 out of the two gifts made it under the tree. So, the day after Christmas, Kenny is wondering, "I didn't see mom open one of my gifts," as Kenny was watching from the computer screen. Sure enough, I forgot to wrap a beautiful gemstone for Danice. Idaho is the gem state. How did you find it pastor?

Well, I didn't really find it. Danice found her own unwrapped gift sitting in my study under a small Christmas tree. I will often say, "I haven't lost it babe, I have just not found it yet." And sure enough, whatever is missing shows up hours later. Days later.

Even years later, a Bible came back to me in the mail that I had lost. Someone found it on an airplane. They kept it for 10 years.

Read my study notes. Found it quite helpful in their faith journey and then decided to return the Bible to me with a note thanking me. How they found me is still kind of puzzling.

**It is easy to lose your joy.** What is the easiest thing to lose? Your wallet? Your glasses? Your mind? All of those are easy to lose, but today I am going to suggest one of the easiest items to lose is your JOY.

### **Joy is easy to lose.**

It is also **easy to be confused about joy.** Is joy an emotion or is it a behavior? Is joy a by-product of circumstances or is it a spiritual muscle to grow? Is joy the same thing as happiness?

Help pastor, I have lost my joy. Help pastor I am confused about joy! Well, let's go to the Bible and see if you can **find your lost joy** and **find some clarity** to remove the confusion.

*<sup>17</sup> For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of **goodness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17-NLT)*

Joy for so many is illusive and an illusion. Mental health breakdown. Sudden death of a spouse. Anxiety, anger, PTSD comes and goes in waves making it hard to enjoy much of anything these days.

Joy for some is abundant and abounding. It seems to arrive without limit and stay except for a few days of overcast moods.

Joy is what makes life fun, exhilarating, and meaningful. Sadly, the emotional weather forecast for many sad souls, sounds like rows and rows of depressed and dreary faces with little or no hope for joy and laughter.

Whether joy is illusive or abundant our Great God wants you to experience joy. Not Christmas joy of kids and candy. But Christmas joy of trusting God's purposes despite sickness, hurt, depression, loneliness and even death.

The Bible tells us that the Christian faith should strive to experience and exhibit 3 qualities of growth: goodness, peace, and joy.

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Although joy should be available and experienced in supernatural proportions to the Christian, so often we seem to have misplaced our joy. Am I right?

Jeremiah tells us this problem of lost joy is not new to God's people when he tells us in *Lamentations 5:15-GW, There is no joy left in our hearts.*"

Now, if that is you, God is ready to offer you his joy now and every day when you believe his word. Some many believers are not aware that the help they need is just a bible study away. A 15 minute in a chair, because God cares.

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thes 5:16-18-NIV)*

NO other verse provides more confusion per square inch than this verse in the Bible. Paul is not saying we should be thankful for cancer, loss of a job, or any other tragedy. Verse 18 says, give thanks **in** all circumstances, not **for** all circumstances.

Yes, you can give thanks in all circumstances, and when you do Joy will arise. Joy will appear. Joy will flood your broken body, flood your bloodied emotions and be available when you call on God.

What we are giving thanks for is God's strength, provision, and care in all circumstances. **The only way to receive Joy is to let go of the need for explanations for everything that happens to you!**

When you can give up the why, God gives you, His joy. If God were to give us the why and explanation, we like wouldn't understand it or accept it. As the Bible says,

*My ways are higher than your ways. (Is 55:9-NIV)*

When you are confused about the direction of your life, you are robbed of joy.

Nothing steals your joy faster than being uncertain about why and what is going on in life. Why life is happening the way it is. I hear this question more than any other, "What am I supposed to do with my life?"

As Rick Warren says, "You were born by His purpose and for His purpose." The search for purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. Say this with me three times, "It all starts with God. It's not about me!" Isn't it amazing that it took an atheist Bertrand Russell to remind us of this insight, "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purposes is meaningless."

*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Proverbs 11:28-MSG)*

Everyone is confused at the first Christmas except the angels.

Let's go to our story of the Magi. Matthew loves the Magi; they get more press than Jesus' birth.

Matthew gives the Magi more literary real estate than the narrative of the birth of Jesus. What an unusual insight. Think about that for a moment. Matthew never mentions the shepherds, angels or even the manger, but he makes it blindingly clear, do not miss the star and the search. Seems to be important to God that we all **go on a journey**. That we all **learn to give gifts**.

Who were these travelers from the East? Magi? Wisemen? Kings? But it is that **star**, some **Magi**, and their **search** that has arrested me again this Christmas season. I have always been fascinated with the Magi.

Yet it is the Messiah, not the Magi that carries the message of Christmas. God saw how mankind was slipping deeper and deeper into sin and so God wrapped his son in human flesh and birthed him to blue collar peasants in Bethlehem.

**As Jesus began his itinerant ministry,**  
he **preached** fearlessly,  
he **healed** people supernaturally,  
he **confronted injustice** courageously and  
...he **loved people** with acts of kindness and compassion  
like none have ever seen, before or since...

Most important, **Jesus died an atoning death** for the wrong doings and sins of the world, for everyone that has ever lived, including my huge pile of sins and wrongdoings.

*<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3-NLT)*

And that is the main story of Christmas that is what we love to celebrate every December. But it is the **side bar story** of the Wise Men and the star, that has had my attention since I was a kid. Because it is the 1st century journey they took to find the king, that closely approximates the 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual journeys that I see people taking at Bethel Life Center and in my travels around the world.

#### **Let me draw a few parallels.**

Now, back to our Wisemen as told by Matthew: ...suddenly an unexpected star appeared overhead accompanied by the unmistakable message from heaven.

**The message was clear:** Pack your bags. Bring along some gifts. Saddle your camels. Follow that star. It will lead you to an extraordinary king. So, by faith, the Wisemen start out on their journey. You could call it a quest for a king.

Whenever I meet someone locally or when I find out someone is a Christ follower, the question I love to ask is, "how did your spiritual journey begin?"

What I am really looking for is, what was their star event? What unexpected thing came into their life that got them off dead center, wrecked their life, sent them on a quest for a king?

What star event came into your life that began your quest for a king? When I ask that question, I get a **kaleidoscopic array** of answers: a sickness, loss of job, invite to church to get someone off their back.

So, they decide to go on a quest, to find out if there is a God and if there is an eternity.

Friend, God can turn any disruption in your life, good or bad into the equivalent of the unexpected star experience, that caught the attention of the Magi-Wisemen.

And catalyze their quest and your quest for a king. If I handed the microphone around the room, I would hear 100's of stories of what started you on your journey. And some of you, while I am talking about this star and Wisemen journey, you are realizing and it is becoming apparent to you, that you have not started your journey yet.

**That's alright. That's alright.**

Many of us have been praying that this weekend's experience will have that **star equivalent effect** on you and maybe this will be enough to inspire you to start your journey in search for the king.

Going back to the journey of the Magi-Wisemen, all was going pretty well until their path intersected with a pathological earthly king named Herod. The paranoid guy in our bible text.

Herod blew a gasket when the Magi arrived, looking for a new king. Historically and biblically when a king builds an amazing kingdom, travelers from nearby kingdoms come and check it out.

Herod was attempting to rebuild his kingdom that rivaled the greatest in Jewish history. Solomon. Herod's temple was far greater and grander than Solomon's. Herod was well on his way to accomplish his architectural goals.

Travelers, like Magi and Wisemen travelling the globe has a biblical precedence, as many of you know.

Solomon built one of those world class kingdoms. God's favor and blessing was all over Solomon. His people. His fame spread all over the known world.

One day some foreigners from Africa come to Solomon's kingdom, bearing gifts and seeking is wisdom. With camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold in tow, precious stone, the **Queen of Sheba** came to him to learn about the key to his success. During her visit, the depth of Solomon's wisdom and blessing from God, took her breath away.

When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions.

*<sup>2</sup> Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. <sup>3</sup> Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her.*

*<sup>4</sup> When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, <sup>5</sup> the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his*

*cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at<sup>[a]</sup> the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed.* (1 Kings 10-NIV)

Herod being Hebrew, knew the history of his people, and secretly wanted to build a kingdom that rivaled Solomon. So, when the Wisemen arrive asking for a king, Herod went nuclear.

Quickly he set in motion a plan to discover whose kingdom was better, his of this new king that the Magi-Wisemen were looking for.

So, Herod gives the Wisemen instructions to seek out this king and return with a report, so he too can come and worship him.

Why hadn't Herod's Wisemen gone on a search? Nothing like being upstaged by foreigners.

You could say that Herod complicated the Wisemen search. You could say that Herod tried to steal the show. But, no go, on stealing the show.

*<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." (Matt 2-NIV)*

Herod learns that there is a new king in the vicinity. The Wisemen exit the side door of the palace, they relocate the star. And the star vectors them to the precise place where Mary and Jesus are resting and staying.

It is clear from the account that King Herod complicated the Wisemen journey, **my experience is ...**

Everyone's spiritual journey, everybody's spiritual quest for a king gets complicated along the way, somewhere along the path.

Many serious Christ followers can describe in no uncertain terms the barriers and obstacles they had to overcome on their journey to the king. And with every barrier and obstacle comes the disruption of joy.

Sometimes it is a Cynical Person who steals your joy.

Set of Difficult Circumstances that steal your joy.

Other times it is just old-fashioned doubt and fear that must be overcome so joy is not lost.

Sometimes it is Pride-where you say, wait a minute I have been the king, and why go looking for another one, I like being the king and running my own program.

My experience and Truth be told:

Nobody walks uninterrupted all the way to the king.

The Wisemen had to deal with a maniacal ego king. They didn't cower. They didn't cave. They didn't turn tale and run.

To their credit they persevered and courageously continued their quest for a king until they found him in that little stable.

In that blanket. Barnyard wraps. God in the flesh. The long-promised king.

Stars bring joy, Herod's steal joy!

When the Magi were confused, they decided to follow God's light one step at a time.

*<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were **overjoyed**.*

*<sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matt 2-NIV)*

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Yes, you can give thanks in all circumstances, and when you do Joy will arise. Joy will appear. Joy will flood your broken body, flood your bloodied emotions and be available when you call on God.

What we are giving thanks for is God's strength, provision, and care in all circumstances. **The only way to receive Joy is to let go of the need for explanations for everything that happens to you!**

When you can give up the why, God gives you, His joy. If God were to give us the why and explanation, we like wouldn't understand it or accept it. As the Bible says,

*My ways are higher than your ways. (Is 55:9-NIV)*

When you are confused about the direction of your life, you are robbed of joy.

Nothing steals your joy faster than being uncertain about why and what is going on in life. Why life is happening the way it is. I hear this question more than any other, "What am I supposed to do with my life?"

As Rick Warren says, "You were born by His purpose and for His purpose." The search for purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. Say this with me three times, "It all starts with God. It's not about me!" Isn't it amazing that it took an atheist Bertrand Russell to remind us of this insight, "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purposes is meaningless."

*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Proverbs 11:28-MSG)*

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Matthew gives the Magi more literary real estate than the narrative of the birth of Jesus. What an unusual insight. Think about that for a moment. Matthew never mentions the shepherds, angels or even the manger, but he makes it blindingly clear, do not miss the star and the search. Seems to be important to God that we all **go on a journey**. That we all **learn to give gifts**.

Who were these travelers from the East? Magi? Wisemen? Kings? But it is that **star**, some **Magi**, and their **search** that has arrested me again this Christmas season. I have always been fascinated with the Magi.

Yet it is the Messiah, not the Magi that carries the message of Christmas. God saw how mankind was slipping deeper and deeper into sin and so God wrapped his son in human flesh and birthed him to blue collar peasants in Bethlehem.

**As Jesus began his itinerant ministry,**  
he **preached** fearlessly,  
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he **confronted injustice** courageously and  
...he **loved people** with acts of kindness and compassion  
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Most important, **Jesus died an atoning death** for the wrong doings and sins of the world, for everyone that has ever lived, including my huge pile of sins and wrongdoings.

*<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3-NLT)*

And that is the main story of Christmas that is what we love to celebrate every December. But it is the **side bar story** of the Wise Men and the star, that has had my attention since I was a kid. Because it is the 1st century journey they took to find the king, that closely approximates the 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual journeys that I see people taking at Bethel Life Center and in my travels around the world.

#### **Let me draw a few parallels.**

Now, back to our Wisemen as told by Matthew: ...suddenly an unexpected star appeared overhead accompanied by the unmistakable message from heaven.

**The message was clear:** Pack your bags. Bring along some gifts. Saddle your camels. Follow that star. It will lead you to an extraordinary king. So, by faith, the Wisemen start out on their journey. You could call it a quest for a king.

Whenever I meet someone locally or when I find out someone is a Christ follower, the question I love to ask is, "how did your spiritual journey begin?"

What I am really looking for is, what was their star event? What unexpected thing came into their life that got them off dead center, wrecked their life, sent them on a quest for a king?

What star event came into your life that began your quest for a king? When I ask that question, I get a **kaleidoscopic array** of answers: a sickness, loss of job, invite to church to get someone off their back.

So, they decide to go on a quest, to find out if there is a God and if there is an eternity.

Friend, God can turn any disruption in your life, good or bad into the equivalent of the unexpected star experience, that caught the attention of the Magi-Wisemen.

And catalyze their quest and your quest for a king. If I handed the microphone around the room, I would hear 100's of stories of what started you on your journey. And some of you, while I am talking about this star and Wisemen journey, you are realizing and it is becoming apparent to you, that you have not started your journey yet.

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Many of us have been praying that this weekend's experience will have that **star equivalent effect** on you and maybe this will be enough to inspire you to start your journey in search for the king.

Going back to the journey of the Magi-Wisemen, all was going pretty well until their path intersected with a pathological earthly king named Herod. The paranoid guy in our bible text.

Herod blew a gasket when the Magi arrived, looking for a new king. Historically and biblically when a king builds an amazing kingdom, travelers from nearby kingdoms come and check it out.

Herod was attempting to rebuild his kingdom that rivaled the greatest in Jewish history. Solomon. Herod's temple was far greater and grander than Solomon's. Herod was well on his way to accomplish his architectural goals.

Travelers, like Magi and Wisemen travelling the globe has a biblical precedence, as many of you know.

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One day some foreigners from Africa come to Solomon's kingdom, bearing gifts and seeking is wisdom. With camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold in tow, precious stone, the **Queen of Sheba** came to him to learn about the key to his success. During her visit, the depth of Solomon's wisdom and blessing from God, took her breath away.

When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions.

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Herod being Hebrew, knew the history of his people, and secretly wanted to build a kingdom that rivaled Solomon. So, when the Wisemen arrive asking for a king, Herod went nuclear.

Quickly he set in motion a plan to discover whose kingdom was better, his of this new king that the Magi-Wisemen were looking for.

So, Herod gives the Wisemen instructions to seek out this king and return with a report, so he too can come and worship him.

Why hadn't Herod's Wisemen gone on a search? Nothing like being upstaged by foreigners.

You could say that Herod complicated the Wisemen search. You could say that Herod tried to steal the show. But, no go, on stealing the show.

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Herod learns that there is a new king in the vicinity. The Wisemen exit the side door of the palace, they relocate the star. And the star vectors them to the precise place where Mary and Jesus are resting and staying.

It is clear from the account that King Herod complicated the Wisemen journey, **my experience is ...**

Everyone's spiritual journey, everybody's spiritual quest for a king gets complicated along the way, somewhere along the path.

Many serious Christ followers can describe in no uncertain terms the barriers and obstacles they had to overcome on their journey to the king. And with every barrier and obstacle comes the disruption of joy.

Sometimes it is a Cynical Person who steals your joy.

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Other times it is just old-fashioned doubt and fear that must be overcome so joy is not lost.

Sometimes it is Pride-where you say, wait a minute I have been the king, and why go looking for another one, I like being the king and running my own program.

My experience and Truth be told:

Nobody walks uninterrupted all the way to the king.

The Wisemen had to deal with a maniacal ego king. They didn't cower. They didn't cave. They didn't turn tale and run.

To their credit they persevered and courageously continued their quest for a king until they found him in that little stable.

In that blanket. Barnyard wraps. God in the flesh. The long-promised king.

Stars bring joy, Herod's steal joy!

When the Magi were confused, they decided to follow God's light one step at a time.

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## Joy

Pastor Ken

December 28, 2025

As your pastor and spiritual coach, it is my responsibility to you grow in your life with Jesus.

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

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How many are prone to misplace or lose things? I lose my car at Royals games. I lose my keys and phone at Bethel. I have lost my hair, if you find it, let me know. Someone will find my phone at church and go, "oh, that is Pastor Ken's phone."

Well, I did it again this Christmas. Kenny our oldest son in Idaho, gave me some gifts to wrap for mom, but only 1 out of the two gifts made it under the tree. So, the day after Christmas, Kenny is wondering, "I didn't see mom open one of my gifts," as Kenny was watching from the computer screen. Sure enough, I forgot to wrap a beautiful gemstone for Danice. Idaho is the gem state. How did you find it pastor?

Well, I didn't really find it. Danice found her own unwrapped gift sitting in my study under a small Christmas tree. I will often say, "I haven't lost it babe, I have just not found it yet." And sure enough, whatever is missing shows up hours later. Days later.

Even years later, a Bible came back to me in the mail that I had lost. Someone found it on an airplane. They kept it for 10 years.

Read my study notes. Found it quite helpful in their faith journey and then decided to return the Bible to me with a note thanking me. How they found me is still kind of puzzling.

**It is easy to lose your joy.** What is the easiest thing to lose? Your wallet? Your glasses? Your mind? All of those are easy to lose, but today I am going to suggest one of the easiest items to lose is your JOY.

### **Joy is easy to lose.**

It is also **easy to be confused about joy.** Is joy an emotion or is it a behavior? Is joy a by-product of circumstances or is it a spiritual muscle to grow? Is joy the same thing as happiness?

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When you can give up the why, God gives you, His joy. If God were to give us the why and explanation, we like wouldn't understand it or accept it. As the Bible says,

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When you are confused about the direction of your life, you are robbed of joy.

Nothing steals your joy faster than being uncertain about why and what is going on in life. Why life is happening the way it is. I hear this question more than any other, "What am I supposed to do with my life?"

As Rick Warren says, "You were born by His purpose and for His purpose." The search for purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. Say this with me three times, "It all starts with God. It's not about me!" Isn't it amazing that it took an atheist Bertrand Russell to remind us of this insight, "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purposes is meaningless."

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he **preached** fearlessly,  
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Most important, **Jesus died an atoning death** for the wrong doings and sins of the world, for everyone that has ever lived, including my huge pile of sins and wrongdoings.

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And that is the main story of Christmas that is what we love to celebrate every December. But it is the **side bar story** of the Wise Men and the star, that has had my attention since I was a kid. Because it is the 1st century journey they took to find the king, that closely approximates the 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual journeys that I see people taking at Bethel Life Center and in my travels around the world.

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Now, back to our Wisemen as told by Matthew: ...suddenly an unexpected star appeared overhead accompanied by the unmistakable message from heaven.

**The message was clear:** Pack your bags. Bring along some gifts. Saddle your camels. Follow that star. It will lead you to an extraordinary king. So, by faith, the Wisemen start out on their journey. You could call it a quest for a king.

Whenever I meet someone locally or when I find out someone is a Christ follower, the question I love to ask is, "how did your spiritual journey begin?"

What I am really looking for is, what was their star event? What unexpected thing came into their life that got them off dead center, wrecked their life, sent them on a quest for a king?

What star event came into your life that began your quest for a king? When I ask that question, I get a **kaleidoscopic array** of answers: a sickness, loss of job, invite to church to get someone off their back.

So, they decide to go on a quest, to find out if there is a God and if there is an eternity.

Friend, God can turn any disruption in your life, good or bad into the equivalent of the unexpected star experience, that caught the attention of the Magi-Wisemen.

And catalyze their quest and your quest for a king. If I handed the microphone around the room, I would hear 100's of stories of what started you on your journey. And some of you, while I am talking about this star and Wisemen journey, you are realizing and it is becoming apparent to you, that you have not started your journey yet.

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One day some foreigners from Africa come to Solomon's kingdom, bearing gifts and seeking is wisdom. With camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold in tow, precious stone, the **Queen of Sheba** came to him to learn about the key to his success. During her visit, the depth of Solomon's wisdom and blessing from God, took her breath away.

When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions.

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Quickly he set in motion a plan to discover whose kingdom was better, his of this new king that the Magi-Wisemen were looking for.

So, Herod gives the Wisemen instructions to seek out this king and return with a report, so he too can come and worship him.

Why hadn't Herod's Wisemen gone on a search? Nothing like being upstaged by foreigners.

You could say that Herod complicated the Wisemen search. You could say that Herod tried to steal the show. But, no go, on stealing the show.

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Herod learns that there is a new king in the vicinity. The Wisemen exit the side door of the palace, they relocate the star. And the star vectors them to the precise place where Mary and Jesus are resting and staying.

It is clear from the account that King Herod complicated the Wisemen journey, **my experience is ...**

Everyone's spiritual journey, everybody's spiritual quest for a king gets complicated along the way, somewhere along the path.

Many serious Christ followers can describe in no uncertain terms the barriers and obstacles they had to overcome on their journey to the king. And with every barrier and obstacle comes the disruption of joy.

Sometimes it is a Cynical Person who steals your joy.

Set of Difficult Circumstances that steal your joy.

Other times it is just old-fashioned doubt and fear that must be overcome so joy is not lost.

Sometimes it is Pride-where you say, wait a minute I have been the king, and why go looking for another one, I like being the king and running my own program.

My experience and Truth be told:

Nobody walks uninterrupted all the way to the king.

The Wisemen had to deal with a maniacal ego king. They didn't cower. They didn't cave. They didn't turn tale and run.

To their credit they persevered and courageously continued their quest for a king until they found him in that little stable.

In that blanket. Barnyard wraps. God in the flesh. The long-promised king.

Stars bring joy, Herod's steal joy!

When the Magi were confused, they decided to follow God's light one step at a time.

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## Joy

Pastor Ken

December 28, 2025

As your pastor and spiritual coach, it is my responsibility to you grow in your life with Jesus.

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

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How many are prone to misplace or lose things? I lose my car at Royals games. I lose my keys and phone at Bethel. I have lost my hair, if you find it, let me know. Someone will find my phone at church and go, "oh, that is Pastor Ken's phone."

Well, I did it again this Christmas. Kenny our oldest son in Idaho, gave me some gifts to wrap for mom, but only 1 out of the two gifts made it under the tree. So, the day after Christmas, Kenny is wondering, "I didn't see mom open one of my gifts," as Kenny was watching from the computer screen. Sure enough, I forgot to wrap a beautiful gemstone for Danice. Idaho is the gem state. How did you find it pastor?

Well, I didn't really find it. Danice found her own unwrapped gift sitting in my study under a small Christmas tree. I will often say, "I haven't lost it babe, I have just not found it yet." And sure enough, whatever is missing shows up hours later. Days later.

Even years later, a Bible came back to me in the mail that I had lost. Someone found it on an airplane. They kept it for 10 years.

Read my study notes. Found it quite helpful in their faith journey and then decided to return the Bible to me with a note thanking me. How they found me is still kind of puzzling.

**It is easy to lose your joy.** What is the easiest thing to lose? Your wallet? Your glasses? Your mind? All of those are easy to lose, but today I am going to suggest one of the easiest items to lose is your JOY.

### **Joy is easy to lose.**

It is also **easy to be confused about joy.** Is joy an emotion or is it a behavior? Is joy a by-product of circumstances or is it a spiritual muscle to grow? Is joy the same thing as happiness?

Help pastor, I have lost my joy. Help pastor I am confused about joy! Well, let's go to the Bible and see if you can **find your lost joy** and **find some clarity** to remove the confusion.

*<sup>17</sup> For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of **goodness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17-NLT)*

Joy for so many is illusive and an illusion. Mental health breakdown. Sudden death of a spouse. Anxiety, anger, PTSD comes and goes in waves making it hard to enjoy much of anything these days.

Joy for some is abundant and abounding. It seems to arrive without limit and stay except for a few days of overcast moods.

Joy is what makes life fun, exhilarating, and meaningful. Sadly, the emotional weather forecast for many sad souls, sounds like rows and rows of depressed and dreary faces with little or no hope for joy and laughter.

Whether joy is illusive or abundant our Great God wants you to experience joy. Not Christmas joy of kids and candy. But Christmas joy of trusting God's purposes despite sickness, hurt, depression, loneliness and even death.

The Bible tells us that the Christian faith should strive to experience and exhibit 3 qualities of growth: goodness, peace, and joy.

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Jeremiah tells us this problem of lost joy is not new to God's people when he tells us in *Lamentations 5:15-GW, There is no joy left in our hearts.*"

Now, if that is you, God is ready to offer you his joy now and every day when you believe his word. Some many believers are not aware that the help they need is just a bible study away. A 15 minute in a chair, because God cares.

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And that is the main story of Christmas that is what we love to celebrate every December. But it is the **side bar story** of the Wise Men and the star, that has had my attention since I was a kid. Because it is the 1st century journey they took to find the king, that closely approximates the 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual journeys that I see people taking at Bethel Life Center and in my travels around the world.

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What star event came into your life that began your quest for a king? When I ask that question, I get a **kaleidoscopic array** of answers: a sickness, loss of job, invite to church to get someone off their back.

So, they decide to go on a quest, to find out if there is a God and if there is an eternity.

Friend, God can turn any disruption in your life, good or bad into the equivalent of the unexpected star experience, that caught the attention of the Magi-Wisemen.

And catalyze their quest and your quest for a king. If I handed the microphone around the room, I would hear 100's of stories of what started you on your journey. And some of you, while I am talking about this star and Wisemen journey, you are realizing and it is becoming apparent to you, that you have not started your journey yet.

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So, Herod gives the Wisemen instructions to seek out this king and return with a report, so he too can come and worship him.

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Herod learns that there is a new king in the vicinity. The Wisemen exit the side door of the palace, they relocate the star. And the star vectors them to the precise place where Mary and Jesus are resting and staying.

It is clear from the account that King Herod complicated the Wisemen journey, **my experience is ...**

Everyone's spiritual journey, everybody's spiritual quest for a king gets complicated along the way, somewhere along the path.

Many serious Christ followers can describe in no uncertain terms the barriers and obstacles they had to overcome on their journey to the king. And with every barrier and obstacle comes the disruption of joy.

Sometimes it is a Cynical Person who steals your joy.

Set of Difficult Circumstances that steal your joy.

Other times it is just old-fashioned doubt and fear that must be overcome so joy is not lost.

Sometimes it is Pride-where you say, wait a minute I have been the king, and why go looking for another one, I like being the king and running my own program.

My experience and Truth be told:

Nobody walks uninterrupted all the way to the king.

The Wisemen had to deal with a maniacal ego king. They didn't cower. They didn't cave. They didn't turn tale and run.

To their credit they persevered and courageously continued their quest for a king until they found him in that little stable.

In that blanket. Barnyard wraps. God in the flesh. The long-promised king.

Stars bring joy, Herod's steal joy!

When the Magi were confused, they decided to follow God's light one step at a time.

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## Joy

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As your pastor and spiritual coach, it is my responsibility to you grow in your life with Jesus.

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. (Matt 2-NIV)*

How many are prone to misplace or lose things? I lose my car at Royals games. I lose my keys and phone at Bethel. I have lost my hair, if you find it, let me know. Someone will find my phone at church and go, "oh, that is Pastor Ken's phone."

Well, I did it again this Christmas. Kenny our oldest son in Idaho, gave me some gifts to wrap for mom, but only 1 out of the two gifts made it under the tree. So, the day after Christmas, Kenny is wondering, "I didn't see mom open one of my gifts," as Kenny was watching from the computer screen. Sure enough, I forgot to wrap a beautiful gemstone for Danice. Idaho is the gem state. How did you find it pastor?

Well, I didn't really find it. Danice found her own unwrapped gift sitting in my study under a small Christmas tree. I will often say, "I haven't lost it babe, I have just not found it yet." And sure enough, whatever is missing shows up hours later. Days later.

Even years later, a Bible came back to me in the mail that I had lost. Someone found it on an airplane. They kept it for 10 years.

Read my study notes. Found it quite helpful in their faith journey and then decided to return the Bible to me with a note thanking me. How they found me is still kind of puzzling.

**It is easy to lose your joy.** What is the easiest thing to lose? Your wallet? Your glasses? Your mind? All of those are easy to lose, but today I am going to suggest one of the easiest items to lose is your JOY.

### **Joy is easy to lose.**

It is also **easy to be confused about joy.** Is joy an emotion or is it a behavior? Is joy a by-product of circumstances or is it a spiritual muscle to grow? Is joy the same thing as happiness?

Help pastor, I have lost my joy. Help pastor I am confused about joy! Well, let's go to the Bible and see if you can **find your lost joy** and **find some clarity** to remove the confusion.

*<sup>17</sup> For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of **goodness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17-NLT)*

Joy for so many is illusive and an illusion. Mental health breakdown. Sudden death of a spouse. Anxiety, anger, PTSD comes and goes in waves making it hard to enjoy much of anything these days.

Joy for some is abundant and abounding. It seems to arrive without limit and stay except for a few days of overcast moods.

Joy is what makes life fun, exhilarating, and meaningful. Sadly, the emotional weather forecast for many sad souls, sounds like rows and rows of depressed and dreary faces with little or no hope for joy and laughter.

Whether joy is illusive or abundant our Great God wants you to experience joy. Not Christmas joy of kids and candy. But Christmas joy of trusting God's purposes despite sickness, hurt, depression, loneliness and even death.

The Bible tells us that the Christian faith should strive to experience and exhibit 3 qualities of growth: goodness, peace, and joy.

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Although joy should be available and experienced in supernatural proportions to the Christian, so often we seem to have misplaced our joy. Am I right?

Jeremiah tells us this problem of lost joy is not new to God's people when he tells us in *Lamentations 5:15-GW, There is no joy left in our hearts.*"

Now, if that is you, God is ready to offer you his joy now and every day when you believe his word. Some many believers are not aware that the help they need is just a bible study away. A 15 minute in a chair, because God cares.

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thes 5:16-18-NIV)*

NO other verse provides more confusion per square inch than this verse in the Bible. Paul is not saying we should be thankful for cancer, loss of a job, or any other tragedy. Verse 18 says, give thanks **in** all circumstances, not **for** all circumstances.

Yes, you can give thanks in all circumstances, and when you do Joy will arise. Joy will appear. Joy will flood your broken body, flood your bloodied emotions and be available when you call on God.

What we are giving thanks for is God's strength, provision, and care in all circumstances. **The only way to receive Joy is to let go of the need for explanations for everything that happens to you!**

When you can give up the why, God gives you, His joy. If God were to give us the why and explanation, we like wouldn't understand it or accept it. As the Bible says,

*My ways are higher than your ways. (Is 55:9-NIV)*

When you are confused about the direction of your life, you are robbed of joy.

Nothing steals your joy faster than being uncertain about why and what is going on in life. Why life is happening the way it is. I hear this question more than any other, "What am I supposed to do with my life?"

As Rick Warren says, "You were born by His purpose and for His purpose." The search for purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. Say this with me three times, "It all starts with God. It's not about me!" Isn't it amazing that it took an atheist Bertrand Russell to remind us of this insight, "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purposes is meaningless."

*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Proverbs 11:28-MSG)*

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Let's go to our story of the Magi. Matthew loves the Magi; they get more press than Jesus' birth.

Matthew gives the Magi more literary real estate than the narrative of the birth of Jesus. What an unusual insight. Think about that for a moment. Matthew never mentions the shepherds, angels or even the manger, but he makes it blindingly clear, do not miss the star and the search. Seems to be important to God that we all **go on a journey**. That we all **learn to give gifts**.

Who were these travelers from the East? Magi? Wisemen? Kings? But it is that **star**, some **Magi**, and their **search** that has arrested me again this Christmas season. I have always been fascinated with the Magi.

Yet it is the Messiah, not the Magi that carries the message of Christmas. God saw how mankind was slipping deeper and deeper into sin and so God wrapped his son in human flesh and birthed him to blue collar peasants in Bethlehem.

**As Jesus began his itinerant ministry,**  
he **preached** fearlessly,  
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*cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at<sup>[a]</sup> the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed.* (1 Kings 10-NIV)

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Quickly he set in motion a plan to discover whose kingdom was better, his of this new king that the Magi-Wisemen were looking for.

So, Herod gives the Wisemen instructions to seek out this king and return with a report, so he too can come and worship him.

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Herod learns that there is a new king in the vicinity. The Wisemen exit the side door of the palace, they relocate the star. And the star vectors them to the precise place where Mary and Jesus are resting and staying.

It is clear from the account that King Herod complicated the Wisemen journey, **my experience is ...**

Everyone's spiritual journey, everybody's spiritual quest for a king gets complicated along the way, somewhere along the path.

Many serious Christ followers can describe in no uncertain terms the barriers and obstacles they had to overcome on their journey to the king. And with every barrier and obstacle comes the disruption of joy.

Sometimes it is a Cynical Person who steals your joy.

Set of Difficult Circumstances that steal your joy.

Other times it is just old-fashioned doubt and fear that must be overcome so joy is not lost.

Sometimes it is Pride-where you say, wait a minute I have been the king, and why go looking for another one, I like being the king and running my own program.

My experience and Truth be told:

Nobody walks uninterrupted all the way to the king.

The Wisemen had to deal with a maniacal ego king. They didn't cower. They didn't cave. They didn't turn tale and run.

To their credit they persevered and courageously continued their quest for a king until they found him in that little stable.

In that blanket. Barnyard wraps. God in the flesh. The long-promised king.

Stars bring joy, Herod's steal joy!

When the Magi were confused, they decided to follow God's light one step at a time.

*<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were **overjoyed**.*

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## Joy

Pastor Ken

December 28, 2025

As your pastor and spiritual coach, it is my responsibility to you grow in your life with Jesus.

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. (Matt 2-NIV)*

How many are prone to misplace or lose things? I lose my car at Royals games. I lose my keys and phone at Bethel. I have lost my hair, if you find it, let me know. Someone will find my phone at church and go, "oh, that is Pastor Ken's phone."

Well, I did it again this Christmas. Kenny our oldest son in Idaho, gave me some gifts to wrap for mom, but only 1 out of the two gifts made it under the tree. So, the day after Christmas, Kenny is wondering, "I didn't see mom open one of my gifts," as Kenny was watching from the computer screen. Sure enough, I forgot to wrap a beautiful gemstone for Danice. Idaho is the gem state. How did you find it pastor?

Well, I didn't really find it. Danice found her own unwrapped gift sitting in my study under a small Christmas tree. I will often say, "I haven't lost it babe, I have just not found it yet." And sure enough, whatever is missing shows up hours later. Days later.

Even years later, a Bible came back to me in the mail that I had lost. Someone found it on an airplane. They kept it for 10 years.

Read my study notes. Found it quite helpful in their faith journey and then decided to return the Bible to me with a note thanking me. How they found me is still kind of puzzling.

**It is easy to lose your joy.** What is the easiest thing to lose? Your wallet? Your glasses? Your mind? All of those are easy to lose, but today I am going to suggest one of the easiest items to lose is your JOY.

### **Joy is easy to lose.**

It is also **easy to be confused about joy.** Is joy an emotion or is it a behavior? Is joy a by-product of circumstances or is it a spiritual muscle to grow? Is joy the same thing as happiness?

Help pastor, I have lost my joy. Help pastor I am confused about joy! Well, let's go to the Bible and see if you can **find your lost joy** and **find some clarity** to remove the confusion.

*<sup>17</sup> For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of **goodness and peace and joy** in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17-NLT)*

Joy for so many is illusive and an illusion. Mental health breakdown. Sudden death of a spouse. Anxiety, anger, PTSD comes and goes in waves making it hard to enjoy much of anything these days.

Joy for some is abundant and abounding. It seems to arrive without limit and stay except for a few days of overcast moods.

Joy is what makes life fun, exhilarating, and meaningful. Sadly, the emotional weather forecast for many sad souls, sounds like rows and rows of depressed and dreary faces with little or no hope for joy and laughter.

Whether joy is illusive or abundant our Great God wants you to experience joy. Not Christmas joy of kids and candy. But Christmas joy of trusting God's purposes despite sickness, hurt, depression, loneliness and even death.

The Bible tells us that the Christian faith should strive to experience and exhibit 3 qualities of growth: goodness, peace, and joy.

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Although joy should be available and experienced in supernatural proportions to the Christian, so often we seem to have misplaced our joy. Am I right?

Jeremiah tells us this problem of lost joy is not new to God's people when he tells us in *Lamentations 5:15-GW, There is no joy left in our hearts.*"

Now, if that is you, God is ready to offer you his joy now and every day when you believe his word. Some many believers are not aware that the help they need is just a bible study away. A 15 minute in a chair, because God cares.

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thes 5:16-18-NIV)*

NO other verse provides more confusion per square inch than this verse in the Bible. Paul is not saying we should be thankful for cancer, loss of a job, or any other tragedy. Verse 18 says, give thanks **in** all circumstances, not **for** all circumstances.

Yes, you can give thanks in all circumstances, and when you do Joy will arise. Joy will appear. Joy will flood your broken body, flood your bloodied emotions and be available when you call on God.

What we are giving thanks for is God's strength, provision, and care in all circumstances. **The only way to receive Joy is to let go of the need for explanations for everything that happens to you!**

When you can give up the why, God gives you, His joy. If God were to give us the why and explanation, we like wouldn't understand it or accept it. As the Bible says,

*My ways are higher than your ways. (Is 55:9-NIV)*

When you are confused about the direction of your life, you are robbed of joy.

Nothing steals your joy faster than being uncertain about why and what is going on in life. Why life is happening the way it is. I hear this question more than any other, "What am I supposed to do with my life?"

As Rick Warren says, "You were born by His purpose and for His purpose." The search for purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point-ourselves. Say this with me three times, "It all starts with God. It's not about me!" Isn't it amazing that it took an atheist Bertrand Russell to remind us of this insight, "Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purposes is meaningless."

*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Proverbs 11:28-MSG)*

Everyone is confused at the first Christmas except the angels.

Let's go to our story of the Magi. Matthew loves the Magi; they get more press than Jesus' birth.

Matthew gives the Magi more literary real estate than the narrative of the birth of Jesus. What an unusual insight. Think about that for a moment. Matthew never mentions the shepherds, angels or even the manger, but he makes it blindingly clear, do not miss the star and the search. Seems to be important to God that we all **go on a journey**. That we all **learn to give gifts**.

Who were these travelers from the East? Magi? Wisemen? Kings? But it is that **star**, some **Magi**, and their **search** that has arrested me again this Christmas season. I have always been fascinated with the Magi.

Yet it is the Messiah, not the Magi that carries the message of Christmas. God saw how mankind was slipping deeper and deeper into sin and so God wrapped his son in human flesh and birthed him to blue collar peasants in Bethlehem.

**As Jesus began his itinerant ministry,**  
he **preached** fearlessly,  
he **healed** people supernaturally,  
he **confronted injustice** courageously and  
...he **loved people** with acts of kindness and compassion  
like none have ever seen, before or since...

Most important, **Jesus died an atoning death** for the wrong doings and sins of the world, for everyone that has ever lived, including my huge pile of sins and wrongdoings.

*<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3-NLT)*

And that is the main story of Christmas that is what we love to celebrate every December. But it is the **side bar story** of the Wise Men and the star, that has had my attention since I was a kid. Because it is the 1st century journey they took to find the king, that closely approximates the 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual journeys that I see people taking at Bethel Life Center and in my travels around the world.

#### **Let me draw a few parallels.**

Now, back to our Wisemen as told by Matthew: ...suddenly an unexpected star appeared overhead accompanied by the unmistakable message from heaven.

**The message was clear:** Pack your bags. Bring along some gifts. Saddle your camels. Follow that star. It will lead you to an extraordinary king. So, by faith, the Wisemen start out on their journey. You could call it a quest for a king.

Whenever I meet someone locally or when I find out someone is a Christ follower, the question I love to ask is, "how did your spiritual journey begin?"

What I am really looking for is, what was their star event? What unexpected thing came into their life that got them off dead center, wrecked their life, sent them on a quest for a king?

What star event came into your life that began your quest for a king? When I ask that question, I get a **kaleidoscopic array** of answers: a sickness, loss of job, invite to church to get someone off their back.

So, they decide to go on a quest, to find out if there is a God and if there is an eternity.

Friend, God can turn any disruption in your life, good or bad into the equivalent of the unexpected star experience, that caught the attention of the Magi-Wisemen.

And catalyze their quest and your quest for a king. If I handed the microphone around the room, I would hear 100's of stories of what started you on your journey. And some of you, while I am talking about this star and Wisemen journey, you are realizing and it is becoming apparent to you, that you have not started your journey yet.

**That's alright. That's alright.**

Many of us have been praying that this weekend's experience will have that **star equivalent effect** on you and maybe this will be enough to inspire you to start your journey in search for the king.

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