



December Cell Talk: Week 1

Theme: Visits and Violence (Matthew 2:1-18)

Kit List: Bibles, candle, matches, paper, pencils, newspapers, tape or glue

Welcome

Bring a number of newspapers to cell. Have everyone skim through them and cut out and articles or pictures of violence. Put them all on one piece of paper in a collage.

Then go through the papers again and look for any articles or pictures that speak of hope. Make another collage.

Which collage has more pictures? Why is that? What are we to do with all the violence in our world? What do you do in the face of apparent hopelessness?

Worship

Light four candles this week for the fourth week of Advent. Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

The light of the world, the one whose shoulders would hold the government, the prince of peace, came into the world and was honoured by wise men. But he was also pursued and threatened by the powers of this world, and was eventually executed by those same powers. The bringer of peace was subjected to violence, right from the beginning.

Turn off all the lights and let the three candles shine. Sing "The First Nowell" together, and then "Humble King" if you know it. Add your prayers to these songs.

Pray against the violence in the world, the violence in your community, the violence in your own heart. Pray in particular for the children in our world at risk of violence through war, poverty, trafficking, or abortion.

Word

Before you read this passage, ask what everyone knows about the wise men, or the "three kings".

Read Matthew 2:1-18 together.

What kind of reception is the Prince of Peace given upon his arrival on earth?

Why are some people drawn to Christ, and others repelled or threatened by him?

What does this mean for followers of Jesus? Should we expect the same kind of reaction to us? Have you experienced both of these?

Why is it that in this story those from far away are drawn to Jesus, but those who are close by are threatened?

Why is it important that the wise men are in the gospel? Why do you think Matthew includes them?

The wise men are joyful upon reaching the manger. Why? Do you experience joy when you encounter Christ? Describe such an experience.

Where do you encounter Christ? Do you search for him? If so, how?

Why does the Holy Family flee to Egypt of all places? What is the significance in this?

Why did Jesus come into a situation of such vulnerability and violence? Why not into safety, comfort and privilege?

Witness

Go out to street corners and declare the remembrance of the time of Jesus' birth, and declare the expectation of his coming back. The best way to do this at this time of year is through Christmas carols. One way to do this is by signing up for a Kettles shift as a cell group this week. **We are now into Dec., so it is vital to fill all the Kettles shifts. Please call Nicole before your cell and find out what shifts are available!** Also, be in prayer daily for a friend who does not yet know the King who was born in a manger.

Wealth

Are you up to date on your tithing for the year? Now at the end of the year is a good time to ensure that you have been supporting your local ministry with your finances as well as your time and prayers.

Action Point

Get informed about the modern-day "slaughter of the innocents". Check out <http://www.consistent-life.org/> and see how violence is threatening the most vulnerable in our world today.

Leader's Guide

The Prince of Peace is met by wise men bearing gifts, and soldiers bearing death. His very presence was life to those who were drawn to him, terror and threat to those who wanted nothing of the true King of Israel. Jesus, and those who bear Christ, will always be met in this way, ultimately. The reaction to Christians has been and will continue to be the same as that to Christ – conversion, or crucifixion.

That the wise men were from afar and Herod from close by has something to do with Jesus' statement that a prophet is never accepted in his hometown. It also sets the stage for the later Gentile acceptance of the gospel and Jewish rejection. The wise men are also showing that those who seek the Lord, even if they are not of the Jewish faith, can find him where he is. This was an important message for the first Gentile believers, and for people today who think they are disqualified from knowing God because of their background.

The Holy Family flees to Egypt as part of a fulfilled prophecy, that God would call his son out of Egypt (Hos 11:1). It is deeply ironic that the first time God calls Israel (his child) out of Egypt, it is because Egypt is the oppressor. Now the powers that be in Israel have become the oppressor, and safety is found in Egypt, the ancient symbol of evil and slavery. Jesus will come out of Egypt to bring an end to slavery and oppression.

Jesus can identify with the vast majority of the world who do not live in safety and privilege, for whom violence is a daily reality, who are refugees or threatened by oppressors. He truly took on the flesh of suffering humanity to bring about Peace.

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