

“ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS”
JANUARY 2007

A common assumption is that men do not like to ask for directions. I have heard this piece of modern folk wisdom over and over. A recent commercial poked fun of a father who would not ask for directions and got his family hopelessly lost. I don't know how much truth there is in this assumption. When I was growing up, our family would go on a trip every summer. My father would drive the family car and was not averse to pulling into a gas station to ask for directions. He probably figured that it was better to quickly arrive at the destination rather than drive in circles with four impatient children in the car.

Asking for directions is one of the themes of the story of the wise men. We celebrate their journey every Epiphany, January 6th. You know their story. They saw the strange new star and followed it to Jerusalem. Once they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked for assistance,

*“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?
For we have seen his star in the east,
and have come to worship him.”
(Matthew 2:3)*

The wise men could travel no farther on their own. They needed the help of the people living in Jerusalem. Matthew tells us that the learned men of the city recalled the words of the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. King Herod gives the wise men directions to Bethlehem and sends them on their way. They find the newborn king and worship him.

These travelers from the east were smart enough to know that they didn't have all of the answers. They were not ashamed to ask for help. Once they asked for assistance, they were given directions to the village where Jesus was born. We cannot miss the faith and humility found in this story. They were not afraid to earnestly search for the newborn king. At a crucial point in their quest, they were not above asking for directions.

As we enter this new year of 2007, let us remember the story of the wise men. Their search for the Christ Child inspires us even today. Let us be open to his presence and humble enough to ask for his guidance. In those moments when life seems confusing, remember to ask the Lord for directions.

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