

**Matthew 2:10**

***When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.***

In the US alone, more than 1.3 billion units of it are sold each week in the US alone. Globally, sales amount to more than \$53 billion and are on pace to hit nearly \$90 billion by 2026. Only available in the US since 1997, the general product has seen exponential growth for nearly 25 years. Any guesses?

The ads are everywhere, one more goofy than the next. Over the years, celebrity after celebrity has endorsed the product, and the product has endorsed celebrity after celebrity, event after event.

And what does this amazing product promise? It's something that we all want, at least from time to time. That explains why 47% of the world's population uses it multiple times each week. What do we need? Energy. And what's the product? Energy drinks.

Here's what they promise. Take 5-hour Energy shots, for example. According to the website, 5-hour Energy shots - packed with B-vitamins and amino acids; with zero sugar, zero herbal stimulants and only four calories - are a "no nonsense way for working adults to stay bright and alert and better focused."

On a side note, some of you may be aware, however, that several years ago, 5-hour Energy was under investigation for such things as wrongful death, failure to back claims, and refusal to provide mandated paperwork. Attorneys general from some 33 states at the time. But with no conclusive results, suits were eventually dropped or settled.

Kind of makes you wonder, though, what is going on that the attorneys general from 33 states would want to get involved with just one product. It seems like there are so many other products out there that make outrageous claims and nobody seems to be investigating them. I mean, have you seen that one commercial...

Oh, wait a second. Did you see what happened there? I lost my focus. But isn't that

the point? In our age of ADHD, Ritalin, and Adderall, focus is a major buzz word and energy drinks are a way to get it. I mean, how many of us haven't said to ourselves, "If I could just focus I could get more done!"

In the Scriptures, the Magi are about as good of an example of keeping focused as anyone. After all, they had likely travelled a long time. (If you'll recall from the gospel lesson, Herod wanted to know precisely when the star had appeared and then later determined the age of the Christ child to be 2 years or younger. So they may have been travelling nearly two years before they found the one ***born king of the Jews.***

And beyond that, consider that the Magi travelled all that way based on only a singular prophecy, likely the one from Balaam (of the talking donkey fame) that we heard from Numbers 24 just a few moments ago: ***"I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob. a scepter will rise out of Israel."*** (v.17) Now you and I might fail to see the connection, but if the prophet Daniel had been inspired to recognize the connection and then passed along to other Magi in Babylon, they may just have been watching for the rising star for generations. Then, when it appeared, they focused on the star and made their way to worship the newborn King.

Of course, if they only had writings from Daniel, they wouldn't have connected Balaam's oracle in Numbers to Micah's prophecy in chapter 5: ***But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel. His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity."*** And so it is not surprising that they seemed to have lost their focus on the star and travelled to the city of David – Jerusalem – rather than to the town of David – Bethlehem – in their search for the Child Jesus.

It is often said at this time of year: Wise men seek Him still. But what causes you to lose your focus as you continue to seek Him in your life? So many of us seem to struggle with losing focus these days, especially when it comes to seeking Jesus. The "star" for us believers is not *finding* him

– the Spirit has taken care of that – but rather *living for him*.

Jesus defined living for him like this: ***If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.*** And notice that there isn't the word "most" in there, as in "If you hold to my most important teachings" or "If you hold to most of my teachings." No, wise men seek Him where he *is* not where they *want* him to be.

It is just so hard, though, because that requires us to think and be objective and actually apply his teaching – all of it. It is so much easier to just feel our way through discipleship, make Jesus' teaching subject to my feelings, and then, because they are my feelings, who are you, or anybody else, to tell me that I'm wrong. Your application of Jesus' teaching is being judgmental. My friends, that's the equivalent focus of a dog running through a park filled with squirrels.

Some years ago, I took some students to a presidential election rally. (It doesn't really matter who the candidate was. From what I have seen over the years, what I'm about to explain is common to most of them.) We arrived on the college campus where it was held quite early, and still only barely managed to get into the event. There were bands and speakers and celebrities all there to whip the people up into an emotional frenzy.

The problem was, the candidate was running late and the event planners were having a hard time keeping the crowd at its emotional high. They kept giving updates about how much closer the candidate was getting. The band started repeating songs. Finally the candidate arrived to a cacophonous roar. He spoke for about 10 minutes with plenty of lines to get great crowd reactions. There was a raucous send-off and it was done.

There was plenty of emotion, but quite frankly, if you came in order to get to know the candidate and his platform better, you were severely disappointed. There was little substance, there were no questions from the crowd, not a single aspect focused in on the tough issues facing the country. Oh, people loved it! It played to emotion and as long as everybody was hearing what they wanted, everything was just great! But in the end, it didn't actually help anyone but the candidate.

Now, I don't want to give anyone the impression that the Magi were wrong to stop in Jerusalem or that because of some kind of weakness the Magi lost focus or that they were emotional wrecks who looked away from the star. But it is interesting to note that after making the stop in Jerusalem and being directed to Bethlehem through *God's Word*, they got back on the road...and there it was...to refocus their journey. And ***When they saw the star, they rejoiced with overwhelming joy.***

In other words, first the truth then the emotion. As spiritual Magi, as faithful wise men and wise women and wise children, as "***real***" disciples of Jesus, do not allow yourself to lose focus on Jesus and his teaching. Do not chase after emotional squirrels or buy into your own political rally. Rather, focus on Jesus and the ***star*** of his teaching in his Word. Hold on to the promises that *have* been, and *continue* to be, given to you through the waters of holy baptism and the assurance of his holy supper. Seek His truth in your life of faith rather than be distracted by what the world thinks and says and feels and does. Yes, we need to be relational people, but only after we are Christ centered. ***When they saw the star, they rejoiced with overwhelming joy. <sup>11</sup> After they went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they bowed down and worshipped him.***

It is difficult to say for certain just how much the magi knew as they worshiped Jesus, the Savior-King. But the Greek word for worship here is the same word used for worship throughout the book of Revelation. It is likely, though not certain, that they knew him to be the Messiah promised to generation after generation. But we know him, by grace through faith, to be the Messiah, your Savior and mine. That's why we focus on him, seek him, worship him, hold on to him. For he is the one ***born king of the Jews*** to redeem his people. He is the one ***raised from the dead...that we too may live a new life.*** He is the one ***who has prepared a place for you [and] will come back and take you to be with [him]*** where he is at. So ditch the energy drinks. What you're feeling right there is focused gospel joy. Amen.