

Wise Men Visited Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 2:1-21

MAIN POINT: The wise men worshiped Jesus as King.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)

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LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

The wise men were *magi*. Their study of the stars led them to Judea to find and worship Jesus, the newborn King. Before they found Jesus, though, the wise men met King Herod. God had promised the Jewish people a new king—one who would save them from their enemies.

King Herod was not that king. Imagine how he felt when he heard about a new king in town.

The wise men asked him, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2) The wise men unintentionally challenged Herod’s reign. Not only was Herod not a full Jew, he was not a descendant of King

David. Herod was deeply disturbed by the news that this child had the birthright of being king.

As Herod's fury grew, he gathered his chief priests and scribes to determine where Jesus had been born. Then he lied to the wise men: "When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship Him" (Matt. 2:8). What deceitfulness! The truth was, Herod did not want to worship Jesus at all; he wanted to kill Him!

The wise men continued on their journey and found Jesus. Jesus may have been about two years old when the magi found Him and worshiped Him. The Bible does not say how many magi worshiped Jesus, although three are often depicted because of their three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. God warned the wise men in a dream to avoid Herod, so they returned home by another route.

The wise men came to worship Jesus as King. Jesus is the King who will rule forever, as God promised to King David in 2 Samuel 7. Help the children you teach realize that Jesus is the true King who is worthy of all our worship.



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The BIBLE STORY

Wise Men Visited Jesus

Matthew 2:1-21

Long ago, God promised to send a king to save His people from their enemies. The people waited a long time for their king, but the time had finally come. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem at the same time Herod was king.** Was Herod the king God promised? No! Herod was an evil king.

God sent a star to show the wise men that Jesus had been born. The wise men traveled to find Jesus. **They came to King Herod. “Where is the king of the Jews?” they asked. “We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”**

King Herod was very angry. A new king? Herod was king! He assembled all the chief priests and scribes. They looked at what the prophets had written to figure out where Jesus had been born.

The chief priests and scribes told King Herod what the prophet Micah had written: “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah: because out of you will come a leader who will shepherd My people Israel.”

Herod spoke to the wise men in secret. **“Go and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship Him.”** But Herod was lying. He **didn’t want to worship the new king; he wanted to kill Him!**

The wise men followed the star until it led them to Jesus. They went into the house where Jesus was with His mother Mary. **The wise men fell to their knees and worshiped Jesus. Then they gave Jesus gifts:** gold,

frankincense, and myrrh. **When it was time for the wise men to go home, God warned them in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was. So they took a different way home.**

After the wise men were gone, an angel appeared to Mary's husband, Joseph, in a dream. The angel said, "Get up! Take the child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy Him." So in the middle of the night, Joseph got up and took Mary and Jesus to Egypt where they would be safe.

King Herod was so mad that the wise men didn't tell him where Jesus was. He killed all the boys in Bethlehem under two years old—just to make sure he killed Jesus. But he didn't know Jesus and His family had escaped.

A while later, when Herod died, an angel spoke to Joseph again in a dream. "Get up! Take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, because those who sought the child's life are dead." So Joseph did what the angel said. He got up and took Mary and Jesus to Israel.

Christ Connection: The wise men came to worship Jesus as King. Jesus is the King who will rule forever, as God promised to King David in 2 Samuel 7. Jesus is the true King who is worthy of all our worship.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that just as the angels worshiped Jesus at His birth (Heb. 1:6), the wise men worshiped Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God; He is worthy of all our worship. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Wise Men Visited Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 2:1-21

MAIN POINT: The wise men worshiped Jesus as King.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY • The men that we will hear about today were looking and hoping for God to do great things. Is there something that you are looking forward to or hoping for God to do in this coming year?

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Mosaic Puzzle” on the activity page.

SAY • Today we will hear a story about wise men who looked for Jesus because of a special sign that they saw.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Where’s the star?

Direct one kid (the “wise man”) to sit in a chair facing away from the rest of the group. Instruct the other kids to be seated, all facing the back of the wise man’s chair.

Silently hand a construction paper star to a kid to hide

- “Mosaic Puzzle” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers



- construction paper star

behind her back. (All the kids should put their hands behind their backs to confuse the wise man.)

Lead the group to chant, “Wise man, wise man, where’s the star? We’ve been looking from afar.”

The wise man turns around and takes one guess as to who has the star. If he guesses correctly, he takes another turn as wise man. If he guesses incorrectly, the kid who had the star is the new wise man.

SAY • In today’s Bible story, the wise men followed a special star that appeared in the sky. Where do you think the star led them?

OPTION 2: Prophecy pass

Guide kids to sit in a tight circle.

SAY • I am going to whisper a secret message into the ear of [*name of kid to your right*]. Then she will whisper it into the ear of [*person to her right*]. Keep passing the message around the circle. You may only whisper the message once, so speak clearly.

Whisper the secret message to the next player: “**Jesus was born to be God’s promised Savior.**” When the message reaches the last person in the circle, invite him to announce the message to the group.

SAY • God spoke through many prophets that He would send a Savior. Sometimes people listened to their message. Sometimes they forgot. Often, they didn’t understand. Our Bible story today is about some wise men who understood the prophecies. Listen to find out what they did because of what they believed about God’s promised Savior.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• large paper star

[Large Group Leader enters dressed again in warrior attire. Walk into the room with eyes fixed on a star hanging from the ceiling. Walk around the star, looking at it from all angles, making a face of wonder or amazement.]

LEADER • Welcome back, everyone. We've been learning about the birth of Jesus. He had a mom and dad who didn't seem all that extraordinary. Jesus wasn't born in a palace, and the people who came to worship Him weren't fancy, rich people. They were lowly shepherds.

But ... [*point to star*] God displayed a bright sign to announce that Jesus was the hero—the Rescuer—they had been waiting for. God put this star in the sky, like a spotlight that shouted, “Here He is everyone! This is My Son!”

A few men were on the lookout for this sign. They had studied the promises that God had made

long ago. They searched with their eyes and thought with their brains and trusted with their hearts that when this star appeared, it would lead them to God's promised King.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Let's look over at our timeline. Remember that the people of Israel had waited for 400 years between the last prophet and Jesus' birth. Then an angel visited Mary and Joseph to tell them that Jesus was coming! They had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted for the census that Caesar Augustus had ordered.

• Giant Timeline

In Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Then, in a lowly stable, the Savior was born! Jesus had finally arrived! God announced the birth of His Son by sending a choir of angels to some ordinary shepherds in the fields.

Then a star appeared in the sky. We are going to read today about some men who traveled from far away to Jesus.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The question we need to ask at this point is, *why?* Why did these men travel so far to see a little boy? Why did they care that He had been born? Had they discovered what you and I know about Jesus? Someone tell me, ***Why was Jesus born?*** [*Call on a kid to answer the question.*] Precisely. ***Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

- Bibles
- “Wise Men Visited Jesus” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 2:1-21. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “Wise Men Visited Jesus.”

LEADER • King Herod was an evil king who ruled over the Jews. So when the wise men showed up at his door and told him that they were looking for the new King of the Jews, he was mad! When the wise men found Jesus, **the wise men worshiped Jesus as King** and gave Him many treasures. They knew that He was the King they had been waiting for!

Let’s see what you remember from the story.

Ask the following review questions:

1. What did the wise men ask when they met King Herod? (*“Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?” Matt. 2:2*)
2. What reason did Herod give the wise men for wanting to find the child? (*Herod wanted to worship Him also, Matt. 2:8*)
3. How did the wise men respond when they saw Jesus? (*They fell down and worshiped Him, Matt. 2:11*)
4. What gifts did they give to Jesus? (*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
5. Why did the wise men not return to Herod after meeting Jesus? (*God warned them in a dream, Matt. 2:12*)
6. What warning did God give to Joseph in a dream? (*Herod was going to try to kill Jesus, Matt. 2:13*)
7. Where did God tell Mary and Joseph to go? (*to Egypt, Matt. 2:13*)

LEADER • Jesus is the King who will rule forever, as God promised to King David in 2 Samuel 7. Jesus is the true King who is worthy of all our worship.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Galatians 4:4-5.

LEADER • Last week we finished putting hand motions to this verse. Let's review the whole passage together. I'd like to have a few volunteers come up here with me to lead us through the verse. Raise your hand if you remember the motions and want to help me!

Select a few volunteers to stand up at the front and help you say the key passage with hand motions.

Demonstrate hand motions for key words to help them memorize the key passage. Review the passage three times with motions. If additional volunteers want to help you at the front, allow them to take a turn as they lead kids in singing the key passage song.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Adoption as Sons" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • The wise men traveled a long way to find Jesus. They showed that they loved Him by worshiping him and bringing Him gifts. Think about that and watch this.

Show the "Unit 5, Session 3" discussion starter video.

LEADER • Who do you think was most excited about the new bubblegum bacon burrito bowl? Who was the

- "Unit 5, Session 3" discussion starter video

least excited to try it? How could you tell?
Point out that what we are willing to do reflects how much we value and care about something. Wise men traveled a great distance to worship Jesus because they valued Him. Guide kids to discuss how they can show they value Jesus.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Joy to the World” song

LEADER • One way we can show that we value Jesus is by worshipping Him. Will you sing with me?
Sing together “Joy to the World.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before you dismiss to small groups.

LEADER • Before we head to small groups, I want everyone to shout out the answer to our big picture question: ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

Today we learned that **the wise men worshiped Jesus as King**. These wise men knew who deserves our worship. Jesus is the One who came to rescue us. He is the only One who can rescue us. ***Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

Let’s pray. Father, thank You that You sent Jesus to rescue us from sin. Please turn our hearts to worship the One who deserves all of our worship. Help us to worship Jesus! Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- Christmas object (stocking, ornament, or so forth)

Display the key passage poster and lead to group to read Galatians 4:4-5 together. Remove or cover the poster while playing the game.

Guide the kids to stand in a large circle. Stand in the center of the circle and lead the kids to recite the key passage together. Hold up a Christmas object such as a stocking or ornament.

Pass the object to one of the kids. Instruct her to say the first word of the key passage. Then she should give the object to someone else, and he will say the second word. Continue passing the object until kids say the entire key passage.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- touch bell or other noise-maker

SAY • We are going to review the stories that we have read over the past few weeks about Jesus' birth.

Form two teams and line up kids in two lines opposite one another. Place a table with a touch bell or another noise-maker between the two teams.

Ask a question and instruct kids to ring the bell (or make another noise) if they know the answer. The first kid to ring

in may answer the question.

If the player answers correctly, that team gets a point. If she answers incorrectly, the opponent has an opportunity to answer. Each correct answer is worth one point. If neither player knows the answer, provide the reference and guide them to look for the answer in the Bible.

Allow each kid to participate. Then total up the points and declare a winning team.

1. Who told Mary that she would have a baby? (*the angel Gabriel, Luke 1:26*)
2. Where was Mary living when the angel visited her? (*Nazareth, Luke 1:26*)
3. Who was Mary's cousin? (*Elizabeth, Luke 1:36*)
4. Why did Joseph decide not to divorce Mary? (*An angel told Joseph in a dream that Mary's baby was God's Son, the Messiah; Matt. 1:19-20*)
5. Where did Mary and Joseph travel for the census? (*Bethlehem, Luke 2:4-5*)
6. Joseph was a descendant of which king? (*King David, Luke 2:4*)
7. Whom did the angels tell that Jesus had been born? (*shepherds in the fields with their sheep, Luke 2:8-11*)
8. What did the shepherds do after hearing the news about Jesus? (*They rushed to see Jesus, Luke 2:15*)
9. How did the wise men know where to find Jesus? (*They followed a star, Matt. 2:12*)
10. What gifts did the wise men give Jesus? (*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
11. Why did Herod want to know where Jesus was? (*He wanted to kill Jesus, Matt. 2:13*)
12. **Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.**

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



- “Nativity Story Cube” printable, 1 per kid
- scissors
- tape

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Nativity story cube

Provide a story cube template for the kids to cut out. Each side of the box displays a picture representing one part of the story of Jesus’ birth.

Direct kids to fold the box along the dotted lines and then tape to secure it. Instruct kids to find a partner and practice telling each other the story of Jesus’ birth, using the cube as a prompt.

SAY • The wise men worshiped Jesus as King. Many people do not yet worship Jesus as King. Think of someone whom you know who does not worship Jesus. If you have an opportunity this week, use your nativity cube to share the story of Jesus’ birth with that person.

OPTION 2: Gift wrap relay

Divide kids into teams of five or six kids per team. Instruct each team to form a single-file line at one end of the room.

At the opposite end of the room, set up one station per team with items necessary to wrap a gift: a box, roll of wrapping paper, tape, scissors, gift tag, and bow.

When you say “go,” each team will send one member to their gift station to perform one task toward wrapping the gift. (For example, the first kid may cut the correct amount of wrapping paper, the second kid may use one piece of tape to secure the paper to the box, and so on.)

After completing only one task, the kid will return to his team and tag the next player. Then that player will rush to the gift station to complete another task. The winner is the first team to wrap its gift (box completely covered with paper, gift tag, and bow attached).

- boxes, 1 per team
- wrapping paper
- tape
- scissors
- gift tags
- bows

SAY • The wise men worshiped Jesus as King by bringing him special gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We probably all know what gold is, but does anyone know what frankincense and myrrh are?

[*Call on volunteers to respond.*] Frankincense was used as an ingredient in something like perfume that was burned in the temple where people worshiped God. Myrrh is a spice used in anointing oil; sometimes it is used as a perfume. Why would the wise men bring gifts such as these to Jesus?

[*Call on volunteers to give answers.*] All three gifts—the gold, frankincense and myrrh—were very expensive gifts. Presenting gifts to kings was customary; these wise men knew that Jesus deserved to be offered precious, expensive gifts because He was the King of the Jews—the King of all kings.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Give each kid her journal page and a pencil.

SAY • Think of someone in your life who doesn't know that Jesus came to earth to rescue him from sin. Write out a prayer to God, asking Him to help that person understand his need for Jesus. ***Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Words for the Wise” on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Words for the Wise” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.