

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

WISE MEN CHRISTMAS MAGI BIRTH OF CHRIST GIFTS VISIT BABY JESUS

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 2:1-12

MEMORY VERSE

“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 3:16, NIV*).

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To encourage children to learn and demonstrate how to worship and obey Jesus.

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The story of the visit of the Magi to see Jesus is one of the most exciting parts of the Christmas story. It tells us about the long journey they took to see the newborn King. The Bible does not tell us how many Magi visited Jesus, or what their names were. Tradition says there were three, because of the number of gifts they offered to the Lord. However, there could have been more than three.

But the Bible gives us some clear facts. The magi came from the east to Jerusalem, and went to King Herod to ask, “Where is the King of the Jews born? For his star we have seen in the east, and we come to worship him” (Matthew 2: 2).

The King Herod of this passage should not be confused with the other kings of the same name mentioned in the Bible. This king was not a Jew, but a cruel and very jealous man. And he did not want another king to take his place.

Herod did not know of any unborn baby being “the King of the Jews.” “And when he had called all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ should be born” (v. 4).

When they gave him the answer, they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet” (v. 5). The prophet to whom this passage refers is Micah (Micah 5: 2).

Immediately, "Herod secretly called the wise men." He wanted to know the exact time the star had appeared, in order to calculate the age of the child. So he sent them to Bethlehem to look for the baby, and told them that when they found him, they should let him know so that he could worship him.

When the magi left the palace of the King, they followed the star to Bethlehem, where Jesus was with his mother, Mary. Contrary to popular belief, he was not in the stable. Experts have established that Jesus was already one or two years old when the magi found him. This explains why afterwards Herod had all the children under two years of age living in Bethlehem killed, to try and make sure that this threat to his throne would be eliminated.

When the magi found Jesus, they knelt before him and worshiped him, offering him very expensive gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts symbolized what Jesus had come to do on this earth. Gold was a gift to kings; Jesus was a king. Frankincense was the gift to priests; Christ came to be our High Priest so that we could come into the presence of God without the help of an earthly priest. Myrrh was a gift to the one who was going to die; Jesus came to die for our sins. When presenting this lesson perhaps you could use objects or pictures to represent the three gifts and what they mean. This would deepen the understanding of the students. Spending more time presenting these concepts will add more meaning to the content.

The magi were warned by a vision in dreams that they should not return to Herod, because he wanted to kill the child. He was afraid that Jesus would take his place on the throne. So for that reason, the magi returned to their land in the east, another way.

Just as these material gifts were important for their value and symbolism, the gifts of worship and obedience of these magi showed that the new Messiah had come for all, not only for the Jews. From the humble shepherds to the wise magi, all came to worship him. Even in our time, Christ reaches out to people of all social levels. He can reach everyone!

ADAPTATION

All children are fascinated with gifts, so for them, Christmas is a very important time. Children are thrilled to receive at least one present. Talk to them about their Christmas traditions.

It is sad to see that in a materialistic age, the gifts can tarnish the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Children sometimes worry a lot about what they are going to receive, forgetting how this tradition began.

The interests of the children as to what to receive for Christmas contrasts with what the magi decided to give to Jesus. They made a long journey to offer the King their gifts of worship and obedience, along with the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Help your children follow the example of the magi and give Jesus their full worship and obedience. After presenting the biblical account, ask students what they think they could bring to Jesus to show Him how much they love him.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Ask the children: "How can we show others that they are special to us. Answers may be "giving them a small gift, lending them my toys, being friendly, etc." Tell them: "Magi from the east came to see Jesus. They wanted to show him how special they believed he was. Let's see what the magi did."

TEACH THE LESSON

The star inside an apple

Cut an apple or other similar local fruit in half and show your children the star that forms in the middle. Tell them that some people think that the star in the middle of some fruit is a reminder of the star that guided the magi to where Jesus was. We are glad that God has sent that special star. It is a sign that Jesus is not only the King of the Jews, but also of us. The magi who came from the East were the first non-Jewish people to worship Jesus. If you have enough apples/ fruit, give them to the children as a small snack.

Then relate the story in your own words from Matthew 2:1-12.

CONNECT THE LESSON

The Gifts of the Magi

Give your children Student Activity Sheet #157-A plus glue and scissors. Have them cut out the gifts and glue them on the hands of the magi who are offering the gifts to baby Jesus.

Read the Bible verse on the activity sheet and review briefly what was learned in the lesson today. Help your children identify the different ways in which we can praise and obey God during this coming week. Provide colored pencils or crayons for your children and give them enough time to draw inside the gift boxes ways in which they can offer a present of obedience and praise to Jesus.

If some wish, they can tell the rest of the class what they decided to give Jesus. Read together the verse at the bottom of the activity sheet (Acts 20:35).

What gifts can we give to Jesus?

Remind your children that we can all give gifts of praise and obedience to King Jesus. Give the children Student Activity Sheet #157-B and ask them the following question: "What gifts can we give Jesus?"

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Put the words of the verse on small cards, including the reference, and mix them up on the table or the floor. Help students put them in the right order, then practice reading the verse. Take away one card at a time and keep repeating it until the whole verse and reference are memorized. Give each student a small card with the verse on it so they may carry it or post it for review. Ask them to think of a way they can apply the verse this week and be ready to share next time.

If you can, arrange to have your children recite their memory verse for the whole congregation. Congratulate them on their enthusiasm for learning the Word of God.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Ask the children to give their prayer requests. As you pray for them, also give thanks to God for the gift of his Son, Jesus. Also, give thanks for Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi who came to visit the Messiah.

Encourage

Encourage your children to put into practice at home and at school the lessons they have learned during this unit and to honor Jesus throughout their lives.

Invite

Invite children to be prepared to tell how they put into action what they learned today when you gather again for the next session. Ask them to bring a friend with them. Remind them that in the next session they will begin a new unit of lessons. Challenge them to bring friends.