

- on medium heat and add the popcorn kernels.
2. Cover the pot loosely with a lid. When the kernels start popping, shake the pot to ensure even popping.
 3. When popping slows down, remove from heat and pour into a large bowl.
 4. While still warm, shake the cinnamon and sugar mixture on top and stir. Enjoy!

SAY • Can you think of someone who might need to hear the good news this Christmas? When you get home, ask your parents for permission to take this bag of good news popcorn to someone who needs to hear that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write or draw a picture of what the shepherds might have told the people about when they met Jesus. Ask kids what they would tell someone about Jesus this Christmas.

SAY • Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior. Jesus is God's Son, who came to earth as a human being just like us so He could rescue us from sin.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to be our Savior and for Him to help everyone remember the real reason for Christmas this year.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids*

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)

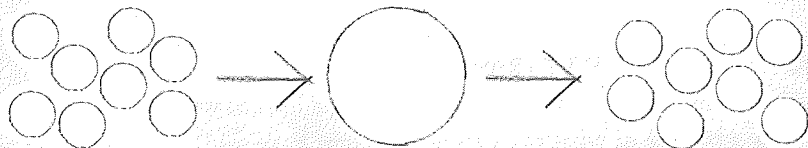
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LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 126

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 132



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.



MINISTRY GRID
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Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

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,**

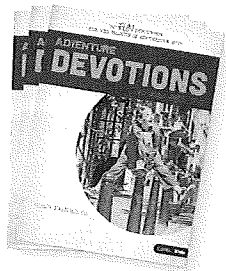
frankincense, and myrrh. **When it was time for the wise men to go home, God warned them in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was. So they took a different way home.**

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
ADVENTURE!**

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. As kids arrive, ask them where they would go if they could travel anywhere in the world. How would the kids get there? What would they do when they arrived? How long would they stay?

SAY • Today we're going to learn about a group of wise men who traveled a very long way for a very important reason. They traveled from the east to Bethlehem so they could worship Jesus as King.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Bringing Gifts" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Bringing Gifts" activity page. (*Answer key: WORSHIPED*)

SAY • The wise men took a long difficult journey to bring gifts to Jesus and worship Him as King. They had noticed a bright star in the sky and knew that it was God's sign that a special King was born. We'll learn more about the wise men's journey to Jesus in just a moment.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Follow the leader

Guide the kids to follow you around the room, doing exactly as you do. You may want to hop, run in place, pat your head, quack like a duck, make a silly face, or twirl around as you walk. After a few moments invite another kid to make up the motions for kids to follow. Continue until each kid has a turn to be the leader.

SAY • In this game, you had to keep your eyes on me and follow everything I did. The wise men had to keep their eyes on the star in the sky. They followed the star wherever it went, and it led them right to Jesus. When they reached Him, **the wise men worshiped Jesus as King.**

OPTION 2: Where's the star?

Choose a kid to be a wise man. The wise man will sit in a chair facing away from the other kids. Tape a star behind his chair. Kids will silently choose another kid to sneak up and remove the star, bring it back to the other kids, and sit on it. Kids will chant, "Wise man, wise man where's the star? We've been looking from afar." The wise man must guess who took the star. If he guesses correctly, he continues being the wise man. If he guesses incorrectly, the kid who took the star becomes the wise man or wise woman.

SAY • The wise men in our story today followed a special star that appeared in the sky. God put the star there to lead them to Jesus. When they arrived, **the wise men worshiped Jesus as King.**



- star cutout
- tape

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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.

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)

[Large Group Leader enters.]

• leader attire
• pictures or slides of kings from history taken from the Internet

LEADER • Hi, friends! How are you all doing today? I am very excited about the story we have today. Today we're learning about the wise men who visited Jesus. In honor of this Bible story, I have a surprise for you. *[Display several different pictures of kings from different cultures and time periods.]* Can anyone tell me what each of these men have in common? They are all kings. *[Talk about the kings, when they lived, and what they are most known for.]*

The wise men were educated men. Many Bible scholars believe they learned about God's promise to send a special King through the prophet Daniel, who was taken to Babylon during the exile, which we will learn more about in the future. Hundreds of years after Daniel's death, the wise men saw a star and knew that it was God's sign that a special King was born. But this child that was born was not going

be the kind of king they were expecting!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Over the last few weeks, we've been taking a break from our study of the Bible in the order that the events happened so that we could celebrate Christmas. A couple weeks ago, we learned that **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** Mary and Joseph were ordinary people, but the angel told them that God was going to use Mary to bring His Son into the world as a baby, and God was going to use Joseph to be Jesus' earthly father.

• Giant Timeline

Last week, we learned that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.** Angels announced to shepherds outside of Bethlehem that Jesus, the Messiah and the Savior of the world, was born. Jesus' birth was good news!

Today we're going to learn that the wise men traveled hundreds of miles to see this new king of the Jews. When they saw Him, **the wise men worshiped Jesus as King.**

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The wise men may have learned that a special king of the Jews was born, but they may not have known what kind of a king Jesus would be. When I count to three, this half of the room [*point to one side of the room*] will say the big picture question and the other half [*point*] will say the answer. One, two, three! ***Why was Jesus born? 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.” For a shorter version of the Bible story, read only the bolded text.

LEADER • The wise men traveled very far to give gifts to the new king. When they stopped in Jerusalem, where King David had set up the royal palace, to ask King Herod about Jesus, He and all the people in Jerusalem became troubled. Even though the prophets had told the people in the Scriptures that God would send a King, they were not happy.

King Herod told the wise men to tell him when they found the new king so Herod could worship Him too. Was that what Herod really wanted to do? No! Herod wanted to destroy the new king. He didn’t understand that Jesus first came to earth to die on the cross and rise again to rescue us from sin.

The wise men worshiped Jesus as King. When Jesus returns, He will reign as the King of kings and will rule forever, as God promised King David in 2 Samuel 7. Jesus is the true King who is worthy of all our worship.

Ask the following review questions:

1. What did God put in the sky to let the wise men know Jesus was born? (*a star; Matt. 2:2*)
2. What gifts did the wise men give to Jesus? (*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
3. Did Herod want to actually worship Jesus? (*No, he wanted to destroy Him; Matt. 2:13*)

4. How did God warn Mary and Joseph about Herod's plot to kill the boys in Bethlehem? (*An angel told Joseph in a dream, Matt. 2:13*)
5. Where did the angel tell Joseph to take Mary and Jesus? (*Egypt, Matt. 2:13*)
6. ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

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. Invite any kids who can say the key passage from memory to do so now. Praise each kid's attempt, assisting as needed.

LEADER • Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin. Our key passage says that God sent Jesus, born as a human being, to redeem us! Not only that, but when we turn away from sin and trust in Jesus, we become God's children!

Sing the key passage song.

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

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • How do you know that someone really cares about something? That he really values it? Check this video out.

- "Unit 5, Session 3" discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 5, Session 3” discussion starter video.

LEADER • Who do you think likes the bubble-gum burrito bowl the most? How do you know that the wise men valued Jesus? How can we show Jesus how much we value Him? What can you sacrifice for Jesus as an act of worship? [*Invite kids to respond to each question.*]

Jesus is our greatest treasure! There is nothing more wonderful and more valuable than Jesus. Christmas is when we celebrate the amazing gift of Jesus that God gave us. While we cannot do anything to earn this gift, once we receive it, our hearts should want to give God gifts back out of gratitude. That’s what worship is all about!

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Joy to the World” song

LEADER • **The wise men worshiped Jesus as King** with gifts. Let’s worship Jesus with our voices! Sing together “Joy to the World.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Before transitioning to small groups, make any announcements for your kids ministry. Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for showing the wise men that You had kept Your promise to send a special King, the Messiah! Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin and be our Savior. Help us to turn away from sin and trust in 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

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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- wrapped gift or gift bag

Invite kids to stand or sit in a circle. Give one kid a wrapped gift. At your signal, kids will say the key passage together, one word at a time, while passing the gift around the circle. Whoever is holding the gift on the last word of the key passage must fold her hands behind her back. Kids who are passing the gift will skip that child. For younger kids, do not eliminate any kids, but see if they can say the key passage faster and faster each round.

SAY • Have you ever wondered why we exchange gifts at Christmas time? Our key passage tells us that when God sent Jesus to earth, Jesus redeemed us, or made an exchange. Jesus is God's Son; He never sinned. We are sinners; we can never obey God completely. But Jesus died on the cross, taking our punishment that we deserve, and gave us life forever with Him! We can't do anything to earn forgiveness and eternal life. We can only trust what Jesus has done for us!

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- cardboard blocks
- spray bottles of perfume or body mist
- small containers of baby or mineral oil
- tape
- markers
- cardboard box

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Before class, wrap cardboard building blocks with gold foil or wrapping paper. Ask to borrow several inexpensive spray bottles of perfume or body mist. Provide small containers

of baby oil or mineral oil. Set up a cardboard box labeled *GIFTS FOR JESUS*. Write a few review questions on strips of tape and tape them to the “gifts” that represent what the wise men brought Jesus. Invite kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 2:1-21. Be prepared to assist non-readers. Explain that each kid will come up one at a time, select a gift, and answer the review question. When he has answered the question correctly, he may place it in the cardboard box. Make sure each kid has a chance to answer correctly and give a gift to Jesus.

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

1. Where did the wise men come from? (*the east, Matt. 2:1*)
2. What did God put in the sky to let the wise men know Jesus was born? (*a star, Matt. 2:2*)
3. Who told the wise men that Jesus would be in Bethlehem? (*the chief priests and scribes, Matt. 2:4-5*)
4. What gifts did the wise men give to Jesus? (*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
5. Did Herod want to actually worship Jesus? (*No, he wanted to destroy Him; Matt. 2:13*)
6. How did God warn Mary and Joseph about Herod’s plot to kill the boys in Bethlehem? (*An angel told Joseph in a dream, Matt. 2:13*)
7. Where did the angel tell Joseph to take Mary and Jesus? (*Egypt, Matt. 2:13*)
8. **Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.**

SAY • **The wise men worshiped Jesus as King** by giving Him gifts. Do you know the best way people can worship Jesus as King? People can turn away from sin and trust in Jesus as Savior and King. That is the kind of worship Jesus deserves!



Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: It's good to be king

Invite kids to stand in a circle, facing inward. Choose one kid to be king (or queen) for the next minute. The king will give a command that everyone must obey for 60 seconds. When 60 seconds are up, the king will choose a successor. Continue playing until each kid has a turn to be king or queen.

SAY • It's good to be king or queen, isn't it? A king or queen has power, and people have to do what he or she says. Our Bible story teaches us about two different kinds of kings. King Herod was not a kind king. He wanted to keep his power, and he was afraid that Jesus would take his power away from him.

The wise men worshiped Jesus as King, but Jesus is a different kind of king. Jesus came to earth as a human being so He could experience everything that we face. The only difference is that Jesus never disobeyed God. But Jesus died on the cross to take our punishment, and He rose again so we could have eternal life when we trust in Him. One day, Jesus will come back as the King of kings. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will live with Him and worship Him forever!

OPTION 2: Decorate a crown

- construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- colorful beads
- adhesive-backed jewels
- crayons and markers

Provide construction paper, scissors, glue, colorful beads, adhesive-backed jewels, crayons, and markers for kids to cut out and decorate a crown. Guide them to write the main point on the crown. You may need to write the main point on the crown for younger kids.

SAY • Do you know who wears a crown? That's right, a

King! **The wise men worshiped Jesus as King.**

Jesus is our King who will be King forever, and He deserves all our worship.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to draw a picture of the wise men traveling to see Jesus. As they draw, talk about the difference between how they responded to Jesus' birth and how Herod responded to the news that another king was born.

SAY • The wise men traveled from another nation to worship Jesus as King, but King Herod did not want to travel eight miles to see Jesus. The wise men worshiped Jesus as King with glad hearts; King Herod was afraid and wanted to destroy Him. How will you respond to the good news that Jesus was born to be our King?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to earth as a humble Savior-King. Thank Jesus for choosing to die on the cross and rising again as the way to set up His kingdom of rescued sinners. Pray for each child by name. Ask God to help the kids respond to Jesus with love and worship.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids