



JOURNEY OF THE WISE MEN A CHRISTMAS STORY

MATTHEW 2:1-12

GOAL

- ▶ **To encourage children to seek after the Messiah and His Kingdom, above all other treasures.** The Magi, also known as wise men, were dedicated to finding the newborn king who would bring salvation to the whole world! Show children what it looks like to seek Him, know Him, and worship Him—just like the wise men did in the Christmas story.
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WORDS TO KNOW

- ▶ **Magi:** Wise men from the east who were known, far and wide, for their knowledge and wisdom—so much so, that even great kings and leaders came to them for advice. The wise men in this story knew that a great king would be born, so they spent their lives searching for Him, and when they found Him, they worshiped Him.
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MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **Matthew 2:2:** Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

Jeremiah 29:13: You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Words to Know



OVERVIEW

▶ **Read 2 Matthew 2:1-12:** This story follows the journey of a group of Magi, also known as wise men, in search of the promised King. One night, while they were gazing out into the night sky, they witnessed the brightest star they had ever seen. Convinced it was the announcement of the birth of the King they had been waiting for, they set off on a journey to find Him. Their adventure took them through the streets of Jerusalem, into the presence of the wicked King Herod, and finally to the exact location of Jesus. When at last they found the young Messiah, they fell on their faces and worshiped Him.

SUGGESTIONS

▶ Have you ever wanted something quite badly, for example, a bike? You want this bike so much, you try to find the best one to buy, you watch for advertisements on TV, you read about it, talk about it, and write about it in school. Searching for a way to get this special treasure takes up every spare moment you have. The wise men felt much stronger about finding the Deliverer who would be the King of all kings! They knew He was something special, and they stopped at nothing to find Him. God promises that when you seek Him, you will find Him, especially when you seek Him with all your heart. And when your strongest desire is to find His treasure, you will find it.



PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

Ages 5-7 **Chase the Star** | **Supplies:** flashlight, scissors, dark construction paper, scotch tape.

Cut a square piece of construction paper slightly larger than the end of the flashlight. Cut a star out of the middle of the square, slightly smaller than the rim of the flashlight. Tape this square over the bulb end so that the light shines through and creates a star shape on the wall. Explain to the students that the wise men followed the star for a while, over every terrain, never giving up until it came to rest. Turn the classroom lights off, and tell them to follow that star. Begin shining the light at various points in the room; as soon as the students almost reach the star's location, switch to a different wall or object. Do this until they are laughing and breathless.

Then let the star "rest" and when they've caught up to it, recite Matthew 2:9-12. "After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route."

Ages 5-7 **Name that Christmas Character** | **Supplies:** colored construction paper, scissors, a marker, and a container.

Cut colorful strips of paper and clearly write the name of a Christmas character or thing from the lesson on the strips. Ideas: Magi, Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, shepherds, sheep, camel, angel, star, King Herod, and Jewish religious leader. Ask for a volunteer to come up and choose a character from the container, and without speaking, act out the roles that the character (or thing) played in the story. The child who guesses first, gets to come up and choose the next strip of paper from the container and act out the character, and so on.



Ages 8-10 **Star of Bethlehem Ornament** | **Supplies:** Salt dough (½ cup of salt, 1 cup of flour, and ½ cup of water; mix and knead), star cookie cutters, paint, sponge brushes, glitter, and ribbon.

Roll Dough ¼ inch thick and cut using star cookie cutters. On one point of the star, poke a hole using something like the end of a drinking straw. Place stars on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and bake 2 hours at 250 degrees. [Note: One batch of dough will make about 30 stars.]

Give each student a star, and let them pick a paint color. While the paint on the stars is still wet, let students sprinkle them with their choice of glitter (if the paint has dried, wipe it with a little glue and then let them add glitter). Once the paint is completely dry, help the child thread the ribbon through the hole, and tie a knot.

MEMORY
VERSE
MEANING

▶ **Matthew 2:2:** After it was revealed to the Magi that the Messiah was to be born, they traveled to Jerusalem in search of Him. Throughout the city of Jerusalem, they asked everyone they saw if they knew where the new king could be found. It must have been surprising to them that no one seemed to know about the coming of their own King, the Messiah!

Jeremiah 29:13: The Lord Jesus, and His Kingdom, is like a treasure—a treasure worth giving up everything to find. The treasures in this world are nice, but they are temporary; His treasures last forever.



POST-LESSON ACTIVITY

Ages 5-7 He, Is, Born!

This game is similar to the traditional “Duck, Duck, Goose” game. Sit the children in a circle. Select one child to walk around the circle, tapping each head and saying, “He is, He is...” until they choose a child to run after them, then say, “Born!” The selected runner chases the other until they get back to the open space.

Ages 8-10 Camel Races

Explain or show a brief video to the children of how camels run. It’s very possible that camels were part of the caravan of wise men as they made the long journey from the east to Jerusalem. It would have been difficult to ride one of those awkward creatures such a long way! Split the class into two teams and hold a relay; the only trick is that they must run on all fours, and they must run like a camel! Right foot and hand together, left foot and hand together. If anyone student doesn't run this way, they go to the back of their team's line and it's the following student's turn to race. First team to cycle through all their players wins!

Ages 8-10 **Celebrate Jesus Christmas Cookies** | **Supplies:** Plain sugar cookies, ready-made frosting, plastic knives, sprinkles, and Christmas cellophane bags (the size of your biggest cookie).

Let the kids celebrate the miracle of Jesus’ birth by decorating Christmas cookies! Wrap the finished cookie in cellophane bags and complete by tying a decorative ribbon to seal it closed. Make the atmosphere especially festive by playing Christmas carols (more the sacred variety, like, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”, “Joy to the World”, and “Silent Night”) as background music. Happy Birthday, Jesus!



**TAKE
HOME**

- ▶ Seek the king! Collect clues about Him from your Bible, see Him in the handiwork of His creation, and draw near to Him in prayer. To those who seek Him, He promises to be near, to reveal mysteries, and to accomplish more than can be imagined.

One idea is to keep a little book of clues: Every time God reveals to you a little bit more of who He is, what He's done, and how He operates, write or draw a picture of it in your notebook. Record the things that you read about Him in the Bible, His power and glory revealed in creation, and some of the special moments in conversation with Him, when He whispers to you His truth and answers prayers! Listen, and He will reveal His glory!



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: The Magi thought the bright star was a sign of what?

A1: The Magi thought the bright star was a sign that a great king had been born.

Q1b: Have you ever seen a shooting star or meteor shower?

TN: If we are lucky, we may have seen a bright, beautiful light streak across the sky. We call them shooting stars or meteors. Most of the time, shooting stars are visible for only a couple of seconds. Meteor showers give us an opportunity to see more of these sights, but they are still very short lived. On the night that Jesus was born, a star rose and shined so brightly that people near and far took notice. The star didn't flash across the sky and then vanish—this star hung in the sky producing an amazing light for quite a long time. This was no normal occurrence—this was a sign.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: What did the angel tell the shepherds to comfort them?

A2: The angel told them that the Messiah had been born.

Q2b: What do you think would be the best way to celebrate your birthday?

TN: Let the students answer and get creative. Then tell them that the day that Jesus was born, a light from Heaven shone over the stable where He and His earthly parents were staying. Angels showed up and praised God and announced the birth of our Savior. People from all over came to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus and worship Him. The day Jesus was born both Heaven and earth celebrated.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: In what city did the wise men ask people about the newborn king of the Jews?

A3: The wise men asked people in Jerusalem about the newborn king of the Jews.

Q3b: Do you know the names of the people who live 4 miles from your house?

TN: Unless we live in a very small town, it is unlikely that we know the names of all the people who live 4 miles from us. Many of us may not even know the names of the people who live on the same street as we do. So, when the wise men came to Jerusalem and asked where they could find this baby, no one knew who they were talking about! But this was no ordinary baby—this was the Savior! How could no one know who they were talking about?! They were surprised and maybe even a little bit shocked that no one knew.

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What was the name of the man who called himself the king of the Jews?

A4: Herod called himself the king of the Jews.

Q4b: Do you know anyone who has the same first name as you?

TN: Some of us have pretty common names, so knowing someone with the same name isn't that strange. Those of us with common names often have to go by our first and last names to help distinguish us from each other; however, King Herod, who was known as the king of the Jews, was not accustomed to such confusion. In his mind, when someone asked who was the king of the Jews, the answer was obvious: it was him! This presented more of a problem than just being confused with someone else—being king meant having power. If someone else was being called king of the Jews, Herod's power was at risk, and that was something Herod was not willing to give up or share.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: Toward what city did the wise men travel next?

A5: The wise men left Jerusalem and headed toward Bethlehem.

Q5b: Do you know in which direction the sun rises and sets every day?

TN: The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Knowing this can help us with directions and even approximate the time of day. Explorers often used the sun and the location of stars in the sky to help them find their way to new locations and back home again. Because the sun and stars are not visible all the time, using them for directions wasn't always helpful or accurate. The wise men traveled from far away, using only the bright light from the star that appeared the night that Jesus was born. While it is unknown whether the star was visible during the day, it definitely was at night. When it was visible, it was constant; it did not move across the sky like the sun and the stars, which made it easy to find Jesus' location.

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What gifts did the wise men bring Jesus?

A6: They brought Him gifts fit for a king: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Q6b: Where is the right place to park your bike at school: locked up at a bike rack or on top of your teacher's desk?

TN: It is unlikely that our teachers would appreciate us parking our bikes on their desks! Even just bringing our bikes into the classroom would feel wrong and out of place. So, when the wise men arrived to worship the King of kings, Lord of lords, and Prince of peace, they probably expected to find Him in a palace being waited on hand and foot. Instead, they found Him in a stable, lying in a manger used to feed farm animals. While Jesus' life did not reflect that of most royalty, He is no less of a king, and His situation did not diminish His power. The location of His birth was not an accident. Despite being born in a stable, the wise men recognized Jesus' position and what His birth meant. The treasures they brought as gifts were not out of place; they were gifts fit for a king, and that is exactly what that baby in the manger was—our long promised King and Savior.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 7



Q7a: How did God warn the wise men and Joseph that Herod planned to kill Jesus?

A7: God warned the wise men and Joseph in a dream.

Q7b: How far would you go to see Jesus if He were a man on the earth again?

TN: Would we climb the highest mountain, swim an ocean? We don't know exactly how far the wise men traveled, but it wasn't a quick weekend road trip! Any distance would be worth the effort to see Jesus in person. The good news is that we don't have to go anywhere to be with Jesus. He is with us always! Wherever we are, all we have to do is talk to Him. His blessings and guidance are available to us even without being in His physical presence.



**MEMORY
VERSES**

▶ **Matthew 2:2:** Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

Jeremiah 29:13: You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

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BIG IDEA

▶ Even without a star to guide our way, if we seek Jesus, we will find Him.

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**CLOSING
PRAYER**

▶ Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the promise that when we seek You, we will find You! Help us each day to see how valuable You really are and the treasure that is Your Kingdom! We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



Far away from the city of Jerusalem, there lived a mysterious tribe of people called the Magi. The Magi were filled with wisdom and understanding, and they were respected by kings and other important people. As three of these wise men were gazing out into the sky one starry night, an unusually bright light shone—brighter than any star they had ever seen. They were amazed at what they saw, and were convinced it was a sign that a great king had been born. Quickly, they set out on a journey to find him.

SLIDE 2



The same light that had caught the attention of the wise men, also drew several shepherds out from the fields and into the quiet and lowly town of Bethlehem. The glory of God shone so brightly that they shook with fear. But an angel comforted them, “Don’t be afraid! I bring good news for you and all people. The Messiah, your Savior, is born this very day!”

SLIDE 3



After a long journey, the wise men arrived in Jerusalem. As they rode through the city, they excitedly called out, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews?!” They knew this king would be different than any other king before; this king was promised to bring peace and joy to all the nations of the world. Surely someone would know of His coming! “We have seen His star,” the wise men declared, “and we are here to worship Him!” But no one knew where this child could be found.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



Herod, who called himself king of the Jews, was greatly troubled by the announcement of a new king—a king who might take his place! He met with the Jewish leaders and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. Then he arranged a secret meeting with the wise men and said to them, “Go, and look for the Messiah in the town of Bethlehem, and when you find Him, let me know so that I can also worship Him.” But secretly, Herod did not want to worship the new king; he only wanted the wise men to discover where Jesus was so he could have Him killed.

SLIDE 5



As the wise men left Jerusalem and headed toward Bethlehem, they once again saw the glorious light in the night sky. This light had led them many long miles from home, and now it would lead them right to the place where Jesus was. As the wise men drew closer, they were filled with excitement and wonder.

SLIDE 6



When they stepped into the house, the wise men saw a young child with His mother Mary, and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. They gave Jesus gifts fit for a king, including costly treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The scene was incredible! The greatest of kings born in the most unlikely of places. Mary took in every detail and tucked them away in her heart. She wanted to remember these precious moments for the rest of her life.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 7



Later, the wise men and Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, were warned by God in a dream that Herod intended to kill the young Messiah! God led the wise men and the new family safely out of the city of Bethlehem and far away from evil King Herod.

Eventually Jesus and His family returned to Nazareth. As Jesus grew, He revealed more and more about who He was. He healed the sick, raised the dead, opened the eyes of the blind, and most amazing of all, He gave his life on the cross to rescue the world from the curse of sin. The wise men's journey had led them to Jesus—the Son of God, the king of kings and the lord of lords!