

WISE MEN VISITED JESUS

MATTHEW 2



KEY PASSAGE: John 3:16

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.

CHRIST CONNECTION: The wise men worshiped Jesus as the Messiah and gave Him valuable gifts. Jesus gave His life for us when He died on the cross for our sins. Jesus is worthy of all worship.

STORY POINT: The wise men worshiped Jesus as the Messiah.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The biblical story of the wise men’s visit highlights the worthiness of Jesus as Messiah. These men from the east traveled hundreds of miles to worship the young King.

We read in verse 2 that the wise men arrived in Jerusalem proclaiming a star’s rising and their mission to worship the King of the Jews. After being asked by King Herod where the Messiah would be born, the religious scholars of the time cited Micah 5:2, declaring that a leader would arise from this humble city to shepherd God’s people.

The wise men followed the star to the home where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were staying. The travelers fell to their knees in worship, offering fine treasures to signify their awe of the one true King. Jesus was more than worthy of their worship—even in His childhood years, before He had begun His ministry or taken to the cross.

The wise men’s response to learning about the Messiah couldn’t have differed more from the reaction of King Herod, who not only lied about his desire to worship the child but also sought to kill the young boy who Herod considered a rival king. It would be the first of many times that Simeon’s prophecy over Jesus would come to pass: “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed” (Luke 2:34).

Teach the kids in your group that they too face a choice of rejecting Jesus like Herod did or worshipping Him like the wise men as the promised King. Jesus gave His life for us as a sacrifice for our sins and rose again to defeat death. Only He is worthy of our worship. Pray that each child would recognize the value of knowing Jesus and of trusting in Him for salvation.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Lead the Way" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- "Story Point Stars" printable



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Wise Men Visited Jesus" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- gold, frankincense, and myrrh (optional)

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 19, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- "Annie Armstrong's Legacy" video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "Eternal Life (John 3:16)" song
- plastic eggs, 12
- egg carton
- worship song of your choice (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- small prizes, 1 per kid
- gift bags, 1 per kid

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



WELCOME Kids

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

| **SAY** “ What is the best gift you’ve ever given someone? What made it so special? ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Lead the Way” activity page.

| **SAY** “ Your awesome navigation skills helped the wise men follow the star through the maze! In today’s story, we’ll learn about three wise men who traveled far to see Jesus, the promised Messiah. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: STAR SEARCHING

Before the session, make a copy of the “Story Point Stars” printable and cut out each star. Go around the room and hide each of the stars. As you hide them, write a clue on the back of the star to help lead the kids to the next one. Do this until all the stars are hidden. Gather the kids and direct them to the first star. Encourage them to work as a team to decipher the clues and find each star. Once all the stars have been found, help the kids form today’s story point.

| **SAY** “ By following the stars, you guys were able to work out today’s story point! After Jesus was born, wise men followed a star to find Him. Together we will learn that **THE WISE MEN WORSHIPED JESUS AS THE MESSIAH.** ”

OPTION 2: DANCE AFTER ME!



Invite the kids to stand up, hold hands, and form a circle. Stand in the middle of the circle and explain that you are going to teach the kids some dance moves. Begin with a simple move and have the kids repeat after you. Now perform the same dance move, but add on one new move. Have the kids repeat the sequence. Continue doing this, adding on a new move each time. If any kid forgets a move or performs them in the wrong order, they must sit down. Play until there is one kid remaining.

| **SAY** “ When you followed my moves, you all became awesome dancers! After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the east followed God’s star to find Him. Together we will learn that **THE WISE MEN WORSHIPED JESUS AS THE MESSIAH.** ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m so excited to explore another story in the book of Matthew with you! If you brought your Bible this morning, go ahead and take it out now [Distribute Bibles to any kid who needs one.] Together we have learned that God sent His Son, Jesus, as the promised Messiah who would save the people from their sins. Simeon and Anna worshiped Jesus, and today we will see that the wise men worshiped Jesus, too!

Let’s pray together before we open God’s Word. ‘God, thank You for revealing who You are through Your Word. As we read about the wise men, open our hearts and minds to worship You in Spirit and in truth. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ Our big picture question reminds us to worship Jesus because of who He is. Can anyone recite our big picture question? [Allow responses.] **Who is Jesus?** [Allow responses.] Together we have learned that **Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.** God loves us so much that He has not left us in our sin. Jesus is worthy of our worship because He is the Son of God who offers salvation to all who trust in Him. Today, we will learn that the wise men brought gifts and worshiped Jesus as the promised Messiah. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ God’s people were unable to save themselves from sin, but the prophet Malachi shared that God would send the Messiah to save His people. Chosen by God, Mary humbled herself as a servant, and through her obedience God brought His Son, Jesus, into the world. When Jesus was brought to the temple, Simeon recognized that God had fulfilled His promise. Simeon and Anna worshiped Jesus as the Messiah who had come to save the people from their sins. Today, we will see that **THE WISE MEN WORSHIPED JESUS AS THE MESSIAH.** ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 2. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Wise Men Visited Jesus.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

WISE MEN VISITED JESUS

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this news, he was deeply upset. He assembled all the chief priests and scribes and asked them where the Messiah would be born. They said, “Bethlehem of Judea, because this is what was written by God’s prophet.”

Herod secretly sent for the wise men from the east and asked them the exact time the star appeared. Then Herod sent them to Bethlehem and told them to search for the child and report back to him.

The star led the wise men until it stopped above the place where Jesus was. When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. The wise men entered the house and saw Jesus with His mother, Mary. They fell to their knees and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and gave Him great gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The wise men were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, because he wanted to kill Jesus. So, they returned to their own country by another way.

After the wise men left, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “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 kill him.” So, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to Egypt.

When Herod realized the wise men had outsmarted him, he became extremely angry. He gave orders to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and younger.

After Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who wanted to kill Jesus are dead.” So, Joseph got up and brought Mary and Jesus back to Israel, to the town called Nazareth.

Christ Connection: The wise men worshiped Jesus as the Messiah and gave Him valuable gifts. Jesus gave His life for us when He died on the cross for our sins. Jesus is worthy of all worship.”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Active Listening: Each time the kids hear the words *wise men*, encourage them to point to their brain. Share that another word for wise men is “Magi.”

Visualize the gifts: Consider bringing in something gold like jewelry, as well as frankincense and myrrh in the form of oils. Invite the kids to pass these around to help them visualize as you read through the story.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY ““ When the wise men from the east recognized the star in the sky, they knew that the King of the Jews had been born. How did King Herod respond when he heard why the wise men had come to Jerusalem? [Allow responses.] Herod became upset and secretly asked the wise men to find Jesus. When the wise men found Jesus, they immediately fell down and worshiped Him as the Messiah. When we understand who Jesus is, we too should worship Him as Lord. What gifts did the wise men bring Jesus? [Allow responses.] The wise men brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh because they knew that Jesus was worthy of all their gifts and worship.

What did King Herod do when he found out the wise men had outsmarted him? [Allow responses.] King Herod was angry and sought to kill Jesus. But God had already warned Joseph to take his family and leave for Egypt. Joseph trusted God’s plan and obeyed Him. Once Herod died, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus came back to live in the town of Nazareth. Through all of these things, God was sovereign. We can trust that God is in control of our lives too. He had a plan to send us salvation through His Son, and He is at work now, bringing together His eternal plan of redemption for all who believe in Him.

The wise men worshiped Jesus as the Messiah and gave Him valuable gifts. Jesus gave His life for us when He died on the cross for our sins. Jesus is worthy of all worship. ””

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY ““ Jesus gave us the most valuable gift of all. He is the Messiah who laid down His life for our sins. Jesus doesn’t ask us for gold, frankincense, or myrrh. He asks us to trust in Him and worship Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to put your faith in Jesus, please talk to your parents or a church leader. ””

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 19, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How do I spend more time with God when school, life, and friendships take up a lot of time?
2. Jesus gave His life for us when He died on the cross for our sins. What are ways we can truly worship Him?

**5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)**

Play the “Annie Armstrong’s Legacy” video. Explain that Annie Armstrong was recognized as a national trailblazer for her missions leadership.

SAY “ Some of Annie’s work included: starting a mission for Baltimore’s poor and addicted, raising support for missionaries to Italian and Jewish immigrants, fundraising to build churches in Cuba, and advocating for Native Americans and poorer mountain people. She traveled across America to encourage missionaries and inspire churches to pray, give, and act to accomplish more for mission work.

Annie Armstrong led the WMU to contribute \$5,000 in 1895, so that missionaries could continue their work. This led to the WMU creating a time of praying for and giving to home missions. Since then, a week of prayer and a home missions offering have continued. Today, this is called the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® for North American Missions to honor the sacrificial work Annie did. Every penny given to the offering supports thousands of missionaries in ministries across the United States and Canada. More than one billion dollars have been raised through this offering. ”

Pray, thanking God for the work of Annie Armstrong and how the mission offering named after her helps missionaries throughout North America.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 3:16 together.

SAY “ Because of His love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus. When we trust in Him, we are promised life with God forever! Let’s explore this together in our key passage. ”

Copy the words of the key passage onto twelve plastic eggs using a permanent marker. Group multiple words onto each egg as needed. Hide the eggs around the room and invite the kids to find them. Once all the eggs have been found, challenge the kids to place them in order in the egg carton according to the key passage. Recite the key passage aloud as a class.

Lead kids to sing “Eternal Life (John 3:16).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ God, thank You for sending Your Son to give His life for ours. We understand You are Lord over our lives and are worthy of our worship. Give us the strength to surrender our lives to You every day. Amen. ”





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 2. Explain that the book of Matthew is one of the four Gospels. Matthew is also called a Synoptic Gospel because it contains many of the same stories as the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

Consider pointing out the location of Bethlehem [15] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 2:10-11 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Think about the most valuable thing you own. Maybe it’s a toy, or clothes, or even a pair of shoes. The wise men came to bring Jesus their best gifts because they knew He was worthy of their worship. The Bible teaches that the greatest commandment is to love God with our entire being (Matthew 22:37-38). The best gift we can give Jesus is our lives. When we repent and believe in Jesus, He saves us from our sin and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in our lives every day to make us more like Jesus. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why did the wise men bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh? ”

Help kids understand that while such gifts might sound odd today, they held great value when Jesus was a child and pointed to His great worth as King. Remind kids that Jesus is the King over all nations. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isaiah 60:3-6.)

SAY “ Why did Herod want to kill Jesus? ”

Explain that the wise men called Jesus the king of the Jews. Herod was unwilling to bow down to Jesus as King of kings and Lord over His life. Remind kids that God was in control, despite Herod’s choice. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 33:10-11.)

SAY “ What gifts can we offer to Jesus? ”

Remind kids that the greatest gift we can give Jesus is to surrender our lives to Him. When we trust our lives to Jesus, we receive spiritual gifts. These are gifts that we can use to serve Jesus and His church. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:10.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: GIFT EXCHANGE

Before the session, pick up some small prizes and gift bags, one for each kid. For prize ideas, consider visiting your local dollar store. Place one prize inside each gift bag.

Instruct the kids to sit down in a circle. Hand each kid one gift bag at random and tell them not to open it. Play some music and have the kids pass their bags around the circle clockwise. When you pause the music, have the kids pass their bags counterclockwise. Continue doing this several times. Once the song has ended, allow the kids to open the bags and keep their prizes.

SAY “ The wise men brought Jesus gifts because He is the Messiah who is worthy of our worship! Jesus came to offer us the greatest gift, salvation from our sins. The best gift we can offer God is to trust our lives to Him. ”

OPTION 2: HOP (HAND) SCOTCH

Before the activity, tape sheets of paper to the floor in rows of three. Using a marker, trace a different combination of hands and feet onto each sheet of paper. For example, two feet and one hand, two hands and one foot, etc. Make several rows, creating a hopscotch board. Line the kids up behind the board. Explain that, one at a time, the kids will hop down the board, placing his or her hands and feet according to the instructions marked on each square paper. If any kid falls over, they must go to the back of the line and try again. Do this until each kid has made it across.

SAY “ To make it across the board, you had to follow the symbols on the paper. The wise men followed God’s star and came to worship Jesus. Jesus is the promised Messiah who is worthy of our worship! ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.