

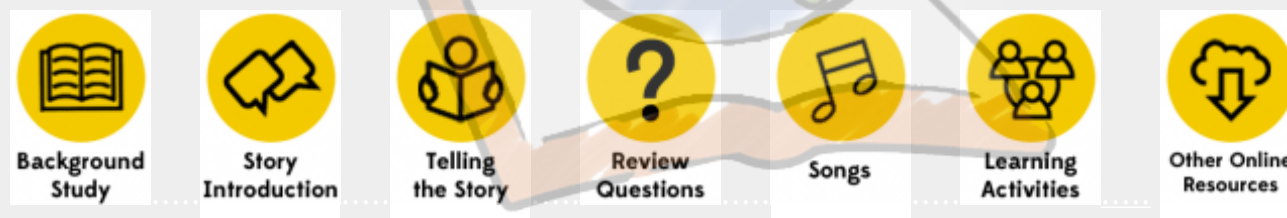
Wise Men and a Star

Scripture Reference: [Matthew 2:1-18](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Give honour and respect to Jesus.

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](#)



Story Overview:

Wise men from the East knew because of His star that something significant had taken place. They made a long journey bringing precious, valuable gifts to this special baby. Wanting to do harm to Jesus, King Herod tried to use the wise men to lead him to the baby but the wise men left no trail. Instead, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to safety in Egypt.

Background Study:

The wise men were probably members of the order of priests and philosophers called Magi that had existed east of the Euphrates River since ancient times. As “the Levites of the East,” they performed public religious rites, mediated between God and men, interpreted doctrine, and educated the royal family. They were also very skilful astronomers. A star was in their line of speciality.

We often hear about three wise men. The bible does not say the number but does mention three gifts specifically. Frankincense is a kind of gum that is burned for its aroma. Myrrh is an expensive perfume.

The star they followed was probably no ordinary star, or comet, or conjunction of planets, or eclipse. The magi studied the night sky and those things would have been more common. This star was special and it was provided by God. It behaved as not other star had, and led the wise men right to Jesus’ house. Evidently, God, for His own purpose, chose to reveal himself through a star and a dream to people who ordinarily were not His followers.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were very conspicuous. They seemed to think that everyone in the Jewish capital city would know about the newborn king of the Jews. However, their questions upset Herod. There was a widespread expectation that an important person was about to appear in Judea. Herod the Great had some good qualities - courage, executive ability - but he was excessively jealous and inhumanly cruel. If Herod thought the important person was a child who would someday take his throne, he would eliminate Him. His subjects feared his cruelty.

Herod asked the religious leaders where the long expected Messiah would be born. In [Matthew 2:6](#) they quoted [Micah 5:2](#), informing Herod that Bethlehem was the place. Then, so as not to call too much attention to the child, Herod met with the wise men secretly ([Matthew 2:7-8](#)). He asked questions to try to determine the age of the child.

With pretence of wanting to worship, he sent the wise men to find the child.

Many depictions of the visit of the magi show them presenting gifts to a baby Jesus in a stable at the same time as the shepherds were visiting. In actual fact, many months had passed since Jesus' birth. Joseph and Mary now lived in a house in Bethlehem. We know that Joseph and Mary travelled the 9 kilometres (6 miles) to Jerusalem to follow the custom of presenting Jesus when he was eight days old ([Luke 2:21-40](#)). Just after the events in today's story, Herod had all Jewish boys under the age of two killed to try to wipe out the chance of a new king replacing him ([Matthew 2:16-18](#)). This might indicate that Jesus was about two years old at the time of the Magi visit.

Evidently the wise men travelled by night to the very house where baby Jesus lived. Heeding God's warning, they went home another way. The text reads as though the wise men came, worshiped Jesus, left; and Joseph, Mary and Jesus left all in the same night.

Egypt was the country where Jesus' ancestors were slaves. Now, Egypt was the place where Jesus would be kept safe from King Herod. He probably wasn't there very long but His stay there fulfilled [Hosea 11:1](#).

The name "King Herod" appears a few times in the New Testament. Here are descriptions of three of them:

1. Herod the Great- (37-4BC) King at the time of Jesus' birth. Visited by the wise men. In an attempt to kill baby Jesus he ordered Jewish boys under the age of two to be killed. [Matthew 2:1-15](#)
2. Herod Antipas- (4BC-AD39) He put John the Baptist to death ([Matthew 14:1-12](#)). Pilate sent Jesus to him before his crucifixion ([Luke 23:7-12](#)).
3. Herod Agrippa I- (AD 37-44) He killed James and had Peter thrown in prison. Struck down by an angel and eaten by worms ([Acts 12:1-24](#)).



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Before class gather together some items that could be given to a baby at his/her birth (nappies, rattle, baby powder, soap, etc.) Let the children talk about gifts they would give to a baby. "In today's story we are going to talk about some gifts that Jesus received. One of the people who gave Jesus gifts was a very wise man. Today we are going to let him tell us about what happened." (Cover your head with a sheet or blanket and put on some "expensive" jewellery or scarves. Lower your voice into a man's voice and tell the story as if you are one of the wise men. Another option is to ask a man of the congregation to dress up and tell the story in first person.)

If you have a visual aid then you might just say that you have some nice photos of everything that happened. Ask if they would like to see the photos. Show the visual aid as you tell the story.

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The Story:

Far to the east of Bethlehem there were men who were referred to as "magi". The magi were considered to be very wise. Even though they were wise in many ways the magi did not worship God.

The magi did, however, study science and the stars. They had seen the stars many times but there was something very different about one star they began to see in the sky. There

was something so special about this star that the magi knew they must go and see what it was about.

After studying the star the magi began to follow it. This star was so special that they realised that it was leading them to a king. The king of the Jews. This was exciting! They wanted to worship this new king.

The star was over the town of Bethlehem but the magi decided to stop in the city of Jerusalem on the way. Herod was the King of the Jews and he lived in a palace in Jerusalem. The magi thought that since he was a king that surely Herod would know about the new king.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” the wise men asked Herod, “We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” They wanted to give him gifts and praise him like a king deserved.

King Herod seemed puzzled. He called together the chief priests and teachers of the law and asked for their advice. Herod was the king. Had the priests and teachers of the law ever hear about another king.

These advisers knew what the prophets had written about in the Old Testament. They knew that God was sending a Messiah to save his people. The prophets had said that the Messiah, the real King of the Jews, would be born in Bethlehem.

The “real King of the Jews?”. This meant that when the Messiah came, he would be more important than King Herod. King Herod did not want anyone to be more important than him! He was king and he liked himself a lot. He knew he had to find out where this new king was. He had to get rid of him.

So Herod came back to the Magi and tried to trick them. He told them to go and find the newborn king so he could go and worship him and give him honour too.

But this was a trick. King Herod didn't really want to worship the new king - he wanted to kill him! He just wanted to follow the magi so he would know where the new king was.

The star began to shine again so the wise men followed it once again. Soon they found the house in Bethlehem where Joseph, Mary and their little boy, Jesus were staying.

Mary and Joseph told the wise men all about how Jesus had been born in a stable. They told them about the angels singing to the shepherds when they announced his birth.

The wise men knew immediately that this little boy was truly the new king of the Jews.

They bowed down in front of him and gave him very expensive gifts from their country in the east. The gifts were gold, incense and myrrh. These were the kinds of expensive gifts that people would give to a king. The Magi gave Jesus this special honour.

The magi had a dream and knew that King Herod was going to try to kill Jesus. The magi did not want to tell King Herod where to find Jesus. They went back home a different way so that King Herod would not be able to follow them.

The magi weren't the only ones to have a dream. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph, get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you. If you don't go then Herod will search and find your son. Then he will kill him."

So Joseph got up at that very moment. In the middle of the night he took his family on the long trip to Egypt. They were safe.

It was a good thing that Joseph did act quickly. When the other Magi did not return to King Herod he got very angry. King Herod ordered his soldiers to kill every single little Jewish boy under the age of two. He did not know that Jesus was already gone so he thought that he could kill him this way. What a sad day.

But God kept Jesus safe! Jesus was God's special gift to the world. The wise men knew

that Jesus was special so they wanted to give him special honour.

Are you like the wise men? You can give Jesus special honour by obeying him and telling him how much you love him. Have you given Jesus honour today?

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print](#). Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Where did the wise men that brought gifts to Jesus come from? The East
2. What is another name for wise men from the east? Magi
3. Who was the King who wanted to kill young Jesus? Herod
4. What led the Magi to Jesus? A star
5. Name the three gifts that the Magi gave Jesus: gold, incense (or frankincense), and myrrh.

Song Suggestions:

- Sing appropriate Christmas Carols (We Three Kings)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

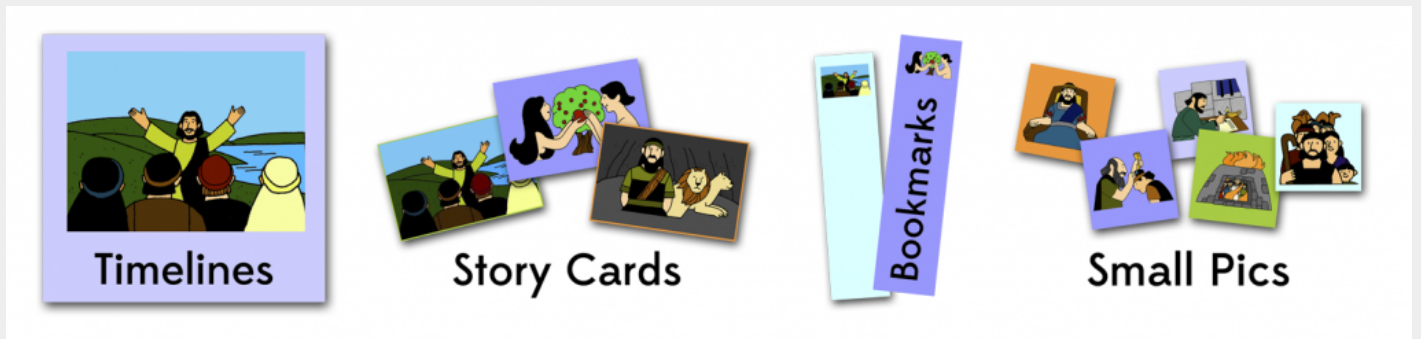
Activities:

- Make a trail of stars for the children to follow. Have the children follow the star trail to Herod's palace in Jerusalem. This might be a road sign or picture of a palace. Tell the first part of the story in this place. Then have the students follow another trail to Jesus' house and tell the next part of the story. Finally, have the children "sneak" back to the classroom a different way like the Magi did when they went back home.
- Gift wrap a few different boxes in several sizes. Inside each box you should have one gift. Some gifts should be good and some funny (a lolly, one unmatched sock, a small toy, an empty toilet paper roll, etc.) Children can open the gift if they answer a question correctly (today's review questions would be good). Let the children take turns opening the gifts until all are opened. Finish with one last box that contains a picture of Jesus. Discuss how that God gave the best gift.

Crafts:

- Teach younger children how to draw a star.
- Make any "star" craft. One idea is to have children cut slices of bread with star-shaped cookie cutters. Spread with soft margarine or butter and sprinkle with "hundreds and thousands" or shiny biscuit decorations.
- Write "Jesus is Special" on a star shape. Let the children write words about Jesus on the star: Son of God, born in Bethlehem, birth prophesied, shepherds visited, angels announced, etc.
- [Make a scroll. Click here for instructions.](#) Write this verse on it: "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

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Wise Men and a Star" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for "Wise Men and a Star" printables to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about Simeon and Anna \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about the visit of the wise men \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus' escape to Egypt \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Mary, Jesus and wise men from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Various activities and puzzles specifically about Mary \(covers more than one story\) from gardenpraise.com\)](#)
- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the birth of Jesus through to his visit to the temple at the age of twelve from garentofpraise.com](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-birth-youth/>

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