

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



THE JOY OF GIVING

Matthew 2:1-12 The Wise Men visit Jesus

Each child will need:

- Colouring pens/pencils and paper
- The Nativity scene they have been making, specifically a wise man figure
- A large book, sheet of wrapping paper and sticky tape
- Some gift tags
- Each child could come dressed as one of the wise men
- Could you take a small gift around to each of your group members, that they can open in the session – perhaps some gold coins?
- Additional idea: give each member some dried spaghetti and a pack of marshmallows. Challenge them to make a star by pushing the spaghetti into the marshmallows. The star should be able to stand up on its own. Ask them to complete this task before the session and bring their star along. You can make it into a competition if you so choose and awards prizes: for the most star-shaped, the biggest, the one that stands alone for the longest...

You may wish to email or give a print-out of the Wise Men Maze sheet.

Start It

Play a Christmas scavenger hunt with your group. Simply come up with a list of items that they need to find around the house. Tell the children the items one at a time, and the first one back to the screen with the item is the winner. Here are some ideas:

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| → Something that is a gold colour | → A candle |
| → A star | → Some Christmas chocolate |
| → Something that smells nice | → Bells |
| → A Santa image/model | → An unusual Christmas tree ornament |
| → A reindeer | → Something that sparkles |
| → Something that tastes bitter | → A wrapped Christmas present |
| → A figure representing the baby Jesus | |

When you have finished the hunt, ask the children about the last item – the present. For example, who is it for, can they guess what is in it, are they getting excited about the thought of opening presents on Christmas Day?

Ask: Who do we know in the Nativity story who brought gifts to Jesus?

Say: Yes – that's right – the wise men.

Ask: Who can remember what the gifts were? Can you find any items in your scavenger hunt that represent the gifts?

(Something the colour of gold, something that smells nice, something that tastes bitter.)

Say: In this session we are going to read about how the wise men (sometimes called the Three Kings or the Magi) followed a star to Jesus. It was a journey of great joy, and when they found Jesus they gave him some special gifts.

Tell It

Read Matthew 2:1-12

Leader's note: Before starting today's session, you will need to download the story and the notes in the format you prefer to work with.

If you follow this link: <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-008-wise-men> you have three options to choose:

- View slideshow
- Download the image set (PDF, PowerPoint, Keynote or JPEGs)
- Story planner

Share the screen and tell the story.

Use any of the following questions to discuss the story with the group.

- In the story, how many wise men were there? (NB The Bible does not say how many wise men – just that there were three gifts.)
- What could they have been riding? (Again, the Bible does not say.)
- Where had they come from?
- Why had they come?
- What had they followed?
- In Matthew 2:10 it says, 'When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy.' Why do you think the wise men were filled with joy when they saw the star?
- What do you think the star looked like?
- Have you ever seen a star that moved?
- What do you think the wise men were saying to each other as they followed the star?
- Where did they find Jesus?
- How did the wise men know that Jesus was special? Do you think they knew he was God?
- What did they give to Jesus?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph thought about these gifts?
- If you had been one of the wise men, what would you have taken as a gift for Jesus?
- What did King Herod think about all of this?
- What trick did he try to play?
- Did he manage it? What happened?

💡 **Say:** The wise men knew that Jesus was very special. In fact, they knew that he was the King of the Jews that everyone had been waiting for. They travelled hundreds of miles, a journey that possibly lasted more than two years, to find this baby, following a star to guide them.

💡 **Say:** The Bible tells us, 'When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy' (Matthew 2:10 *ICB*). They were on a joyful journey, knowing that they were going to celebrate meeting the King of the Jews. When they finally found Jesus, they bowed down before him and worshipped him. Full of joy, they gave him gifts fit for a king – the King of kings!

Ask: Who knows what the three gifts were that the wise men brought for Jesus?

💡 **Say:** The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh may seem rather strange gifts to bring to a baby. But when we look closely at them we can see that these gifts help us to understand what the wise men knew about Jesus. The gifts show the kind of person they believed Jesus was going to be and that, from the beginning, Jesus' birth was part of God's plan.

Share screen with the picture of the three gifts (attached below) and ask the children to match the gift with the description.

Summarise by highlighting the following meaning of the gifts:

Gold is the gift to honour a king. When the wise men presented gold, they were honouring Jesus with the very best that they possessed, and they were also recognising that Jesus was King.

Frankincense is the incense burned in religious ceremonies to honour God. It is a resin that looks like small milky brown rocks and was very valuable in the time of Jesus. Ancient people burned frankincense, believing it to carry their prayers to Heaven. When we think of frankincense, we can think about how Jesus is not only the King of kings, but he is holy, he is with God and he is always praying for us.

Myrrh is another gum resin that was used for anointing the dead to prepare them for burial. So myrrh signifies 'bitterness'. The gift of myrrh reminds us of the sacrifice that Jesus would make on the cross to pay for the sins of the world.

Play the carol 'We Three Kings' and allow some time for the children to colour in their wise man figure. They could draw a gift in their wise man's hands. As they colour, you can point out some of the lyrics of the carol about the gifts that the wise men bought to Jesus. Then ask the children to place the figure in their Nativity scene.

Sing It

Sing this lively song together about the gift that God gave us that first Christmas.

'Born is the King' by Hillsong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSLrFVR-Hqw>

You could also have some fun with this little ditty, sung to the tune of 'Three Blind Mice'!

**Three wise men, three wise men,
Travelling afar, seeing a star.
They found the Saviour in Bethlehem,
Fell on their knees to worship him;
There had never before been a child like him -
Three wise men.**

**Three wise men, three wise men,
Followed the star, followed it far.
They followed the star to Bethlehem,
Bowed down and worshipped the newborn King,
Gave gold and myrrh, and frankincense
To Jesus the King.**

Action It

Ask the children to get ready with their large book, sheet of wrapping paper and sticky tape. Tell them you are going to have a quick competition to see who can wrap a present (the book) the fastest. When everyone is ready, say go! And then declare a winner. Instead of judging by speed, you could judge the winner on the neatness of the wrapping.

Use any of the following questions in a short group discussion. You could ask children to write or draw their answers and hold it up to their camera, or reply using the chat function. You could split into smaller groups using the breakout rooms function.

- What was the best Christmas present that you have ever received?
 - What was the Christmas present that you have been most excited to give to someone?
 - When have you made someone happy by giving them a gift?
 - Have you ever received a Christmas present that cost someone time instead of money? What was it?
 - What gifts can you give, or have received, that can't be wrapped up?
 - If your parents told you they didn't have any money for presents this year, what gift would you ask for?
- **Say:** One of the ways people celebrate Christmas today is by giving gifts to each other. The giving of gifts at Christmas is something that is often thought to have started by the wise men giving gifts to Jesus. Just as the wise men brought gifts to Jesus to show their love for him, we can give gifts to others to show our love for them.

Ask:

- How do you decide what gift to give someone?
- How do you feel when you give someone a present?

Allow time for response and discussion.

● **Say:** Giving to other people is one great way of increasing our own joy, and the joy of others. This is backed up by science! A study has found that the happiness levels of people who give gifts is much higher than those who receive gifts.¹ Giving to someone else makes us happy!

Ask: Why do you think giving to someone else increases our joy?

● **Say:** When we choose a gift for someone, we try to fit the gift to the person, to find something that suits them, something they like or will use, or that says something about the way we feel about them. Our gift shows that we care about that person, that we know what they are interested in and what matters most to them. And of course, there is nothing better than seeing someone you love and care about happy and smiling!

Ask: How can we make our gifts to friends and family special this year?

Allow some time for the children to think about any special gifts that they may like to give to a family member, friend or neighbour.

Remind the children that gifts do not need to cost money. They don't even need to be something physical that can be wrapped up.

The children can write their ideas on the gift tags.

Discuss and share your ideas with each other if appropriate. Encourage the children to actually give the gifts that they have decided on.

Pray It

● **Say:** In their joy, the wise men presented Jesus with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. With the brand-new year coming up, what kinds of gifts do you think Jesus wants from us? How can we give gifts of time and talents, skills and energy in service to him?

Ask the children to draw a picture of a gift (or gifts) they would like to give to Jesus. It could be a promise to help someone, to be kind to a sibling. Or maybe they want to give one of their toys to someone who has less than they have.

With an older group you could watch this two-minute video - *Christmas in a Nutshell*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgH8ZlZ9jQ>

As you watch, ask the children to prayerfully consider what they can offer of themselves back to Jesus this Christmas and what they can offer to others.

● **Say:** This Christmas let's remember that Jesus is the greatest gift of all. He was born in a manger many years ago and he is alive today. He is the greatest King of all, and he loves us and leads us into the wonderful life with God.

Finish with this prayer together.

King Jesus, thank you for coming into the world as a tiny baby; you are the greatest gift of all this Christmas. Thank you for all the wonderful things about Christmas, but help us always to remember that you are the most important thing. Help me to praise you with my gifts. Amen.

Explore It

Remember to send home the Explore It (For Me) and Explore It (Together) ideas for children and families.

¹ https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-12/afps-tjo121918.php