ADAPTABLE TEACHING RESOURCES

THE DVENTURE OF . CHRISTMAS

A journey through advent for churches & families

LESSON 4: WISE MEN'S ADVENTURE

Matthew 2:1-12

The Adventure of Christmas

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes use the New International Version.

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Cover design, cover illustrations and worksheet illustrations by Alex Webb-Peploe | Lesson illustrations by Magriet Brink | Craft design by Petasha Evans | Writing team: Amy Smith, Ed Drew, Cathy Dalton, Rachel Allord & Paula Standal

These resources tie in with 'The Adventure of Christmas' book of family Bible times and advent calendar. Published by The Good Book Company.

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'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)

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Wise Men's Adventure

MATTHEW 2:1-12



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Big Idea:

Understanding who Jesus is makes us worship him joyfully.



Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who love Jesus and value living for him even when that's costly.



Prepare your heart first. Pray and read the Bible passage. Read Where are we going? and Look at the Passage to give you a better understanding of the passage and the Big Idea. Spend some time thinking through Win my heart first and Questions for my heart to see how this makes a difference to your life.

Prepare your lesson. Read the lesson plan for the age group you will be teaching. Use sections from a

different age group if they are better suited to your children. Keep the **Big Idea** in your mind to help you teach it clearly in every part of your lesson. Use the blank **Lesson Template** to plan the different sections. Collect/draw/print/make what you need.

Pray for the children in your group to grasp the **Big** Idea and to live it out in their lives. Remember that you have the Holy Spirit's help as you teach God's word!



Where are we going?

Our Christmas adventure finishes with the story of a long and challenging journey, following a star. What could possibly have convinced Eastern scholars from a different land and culture to pack their bags and journey to Palestine?

The child the wise men found may not have appeared impressive, but the prophecies they had read and the stars they had studied pointed to him being God's promised king. Distance, time, effort and cost were no obstacle to them. Their response reveals that they were totally convinced that the toddler was God's king. They joyfully fell down in front of the child and offered their gifts.

That worshipped toddler is now full-grown, seated in heaven and still deserves the same response of worship. This Christmas, we've been on an adventure with the real life characters who were at the first Christmas. We've seen that Jesus is God's promised, forever king who came to save everyone - no matter who we are. Let's love the incredible King Jesus and worship him with all of our lives.

Look at the Passage

The Right Question v1-3

Pagan outsiders from the East arrived in Judea asking the question that should have been on all the local's lips, 'Where is the promised king?' As outsiders who weren't caught up in the local drama and politics, they just asked. They obviously expected the Jewish insiders to share their quest. But instead, feathers were ruffled and Herod was troubled.

The Real Evidence v4-10

The wise men had studied the heavens and the scriptures. They saw an obvious promise – God will send a king. They reached a firm conclusion – a new star has risen; the king is born. Scribes and priests were assembled to open the scriptures that were being fulfilled. They agreed; God was keeping his promise. These verses echo Micah 5:2. Just one of more than 100 Old Testament prophecies about Jesus that he fulfilled. What are the chances? Apparently, it's 1 in 10 000 billion with another 189 zeros after that! (Watch the 'What are the Chances?' video produced by Two Thieves <u>here</u>)

The Best Response v11-12

They arrived at the house to see an ordinary looking Jewish toddler. They bowed down, worshipped him and offered their extravagant gifts because they knew who he was. They realised that, despite appearances, they were in the presence of God's own son, the promised king who came to earth to save. Their response is the only reasonable conclusion to meeting the Son of God.

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Win my heart first

What makes you wonder whether following Jesus is worth it? Do you look around and feel like it's just too hard or asks too much of you? Perhaps others are having an easier time and you'd rather fit in, be comfortable and look after yourself.

But when we fix our heart's gaze on Jesus and consider who he truly is, we're blown away. He's the one who fulfils every promise God ever made. He's the one who history pointed to and who all eternity will be about. That's the truth we need to shift our perspective. It's only when we are able to step out of our own way and put the spotlight fully onto Jesus that we will fall at his feet.

Jesus stooped low to become like us, as weak and defenceless as a toddler clutching his mum's skirt, so that he could bring us to God. When we see him as he really is, we will love him, trust him and willingly bring him all we have and all we are in lives of joyful daily worship.

Questions for my heart

What holds you back from worshipping Jesus? What will help you fix your gaze on Jesus, when it easily shifts to other things?

All-Welcome Service

The table below outlines a plan to teach this lesson to the whole church gathering - adults and children, Christians and unbelieving guests together.

It includes short sections of engaging visual drama to tell the story, interactive discussions, songs and prayers. It is designed for use when children will be in for the whole service, rather than leaving for their own Sunday School groups.

There are also highlighted moments where brief 'mini-sermons' can be included if you want to add more. Aim for each of these 'mini-sermon' slots to be 5 minutes or less. Be visually engaging and use short sentences to hold children's attention. Remember to address everyone (adults, children, guests etc.) so that they understand the passage and can see how it makes a difference to their daily lives.

If the children will be leaving for their own activities, you can instead use the script as a **Bible Story Idea** to introduce the Bible passage (either as a Kids Slot in the service or at the start of the Sunday School lesson). To do this, omit the sections highlighted in blue.



4 volunteers to react to the characters, 3 volunteers dressed as wise men, a toddler. Have readers prepared for the Bible readings and prayer (e.g. children or a family).



Large cut out of a star, 4 character names on pieces of paper in a hat, wise men costumes, scrolls of paper, 3 gift boxes/bags.



PowerPoint slides showing pictures of the 4 characters to react to (dragon, royal family member, famous footballer, baby). Photocopy the worksheet for the congregation or make the following PowerPoint slides – the illustration (see Appendix) and 'Did You Spot It?' questions, 'Work It Out' questions, 'Live It Out' questions.

Hold up the star.



What to Say

Welcome to the final part of our Christmas adventure. We've been meeting the characters who were at the very first Christmas. We met Mary and Joseph, Jesus' mum and dad. And then we met the shepherds - the very first people to meet God's son and promised king, Jesus!

Today's story is also about people who visited Jesus. They were so keen to meet him that they followed a star to find him.

Let's get into the Christmas mood with a song that reminds us of Jesus' birth in the draughty stable with the singing angels and running shepherds. Sing:

Calypso Carol - See him lying on a bed of straw (Christmas carol)

What to Do

continued \longrightarrow

What to Do
Invite a few children to the front to help you with the actions. Get everyone else to join in where they are.
[PowerPoint slide of dragon]
Act out your reaction.
[PowerPoint slides of the 4 characters]
 Volunteers come up and pick a character from the hat and show their reaction. Queen - head bowed, shoulders down, knees and toes bent in a curtsey or kneel. Dragon - head back, eyes wild, arms raised in defence - knees knocking, feet ready to run. Footballer - head smiley, shoulders up and bouncing, knees and toes on the move looking sporty and excited. Baby cousin - head on one side, shoulders scrunched up, saying 'AH!', knees together, tip toeing toes - don't wake them!' Take answers from the congregation.

What to Say	What to Do
Well done for guessing the reactions. Let's sing a song before we hear about the wise men's reaction to Jesus Sing: • O little town of Bethlehem (Christmas carol)	
Listen to this Bible reading and see if you can spot the question the wise men asked. Read Matthew 2:1-6.	
The wise men lived in the East. It was far away from Jerusalem and in those days, when you travelled at the speed of your camel, the journey took a long time.	Wise men come to the front.
They travelled to Jerusalem because of what they had read, seen and studied. They'd read the scrolls and seen the star which told them a king had been born.	Wise men hold up the scroll and star.
They had one question Wise men: 'Where is the king?' They were looking for the king, because they wanted to worship him.	Wise men ask the question together.
If you were looking for the king that God promised to send to Jewish people, then the obvious place to look is the palace. These were wise men so they knew what they were doing!	Wise men smile and look pleased with themselves.
Except, when they arrived, no-one knew what they were talking about – there was a lot of shoulder shrugging. The king at the time, Herod, was troubled. His experts in scriptures also shrugged their shoulders – they didn't know about a new king.	
 Already they've used their heads and their shoulders Head – the wise men asked, 'where is the king?' Shoulders – they asked, 'where is he born?' Herod and the experts shrugged their shoulders – we don't know! 	Wise men join in with the actions: Place hands on your head as a crown. Shrug shoulders with a question.
As they read the scriptures, they found out that the king would be born in Bethlehem – a small town on the outskirts of Jerusalem.	
Let's hear what the wise men did next. Read Matthew 2:7-12	
	continued \longrightarrow





Suggested sermon slot #1: Explain the Big Idea (Understanding who Jesus is makes us worship him joyfully).

Get the congregation talking to one another. Use the 'Did You Spot It?' questions:

- What did the wise men set out wanting to do?
- How did they react when they found Jesus?



[PowerPoint slide of the illustration and 'Did You Spot It?' questions or use the worksheet.]

Wise men do the actions: Place hands on heads as a crown. Shrug shoulders with a guestion.

Invite a toddler up to the front.

Wise men do the actions: Place hands on knees - then kneel. Place gifts on the floor at the toddler's feet.

Act this out with the toddler. Wise men and toddler leave the scene.

[Powerpoint slide of 'Work It Out' questions or use the worksheet.]

So, how did the wise men react?

- Head Where is the king?
- Shoulders Where is he born?

Let's see what they did when they arrived at the house in Jerusalem. They followed the star to an ordinary looking house where they found a very ordinary looking toddler. But when they saw him they...

- Got down on their **knees** they knelt down, to show how much greater Jesus was than they were.
- Placed gifts at his **toes** they took all the precious gifts they brought with them and put them at Jesus' feet, because he is worth giving everything to.

This is no ordinary way to say hello to a toddler! When we see a toddler we might pat them on the head, put a hand on their shoulder, crouch down to their level or give them a wave.

The wise men's reaction is all in - from their head to their toes! What they did shows us that they knew they were meeting God's king and that he is worth worshipping.

He is so great, so good and so loving that when we meet him we want to trust him with everything we have and everything we are. We want to give our whole lives to following him.

Get people talking to one another using the 'Work It Out' questions:

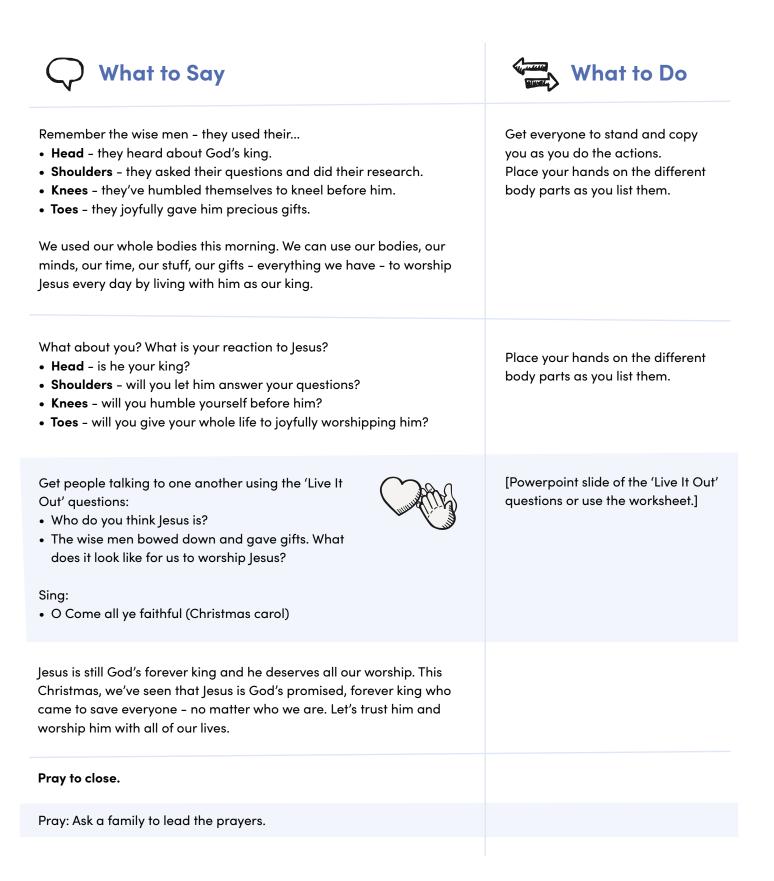
- Why do you think they were so joyful when they found him?
- Why would a full grown, wealthy man bow to a toddler?

Suggested sermon slot #2: Apply the Big Idea. We want people to love Jesus and value living for him even when that's costly.



• Lift up your voices by Awesome Cutlery (All Together Now album. Find a lyric video here)

continued \rightarrow















Focus the children's attention on the theme of the session using Get Going a game or activity. Light, not manic, so that the children can be calm afterwards, with their minds ready.



Teaching ime

Teach the key content of the lesson in an engaging way to clearly point to the Big Idea. If you have used the Bible Story Idea already, you may not need to cover the whole story again. If not, you can adapt it to use here with your group or tell the story in another way, perhaps using the suggestions below. Use a suitable Bible translation for your age group - we use the International Children's Bible which can be found online at www.biblegateway.com. However you do this Teaching Time, conclude with a simple explanation of the Big Idea.



A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get children moving. Finish by linking the activity to the Big Idea so that this time serves the Bible story.





Small group discussion:

The vital chance for the children to reflect on the story, so that its truths impact their hearts. They do most of the talking, not the leader - ask multiple children the same question; give each child an opportunity to respond to what they have heard today. The questions will lead the children to see how their heads (thoughts), hearts (feelings) and hands (actions) are shaped by the Bible story through the work of the Spirit.



Reactions Game

You will need: pictures of characters e.g. a famous sportsperson, a scary character from a book/movie, a baby animal, a superhero.

Children take it in turns to imagine they have met

one of the 4 characters. They act out how they would react to meeting them while the rest of the group have to guess which character it was.

Link: In today's Bible story, the wise men reacted to meeting Jesus by falling down and worshipping him. Their reaction tells us that they knew they were meeting God's king!



What's the Question?

You will need: a list of questions and answers.

Read out the answers from your list as statements. The children then try to work out what the question is, e.g. 'It's half past nine', the question was 'What is the time?' Or, 'it's _____ days until Christmas', the question was 'how many days until Christmas?' For the final statement say, 'He is in Bethlehem in Judea.'

Link: In today's Bible story, the wise men came asking the right question, 'Where is the one who has been born as king?'



Feaching Time



Under 7's

You will need: a star, toy house and the illustration (see Appendix).

Before the lesson, hide the star somewhere in the room

Start the lesson by asking the children to look for the special star you have hidden in the room. Once they have found it, get them to follow the star as you hold it and lead them to sit together for the story time.

ASK the question

Talk to the children about 'asking questions' e.g. if you wanted to know what was for dinner, what would you do? You would ASK! If you wanted to know someone's name, what would you do? ASK! When we want to know more and learn, we ASK questions. In today's Bible story, we meet the wise men. They got to be wise by asking questions: why is that there? How does this work? Who said this would happen? Where can we find out more?

Read Matthew 2:1-2. Explain that the wise men had seen a new star in the sky. They had studied books that talked about God's promised king, they knew he'd been born, and now they wanted to worship him so they had to find out where he was.

LOOK for the house

Explain that it was written in the Bible that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. But that was written a long, long, long time (700 years) before he was even born! The wise men knew they had to look in Bethlehem but they didn't know what street or house

continued —

number to look for. The star helped them find their way.

Ask a child to hold the star above the toy house. Lead the rest of the group on a journey around the room until you get to the house.

SHOW a wise response

Ask the children to listen carefully to how the wise men responded when they finally saw Jesus. Read Matthew 2:10-11 then look at the illustration.

• Do you think bowing down is a normal way to

meet a toddler? Is there a toddler in your group? Imagine bowing down to them!

• Why do you think they did this? They knew he was God's promised king.

Jesus is still God's promised king and we can worship him too. We don't bow down in front of him and give him gifts, but we can live our lives for him. Can they think of any examples of what worship looks like in their lives? E.g. playing with someone that always gets left out. This is worship because we're living Jesus' way.



You will need: 3 Lego/toy figures, stationery items (glue sticks, pencils/pens, stapler, hole punch, sticky tape etc), Bibles, Post-it notes and pens.

The obstacles v1-4

Explain that the wise men were going on an adventure to find the king and worship him. Place the 3 toy figures on one side of the table and the toy house on the opposite side. Draw a star on a Post-it note and stick it to the house.

Explain that there were many obstacles along the journey - hand out the stationery items and get the children to set them out on the table between the toy figures and the house.

Get them to listen carefully for what the obstacles were as you read through verses 1-5. Talk about what the journey would have been like – many months, a great cost, time away from family. They had to journey to a different culture and country with different food, different customs and different clothes. They visited a palace and asked questions but that made the king cross. Maybe they wondered if they were really in the right place because no-one knew the answer and the leaders had to look in their books. Write the obstacles on Post-it notes and stick them to the stationery items. *Move the toy figures across the table and around the obstacles until they are closer to the house*.

- What would you have found hardest to handle on this adventure?
- What did the wise men see that kept them going? (v2)

The motivation v5-9

Read verses 5-9.

• Apart from the star, what other evidence did the wise men have that they were heading in the right direction? *God's promise (v5,6) in the scriptures, which told them to go to Bethlehem.*

The wise men were totally convinced that this child was God's king and they wouldn't stop till they found him.

The goal v10-12

• What did the wise men want to do when they first started their journey? *Look back at v2.*

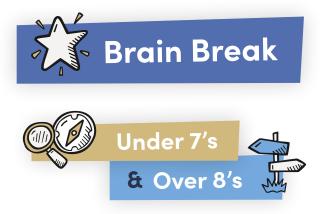
When they finally arrived, they were not disappointed.

- How did they feel? (v10)
- How did they worship the king?

Talk about how Jesus is still the king who should be worshipped. We can worship him with our hearts and our lives. When we trust him as our king and saviour, we worship him. When we make decisions to live his way and not ours, we are worshipping him.

• Can you think of examples of what it looks like to worship Jesus with your life?

Remind the children of what you have learnt together on the Adventure of Christmas - Jesus is God's promised king who will rule forever. He came to save and he came for everyone, no matter who we are. We have so many reasons to worship Jesus. The wise men faced many obstacles on their journey but they were determined to worship Jesus because of how amazing he is. We get to worship the same king. Encourage each other to keep worshipping Jesus by living for him each day.



The Right Reaction

You will need: a lightweight ball or balloon.

Play a simple throw and catch game. Tell the children you want them to head the ball when you say 'head it' and knee the ball when you say 'knee it'. They have to give the right reaction to what you say. For an extra challenge, switch to doing the opposite: head it when you say 'knee it' and knee it when you say 'head it'.

Link: The wise men gave the right reaction to Jesus because they knew who he was. They'd asked the questions and done the studying so they were sure he was the king. When they met Jesus, it was the right reaction to 'knee it' and fall down and worship him.



Heart and Hands



Under 7's

Craft time - Make a Sensory Gift Box Decoration

You will need: a copy of the craft sheet (1 sheet/ 3 children), scissors, coloured string/ribbon, glue, sticky tape, coloured pens/pencils, marker pens, coloured sequins, 1 small clear sealable plastic bag per child (approx. 7x7cm), clear hair gel. Prepare in advance: do the cutting out for younger children.

Step-by-step craft pictures can be found on page 16.

Each child needs a strip with 2 gift boxes on it. Children colour and decorate the star borders and the gift box template. To cut out the centre of the gift box, fold on the dashed line so the decoration is double sided. Then, gently fold the square in half again and cut out on the centre box lines (Fig. 1).

Give each child a plastic bag to fill with coloured sequins. Add a small amount of hair gel and seal the bags. Use a strip of sticky tape so it is sealed tightly. Place the gift box strip face down and then place the sequin filled bag over one of the cut out windows. Stick it down with sticky tape (Fig. 2). Then glue the insides of the decoration together so you have a double sided gift box with a sequin window in the centre. Punch a hole at the top of the decoration and tie a loop of string to hang the decoration. Use this craft time to reinforce the **Big Idea** of the lesson to get them ready for **Think Time**. Talk about how the wise men worshipped Jesus. We can worship Jesus by living for him with all of our hearts – children use the marker pens to draw a heart in the centre of the sequin window (Fig. 3).

Think time

Big Question: What did the wise men do when they met Jesus?

A follow up question: Why did they bow down to a toddler?

Prayer

Thank you God for keeping your promise and sending us King Jesus. Please help us to understand how brilliant Jesus is so that we worship him with our lives. Amen.

Say together: Dear Jesus, thank you for being the best king. Amen.





These questions can mostly be found on the worksheet which has been designed to aid your discussion. If possible, enlarge the page to A3 so you can work on it together. Make sure each child can still answer the personal questions honestly for themselves (e.g. hand out Post-it notes for them to write/draw their answers to these questions).

Did you spot it?

- What did the wise men set out wanting to do?
- How did they react when they found Jesus?

Work it out

- Why do you think they were so joyful when they found him?
- Why would a full grown, wealthy man bow to a toddler?

Live it out

- Who do you think Jesus is?
- The wise men bowed down and gave gifts. What does it look like for us to worship Jesus?

Extra Stretch

- The wise men had travelled from another land and different culture to worship Jesus; what does that tell you about him?
- The journey would have been costly for the wise men. Sometimes worshipping Jesus comes at a cost – our time, friends or reputation. Can you think of a time when worshipping Jesus cost you something?

Prayer

The wise men responded to Jesus with joyful worship. They weren't worried about what others thought, they weren't worried about looking stupid, they were so happy to meet the king. We've got much more information than they had about Jesus, because we know about the rest of his life, his death and his resurrection. How will you respond to him in prayer?

Craft Time

Make a Stained Glass Window Gift Box Decoration. Use the craft if you have time available after your discussion.

You will need: a copy of the craft sheet (1 sheet/ 3 children), scissors, coloured string/ribbon, glue, coloured pens, thin tip marker pens, coloured tissue paper, sticky back plastic, hole punch. Prepare in advance: cut 2 squares of sticky back plastic for each child – each square needs to cover the cut out centre of the gift box.

Step-by-step craft pictures can be found on page 16.

Each child needs a strip with 2 gift boxes on it. Children colour and decorate the star borders and the gift box template. To cut out the centre of the gift box, fold on the dashed line so the decoration is double sided. Then, gently fold the square in half again and cut out on the centre box lines (Fig. 1).

Place the gift box strip face down and put glue around one of the cut out windows. Place one square of the sticky back plastic over the window so the backing paper is facing upwards. Peel away the backing paper. Stick small pieces of coloured tissue paper to the sticky plastic to create the stained glass window effect. When done, stick the other piece of sticky back plastic over the tissue paper (Fig. 2).

Then glue the insides of the decoration together so you have a double sided gift box with a stained glass window in the centre. Punch a hole at the top of the square and tie a loop of string/ribbon to hang the decoration. Use this craft time to talk about how the wise men worshipped Jesus - they bowed down and gave gifts. Talk about how we can worship Jesus with all of our lives. Encourage them to draw a heart, a picture of themselves or an example of how they can worship Jesus on the stained glass window part of the decoration. This can help them to remember what it looks like to worship Jesus with all of their lives. This is the gift that we can give to Jesus (Fig.3).

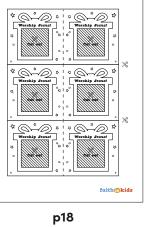


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The following pages can be copied, printed and used to accompany this lesson.



p17



Worksheet

p19



p20

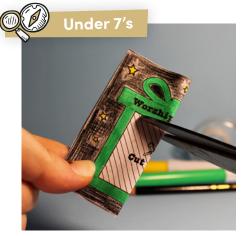


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

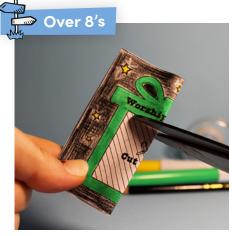


Fig. 1

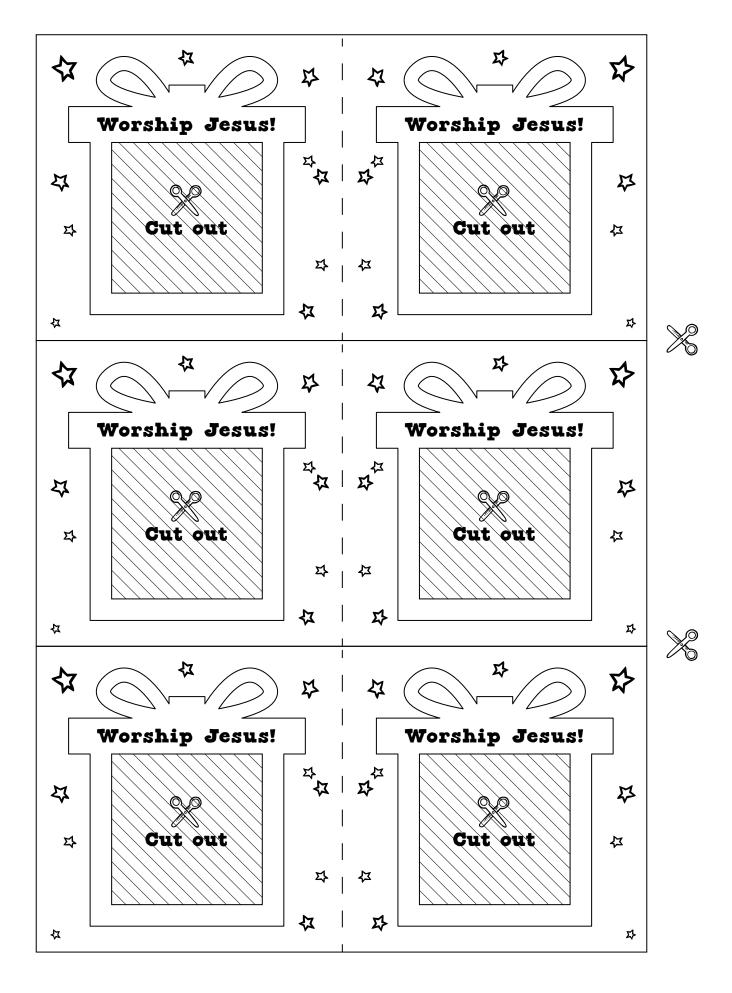






Fig. 3



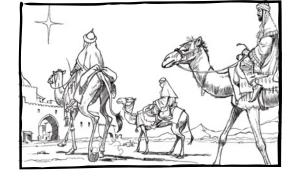




THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTMAS Lesson 4: Wise Men's Adventure **MATTHEW 2:1–12**



Did you spot it?





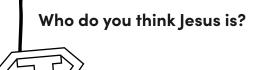
Why do you think they were so joyful when they met Jesus?

they were tired of travelling

they were meeting a king

they arrived in time for lunch





What did the wise men set out wanting to do? Use the letters to find the answer...



How did they react when they found Jesus?

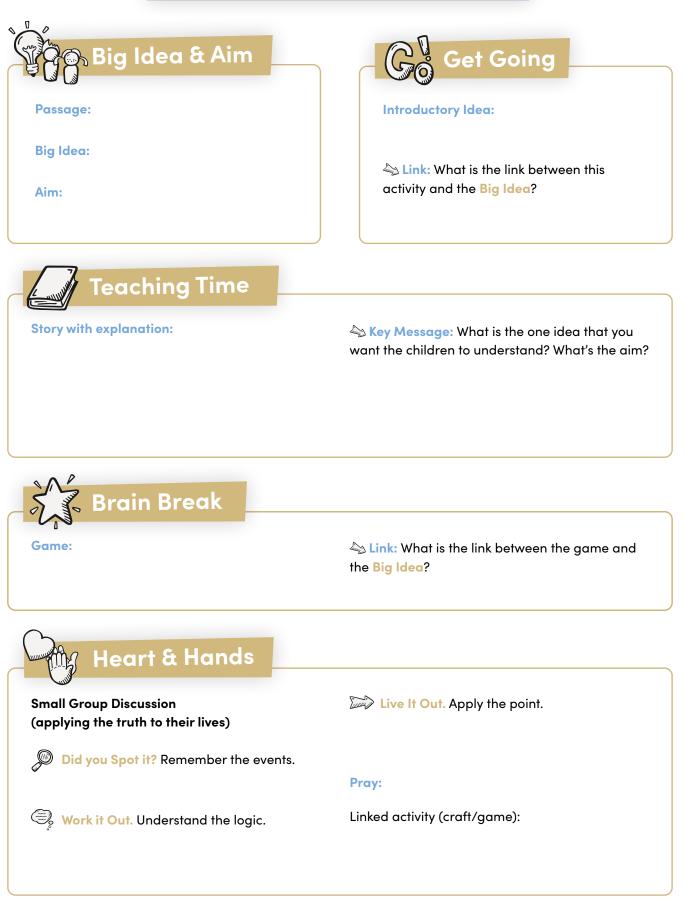




Why would a full grown, wealthy man bow to a toddler? A HIT T

> The wise men bowed down and gave gifts. What does it look like for us to worship Jesus? Write or draw an example...







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