



SESSION THREE:



# God Guides the Wise

STUDENT HANDOUT

Key Verse

The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy.

*Matthew 2:9–10*



TELL YOUR STORY:

## A Good Road Trip

Ever since the wise men first went in search of Jesus, it seems that Christmas and “road trip” have gone together. Whether it’s during the holidays or at any other time, what makes a good road trip for you? Review the list below and place a check mark next to the statement that best describes your response. Discuss the questions on the next page with your partner.

It’s only a good road trip if . . .

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everybody gets along, follows the rules, and doesn’t bug me. ( <i>I need space so I can stay patient.</i> )         | <input type="checkbox"/> I can withdraw and listen to my music or watch a movie. ( <i>I need my alone time.</i> )            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> We get there quickly and don’t take too long with boring stops. ( <i>I push to finish things.</i> )                 | <input type="checkbox"/> We play games and tell jokes and have great conversations. ( <i>I enjoy being with people.</i> )    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> We stop and get out of the car frequently so I don’t have to sit still for hours. ( <i>I have to stay active.</i> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> We buy great snacks and souvenirs along the way. ( <i>I like to have mementos of the journey.</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> We see the sights along the way and learn about interesting places. ( <i>I like to learn new things.</i> )          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

- Share the statement you checked. Why is this important for a good road trip? To explain your answer, share any stories from previous road trips that come to mind.
- What similarities might there be, if any, between what makes a road trip good for you and how you live your life? Or is there another statement on the list that comes closer to describing how you approach your life overall? Share the reasons for your answer.



STUDY GOD'S STORY:

## Magi Follow the Light

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We came to worship him.”

When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. They answered, “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
you are important among the rulers of Judah;  
A ruler will come from you.

He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites.”

Then Herod called a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. Then Herod send the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, “Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come tell me. Then I can go worship him too.”

The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place

where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped the child. They opened the gifts they brought for him. They gave him treasure of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country by a different way.

*Matthew 2:1-12*

### What They Did with the Light

	Wise Men	Herod	Priests
Did they see the light?			
What did they do?			
Why were their responses so different?			



CHRISTMAS PRACTICE:

# We Three Kings Rest Stops

ROAD TRIP REST STOP

*Whisper this verse of “We Three Kings” quietly.*

We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar [*we travel far*]  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain  
Following yonder star

## PAUSE AND IMAGINE

Pause for a moment to think about the road trip the wise men took. Imagine what it would have been like to camp out and ride camels for many months. Imagine the kinds of obstacles they ran into. Imagine the discomforts they went through. They kept going, pushing through the difficulties, so they could be with Jesus.

## MY RESPONSE

Earlier in our lesson you thought about your life as a road trip. What obstacles are you facing on your life’s journey? Where are you heading? Are *you* driving the car, or have you asked *Jesus* to be the driver of your car?

The 23rd Psalm is a well-loved psalm that describes how the Good Shepherd takes care of his sheep. Today, our Road Trip Edition of the 23rd Psalm describes a journey that has its share of obstacles, and has a great destination, but more importantly, has a good and kind driver who is taking care of the passengers all along the way. Fill in the blanks of this Road Trip Edition of Psalm 23 with your personal answers to the questions.

### Psalm 23: Road Trip Edition

The Lord is my driver. I have everything I need.

He gives me rest when \_\_\_\_\_

*[When do you need rest or new strength?]*

He gives me new strength.

For the good of his name, he drives me on roads that are right.

Even if I travel through the very dark valley of \_\_\_\_\_

*[What is something you fear or worry about?]*

I will not be afraid because you are with me.

Your GPS and your seatbelts comfort me.

You prepare a roadside picnic for me when \_\_\_\_\_

*[What is a situation you're struggling with?]*

You keep my gas tank full.

You give me more \_\_\_\_\_ than I can hold.

*[What is a gift God is giving you that you're thankful for?]*

Surely your goodness and love will be with me for the whole journey.

And at the end of the road, I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

*Adapted from Psalm 23*

Now whisper the finished psalm as your prayer of thankfulness and hope for your road trip, and your commitment to make Jesus your driver.

## MY PRAYER

Using a car cut-out, write your name on the passenger side of the car and Jesus' name on the driver's side. Stick your car on the map with a push pin. Before you move to the next station, stop and think about whether Jesus really is the driver in your life. If you are the driver, perhaps now is the time to move over and let him take the wheel. Then thank Jesus for being your driver. Thank him for what's waiting for you at the end of the road, and for how he is taking care of everything you are coming across on your journey.



## FOLLOW YOUR LIGHT REST STOP

*Whisper the chorus of “We Three Kings” quietly.*

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy Perfect Light

### PAUSE AND THINK

Earlier we discussed different responses people in the Christmas story had to the star. What’s your response to the light you have been given? Have you been ignoring it? Have you ever tried to sabotage it—destroy it in some way? Or are you willing to follow it, no matter where it leads?

### MY RESPONSE

Using a Bible, choose one of these verses about light and look it up.

### YOUR LIGHT

- John 8:12
- Psalm 119:105
- 1 John 1:5
- Matthew 5:14–16
- Luke 11:33–34

Circle the verse you chose so you can go back later and find it in your own Bible. Think about your verse, then write one word on the paper provided that says what type of light you have been given, or where your light is contained (such as Jesus, Bible, God, myself, eyes). Treat the light from your verse as YOUR light—the light God is giving you today.

### MY PRAYER

Clip your word to the string of lights, then think about your verse again. Pray to God, asking him to help you respond well to the light you have been given, whether you need to follow it, obey it, read it, see it, or let it be seen.



## WHO WEARS THE CROWN REST STOP

*Whisper this verse of “We Three Kings” quietly.*

Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain  
Gold I bring to crown Him again  
King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign

### PAUSE AND CONSIDER

In the Bible Paul tells us how Jesus gave up his heavenly status and became our servant. Read the passage below slowly and thoughtfully, underlining the ways Jesus served others and the ways we can serve too.

When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.

In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.

Christ himself was like God in everything.

He was equal with God.

But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be held on to.

He gave up his place with God and made himself nothing.

He was born as a man

and became like a servant.

*Philippians 2:3–7*

## MY RESPONSE—PHOTO BOOTH

Are you are wearing the crown that belongs to God? In other words, are you trying to be king of your own life? Name one area where you are wearing the crown. Look back at Philippians 2:3–7 for ideas, or use some of the following ideas to get you thinking:

- I try to be in charge.
- I expect people to make me happy.
- I don't listen.
- I'm selfish.
- I'm too busy.
- I'm holding on to a bad friendship.
- I worry.
- I disobey.

Now that you have thought of the area where you are wearing the crown, write it in large letters on a sheet of blank paper. Go to the photo booth area, put on the crown and hold up your sign. Have your guide take your picture.

*IDEA: As you take off the crown, do it thoughtfully, thinking about it as God's crown that you are taking off and giving back to him, putting him back in charge of your life.*

Now think about how you can look more like a servant. Come up with one way you can put others before yourself this week. Look back at Philippians 2:3–7 for ideas, or use some of the following ideas to get you started:

- I will offer help to my parents.
- I will listen to a friend.
- I will make friends with a new person.
- I will spend time with my little sister/brother.
- I will give a gift to someone who doesn't expect it.
- I will serve someone who may not thank me.

Now that you have thought of a way to put others before yourself, write what you plan to do in large letters on another blank sheet of paper. Go to the photo booth area, pick up the servant's towel, and hold up your sign. Have your guide take your picture.

### MY PRAYER

Save these photos on your phone or have your guides send them to you to remind you of your commitment. Before you move to the next station, take some time to pause and pray and ask God to help you give the crown back to God and pick up the servant's towel this week.



## FRAGRANCE OF WORSHIP REST STOP

*Whisper this verse of “We Three Kings” quietly, noting the explanation of the meaning of the second line.*

Frankincense to offer have I

Incense owns a Deity nigh    *[our prayers (symbolized by incense) are owned by or deserved by a God (Deity) who is close (nigh)]*

Prayer and praising, all men raising

Worship Him, God most high

### PAUSE AND IMAGINE

In Bible times, frankincense was often burned, and the fragrant smoke symbolized the sweet aroma of our prayers and worship. Imagine how pleasing our prayers and our worship are to God. Imagine what kind of fragrance they actually have. Think about how God feels about us when he hears our worship.

### MY RESPONSE

In our lesson last week, we studied the gift of worship the angels gave to God. Return to the practice of worship right now by lifting your eyes to Psalm 63:1–5 posted on the wall, lift your hands up to God, and whisper the words of praise in the psalm to God as your sweet aroma of worship.

## MY PRAYER

After you have whispered the words of the psalm posted on the wall, look at it again below. Circle your favorite phrase and repeat it a few times while closing your eyes and imagining how fragrant your words are to God.

God, you are my God.

I want to follow you.

My whole being

thirsts for you,

like a man in a dry, empty land

where there is no water.

I have seen you in the Temple.

I have seen your strength and glory.

Your love is better than life.

I will praise you.

I will praise you as long as I live.

I will lift up my hands in prayer to your name.

I will be content as if I had eaten the best foods.

My lips will sing. My mouth will praise you.

*Psalm 63:1-5*

Before moving to the next station, think about why you circled the phrase you did. What is happening in your life right now that made that line meaningful to you? Thank God for what he means to you, and for caring about your life and your concerns.



## OINTMENT OF FORGIVENESS REST STOP

*Whisper this verse of “We Three Kings” quietly.*

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breathes of life of gathering gloom  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

### PAUSE AND WONDER

Did you ever realize “We Three Kings” had such a gloomy verse? Think about why such a sad thought has a place in a Christmas carol. Have you figured it out? Why do you think the wise men brought a gift of myrrh to the baby, which was an ointment used to prepare bodies for burial? That’s an unusual gift for a baby, but not for this baby. Why?

### MY RESPONSE

This baby was going to die in our place. Jesus’ death paid for the forgiveness we need for our sins. Ask God to show you a sin in your life that needs his forgiveness. Using the washable pen, write that sin on your arm. Then, as a symbol of how Christ’s death wipes out your sin, rub oil or lotion over your arm, similar to the way the myrrh would have been rubbed on Christ’s body when it was being prepared for burial. As you rub and see the sin slowly fade away, read the following psalm:

God, be merciful to me  
because you are loving.  
Because you are always ready to be merciful,  
wipe out all my wrongs.  
Wash away all my guilt  
and make me clean again.

*Psalm 51:1-2*

## MY PRAYER

After your “sin” has been rubbed away, repeat Psalm 51:12 as your prayer, this time thanking God for his mercy, and naming your specific sin:

Thank you, God, that you are merciful to me  
because you are loving.  
Because you are always ready to be merciful,  
wipe out my \_\_\_\_\_ .

*[Name the wrongs you are trusting God to wipe out]*

Thank you for washing away all my guilt  
and making me clean again.



## CANDLE OF COMMITMENT REST STOP

*Whisper this verse of “We Three Kings” quietly.*

Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heav’n replies

### PAUSE AND REFLECT

Think about the symbols from each of our Rest Stops, and notice their connection with the words in the last verse of “We Three Kings.” Choosing from the 5 symbols from our Rest Stops, which symbol do each of these words or phrases refer to?

Glorious now behold him arise \_\_\_\_\_

King \_\_\_\_\_

God \_\_\_\_\_

Sacrifice \_\_\_\_\_

MYRRH    ROAD TRIP    GOLD    STAR    FRANKINCENSE

## MY RESPONSE

Which of the Rest Stops did you need the most today?

- Did you need to let Jesus be the driver at the Road Trip Rest Stop?
- Did you need to follow, obey, read, or see the light at the Follow Your Light Rest Stop?
- Did you need to take off God's crown and pick up the towel at the Who's Wearing the Crown Rest Stop?
- Did you need to give God a gift of worship at the Fragrance of Worship Rest Stop?
- Did you need forgiveness at the Ointment of Forgiveness Rest Stop?

Light your candle and put it next to the symbol of the Rest Stop you responded to most today.

## MY PRAYER

Kneel and focus on the candles. Pray about your response to the Rest Stop you chose. Review what you did at that Rest Stop, and make a commitment to God in the area he spoke to you about.



**CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE:** Refer back to your Student Handout and review the Rest Stop that meant the most to you. Once a day, work on the practice of that Rest Stop. Next week come prepared to share with our group a way your Rest Stop practice worked for you. Did it shine God's light on your path a little clearer? Did you follow his light a little better? Did you get closer to Jesus?

**CHRISTMAS FOCUS:** Read chapters 7–9 in *Because of Bethlehem*.



## “WE THREE KINGS”

We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain  
Following yonder star

—Chorus—

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy Perfect Light

Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain  
Gold I bring to crown Him again  
King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign

Chorus

Frankincense to offer have I  
Incense owns a Deity nigh  
Prayer and praising, all men raising  
Worship Him, God most high  
Chorus

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breathes of life of gathering gloom  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb  
Chorus

Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heav’n replies  
Chorus