



SESSION THREE:



God Guides the Wise

ELEMENTARY 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 following 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

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.

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 2:6–7

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. You may 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.

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 2:6–7 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 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 fragrance 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.



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.

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