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The Wise Men Follow the Star

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Theme: Jesus is the King worth seeking and worshipping

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"The Wise Men Follow the Star: Why Jesus is Worth the Hunt" (Matthew 2:1-12) Imagine you hear a whisper in the dark, "Follow the light." For three brave men, that whisper wasn't just a dream; it was an adventure. They left their comforts (maybe even their families!) to chase a mystery star, only to find the greatest treasure in the world: the King of kings. Their story isn't just about finding Jesus, it's about realizing He's worth the chase. Sometimes, God calls us to leave behind distractions, follow His leading, and trust that the path will lead to something better. And the best part? When we worship Him, we get to be part of the celebration, just like these men did. Life Application: What's one thing you're willing to leave behind today to seek Jesus? Maybe it's a distraction, a wrong choice, or even just doubt. The star never leads us astray, it points us to the only King who really matters. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

Title: The Wise Men Follow the Star

Long ago, in the small town of Bethlehem, a baby was born, a baby that would change the world. The news spread fast, and far across the land, wise men from a distant country heard the exciting rumors. They weren't ordinary kings or scholars, but men who studied the stars and searched for answers. They wondered, "What could this baby mean for the world?"

When they heard the story, they packed their bags and set out on a long journey. They traveled far, guided by a mysterious star that appeared in the sky. At first, it seemed to stop over Jerusalem, but the wise men realized they had to keep going because they didn't want to confuse King Herod, who was worried about losing his power. So, they continued until they finally found the right place, where the baby was lying in a manger.

The star led them straight to Jesus, and when they saw Him, they knelt down and worshipped. They gave Him gifts, gold to honor His kingship, frankincense to honor His priestly role, and myrrh, a precious ointment that showed they knew He would face hardship as He grew up. They left a message for Herod too: "We've found the baby who will be King of the Jews!" But before they left, God warned them in a dream to go home another way, so Herod couldn't hurt Jesus.

This story teaches us that sometimes, we don't need to be experts to know something is special. God uses ordinary people, like the wise men, to reveal His truth. Even in our own lives, when we're unsure or searching, God can guide us through unexpected ways, like stars leading the way.

Why This Matters: God still speaks to us today, even if we don't see a bright star. Like the wise men, we might feel like we're on a journey of faith, sometimes we'll get lost, but God will always lead us home. His love and wisdom are always there, waiting to guide us.

Key Verse

Matthew 2:2 , 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.'

Here's how you could explain Matthew 2:2 to junior high students in a way that's honest, relatable, and full of life application: --- "Imagine the biggest, brightest star you've ever seen, like a giant supernova in the sky, leading a group of travelers straight to a baby in a manger. That's what these wise men (probably scholars or kings from another country) were doing when they asked, "Where is this King of the Jews?" They didn't just want to know, it was like they saw proof in the sky that this tiny baby was actually special, worth following, and worth worshipping. Their question wasn't just curiosity; it was a declaration: "This kid is no ordinary baby, this is God's big, bold move!" And even though they came with gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), they didn't stop there. They worshipped Him because they knew this wasn't just a story, it was a real, game-changing beginning." Why does this matter to us today? - For questions: When you wonder "Why am I here?" or "Does God really care about me?", the wise men remind us that even ordinary people (like you!) can see something special in the world, maybe in a book, a song, or even a moment of kindness. Their story teaches us to ask "What's the bigger picture?" - For worship: Worship isn't just singing songs, it's honoring what you truly believe is worth your time. The wise men didn't just look at Jesus; they stopped to bow down and give Him their best. Can you imagine doing that for someone who changed your life? - For action: They didn't just show up, they came back to tell others! Maybe you'll someday share what you believe is real and meaningful too. Real question for you: "If I could see a 'star' in the sky today (metaphorically speaking), what would make me believe someone is 'born king' enough to change my life?" (And remember: God's kingdom starts small, with you!) --- Key takeaway: This verse is like a neon sign saying, "Look up! This kid isn't just a baby, He's the One who makes the world matter."

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Discuss the Star's Light (5 min):
2. Ask: "How did the Wise Men know which way to go? Was it just intuition, or something else?"
3. Read Matthew 2:1-12 (or summarize: "The star led them straight to Jesus, just like God's promises lead us!").
4. Create the Star Path (7 min):
5. Give each student a piece of paper and ask them to draw a star at the top.
6. Below the star, have them sketch a winding path (curves, lines, or zigzags) with crayons, marking the "journey" of the Wise Men.
7. Encourage them to write or draw clues (e.g., "God's promise," "warning signs," "family help") along the path.
8. Share & Reflect (3 min):
9. Have students share their star path with a partner or the group.

10. Ask: "What part of your path do you think God led you toward? Where did you get confused?"
11. Tie it to life: "Sometimes God's path isn't straight, it's full of twists! How can we trust Him even when the road isn't easy?"
12. Why It Works:
13. Combines art with biblical reflection.
14. Lets students explore faith in uncertainty (like the Wise Men).
15. Encourages honest discussion about life's "star paths."

Activity 2:

1. Set Up the Game (3 min):
2. Hide the folded "stars" (clues) around the room (e.g., behind chairs, under desks).
3. Assign 3, 4 students per team. Give them a simple rule: "Each team must find all the clues to win!"
4. Explain the Clues (5 min):
5. Write 4, 5 clues on the paper stars, e.g.:
6. "What was the star's color, according to the Bible?" (Answer: "red", Matthew 2:2)

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions designed to spark meaningful conversation and reflection on The Wise Men Follow the Star (Matthew 2:1-12). These questions encourage critical thinking, empathy, and personal application while staying age-appropriate for junior high students.
- 1. "When Have You Felt Like You Were Lost in Life? How Did You Find Your Way?"
- The Magi didn't start as wise followers, they were curious strangers seeking answers. At some point in your life, have you felt like you were wandering through uncertainty? Whether it was in school, friendships, or even figuring out your own purpose, what clues or "stars" did you notice that helped you find your way back to the right path?
- Why it matters:
- This question invites students to connect the Magi's journey with their own struggles. It highlights how God often reveals His presence in small ways, like dreams, mentors, or even an unexpected friend, and how even the "lost" can learn to trust the guidance.
- 2. "If You Could Have One Question Asked by the Wise Men, What Would It Be? And Why?"
- The Magi didn't just follow a star, they asked questions to understand its meaning. They wanted to know if the king they worshipped was truly the only king (Matthew 2:2). Imagine you're in a similar situation: You're following something significant in your life (a dream, a relationship, or even faith), but you're not sure if it's right. What specific question would you ask to help you decide?
- Why it matters:
- This question pushes students to think about how discernment works in real life. It's a practical exercise in asking the right questions, not just trusting blindly, but exploring doubts and seeking clarity, just like the Magi did.
- 3. "What's Something You've Given Away That You Didn't Expect to Regain?"
- The Magi didn't just give up gold, they gave everything (Matthew 2:11). Gold was their wealth, their time, and their journey's culmination. If you've ever sacrificed something precious (like a hobby, a friendship, or even a personal belief) to follow a bigger dream or principle, what surprised you about the outcome?
- Why it matters:
- This question ties the story to modern challenges, like making tough choices for faith, school, or family. It reminds students that surrender isn't always easy, but it can lead to unexpected blessings, just as the Magi's gift

was a reminder of God's generosity.

- 4. "The Star Led Them Home... But What If It Had Led Them Elsewhere?"
- The star was a supernatural sign, but its path could have been ambiguous. Some scholars think the star's journey might have been a test of faith, what if the Magi had followed it into danger or deception? If you had to imagine a similar situation, how would you respond if the "star" in your life led you in a direction you didn't expect?
- Why it matters:
 - This question explores the tension between following divine guidance and trusting our own instincts. It's a great conversation starter about how we balance faith with wisdom, and when to seek help from others (like the Magi did when they left Jerusalem).
- Bonus Discussion Tip:
 - After each question, ask students to share one example from their own life that relates to the story. For example:
 - "When was a time you had to ask a question that made you feel like a 'Magi'?"
 - "What's something you've given up that turned out to be worth more than you thought?"
 - This keeps the dialogue personal while reinforcing the lesson's life-applications. Would you like any of these adjusted for a specific theme (e.g., more focus on doubt, sacrifice, or leadership)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Junior High: "Wise Enough to Follow the Star" Teacher opens with gentle energy, inviting the class to sit quietly for a moment. Maybe even holds up a small star-shaped rock or a glowing LED star as a visual aid. "Alright, class, imagine this: Three really smart guys showed up to ask some big questions. Not just 'how's the weather?' but 'what's really going on in this world?' They weren't looking for shortcuts or half-truths, they wanted to see the whole picture. Like they were holding a magnifying glass to God's plan, asking, 'Where's this thing we've been told about?' (Pause for a moment of reflection.) And God didn't send them a text message. Nope. He sent a star, something so obvious, so dramatic, that you can't miss it if you're paying attention. For three wise men, that star wasn't just a flickering light in the night sky... it was a call to adventure, a sign that they were on the right path. But here's the thing: the star didn't just show them the way, it challenged them. It made them ask, 'How do I know I'm following the right thing?' And the truth? Sometimes, the answer isn't in a book, or a podcast, or even a 'wise person' we know, it's in the quiet where God speaks. Like when you're trying to decide what to do with your life, or when you're stuck making a big choice. The star in this story wasn't about just getting there, it was about trusting that the journey matters just as much as the destination. So today, we're praying: 'God, help us be wise enough to see what you're showing us, not just in the big answers, but in the small signs, and not just know what's right, but follow it, even when it's hard.'" (Let the class pray together:) "God, show us how to trust You like the wise men trusted You, not because we're always sure, but because we know You're good. Help us not to miss Your signs, but to follow them with hearts open to change. Amen."

>> Missions Spotlight

The Magi (wise men) likely came from Persia (modern-day Iran). Today, Iran has one of the fastest-growing church movements in the world. Many Iranians are discovering that the 'star' their ancestors may have followed leads to Jesus.

-> To the Cross

The wise men traveled a long, hard way to find Jesus. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Myrrh was used for burial , a sign that even at His birth, Jesus' death was part of the plan. He came to be King AND Savior.