

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Second Sunday after Christmas
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

The Incarnation: the Word made flesh. The Word, with God from the very beginning and hovering over the creation process with God, is now an infant lying on a bed of straw surrounded by curious animals. The awe and wonder of this incredible breakthrough can become awash in sentimentality and cuteness. Each year we tiptoe up to this amazing gift: God, in human flesh, coming to live among us. Each year we choose our response.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

A star so bright it commanded the attention of wise men from far away and from a very different faith tradition. Tenaciously, these wise ones followed a star to a very different land and humbly knelt before the infant. Who did they believe this infant was? Who do we say he is?

Theme: A Star Led the Way

Before Class: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for today. You will also need a whiteboard or large sheet of paper for taking notes. If you have access to a video camera you may want to record their interview to show them and to share with their parents.

Beginning: Tell the children that our scripture for today happened before the scripture we had last Sunday (the family fleeing to Egypt to be safe). Today’s story having happened, the story we had last week was pretty inevitable. We can look at today’s story as a flashback--how and why last week the Holy family fled to Egypt.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for this story that helps us see that Jesus came for all of us. Be with us and help us to hear your story in a new way. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 2:1-12 Invite one child to read verse 1-6 and another to read 7-12.

Activity: For a different way to get at this story, tell the children we will have a talk show – either TV or radio, their choice. We will need a TV or radio host to interview Herod, the chief priests and the wise men. Before the host does the interviews we will need to figure out something about the characters: (You may want to make notes on a white board or large sheet of paper for the children to use as they prepare.)

- What do we know from this passage about the wise men?
- Where did they come from? (the “east” so they were not Jews.)
- Why did they decide to follow the star? (It was a star they had never seen before and had heard that a new star would be a sign of a new king.)
- What signs do we find in this passage to assure us that they were, indeed, wise? (They brought presents worthy of a king.)
- What is “frankincense,” and what is “myrrh?” (Both are used in incense and in perfume.)
- What did they figure out about King Herod? (That he was up to no good, so did not tell him where the baby was.)

- What do we know about King Herod in this passage?
- Why was King Herod frightened at the question the wise men asked? (If there was a baby king out there, what could happen to his being king?)
- How did he try to trick the wise men into revealing where the baby was? (He told them to come tell him where the baby was so he, too, could go and worship the baby.)
- What can we determine about the scribes and the chief priest? (They were called upon by Herod because they were knowledgeable about Hebrew scriptures and might know about who was the “King of the Jews”)

The Talk Show: Invite the children to decide who will be the host or hosts, who will be King Herod, the chief priests and scribes, and the wise men. If there are additional children, either take turns in the parts, or just add additional perspectives (some more chief priests, an employee or two of the wise men who went along on the journey, even another interviewer.)

When the children are ready, enjoy the show they present. If you have the ability, you may want to record it so they can watch it themselves and share it with their parents.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to wonder with you: What do you think the wise men did when they got back home? Did they kept quiet about their experience, or told others about the baby they saw?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the ways your story gets told. Help us to follow your star, and guide us to see Christ in our midst. Amen.

Matthew 2:1-12

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.” ’

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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