Preschool–Grade 6

The Wise Men

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: The wise men sought Jesus, worshiped Him as God and gave Him their best. Real seeking leads to real worship, not just knowing facts about Him.
Bible passage: Matthew 2:1–12. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." *Matthew 2:10 (KJV)* and "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." *Jeremiah 29:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 2:1–12, Micah 5:2 and Jeremiah 29:13. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: In Matthew 2 or Not? (5–10 minutes)

Read each item. Students stand up if they think it is in Matthew 2:1–12, and stay seated if it isn't. After each one, give the answer.

1. Wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. *(In: 2:1)* 2) There were three wise men. *(Not in the text; it names three gifts, 2:11, but never says how many men)* 3) They rode camels. *(Not in the text)* 4) They asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" *(In: 2:2)* 5) They visited Jesus in the manger the night He was born. *(Not in the text; they came "into the house" and saw "the young child," 2:11)* 6) The star went before them and stood over where the young child was. *(In: 2:9)* 7) They gave gold, frankincense and myrrh. *(In: 2:11)* 8) They went home another way. *(In: 2:12)*
   Ask: *Why does it matter to know what the Bible actually says?* Say: "Pictures and songs add a lot of extras. We want to know God's Word for ourselves, so today we read the story straight from the text."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Matthew 2:1–8. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **Judaea** (2:1): the southern part of the land of Israel, where Bethlehem is; **behold** (2:1): look!
- **troubled** (2:3): upset and worried
- **chief priests and scribes** (2:4): the leaders of the priests, and the men who studied and copied God's Word
- **demanded** (2:4): asked strongly; **Christ** (2:4): the Anointed One, the promised King
- **Juda** (2:6): Judah; **princes** (2:6): leading towns; **Governor** (2:6): ruler
- **privily** (2:7): secretly; **enquired diligently** (2:7): asked carefully

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Read out loud: Micah 5:2. Old words: **Ephratah** is another name for the Bethlehem area; **little among the thousands of Judah** means a small town among Judah's clans; **from of old, from everlasting** means He has always existed. Ask: *The scribes quoted this verse to Herod (Matthew 2:5–6). What does it tell you about the child the wise men were looking for?*

Read out loud: Matthew 2:9–12. Old words in this passage:

- **lo** (2:9): look!; **went before them** (2:9): went ahead of them
- **rejoiced with exceeding great joy** (2:10): were filled with very, very great joy
- **young child** (2:11): what Matthew calls Jesus here; Matthew says they came into a **house**, not to a manger
- **fell down** (2:11): bowed low to the ground; **treasures** (2:11): the valuable things they brought; **presented** (2:11): gave
- **frankincense** and **myrrh** (2:11): costly, sweet-smelling gums from trees (frankincense was in the holy incense, Exodus 30:34)
- **warned of God** (2:12): warned by God; **departed** (2:12): left

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The wise men said they came "to worship him" (2:2). Herod said he wanted to "worship him also" (2:8), but Matthew 2:13 shows he didn't mean it. What is the difference between real worship and just saying the words?
2. The chief priests and scribes knew the right verse and the right town (2:4–6), but the Bible doesn't say they went to Bethlehem. Can someone know a lot about Jesus and still not come to Him? What about you?
3. Jeremiah 29:13 says God is found when we search "with all your heart." What does seeking God with all your heart look like for someone your age?
4. The wise men worshiped the young child (2:11), and Jesus said to worship God only (Matthew 4:10). What does that tell you about who Jesus is?
5. They opened their treasures and gave them to Jesus (2:11). What are your "treasures" (time, talents, plans)? What would it look like to give them to Him?
6. God warned them in a dream and they obeyed, going home another way (2:12). Why is it wise to obey God even when it changes your plans?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **rejoiced with exceeding great joy** means filled with very, very great joy. In Jeremiah 29:13, **ye** means you, and **with all your heart** means truly and completely, not halfway.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 2:10 this week; keep working on Jeremiah 29:13 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The wise men fell down and worshiped a young child. That is only right if that child is God, because 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve' (Matthew 4:10, KJV). And He is! 'God was manifest in the flesh' (1 Timothy 3:16, KJV): the one God came to us as a man to be our Savior. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. The wise men came "to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). Am I seeking Jesus with all my heart, or do I mostly know facts about Him?
2. What is one "treasure" in my life (my time, a talent, a plan) that I want to give to Jesus this week?
3. Write a short prayer of worship, telling God who He is and thanking Him for coming to us in Jesus. If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Matthew 2:1–12 at home with your family. Spend ten minutes each day seeking God in prayer and in His Word.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are worthy of all our worship. Thank You for coming to us in Jesus. Help us seek You with all our heart, not just know about You, and give You our very best. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks what Herod did next: this lesson stops at Matthew 2:12 and leaves out 2:13–18. Read it yourself before class. Answer honestly and gently: Herod was angry when the wise men didn't come back, and he did a very cruel thing to the young children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). But God had already warned Joseph in a dream, and Joseph took Mary and young Jesus safely to Egypt (2:13–14). God's plan to save us could not be stopped.

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