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# Let Your Light Shine!

## Sunday School Lesson for Epiphany

### from Matthew 2:12-12

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Contrary to most traditional Nativity scenes, the visitation of the Magi (or “Wise Men”) most likely did not take place directly after the birth of Jesus, but was a somewhat separate, though still significant event. In several countries, Epiphany (or “Three Kings Day”) is elaborately honored with gifts and food, in some places even more so than Christmas itself. This story is an important and fun one to celebrate with children. The official “Feast Day” of Epiphany is twelve days after Christmas, on January 6<sup>th</sup>. However, you are always welcome to adapt suggestions and adjust to meet the needs of your group!

**Lesson focus:** There are several key points that can be emphasized in the story of the Magi. The focus of this lesson is on how the revelation to the Magi demonstrates that Christ’s coming is for all people. We recognize that Jesus is the king, come to rescue everyone from sin. This lesson also looks at the importance of shining the light of Christ to others by living for Him and sharing the good news of the Gospel with those around us.

**Passage:** Matthew 2:1-12 (additionally Numbers 24:17, Micah 5:2, Isaiah 60:1-3, Psalm 72:11)

**Target Audience:** Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade

#### More Teaching Ideas:

- Watch the [children’s sermon teaching](#) example and related [Bible crafts](#) for this passage
- Compare our related [Sunday School Lesson for Epiphany](#)
- See the Bible teaching activities on [Sunday School Works for Matthew 2:1-12](#)

**Materials Needed:** Construction paper; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; yarn/string; glitter; popsicle sticks; cookie cutters; maps or globes; Bibles.

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## Games and Group Activities to Introduce the Lesson

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**Lesson Opening:** This lesson involves searching for Jesus, traveling, and providing gifts. Consider a fun opening activity involving light, travel, or hide and seek.

- Star search: Scatter several pieces of paper around the classroom, cut into star shapes. Have part of a memory verse written on each star. After students have found all of the stars, invite them to come together and assemble the verse in order.
- Find Jesus! Hide a small baby doll somewhere in a classroom or nearby area. Play “hot and cold” to find the baby, or provide a map or scavenger hunt with clues. As an additional option, once the baby is found, have another student (perhaps the one who found it) hide the doll elsewhere.
- Shine the light: play a twist on the game “I spy.” Have one child use a flashlight to point to an object somewhere in the room, and see which student can be the first to identify where the flashlight beam is pointing.
- Where are we heading? Use a compass or a map to explain that there are many ways we can get directions somewhere. These days, our phones offer GPS and turn by turn instructions! The compass for our Christian lives should be God’s word, the Bible.
- Enjoy a king cake! This is a traditional treat for the feast of the Epiphany. Make a special cake, and hide a small bean or baby doll within. The student who receives the treasure inside the cake is “king for the day” and can wear a special crown.
- Play a traditional round of “hide and go seek” or “sardines” to recall how Mary and Joseph had to hide away to Egypt with Jesus to save Him from King Herod.
- Sing “We Three Kings” to recall the story in musical form (even if inaccurate).

Explain that the visit of the Wise Men didn’t take place right after Jesus was born. It might have even been a couple of years later! We will take a look at what might have happened then.

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## Epiphany (Matthew 2:1-12) Sunday School Lesson

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**Bible Lesson:** This lesson is one that can be fun to act out as you review the action. You might assign parts and coach kids to repeat words or mime the action as you read. You could also describe the passage as you read a few verses at a time. Additionally, you could opt to read a version from a children's Bible or story book. Start off by mentioning that the visit of the Magi happened *after* Jesus was born. We aren't sure exactly when it took place, but Jesus was no longer a newborn.

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." -Matthew 2:1-2*

Talk a little bit about who these "wise men" might have been. They were not quite kings as the song mentions, but "Magi" (from a Persian term "magupati"). They were probably priests in an Eastern temple, and studied astronomy and signs. These men were not Jewish, but they knew something about the Scriptures, as they recognized the star's significance. Note the significance of this: God revealed Himself to ALL people, even those far from the faith and physical space of the Jews. The Magi were willing to travel quite a distance, at great expense, to find Jesus and worship Him.

**Ask:** What do you know about stars? Do you ever look at the night sky to find special stars or constellations? Can God really use stars to guide people? (Of course!)

*When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler*

*who will shepherd my people Israel." -Matthew 2:3-6*

Here, Herod grows a little nervous. Herod was a jealous king (and a little crazy). He didn't like the sound of another king coming to Israel, so he prodded the Magi, as well as his own "wise men", with

further questions. They explained that they had been guided to Bethlehem, and knew of the prophecy from Micah that promised Bethlehem would be a significant place.

**Ask:** Have you ever taken a long trip? What do you have to do to prepare when taking a journey? The Magi did not have cars or road-side McDonald's or GPS...they worked hard to come to Bethlehem, only to encounter a strange and angry king.

Explain that King Herod instructed the Magi to go find Jesus and bring Him back to the palace...but his true intention was NOT to worship the newborn king...

*Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. -Matthew 2:7-9*

Herod didn't want to worship Jesus...he wanted to get rid of Him! He thought Jesus was a threat to his throne. But the Magi went on their way, and found the star near the place where Jesus was. It's hard to know exactly what was so special about this star or how they knew it was exactly where Jesus was staying, but they found it. The star shone on Jesus, telling the Magi where to find Him.

Explain to children that our job is sort of like that special star! We are called to shine God's light into the world, so that other people can know the joy of Jesus and worship Him, just as the Magi did.

**Ask:** What would you do if you came to the end of a long journey and found what you were looking for? What would you bring as a gift if you went to see Jesus as a baby?

The Magi were excited to finally reach their destination! They worshiped Jesus and brought Him special gifts. Remember: these were people who had not spent their lives waiting for the Messiah as the Jews had, but they still recognized the significance of His birth. They presented Him with special offerings out of their joy and gladness. Jesus came for the world. Not simply for a few people, but for everyone!

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in*

*a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. -Matthew 2:10-12*

The Magi followed the star and were rewarded to find Jesus, the savior of the whole world. Their lives were made complete in Him, just as ours are! We, too, should be willing to do whatever it takes to worship Jesus with our lives. We can also rejoice in opportunities to share His love with others!

Note that God spoke to the Magi again, giving them a dream that warned them not to return to Herod. God was protecting Jesus. If appropriate for your age group audience, you can also share that Herod was furious when he learned the Magi had fled via an alternate route...so angry, in fact, that he ordered the slaughter of ALL male babies in the area! God had already told Mary and Joseph to flee to Egypt, so Jesus was safe. But it reminds us of the painful destruction and sorrow that can come from selfishness.

If time allows (during or after the rest of the story), note some significant prophetic verses that relate to the story:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days. -Micah 5:2*

*I see him, but not now;  
I behold him, but not near:  
a star shall come out of Jacob,  
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;  
it shall crush the forehead of Moab  
and break down all the sons of Sheth. -Numbers 24:17*

*May all kings fall down before him,  
all nations serve him! -Psalm 72:11*

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*

*2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;*

*but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will be seen upon you.*

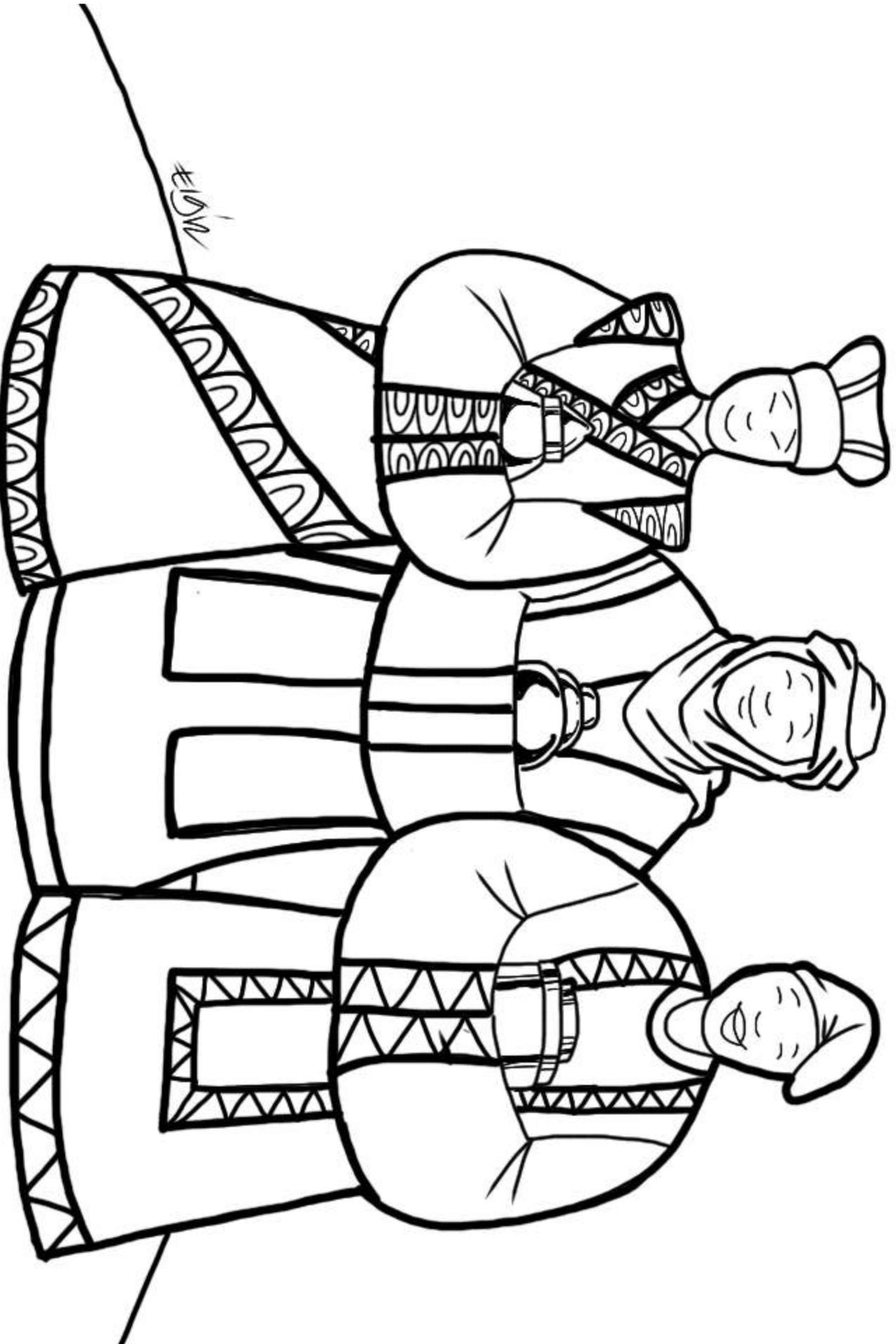
*3 And nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your rising. -Isaiah 60:1-3*

**Craft:** Create some fun crafts that recall the characters in the story, or the significance of the star and light:

- Make puppets of the Wise Men, Mary and Joseph, and Jesus. Use paper bags, toilet paper tubes, or popsicle sticks, and dress them up with fun personality as the players in the story.
- Glue large popsicle sticks together to form a star. Decorate with glitter, stickers, or paint, and attach a string or pipe cleaner to hang as an ornament.
- Make crowns out of foam, cardboard, or paper. True, the Magi were not kings, but Jesus is king!
- Use Epsom salts and perfumed oil to create perfumed salts or potpourri like the incense and myrrh in the story.
- Create a map or treasure hunt guide to recall how the Magi had to seek out Jesus.
- Make a “stained glass” image: Decorate a star in paper (or another image). Cut out small points within and attach bits of colorful tissue paper behind the cut points. Hang the decoration in a window so the light will shine through.
- Use star-shaped cookie cutters to make stars out of paper, play-doh, air-drying clay, or even edible items like Jell-O and bread!

**Close** with prayer, thanking God for coming to Earth as Jesus. Ask for His help as we worship and as we shine His light for others.

*... We Have Seen HIS Star in The East...*



# Wise Men

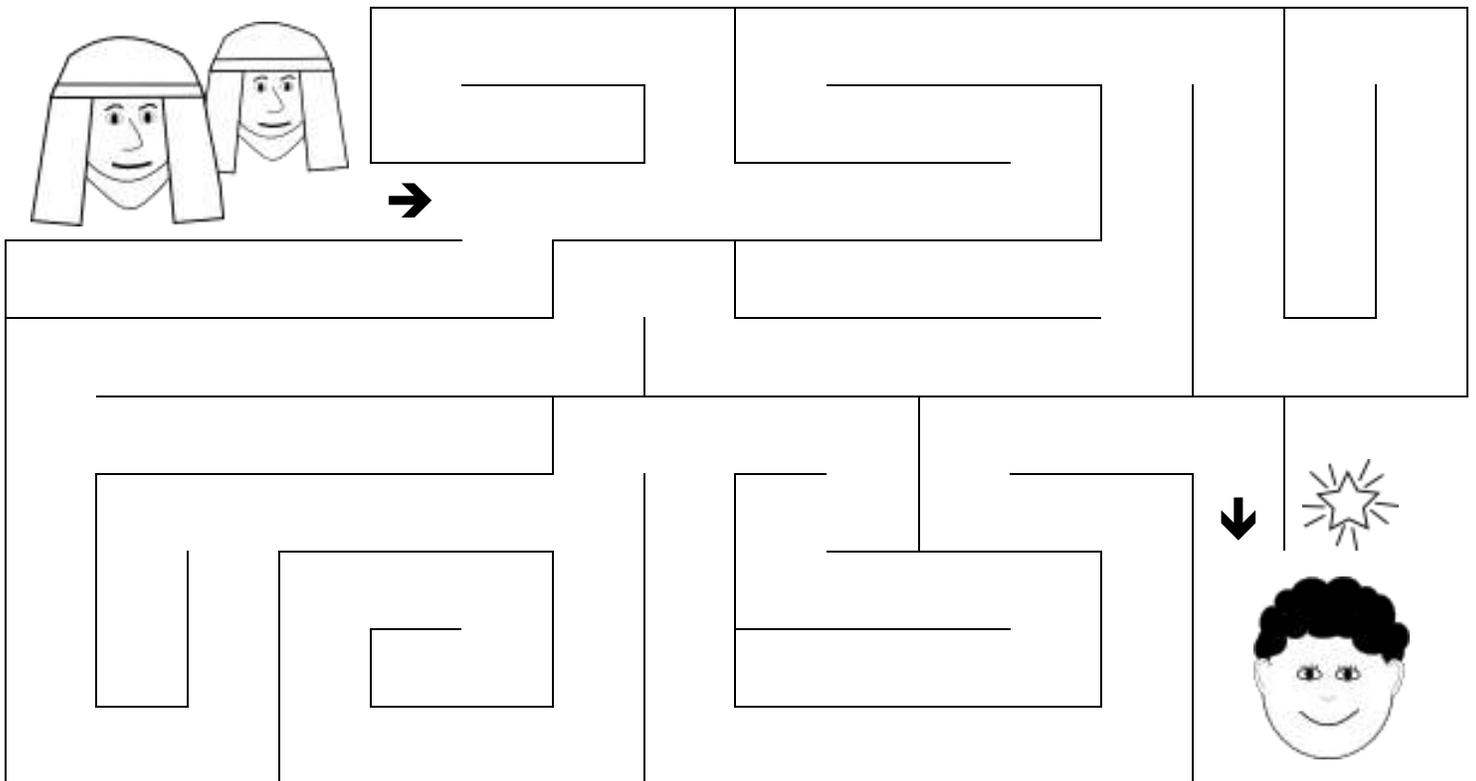
A Christmas activity worksheet from [ministry-to-children.com](http://ministry-to-children.com)

## What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

Mark each statement yes (true) or no (false). Then check your answers on the back of the page.

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus.	yes	no
There were three wise men.	yes	no
The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus.	yes	no
The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger.	yes	no
The wise men worshipped Jesus.	yes	no

Help the wise men find their way to Jesus.



## What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

**The wise men followed a star to find Jesus.** Yes. They said, “We saw his star when it came up in the east.” Matthew 2:2

**There were three wise men.** No. The Bible says “some men” came. Matthew 2:2

**The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus.** Yes. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

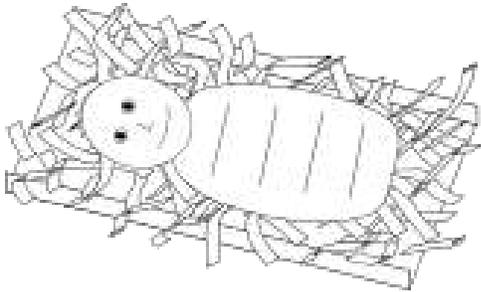
**The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger.** No. The wise men came a long way, and it took a long time. Jesus was probably 1 or 2 years old when the wise men came.

**The wise men worshipped Jesus.** Yes. They knelt down and worshipped him. Matthew 2:11

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## Gifts at Christmas

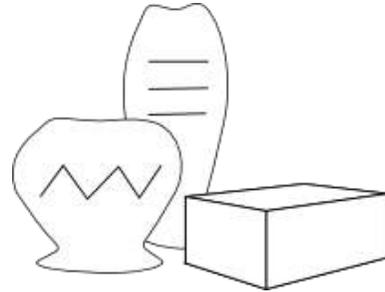
God gave



Jesus

Draw a gift someone  
has given you.

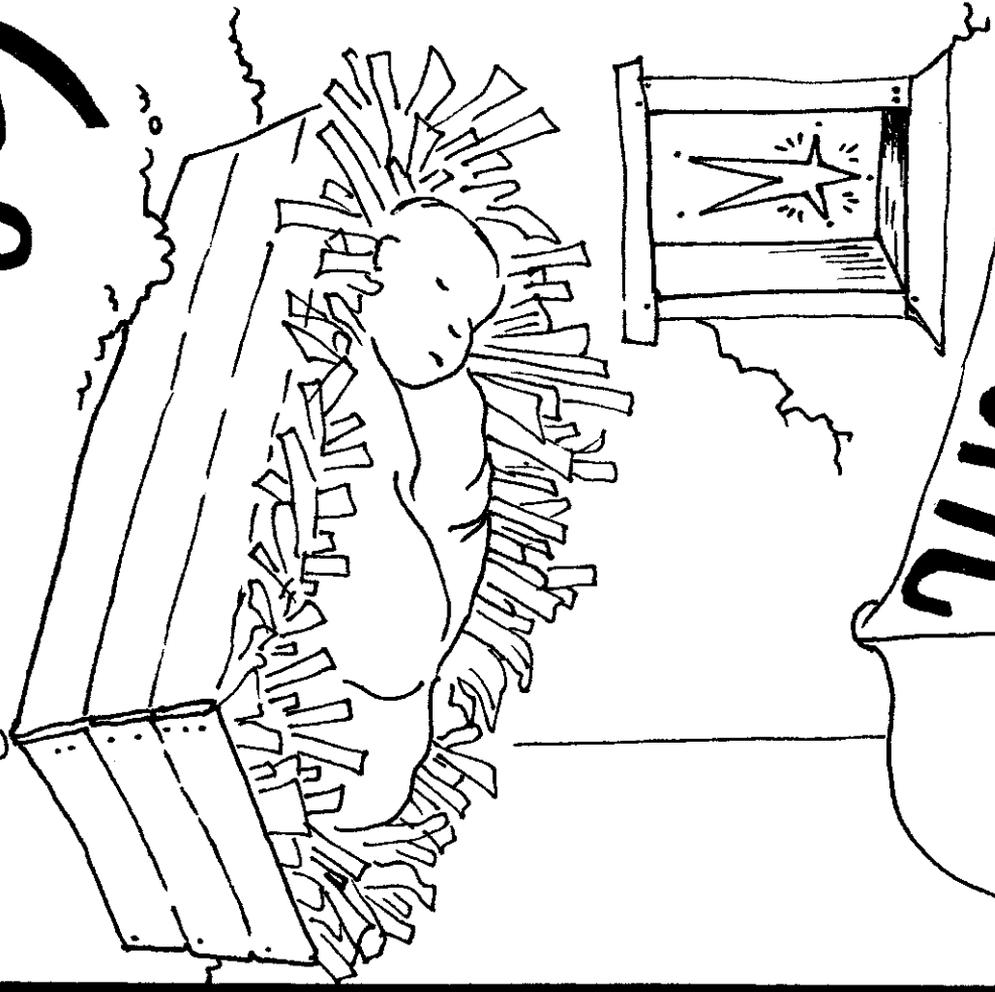
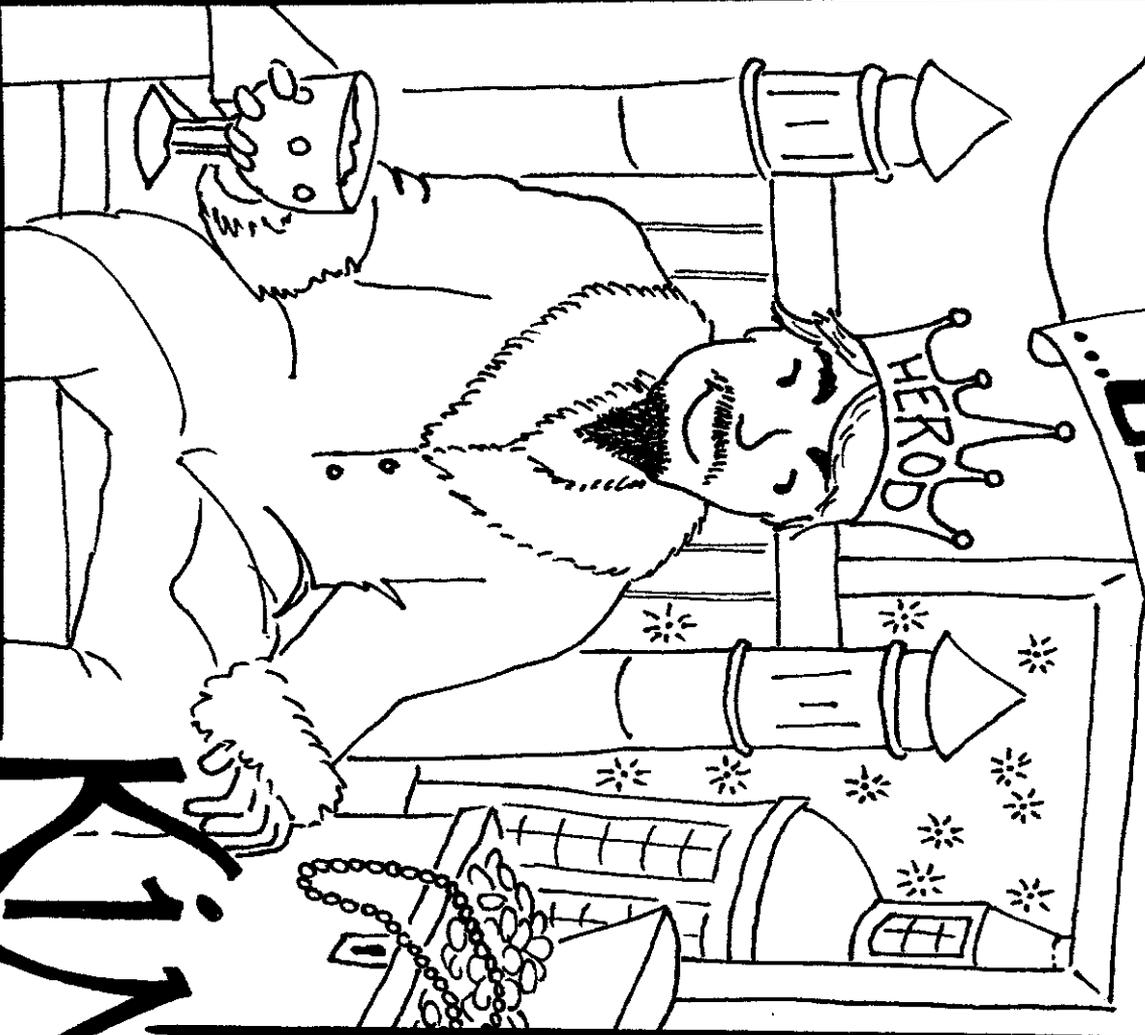
The wise men gave



gold, frankincense, and myrrh

Draw a gift you can  
give someone else.

Two... Very... different



Mandy Grace '10

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## “Look at the Star!”

### Craft Ideas for Epiphany Sunday

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The celebration of Epiphany honors the visit of the Magi, who represent God’s revelation of the Messiah to the gentiles. Of course, a key highlight of this story is how these “wise men” found Jesus by following a remarkable star in the heavens. The crafts here pay homage to that star, and to Christ, the real star of our lives. A decorative ornament and faux “stained glass” use the shape and sparkle of stars, while a “telescope” provides opportunity to look up at the sky, and also doubles as a noisemaker.

#### Verses or Captions to Consider...

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. -Matthew 2:10*

*And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. -Matthew 2:11*

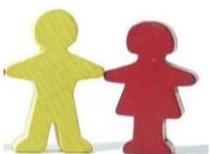
*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. -Psalm 19:1*

*Look up to the sky...God’s hand at work!*

*Stars guide the way...God’s word guides our way!*

*Shine with the light of Christ!!!*

*Jesus is the real STAR of Christmas!*



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# Craft one: “Stained glass” Star decoration

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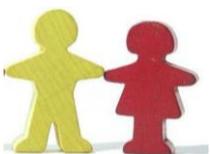
## You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Wax or tissue paper
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- String or pipe cleaners
- Crayons or markers
- Stickers or other decorations



## Procedure:

1. Draw a large star on a piece of construction paper or cardstock. Draw another star (smaller) within the large one.
2. Carefully cut out the large star. Cut the smaller star out from it.
3. Glue the star onto wax paper or tissue paper. Trim the edges.
4. Add extra decorations such as glitter, stickers, and verse captions. If desired, attach a string or pipe cleaner to hang the star. Admire the sunshine coming through and enjoy!



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# Craft Two: Stick Star Ornament or decoration

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## You will need:

- Popsicle sticks
- Glue
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers, glitter, or other decorations
- Pipe cleaners or string



## Procedure (use one of these ideas or adapt and do others):

1. Decide how you prefer to decorate your “clock plate.” Add cut paper “hands” and other embellishments as desired.
2. Add labels, captions, and decorations with markers or crayons.
3. As best suits your needs, add on stickers, eyes, or other décor to create a clock feel. Emphasize the point that the clock decoration reminds us to wait for Jesus.
4. If you wish to hang up the clock, add a string or pipe cleaner to the back side of the plate.



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# Craft Three: “Magi Telescope” (also noisemaker)

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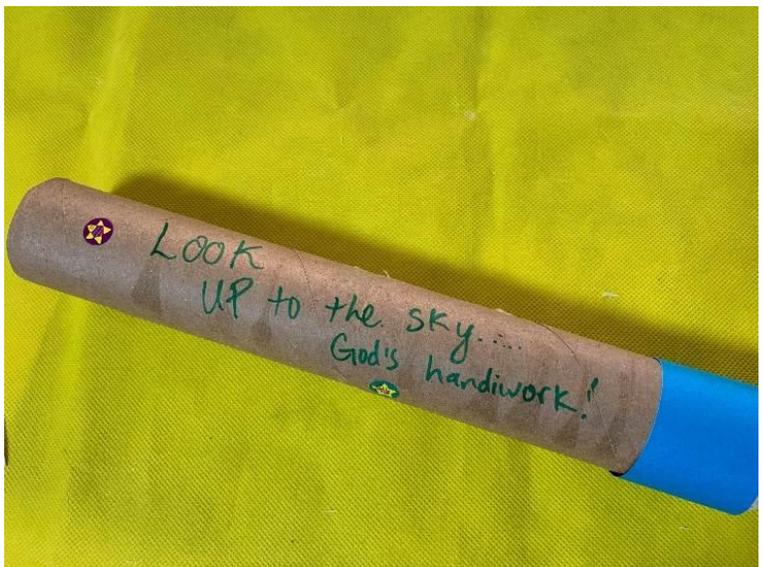
## You will need:

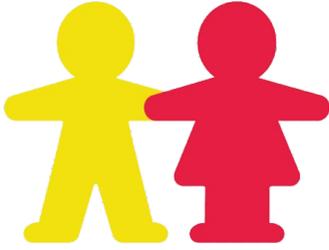
- Paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Markers or crayons
- Ribbon or Pipe Cleaner
- Tape, glue, or staples
- Stickers or glitter
- Wax paper (optional)



## Procedure (use one of these ideas or adapt and do others):

1. Decide how you prefer to decorate your “clock plate.” Add cut paper “hands” and other embellishments as desired.
2. Add labels, captions, and decorations with markers or crayons.
3. As best suits your needs, add on stickers, eyes, or other décor to create a clock feel. Emphasize the point that the clock decoration reminds us to wait for Jesus.
4. If you wish to hang up the clock, add a string or pipe cleaner to the back side of the plate.





# SUNDAY SCHOOL .WORKS



Thank you for downloading these free materials. Our team is grateful for your trust and pray that God will bless your ministry.

This resource was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#) (pictured right). She serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO. She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Every week she writes new [Sunday School lessons](#), [Bible crafts](#), and [children's sermons](#).

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

My name is Tony Kummer (pictured below). I started Ministry-To-Children.com in 2007 as a free resource for anyone sharing Jesus with kids. It is my personal honor to share these resources with churches around the world.



[Reader donations](#) and your support at [The Sunday School Store](#) fund these free materials. Please keep us in mind when you are choosing your next children's ministry curriculum.

If you enjoy our material, be sure to [sign-up for my free email newsletter](#) called "Sunday School Works!" Every Tuesday, I send the latest new lessons, crafts, and coloring pages in print-friendly format to make your lesson planning easy.

May God continue to bless your ministry!

*Tony Kummer*