

Focus: Jesus is the Light of the World

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
CD: Toddler 20 Favorite Bible Songs
Bible: The Beginner's Bible
Cards/Gift Bag/Trash bag
Star

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about being a holy family, a family that focuses on God. This week we will hear about how God let people know that Jesus was born.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray.

God of Light, thank you for the birth of your son Jesus, who is the light of the world.

Help us to let our light shine for all the world to see.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Song/Movement

Everybody Ought to Know, track: 8, from Toddler 20 Favorite Bible Songs

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc. Have children sit on their carpet squares when finished.

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|---|---|
| <p>1. Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know
Who Jesus is. (2x)</p> | <p>4. He's the Lily of the Valley,
He's the Bright and Morning Star;
He's the Fairest of ten thousand.
Everybody ought to know.</p> |
| <p>2. He's the Lily of the Valley,
He's the Bright and Morning Star;
He's the Fairest of ten thousand.
Everybody ought to know.</p> | <p>5. Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know
Who Jesus is. (2x)</p> |
| <p>3. Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know,
Everybody ought to know
Who Jesus is. (2x)</p> | |

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

The star was a sign a king had been born.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *The wise men saw a star in the sky and knew that it meant a new king was born. They did not know he would be different kind of king. He would rule with love and compassion and teach others to do the same.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *“Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it.”*

Read: The Beginner's Bible, pp. 288-293, *Visitors from the East*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *Where did the wise men come from? (The east of Israel is the Middle East and Syria (not Middlebury or Rhode Island-their east, not ours)*
- *Who were they looking for?*
- *Why were they following a star?*
- *Where did the star lead the wise men?*
- *Why were they filled with joy?*
- *Why did the wise men bow down before baby Jesus?*
- *Why did they not return to Herod and go home a different way?*

Reflection on Reading:

A star led the wise men to the baby Jesus. A light helped them to find their way. We can say the same for a lamp or street light. Sometimes we feel afraid of the dark because we don't know what's there. Light helps us to see where it's safe to walk and what it is safe to do.

We call Jesus—the Light—because he showed us how to live in a way that leads us to true happiness forever.

The gifts the wise men brought were gold—because he is the leader of his people, frankincense—used during prayer, the smoke shows the prayers rising to God in heaven.

Myrrh is like frankincense, but is from a thorny bush to remind us that Jesus would die and it has a bitter smell to remind us of Jesus' suffering on the cross.

The wise men came from far away. Their customs were probably different from Mary and Joseph and they probably spoke a different language. They were still God's children, just like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and just like you and me. This story reminds us that God loves everyone. We can still be very different from each other, but still are part of God's family.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Gifts for Jesus

It has been hardly more than a week since we were celebrating, opening gifts, and eating a huge Christmas dinner. What is left of the Christmas celebration? A trash bag full of used wrapping paper and empty boxes. How many of you have taken down the Christmas tree and all the decorations stored in the attic for another year? Christmas is over and our lives have returned to normal. It is back to work for the adults and back to school for the children. Yes, Christmas is over -- at least for another year.

Wait! Is it really over? Is that all there is to Christmas? Is it just a time for parties, giving gifts to friends and family, and a brief period of "Peace on earth, good will toward men?" Surely there is more to it than that.

What did you get for Christmas? No doubt you received some toys and clothes, but the most important gift any of us received was Jesus who came to earth as a gift from God. To those who receive him and believe in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.

The wise men brought gifts of lasting value to Jesus. What gifts can we bring to Jesus?

Read from one of the paper slips. Decide as a group if it is a gift for Jesus or trash.

Put the gifts in the box and the others in the little trash bag.-Can also come up with ideas about how to make the trash into gifts.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love and for the gift of your Son, for it is through that gift that we also become your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Activity 2:

Follow the Star:

This game is played like Simons Says, but you raise the star instead of saying "Simon Says"

The gospels tell us what we should be doing as we wait for Jesus. We should pray, listen to and learn from the stories of Jesus, love and serve God and each other. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, when Jesus comes in glory, he found everyone doing what was right and good and just? Wouldn't it be wonderful if he found us all caring for each other lovingly because he told us to?

Let's practice what Jesus has taught us to do.

Sample Actions-pick a couple actions ahead of time where you won't raise the star. Children who are out-can help you catch others that don't follow the star:

Hug your neighbor
Close your hands in prayer
Go to Church-(March in place)
Say peace be with you to your neighbor
Say Alleluia
Clap your hands
Jump one time
Shake hands with your neighbor
Praise God-Raise your hands up high
Listen to Jesus (cup hand around ear)

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who led the wise men by a star to find Jesus?*
Do you believe in Jesus, who came to show us the glory of God's love for all people?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who opens our hearts to love others?

Sending Forth

Say: Remember that God has given us the gifts of his love, in his Son Jesus. When we show love for others we show our love for Jesus, this is how we show the light of Jesus in the world. Show Jesus how much you love him every day!

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*The Lord is My Shepherd*" track 5 from Toddler 20 Favorite Bible Songs while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.