



Gifts for the Baby King

(based on Matthew 2:1-12)

A long time ago, a group of wise men watched the stars in the sky. They were called magi. One evening, they saw something much unexpected. It was a brand-new star.

The magi started to talk about the new star. Where had it come from? What did it mean? After a lot of talking and studying, they realized that this was a very important star. It was a star with a very special message for them.

“A new king has been born.”

“We must leave immediately,” they said. “We must follow that star, find the child, and bow down to the new king.”

So, they decided to go and find the new king. Each one packed up for the long journey. And each one chose a special gift to give to the child.

It was a very long journey. Most of the time, the magi traveled at night so that they could follow the star.

Eventually after many nights of traveling, they arrived at the city of Jerusalem and went to the royal palace of King Herod.

“We saw a special star in the sky that told us a new king has been born in your country,” they explained. Where can we find the child?”

Herod was not happy to hear what the travelers had to say. Herod was afraid that this baby might become king instead of him, so he pretended to be friendly. “My helpers tell me that this special child is in Bethlehem,” Herod said. “Why don’t you find the child, then come back and tell me where to go. I want to bring gifts to the child too.”

So, the magi went to Bethlehem. The bright star went ahead of them leading the way. Finally, it stopped over the house where Jesus lived. The travelers went into the house and saw Jesus with Mary, his mother. One by one, they knelt down and gave Jesus special gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

That night God spoke to the travelers in their dreams. God warned them not to go back to Herod, so they went home a different way.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Nativity scene—In your child-friendly nativity set, add the wise men (or magi) to the scene.
- What is the meaning of giving gifts and why is it important to you? Encourage your child to think of ways he or she can give gifts all year.
- Talk about the way your family has celebrated the birth of Jesus. What has been the most meaningful activity your family has shared during this season? What family traditions have you renewed this year? What traditions have you begun this year?



Responding to God's Grace

- The wise men traveled from distant lands to find the Christ child. We imagine that this was not an easy journey. While you're at home today, take off one shoe and go about your regular activities inside your house. The discomfort can remind you of the long, difficult journey the wise men took to Bethlehem.
- Some Epiphany customs in different countries include leaving shoes out on the eve of Epiphany (January 6) to be filled with a gift from the magi (wise men). Children leave hay and carrots for the camels! Recreate this tradition in your home by placing small, wrapped gifts in each person's shoes one night. You may slip cookies or treats into a zip-closure bag and leave these in the shoes or give small gifts that are unique to each family member.
- Locate books from the church or public library related to the story of the wise men, such as *Babushka: An Old Russian Folktale* by Charles Mikolaycak (Holiday House, 1984) or *The Legend of Old Befana* by Tomie dePaola (HMH Books for Young Readers, 1980).

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Have family worship:
Light a white candle and read John 8:12.

Invite each family member to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus, the Messiah.

Sing together "This Little Light of Mine":

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.