

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ give their gifts to the Lord.

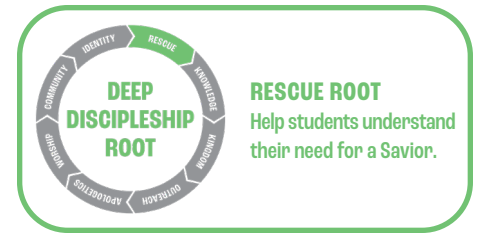
SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 2:1–12

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

We don't know much about these wise men who searched for the King of kings. We don't know precisely where they were from. We don't know how many of them there were. We don't even know their names. We do know they were from the "east" and tracked the special star, so many people believe they were Asian astrologers, which also means they were Gentiles. So, while God's own people missed out on the birth of the Messiah, Gentile representatives were out searching for him with an offering of gifts to worship the King. Wise indeed.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/933475613>



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **Elf on a Rhyme** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**—What's the worst gift you have ever received, and what made it so bad?

DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It's already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYSCbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: The King's star

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 2:1-2

When God came to earth as a baby in a manger in the little town of Bethlehem, the whole world had the opportunity to notice! A special star in the sky signaled far and wide that something spectacular had happened. The Magi from the east came to Jerusalem to find and worship the King of the Jews.

ILLUSTRATION: Has a famous person ever come through your town? Not a kind-of-successful performer, but someone who is really, really famous? When the United States President travels, they are accompanied by a motorcade full of police, Secret Security, and support staff. The parade of cars will shut down traffic for miles and miles! Local airports will have heightened security, and everything will be on high alert. The impact of their physical presence is felt all over the region.

When Jesus came to earth, his presence made an impact. The night sky let everyone know the King was born! The Magi weren't Jewish, but they clearly knew this child was something special. The birth of Jesus was an occasion of celebration for all people.

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR** the **Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Matthew 2:1-2
- Point 1

POINT 2: The King's prophecy

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 2:3-8

Most parents find out they're having a baby about eight months before the baby arrives. Those months can feel like years while they wait for the baby to come. God's Prophets told the nation of Israel that God would send them a Messiah, but they didn't say exactly when. As it turns out, Israel would have to wait hundreds of years before they met the baby they were told about!

Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was the Messiah whom the ancient prophecies foretold. God worked out his perfect plan for salvation over hundreds and hundreds of years! When the King arrived, it happened exactly how God said it would happen.

SLIDES (optional)

- Matthew 2:3-8
- Point 2



POINT 3: The King's gifts

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 2:9–12

The Magi from the east found Jesus beneath the special star in the sky. When they met the miraculous child, they responded in worship and praise. They gave Jesus expensive gifts fit for a king! The Magi were some of the first people on earth to realize an important truth—the natural response to meeting Jesus is worship and praise.

ILLUSTRATION: Share a personal story about giving or receiving an exceptionally thoughtful gift. What was the occasion? How did it make you feel? What did the gift say about your relationship with the recipient or giver?

When we recognize Jesus as King, we should not hesitate to bring him our most precious and treasured possessions, including our worship and praise.

SLIDES (optional)

- Matthew 2:9–12
- Point 3

CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ give their gifts to the Lord.

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- What are you doing to seek out the King of kings, as the Magi did so long ago?
- What are you prepared to give the King?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint** OR the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don't rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider how their whole lives can be a gift to Jesus—the King who brought life to us all!

PRAYER

Take time to pray your students will be able to trust God's plan over their own plans.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

Build Meaningful Relationships

- In what way do giving and receiving gifts affect your relationships?
Gifts can be a way that we show care, love, and compassion for others.
- The Magi were led to Jesus by the special star. What has led you to encounter Christ?
Allow students space to share how various people, experiences, sermons, etc., have led them to encounter Jesus in meaningful ways. Share some stories of your own to help get the conversation going.

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- A star in the sky and an ancient prophecy announced Jesus' birth. What does that tell us about him?
Jesus is who he said he was! Jesus will prove it throughout his life, but even the circumstances of his birth show us that he was no ordinary child.
- The text says King Herod was "troubled." Why do you think he felt like that?
Not everyone was excited about the arrival of a new king—especially those who felt threatened by this child of prophecy! Those who are unwilling to acknowledge Jesus' kingship and authority will never be able to appreciate the excitement of Jesus' birth.
- The Magi came from a land far away. They weren't Jewish people on the lookout for a Messiah. Why do you think they put so much effort into finding a baby they had no connection to?
Jesus was Jewish and the prophesied Messiah of the Jewish people, but he brought salvation to the whole world. The Magi are some of the first to show us how worshiping Jesus is open to everyone.
- When the Magi met Jesus, the Bible says, "they fell down and worshiped him." Why was this their response?
When you encounter a miracle, sometimes all you can do is respond in simple, straightforward worship. The Magi were overwhelmed by meeting the child marked by a star and foretold by prophets. All they could do was worship!

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- The Magi put a lot of effort into finding Jesus. How do you pursue encountering Jesus?
Following Jesus is an active lifestyle, not a passive accident. Like the Magi, we have to make seeking Jesus a priority!
- What kind of gifts can you give to Christ?
Nothing will ever compare to what Christ gave us, but we can surrender to him our lives, worship, and praise. When we follow him in discipleship, we give a valuable gift to the Kingdom!

PRAYER

Take time to pray that we would all come humbly to our King, ready to give all we have in worship and praise.
Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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