**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 4 of 4

# Wise men

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on the importance of worshipping Jesus wholeheartedly.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:1-12

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Once again, the Christmas story features God revealing himself to some surprising people. In this case, we’re left with the slightly uncomfortable image of a group of pagan astrologers setting an example in worshipping Jesus as the Son of God. In this session, we’ll highlight the importance of worshipping God wholeheartedly and the possibility that he might reveal himself to anyone who’s seeking him.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As ever, start the session by chatting to your young people and sharing refreshments with them. As part of your conversation, chat about wise people. Dr Watson describes Sherlock Holmes as “the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known”. Who is the wisest person you have ever known? What exactly makes them wise?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bible; small prizes

If you have a large group, divide the young people into small teams for this activity. Challenge the young people to solve a few riddles. Give a small prize (eg a lollipop) to the first person to answer each riddle correctly. Or keep a note of which team has answered the most riddles correctly and give them a prize to share at the end.

Use some of the following riddles or find your own:

* A man shaves several times a day, yet he still has a beard. Who is this man? *(A barber)*
* What begins with a T, ends with a T, and has T in it? *(A teapot)*
* What can travel around the world while staying in a corner? *(A stamp)*
* Which word in the dictionary is spelt incorrectly? *(Incorrectly)*
* What’s always coming but never arrives? *(Tomorrow)*
* I can be written, I can be spoken, I can be exposed, I can be broken. What am I? *(The news)*
* What coat is best put on wet? *(Paint)*
* Two men had lunch together and ordered iced teas to drink. One man had five iced teas during lunch while the other man had only one. All of the drinks were poisoned. The man who had only one drink died but the man who had five drinks survived. How can that be? *(The poison was in the ice. The man who drank five iced teas never let his ice melt.)*

Finish by pointing out that wisdom can mean a few different things. But perhaps the best definition of wisdom is this: read Proverbs 1:7.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; flipchart; pens; Post-it notes

If you have a large group, divide the young people into two smaller groups for this activity. Set up a flipchart somewhere prominent in the room. Divide the paper into two columns: ‘Herod’ and ‘Wise men’. Divide each column into four rows: ‘Background’, ‘Think’, ‘Say’ and ‘Do’.

Invite the young people to read Matthew 2:1-12. Help them fill in the ‘Background’ row on the flipchart. For example, you could mention that Herod was King of Judea and that the wise men were astrologers, probably from Persia.

Next, ask the young people to jot down some thoughts on what Herod and the wise men think, say and do in Matthew 2. Encourage them to write down their thoughts on Post-its and stick them in the appropriate boxes on the flipchart. After a few minutes, let the group review what’s on the flipchart. How does the wise men’s behaviour compare to Herod’s?

It might be worth pointing out that we’re referring to ‘wise men’ because the Magi were almost certainly male. It is not meant to suggest that women cannot be wise, any more than that they cannot be shepherds.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

**You will need:** three wrapped boxes; marker pens

Before the session, wrap three boxes (shoeboxes are ideal), preferably in shiny wrapping paper. Label one box ‘Gold’, another ‘Frankincense’ and the third ‘Myrrh’. Chat as a group about what each of these gifts represents and why the wise men brought it to Jesus. Try to bring out that:

* gold represents Jesus’ kingship;
* frankincense would be burnt as an offering to a god – it shows that the wise men realise Jesus is God in human form;
* myrrh is used for embalming a dead body – it points towards the sacrifice Jesus would make, later in his life.

The wise men tell Herod they have come to worship Jesus (v2). Discuss what their gifts tell us about what matters in worshipping him. The young people can either write their ideas on the boxes or just talk and use the boxes as a visual aid.

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** card; pens; glue; ribbon

Before the session, find a box template and print the template onto card. Make enough copies for each of your young people to have one.

Encourage everyone to think about what they could give to Jesus as an act of worship. What do they have which is precious to them? Time, skills or energy, for example? Make pens, glue and ribbon available. Let each of the young people write their ideas inside their box, then assemble it, using the glue to hold it together. They can use the pens and ribbon to decorate their boxes.

Either collect the boxes and commit them to God in prayer, as an act of worship, or let each of the young people keep their box as a reminder of the importance of worshipping Jesus wholeheartedly.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** stars; pens; Blu Tack

Before the session, cut out lots of star shapes from card. These don’t have to be huge, but should be big enough to write a name in.

Emphasise that the wise men were searching for God. People in Israel might not have liked their background – they were pagans who looked for messages from God in the stars – but their heart was right. They went in search of God and eventually found him. So let’s pray for people we know who are searching for God. Even if we think they’re looking in the wrong places, let’s ask God to reveal himself to them.

Give out the stars. Invite everyone to write on the stars the names of people they know who are searching for God. (They can use as many stars as they like.) Let the young people stick their stars to a wall. Then finish with a short prayer, thanking God for revealing himself through Jesus and asking that he’ll do the same for all your friends.

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