

date: _ **12/31/17****Bible Passage: Matthew 2:1–12**
(Magi)

God Leads

REMEMBER VERSE

**Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has
come to his people and redeemed them.**

Luke 1:68

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

We left our familiar side of the city and piled into cars to travel to another side of town. Friends from school had invited a dozen or so other families to come sing Christmas carols in the neighborhood around the auto repair shop they owned.

As we trudged through the snow, we prayed for the Holy Spirit to tell us which doors to knock on. Our little group couldn't carry a tune, but the excitement of our children was contagious. I was praying our off-key singing was being heard behind more doors than we realized—regardless of how few doors had been opened.

About an hour closer to arriving back to warmth and cookies, the kids pointed to a row of single-story apartments tucked in darkness. My shoulders slumped. Let's not end on a downer, I thought. But it was too late—the children had already begun ringing doorbells. A young mother with two young children opened the door. Especially thrilled to have an audience their age, our kids roared to life and began to play their instruments. God's Spirit moved within our group. As parents and children worshipped God together, we were reminded we had been called to something greater than ourselves. I was so thankful we had listened to God's gentle nudging to knock on one more door, for it was the biggest blessing of the night. In the most unlikely of places, God led us to worship Him.

Stephanie Bennett
Tru Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

A group of wise men from the east: there are many commentaries and speculations about the beliefs, practices, and roles of wise men of this time period. However, what is known paints a vivid picture of this small community of Gentile men who put their trust in the signs and wonders of the one true God. They had faith enough to believe in The Promise that was foretold, and to journey for several months to a foreign land in search of this King that they might worship Him.

Following the star, God led the wise men into Jerusalem. Upon entering the city, the wise men sought an audience with King Herod. It appears these men presumed Herod and all of Jerusalem would be worshipping the promised King when they inquired, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2). Instead of finding celebration, they were met with Herod’s ignorance and the Jewish priests’ disregard for the prophecies of the Lord. Herod sent for all the chief priests and teachers of the law to explain to him where the Christ was to be born.

Five miles. This was about the distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The long journey to the promised King was almost complete. God had been faithfully leading this caravan of seekers through the desert by the stars—one star in particular. The star went on before them and finally rested above the home where the Christ child and His family were staying. From eternity past to this very moment, God put every last detail in place to prepare for the day that the human world would meet the promised Savior—the One who would redeem the lost and heal the broken relationship between God and mankind. These faithful travelers were about to come face-to-face with royalty. The royalty of all creation—of all eternity—was about to be found in a humble dwelling in the city of Bethlehem. That is where there they were led to worship Him.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God’s Word

Spend some time stargazing this week. Whether you open your door and head into your snowy backyard, or venture out to the sandy shores, find a place where you can have a clear view of the night sky. Then turn your eyes heavenward. Take a few moments and absorb the view.

If you’re able, read where you are, or head back inside. Open your Bible to your favorite psalm. If you don’t have a favorite, consider reading Psalm 9:1–2. After reading, continue to enjoy the night sky, whether from a window or sitting directly beneath it, allowing your heart to worship God as you reflect on His goodness and faithfulness.

A winter’s night blessing for you ...

All of life is a journey of faith. On your journey, God will be faithful to lead you as you trust and follow Him. He will speak to you through His Spirit in various ways.

As you follow and discern His leading, may you always know that God’s goals will be accomplished. They are not dependent on your actions or lack thereof. He will complete what He has started and will bring glory and honor to Himself. As you follow Him in obedience and worship, may you experience God and the fullness of His love for you. May the fullness you have received overflow into the lives of those who are journeying with you.

Small Group
SECTION

EXPLORE:: 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Paper Prints

Children use print blocks and crayons to reveal images of the nativity.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Print Block template \(see Resources\)](#)
- Card stock (1 sheet)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Tape
- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Crayons

PREPARE AHEAD

Print or copy the Print Block template onto card stock and cut out the shapes. Use school glue to outline the lines on each shape, creating print blocks. Let the glue dry thoroughly.

SET UP

Tape the prepared print blocks to a table with the glue side up. Set the paper and crayons on the table.

RELATE

Invite children to join you at the table. Give each child a piece of paper and have him choose a crayon. Demonstrate how to place paper over a print block and color. The outline of the print block will appear on the paper. Encourage children to explore the different print block shapes and color over the ones they'd like on their papers. Ask them about the shapes as they explore. **What different objects are appearing on your paper? What do you think of when you see that object? What do you think these objects might have to do with The Big God Story?**

Large Group
SECTION

DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Ponder Point
God Leads

Chloe's Rules

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)
- Worship music (suggestions: "Glorious" and "I Am Listening to You," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

RELATE

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. *Tech: Cue preschool program theme song.* Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

Mail Time

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Mail Time intro clip and image](#) (see Resources)
- [Remember Verse image and cards](#) (see Resources)
- [Mail Time envelope](#)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

RELATE

Tech: Cue the Mail Time intro clip and image.

Invite two children to help you lead a fun game of Hot and Cold. Choose one child to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Hider will sit down and the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while the children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to see what's inside and then pulls out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with the children.

Lead the children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

REMEMBER VERSE

**Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has
come to his people and redeemed them.**

Luke 1:68

REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

redeemed: bought back. Jesus paid the price of our sin so we can have eternal life.

REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

Praise: Hold hands up in the air and wiggle all fingers.

be to the Lord: Use right hand to make an *L* with index finger and thumb at left shoulder. Cross over front of body and end on right hip.

the God of Israel: Extend right hand in front of body with palm facing to side. Bring hand to rest fingertips just below chin.

because he has come to his people: Hold out both arms at sides of body and pull inward to hug chest.

and redeemed them: Place palms together in prayer motion.

Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What's!t: Star \(see Star template or optional image in Resources\)](#)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

What's!t: Star

God planned—before He hung the first star—for the night sky to be a navigational tool. He knew that one day a group of men from the East would be in search of the promised King. His plan was to lead them to the Christ by one star, where they would worship Jesus. Today, God leads His people to worship Him by His Holy Spirit.

RELATE

Tech: Cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image*. Invite a child volunteer to “spy” on the What's!t by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What's!t in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What's!t. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What's!t from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

ASK

What's this we've found today? Children answer. **I wonder what a star is doing in our wardrobe? What do you think?** Children answer. **Where do we usually see stars? Are stars special or ordinary?** Interact with children. **Those are all very good thoughts. Let's find out how the star fits into The Big God Story in the Bible. Do you know what time it is?** Allow children to answer. **That's right! It's time for ...**

The Big God Story

Matthew 2:1–12

God Leads

Storytelling Technique: Storyteller Dramatization and Prop

SUPPLIES

- [The Big God Story intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What's!t: Star](#)
- [Traveling Music sound effect \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Starry Night Sky image \(see Resources\)](#)

• [Star template \(see Resources\)](#)

- Construction paper (yellow)
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Storyteller props: satchel, Bible (travel-size), fishing rod, map (old and worn-looking)
- Optional: costume for Storyteller (white or khaki linen shirt; loose-fitting pants rolled to the base of the knees; sandals or bare feet)

PREPARE AHEAD

Gather costume items for Storyteller. Print or copy Star template onto yellow construction paper and cut it out (you can also use this week's What'sIt if you made a paper star). Punch a hole through one of the points of the star and tie it to the fishing line of the fishing rod. Wind the star loosely around the rod so the Storyteller can easily unwind it during The Big God Story. Place Bible and map inside satchel. If possible, place the fishing rod in the satchel as well so it sticks out; otherwise, Storyteller can hold the rod against his shoulder as he begins storytelling.

RELATE

Tech: Cue The Big God Story intro clip and image. Once The Big God Story intro clip ends, Storyteller enters from back of room, beginning dialogue in traveler character. *Tech: Cue Traveling music sound effect and Starry Night Sky image.*

(Muttering) **North by northwest ... it should be around here somewhere. Now let me see ... that's the same star I saw earlier** (pull map from satchel). **I believe I should be getting close. I seem to be heading in the right direction.** Continue checking map and approach stage. **I don't remember there being so many rocks and bushes on the road the last time I was here** (reference and interact with children as rocks and bushes). **Oh yes, here it is** (reach stage; turn and face children). **Well, hello! I didn't see you there. My name is** (insert name). **What are your names?** Encourage children to share names all at once. **It's so nice to see you here. I've been following my map to be here with you today. I'm so glad I made it on time to tell you something very exciting from The Big God Story. Do you know where we can find The Big God Story? In the Bible, that's right!** Pull Bible from satchel. **Let's take a moment to ask God to be with us and teach us today.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

In The Big God Story, a very long time ago, God told some special people called prophets that He was going to send The Promise for all the people of the world. Do you remember what a prophet is? Pause for responses. **Yes, a prophet is someone to whom God gives important messages to share with people. Do you remember who The Promise is? Yes! The Promise is Jesus! God sent an angel to tell Mary she was going to have a baby. That baby was going to be ... do you remember? Wait for children. Jesus! That's right. God showed us The Promise when Jesus was born. Everything God told the prophets and the people a long, long, long time ago came true just as He said it would, because God always does what He says He will do!**

About the same time Jesus was born, there were some wise men living in a country far away from the city of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. One night, the wise men looked up at the sky and saw a star that was not like any star they'd ever seen. Take out fishing rod, unwind line, and hold it out so star dangles several feet in front. **This was a special star God had put in the sky when Jesus was born. The wise men knew that if they followed this star, it would lead them to Jesus and they would be able to worship Him. Let's practice following the star just like the wise men did.** Invite children to stand and form a line behind you. Begin walking slowly around the room with the star in front as you continue to storytell. The children should follow.

God led the wise men the entire way with that special star. Every time they needed to turn to go in a new direction, God would move the star and they'd follow. Follow star to left and then to right. **Finally, after a very long**

journey, the men arrived in Bethlehem. The star stopped and rested over the house where Jesus was living with His family. When the wise men saw this, they were very, very happy. Finish circling room. Invite children to be seated, hold star still for several seconds, then set rod down or put back in satchel.

As the wise men approached the house, they saw Jesus with His mother, Mary. They bowed down before Jesus to worship Him. They kept worshipping Jesus as they gave Him extra-special gifts they'd brought all that way. Their journey was now complete. God led the wise men from their home far away with a star in the sky. They came to meet and worship Jesus, the promised One. Jesus is the promised Savior and because of Him, we get to be with God forever.

Did you know that just like God led the wise men to worship Jesus, He leads each of us to worship Him today? It's true! He does! The magi were worshipping the King, who would one day redeem all people from their sins. Of course, we don't have to travel through a desert following a star to worship Jesus. We can worship Him wherever we are, because He is always with us. Jesus made a way for us to be with Him forever. No matter where we are, God is with us, and we can worship Him.

Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages](#) (see Resources)
- [TruWonder Small Group Enhancements timeline and images](#) (see Resources)
- Crayons

RELATE

In The Big God Story, we heard how God used a star in the sky to lead the wise men to worship The Promise, Jesus. God leads us to worship Him too, by giving us His Holy Spirit.

I wonder ... How did the wise men feel when they saw Jesus for the first time?

I wonder ... Did the wise men say thank You to Jesus for coming?

I wonder ... How can I say thank You to God for sending Jesus?

BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards](#) (see Resources)

RELATE

Just as we bless each other when we speak truth, we bless God when we declare His greatness. Our worship blesses Him! Invite the children to join you in blessing God. Encourage kids to shout out "God is," then finish their sentence by exclaiming a word that describes God. You can use the words listed below or add your own.

Kids shout: **God is ...**

Leader responds: **good!**

Kids shout: **God is ...**

Leader responds: **kind!**

Kids shout: **God is ...**

Leader responds: **powerful!**

Kids shout: **God is ...**

Leader responds: **love!**

Read the following blessing over the children as a group:

May God show you the path to Jesus and lead you every day.