



# Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work  
so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:  
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus  
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource  
and how to use it as a launch pad for your  
engagement with children and families, please  
use this link: [www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet](http://www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet)

## Title: Matthew 2: 1 – 12 Epiphany

**Theme:** Jesus, the early years

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### Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Welcome to a new year, and a new theme.

This month we will be exploring 'families' as our theme and, in our first week, following on from Christmas and the birth of Jesus, we're exploring the Holy Family – and the visit of the wise men, a celebration we call 'The Epiphany'. We remember that Jesus was born and raised in a normal but 'holy' family. The arrival of a baby will have caused the same joy, and worries, back in the first century as it does today. Although he is the Son of God, Jesus as a baby and a toddler would still need feeding, changing and entertaining.

The wise men (we assume there were three of them because three gifts were brought, but we don't actually know) would have arrived in Bethlehem amidst the chaos of a family getting used to a new addition.

The wise men had embarked on an epic journey following a star in the sky, but the family would have moved around, too. It is believed that the visitors arrived when Jesus was between one and two years old – a toddler – and Joseph and Mary would surely not have been living in the stable all that time. Did the wise men spend all their time travelling? What else might they have been doing?

Whilst this is, mostly, a story about a happy family (the next verses in the Bible tell of them having to flee to Egypt as refugees) be aware that you might have members of your group who are not in stable, happy family situations and give special care and attention to them and their emotions as you work through the activities.

## Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

### **Gathering prayer**

#### **Jesus, our friend**

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

#### **Be with us today**

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

#### **As we share together,**

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

#### **Pray together,**

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

#### **Play together,**

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

#### **And get to know you better,**

(point up with one hand)

#### **As children together in your family**

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

### **AMEN**

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

**Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.**

**Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.**

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,**

**Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.**

**Amen**

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### **Active game – The baby's in the manger**

Using the nativity scene (which might still be on display in churches), encourage the children to think of verses relating to as many of the figures in the scene as they can to sing to the nursery rhyme tune, "The Farmer Wants A Wife." Can the group come up with actions for the verses?

For example:

Joseph wants a wife, Joseph wants a wife, ee-ay-addio, Joseph wants a wife

Mary wants a child, Mary wants a child, ee-ay-addio, Mary wants a child

The shepherds bring a lamb, the shepherds bring a lamb, ee-ay-addio, the shepherds bring a lamb.

The star is shining bright, the star is shining bright, ee-ay-addio, the star is shining bright.

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### **Quieter game – Happy Families**

Play the card game Happy Families. If you do not own a set, many charity shops still sell them. You could create your own. Alternatively, you could ask everyone to bring in a baby photo and all have a go at guessing whose baby photo goes with who.

## **Experience – Bible story and songs**

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the New International Version

<https://bit.ly/MATTHEW2>

### **Where can I find the story online?**

Under fives: The Wise Men Matthew 2: 1-14 By Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/22SMUUMsx0o?si=v2eEutzP0o0mpeb6>

Five to elevens: The Story of Christmas (Jesus and the Wise Men) By Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/Zk1LhnqROCM?si=OEvf2QRro4TtwanH>

### **Songs to support the story**

Under fives: We Three Kings by Cedarmont Kids

[https://youtu.be/\\_SbAhqIO9\\_U?si=HRBjV8D0KtH1ktbx](https://youtu.be/_SbAhqIO9_U?si=HRBjV8D0KtH1ktbx)

Five to elevens: Big Family of God (Makaton Version) by Nick and Becky Drake

Worship for Everyone, Count Everyone in

<https://youtu.be/wq7pj6OB8nU?si=uiNnn327vxFPhLlg>

## **Explore – ways into the theme**

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

### **A new way to explore the theme**

#### **Guided meditation**

This guided meditation gives the children an opportunity to put themselves in the house when the wise men visit and imagine what Jesus may have been like as a boy.

Begin by sharing the Bible reading with the group and explain that we are going to use our imaginations to go and see this scene.

Gather the children into a group and encourage them to get comfortable, usually they like to lie down on soft cushions with their eyes shut, you could play some gentle music in the background.

Read the script in a soft voice, resisting the urge to speak quickly.

In the Bible we don't have many stories of Jesus as a child. This is one of them. We are going to use our imaginations to take ourselves to visit Jesus as a young child.

Let's prepare ourselves.

Be still, listen with your whole mind, body and heart. See what God shows you or says to you today.

Lie down or sit comfortably and close your eyes. You can use pillows or blankets to make yourself as comfortable as possible.

Listen to my voice and relax. Sometimes we get a giggle during relaxation, this is okay but try not to disturb the people around you as we are all concentrating.

Take a few deep breaths as you begin to relax. Breathe in long and deep to the count of five, hold it for three then release it slowly to the count of six

Breath a few times till we are all relaxed.

Now imagine yourself going back in time. Take yourself back to Bethlehem.

You see lots of small stone houses, bunched together in the town.

You notice one small house and go towards it. A small wooden door. A candlelight flickering in the small gap in the wall.

You approach the door. As you get closer you can hear a young family inside; a dad, a mother and a small toddler. I wonder what sounds you can hear.

You knock on the door.

It opens and candlelight spills out of the doorway. You can feel the warmth of the light on your face.

A man is there, smiling, he is expecting you and invites you to come inside.

There are lots of people there. Do they have family visiting?

No, you notice that these are visitors, important people from faraway lands. Wise men who have followed a star here. Look at what they are wearing, what colours, what fabrics.

I wonder what you can smell in the house? Perhaps there are things cooking?

You push your way through the group and notice a young mum sitting, watching her son. You know who this is, it's Jesus.

What do you see Jesus doing? Is he playing? Is he sleeping? Crying? Laughing?

Has he noticed you yet?

His mother invites you to sit down. You kneel down on the cold, hard floor, and you watch the scene.

A young family spending time together, a child exploring the strange gifts the visitors have brought for him.

Perhaps they offer you some food or drink. I wonder what it is.

Imagine the scene for a moment...

Now it's time to start coming back.

You thank the family for their welcome; you give the toddler Jesus a hug and you go back to the door.

Open the door. Feel the cold as you step outside.

The door closes behind you.

I wonder what your favourite part of the visit was...

Lie perfectly still, repeat the deep breathing from the start for three breaths.

When you are ready, open your eyes and begin to sit up slowly.

### Discussion

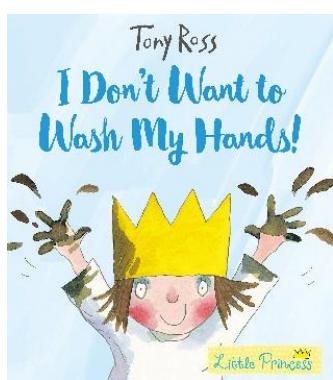
How did you find the experience?

I wonder what it was like to visualise Jesus as a toddler.

I wonder what you saw, heard, smelt.

### Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way, as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the *author*).



I Don't Want to wash my Hands! By Tony Ross 2001: Andersen Press <https://youtu.be/yerfwV3NSdQ?si=n3NkhY5tll2oZYcl>

Even though she is a member of the royal family, the Little Princess still has to do ordinary things – just like everybody else!

- Do you think there were things Jesus didn't like doing – even when grown-ups asked him?
- Are there things you get cross about being asked to do?
- Do you think Jesus was good at listening to the people who looked after him?

### Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- What do you think the family were doing when the wise men arrived?
- Where was Joseph?
- Why did it take so long for the astrologers to arrive?
- If you were visiting Jesus, what gift would you take?

## Wondering reflect on the theme

- I wonder how Mary felt when she/Jesus received the gifts she did.
- I wonder if Jesus did ordinary childhood things.
- I wonder if Mary and Joseph forgot that Jesus was the son of God.

## What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing “What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag” (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A pack of baby wipes (talk about the messes that babies and toddlers make, and who has to clean them up)
- Toddler toys or games (talk about favourite toys that you play with now, and toys you liked when you were younger)
- A camel toy or picture (talk about the visitors travelling by camel)
- Wrapped present (talk about the wise visitors bringing presents for Jesus)
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)

## Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

### Prayerful activity – Chalk blessings

One activity which some households do during Epiphany is to chalk a blessing on the front of their house. This is a way of honouring God and asking God to bless your house for the coming year. This may be appropriate to do at the front of the building where you meet. If not, then chalk onto black paper, or do this too, so that they can be put up in People's homes.



The words and pictures chosen don't really matter, the main thing is to give the group space and some quiet time to focus on God while doing it. When all have finished, do a collective Amen by touching the floor and gradually raising your hand and coming to standing while saying Aaaaaaaaaaaaaamen and punching the air.

Not all children people are aware of what the word Amen means – this may be a good time to remind them.

## Spoken prayer

Jesus, you who played as a child, help us to be kind and good friends to others,

Jesus, you who were taught as a child, help us to learn more about you,  
Jesus, you who were loved as a child, help us to know we are loved by you,  
Jesus, you who grew as a child, help us to grow in your love each day,  
Jesus, you who cried as a child, be with us and comfort us when we are sad,  
Jesus, you who were God as a child, help us to know who we are and what you have called us to do.

Amen

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### Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

#### Wise man gift bag

This is a simple but impressive craft that celebrates Epiphany as well as gifting something to others.



*You will need:*

- a gift bag
- coloured card
- staples/glue
- extra sparkly papers or decorations
- something as a gift to go inside the bag (see the cookie crown recipe)

*What you do:*

Remove the handles from the bag.

Measure a piece of coloured card to be the same width as the bag, then cut it into a crown shape.

Decorate the crown as much as you would like to and stick it onto the top of the bag on one side.

Draw a face onto the bag. (You could use googly eyes.)

Add any further decorations you would like to.

Place your present inside the bag and seal the top with a stapler.

Give your Epiphany gift to someone special.

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## Cheesy crowns

*You will need:*

- ready rolled puff pastry
- grated cheese
- beaten egg

*What you do:*

Preheat oven to 200°C (Gas mark 6/390°F).

Turn a muffin tin upside down and grease the domes.

Lay the dough on a cutting board. Cut 12 – 3cmx15cm strips out of the sheet of pastry. Cut some zigzag shapes out of each strip.

Beat the egg and brush it onto the dough.

Sprinkle the grated cheese on the dough and then press it into the dough gently.

Wrap the dough around alternate domes to stop them sticking together, making sure the join is secure.

Bake in the oven for 10 mins until puffy and golden brown.

Alternatively, to make flat crowns line two large baking trays with baking paper.

Cut into 5cm segments and then cut some zig zags along the edges, to create a crown shape.

Bake in the oven for 10 mins until golden brown.



## Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about a favourite memory from their childhood.
- Consider regifting an unwanted item or, if you are having a clear out to make room for Christmas gifts, pass something on to someone in need, a friend or to a charity shop. Could you get involved with Operation Christmas Child for next Christmas?

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Epiphany** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing  
**sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group [bit.ly/FACT\\_FB](https://bit.ly/FACT_FB)  
 Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Families**



The Lord's Prayer



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.



Thy kingdom come, thy will be done



on earth as it is in heaven.



Give us this day our daily bread



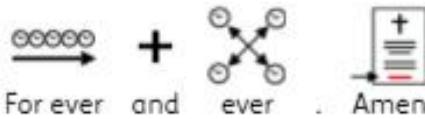
and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us



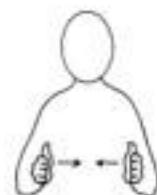
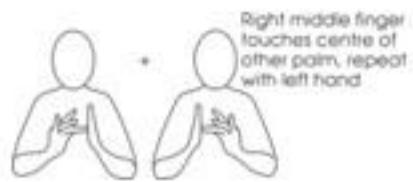
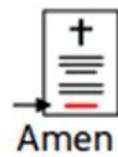
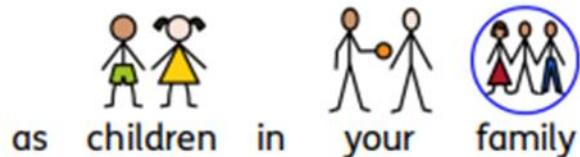
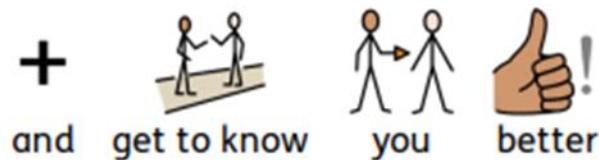
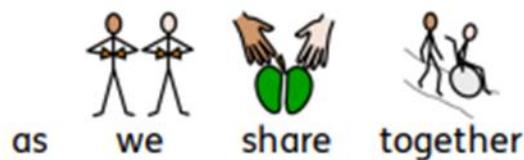
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

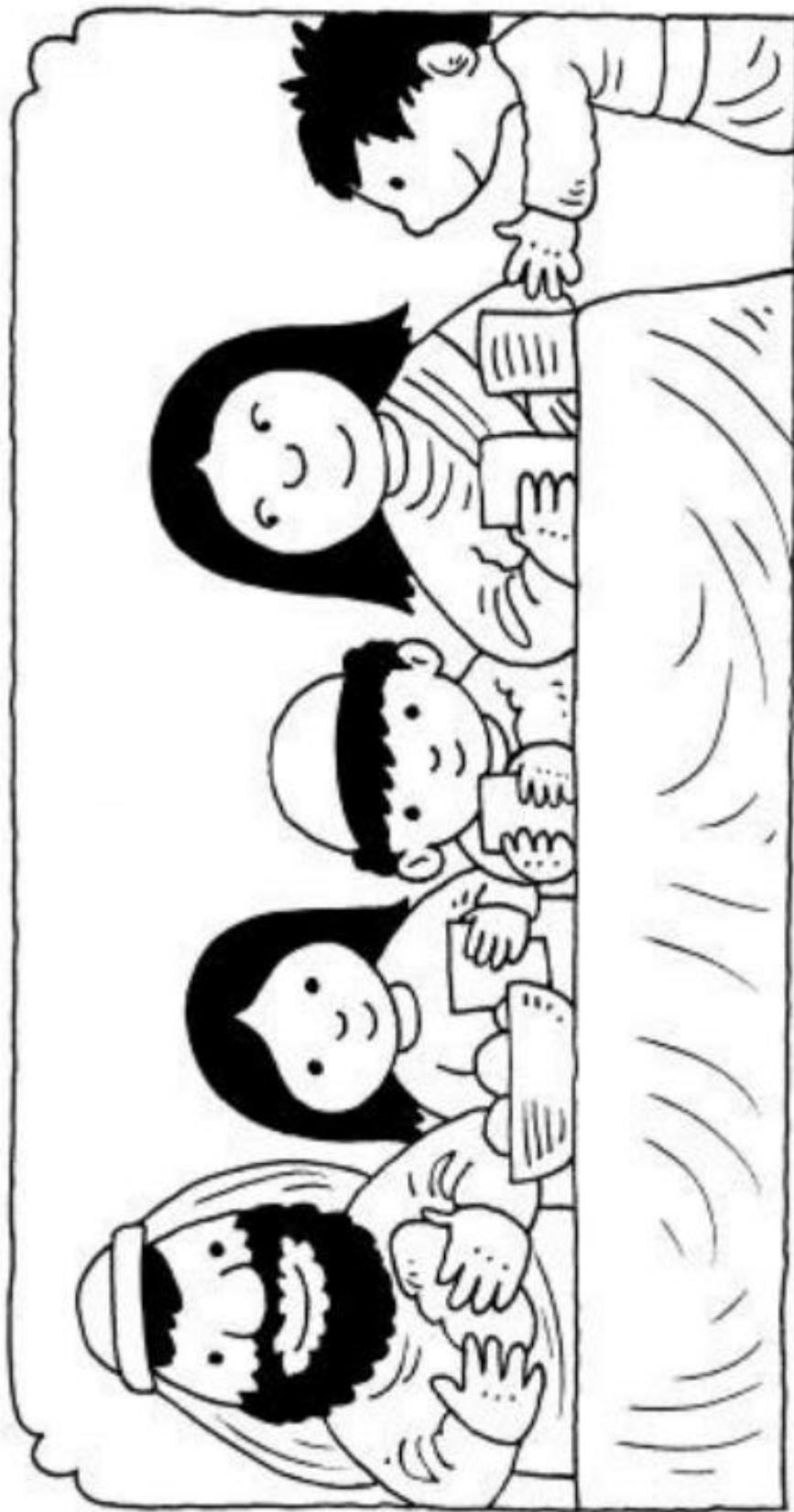


For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory



For ever and ever. Amen





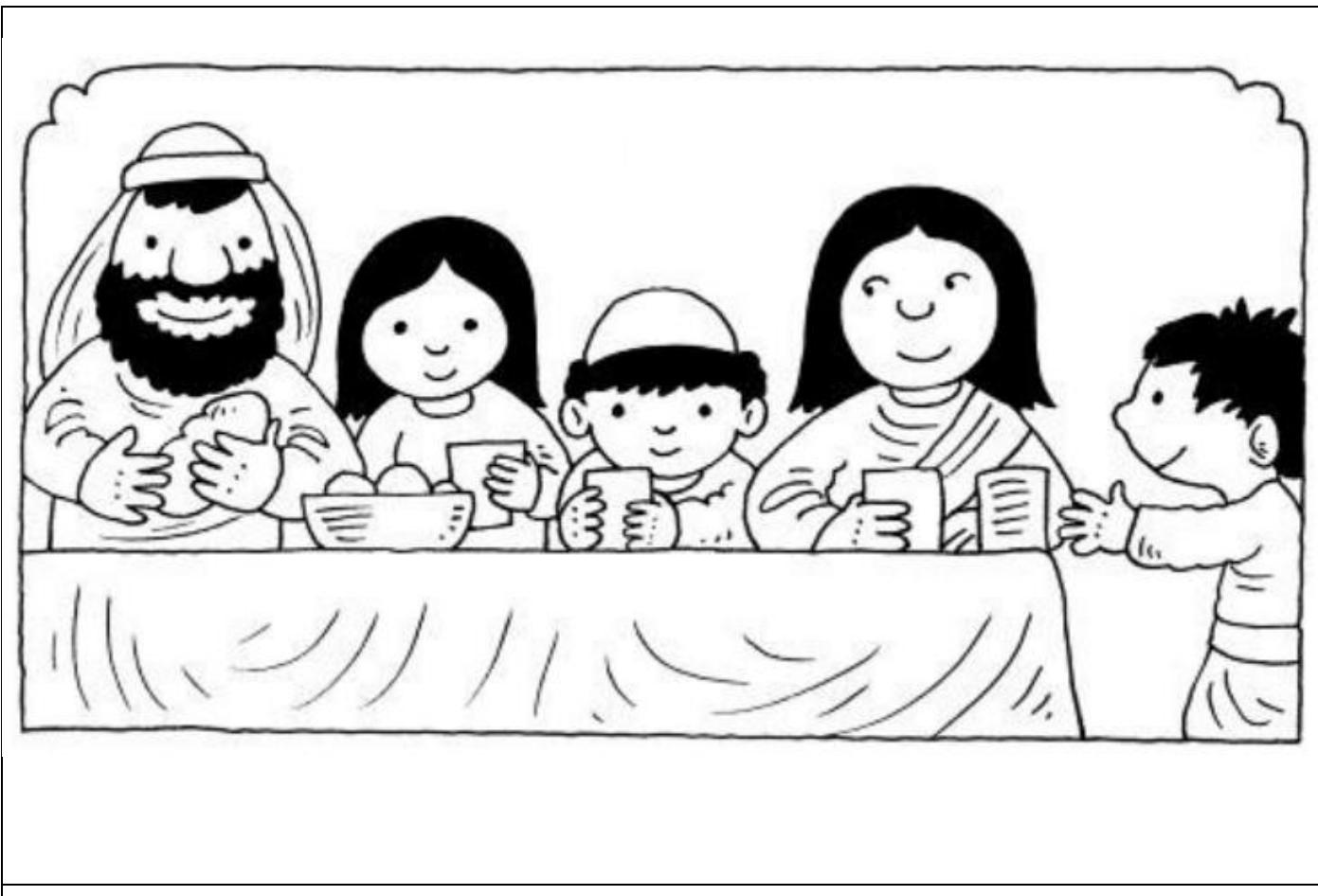


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