



Faith Adventures Youth Resource

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

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home 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/How-To-FAYR

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 family arrived when Jesus was between one and two.

Together – prayer and games

Let's start our time with God and each other well

Use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen

Alternatively, you may join with the widgit prayer found in the Faith Adventures: Children Together or else the Lord's Prayer found at the end of this session.

Active game – Human buckaroo

The wise men travelled a long way from the East and it is likely that they travelled by camel. We don't know how many there were or precisely where they came from, though it was probably somewhere near Persia (modern day Iran). We do know they brought three different gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh.



Split into groups or pairs. One person is the camel and will need to be able to crawl along the floor on hands and knees, all others are the astrologers. Choose three things to put on the camel's back to represent the three gifts. The camel then has to travel the length of the room or complete an obstacle course and the job of the astrologers is to make sure (without holding them) that the gifts do not fall off. The aim is to get across the room without dropping anything. Alternatively, two 'camels' could race to complete the course, or compete to see how many different things the 'camel' can carry on their back before dropping one.

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

This link takes you to Matthew 2: 1 – 12 <https://bit.ly/MATTHEw2>

You may wish to research different versions of this reading on www.biblegateway.com
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, “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.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

*Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011
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Watch: Wise Men, Smart Move: The Story of Happy Magi and Unhappy Herod (Matthew 2)
By The Biggest Story <https://bit.ly/H3r0d>

Listen: The Father's Song by Matt Redman By Mkariobangi <https://bit.ly/f4r3d>

An opportunity for reflection

- Do you think Jesus grew up knowing his family was different to other people's?

Explore – ways into the theme

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

A new way to explore the theme

This is a new way to explore the Bible passage and the theme for this week.

Alternatively, you may wish to use the Explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

Storyboard – day in the life

The aim of this activity is to explore the story of the wise men's visit from a personal and reflective point of view. Therefore this can be done in a variety of ways, use the guided meditation to be found in Faith Adventures: children Together, act out the story in groups, giving enough time to devise a short play; or provide a story board (a template can be found at the end of this session) for each person/group to create their own comic version of a day in the life of the child Jesus.

We don't know many details from the visit, such as what was going on in the household when the wise men arrived. Was it chaos? Was it peaceful? Perhaps Jesus was having a tantrum. Be creative and use speech bubbles to express what the people could have been saying or thinking. Share the stories with each other at the end. Are there any similarities/differences? I wonder how true to life these stories would have been.

Modern parables

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.



The Incredibles 2004: Pixar – Jack-Jack Attack by Nirav Naresh

<https://bit.ly/IncRED1bl>

Jack-Jack seems to be a normal baby, without any of the superhero skills that the rest of his family have, but he surprises everyone.

- Do you think the babysitter was expecting such a challenging job?
- What kind of things did she expect the baby to be able to do?
- Do you think Jesus was good at following instructions that adults gave him?

Group discussion

- Why did it take so long for the astrologers to arrive?
- If you were visiting Jesus what gift would you take?
- Why do you think we know so little about Jesus' childhood and adolescence?

Personal reflection

- I wonder what it's like if you know what you are or what you want to be and others struggle to see it.
- I wonder if Jesus is happy with his name and with his family. Have you ever felt like this?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayers Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session or use the prayer activity below. Alternatively light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

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

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.

Commented [LW1]: Insert comma following "finished"

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

Responding together

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Symbolism

The three wise men brought gifts for Jesus. Because there were three gifts, we assume there were three men but there could have been more. Spend some time researching why Jesus was given gold, frankincense and myrrh. Does any of what you have discovered surprise you?

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 10mins until golden brown.



Challenge

Discipleship doesn't stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today. If not, here are some suggestions:

- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts, insights together. **I wonder what is a favourite memory from your childhood.**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or *Commitment for Life* (cforl.co.uk)
- Have you heard of Operation Christmas Child? Watch a film here: <https://bit.ly/0pch1Id>
- 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?

Thank you for 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 or by sharing it on www.bit.ly/FACT_FB



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

JESUS was a child like me!

Print Free:www.lambsongs.co.nz

By Jill Kemp

Illustrated by Richard Gunther



Although He was the Son of God,
Jesus was a child like me.
He was respectful to his parents
and kind to others.



Jesus was a child like me.
Joseph and his mother Mary took
good care of him and just like every
child, he loved riding on their donkey.



They lived in the village of Nazareth
and would often have family and
friends come to visit. Sharing happy
times with them was important.



Jesus was the oldest child
in the family. He had two
brothers and some sisters
and he loved them all.



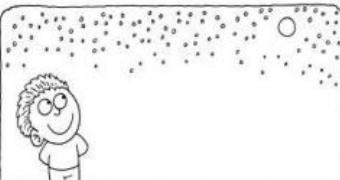
Joseph was a carpenter and
when Jesus was a boy he learnt
to make things from wood too.
Jesus liked to help his friends.



Jesus went fishing with
his friends. He loved to tell
everyone how much their
heavenly Father loved them.



When he was old enough,
Jesus went to school. Joseph
and his mother Mary were proud
to hear Him reading the Scriptures.



When I am alone I think about Jesus.
I want to be more like Him - having
fun with family and friends; respecting
my parents and being helpful and kind.
