



Bible Point ▶

Jesus is the greatest gift of all.

Bible Verse

“God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

Growing Closer to Jesus

Children will discover that gifts come in many forms, learn that people in the Bible viewed Jesus’ birth as a precious gift from above, and understand that the best way to thank Jesus for his gift is to give back to him.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

Wise men bring gifts to Jesus.

**Matthew
2:1-12**



The wise men, or Magi, were likely religious leaders from Persia or Babylon—either astronomers or astrologers, but not kings. The Magi, following a most unusual star, set out for Jerusalem, the Judean capital, to see if the star actually signaled the birth of this great king.

Some suggest that the “star” was actually the result of the alignment of planets that happened sometime between 7 and 4 B.C. Others say it was a special, localized phenomenon provided by God specifically to guide the Magi to Jesus. Whatever it was, its timing and movement were used by God to let people outside of Israel know about the miraculous birth of Jesus.

King Herod, hearing rumors of the birth, not only intended to kill the baby Jesus, but also schemed to use the innocent Magi to lead him to the right baby.

The Magi—whether there were only 3 or more than 20 of them is not clear—did not visit Jesus shortly after he was born; they actually arrived months later and visited Jesus at the house where he and his parents were staying. The three gifts they presented to Jesus indicate their wealth and prominence, since the gifts were costly. Throughout history, different symbolic meanings have been attributed to the Magi’s gifts. One theory suggests that the gold represented Jesus’ kingly nature, the incense his divinity, and the myrrh (a resin often used in burial) his humanity or mortality.

Prayer

- Read Isaiah 11:1-5.
- How does this passage explain why Jesus is the greatest gift of all?
- Pray: Heavenly Father, help me and my students understand why Jesus is the greatest gift of all as we...






Before the Lesson

Collect items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart.

Make photocopies of the “Growing Together” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.

Pray for your students and for God’s direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome	Welcome! —Receive a warm welcome from the teacher, and make name tags.	“Christmas Packages” name tags (p. 23), tape, safety scissors, markers or crayons	
Attention Grabber	A Great Gift —Play a game to unwrap a gift, and discuss why gifts are good.	Cookies, newsprint, tape, CD player	
Bible Exploration & Application	The Jesus Gift —Decorate the room with a chain that represents why Jesus is so special, and listen to John 1:12.	Bible, newsprint, marker, scissors, stapler, tape	
	Star Search —Take a journey similar to the wise men’s journey recorded in Matthew 2:1-12.	Bible, marker, paper	
	A Gift Box —Learn about giving thanks from 2 Corinthians 9:15, and make boxes to give gifts to Jesus.	Bible, “Gift Box” handouts (p. 55), markers, safety scissors, pencil, tape, yarn	
Closing 	God Guides Us —Be reminded by John 3:17 that God will always guide them just as he guided the wise men to find Jesus.		

Welcome

SUPPLIES: “Christmas Packages” name tags (p. 23), tape, safety scissors, markers or crayons

- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s “Growing Together” activities. Use questions such as “What did your family do to share the news about Jesus’ birth?” and “How did you and your family celebrate the good news of Jesus?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus is the greatest gift of all.**
- Hand out the name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged, or if children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout.
- Tell the children that the attention-getting signal you’ll use during this lesson will be raising your hand. Ask children to respond by raising their hands as they stop talking and focus their attention on you. Rehearse the signal with the children, telling them to respond quickly so you’ll have plenty of time for all the fun activities planned for this lesson.



◀ BIBLE POINT



It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over will help children remember it and apply it to their lives.

Attention Grabber

A Great Gift

SUPPLIES: cookies, newsprint, tape, CD player



Before class, wrap a package of cookies in as many pieces of newsprint as there are children in your class. (To add color, you could wrap the cookies in the comics section of the newspaper instead of newsprint.)

Have the children sit in a circle. Say: **There’s a present for you wrapped up in this paper. Let’s play a game to find out what the present is.**

Play “Three Wise Men” on the CD (track 6) and pass the present around the circle. Periodically pause the CD player. Have the child holding the present when the music stops carefully remove one layer of newsprint. Then turn on the music and pass the present around again. Keep playing until the last child has removed the last layer of newsprint and finds the cookies. Share the treat with the children.

Say: **Unwrapping this gift was fun, and we finally found the treat. When Jesus was born, he was a very special gift to us. Let’s talk about gifts right now while we enjoy our treat.**

Ask: • **Which do you like better: getting gifts or giving gifts? Explain.** (I like getting gifts because I like the stuff people give me; giving gifts, because it’s fun to keep a secret.)

• **Why do you think we give gifts at Christmas?** (To show people that we love them; to celebrate Jesus’ birthday.)

Say: ► **Jesus is the greatest gift of all. Today we’re going to talk about what makes God’s gift of Jesus so special.**



◀ BIBLE POINT

Bible Exploration & Application

The Jesus Gift

SUPPLIES: Bible, newsprint, marker, scissors, stapler, tape



Take the *Christmas bow* from the Learning Lab.

Ask: • **What makes Jesus such a special gift?** (He is kind; he loves us; he heals people; he makes miracles happen; he forgives sins; he came back to life.)

Write the children's ideas on a sheet of newsprint. Keep brainstorming until you have at least one idea for each child.

If your children have trouble thinking of ideas, ask them to think of Bible stories they remember about Jesus. Then ask them what good things Jesus did in the stories.

Say: **This big *Christmas bow* can remind us of the gift of Jesus—a big, beautiful gift from God to everyone on earth. Let's share this bow, just as we share the gift of Jesus.**

Take apart the *Christmas bow* and cut a narrow strip of the ribbon for each idea. Give a ribbon strip to each child. Have the children make loops with their ribbons and help them staple the loops together to form a chain.

Raise your hand to get children's attention. Wait for them to respond by raising their hands and focusing on you.



BIBLE POINT ▶

BIBLE VERSE ▶



Open your Bible to **John 1:12** and show children the verse.

Say: ▶ ***Jesus is the greatest gift of all* because he's God's Son. John 1:12 says that if we believe Jesus and accept him, we can become children of God. What a wonderful gift! And in John 3:17, which is our Bible verse for today, it says: ▶ "God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." Jesus wants us to believe in him and accept him so that we are not judged for our sins. Jesus took the punishment for us—what a loving thing to do! Each link in the chain we've made can represent one good thing about Jesus. Jesus did good things because he loves everyone. He loves you, too. Let's decorate our room with this chain to remind us of all the reasons Jesus is the greatest gift of all.**

Have the children tape the chain near the Nativity mural made in Lesson 2 or on the Time Stuffer Christmas tree.

HANDS-ON BIBLE

You'll need index cards or construction paper cut into 5x5-inch squares and markers or crayons. You may also wish to have wrapping paper, boxes, ribbon, tape, and scissors available.

Have children open up their *Hands-On Bibles* and find the "Jesus' Birth: Happy Birthday" page in one of the four-color inserts. Read through the page together with the children and then assist them in the activity, creating their special gift certificates. If time permits, wrap the certificates in boxes and decorate with ribbon.

Ask: • **What's the best birthday gift you ever got?** (A dog; a baby sister; a bicycle.)

• **How can we give to Jesus by giving to others?** (If we do something good for others, we do it for Jesus; Jesus is happy when we are nice to others.)

Say: **Let's celebrate that ► *Jesus is the greatest gift of all* by giving our gift certificates to someone special today!**



Star Search

SUPPLIES: Bible, marker, paper



Before class, make a bed of *manger hay* and put the *stuffed animal* in it to represent baby Jesus in the manger. Hide the bed with the "baby" in a hard-to-find place such as a desk drawer or a high shelf. Remove 20 *shiny shapes* from the Learning Lab and use a marker to number them on the back from 1 to 20. Hide the *shiny shapes* around the room. Draw a stick figure with a crown and an angry face on a piece of paper to represent Herod. Hide that piece of paper with the *shiny shape* numbered 14. Put the shape numbered 20 with the baby and the hay bed.

Say: **You've all heard how the wise men traveled to Bethlehem to see baby Jesus. But did you know that a king tried to trick them? Listen to this story from the book of Matthew.** Open your Bible to **Matthew 2:1-12**. Gather the children on the floor and tell this story: **Some wise men knew that Jesus was a special gift. These wise men came to Jerusalem one day and said, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."** Have children pretend to shield their eyes with their hands and look around the room.

A man named Herod was the king, and when he heard what the wise men said about a new king, he was worried. So he gathered all of the priests and teachers and asked them about the new king. The priests and teachers told King Herod that the new king would be born in Bethlehem. Have children pretend that they are discussing something very important with the people sitting around them.

King Herod began to plan a way to kill the brand-new king. But he was very sneaky about it. He met with the wise men and told them that the baby could be found in Bethlehem. Herod told the wise men, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!" Have children raise their arms above their heads and pretend to bow down in place.

Bible Insight

Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. Jesus was therefore born before 4 B.C., and our calendars are off by a few years.

The wise men traveled to Bethlehem. The star went ahead of them and stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. Have the children point upward and then clap with excitement. **The wise men went to the house where Jesus was and saw him with his mother, Mary. Then they bowed down and worshipped him. They gave him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Frankincense and myrrh are special, sweet-smelling perfumes.** Have children pretend to sniff the air and smile.

When it was time for the wise men to leave, God warned them not to tell Herod where baby Jesus was. So they went home a different way.

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus. Let's pretend we're the wise men, and let's follow stars to find baby Jesus. There are stars and other shapes hidden around the room that will lead us to the baby Jesus. First, we have to find a shape with a 1 written on it.

Have the children hunt for the first shape. Once they've found it, have them start hunting for the shape marked with a 2. Each time the children find a star or shape, ask them questions about the wise men's journey, such as "How do you think they traveled?" "What do you think they packed?" "What did they eat on their journey?" and "What did they sleep on?"

Have children keep hunting for shapes until they find 14. When the children have found shape 14 and the picture of Herod that's hidden with it, ask:

- **Why do you think Herod wanted to hurt Jesus?** (He was mean; he was scared of the new king.)

- **Would you have been afraid of Herod? Why or why not?** (I would have been scared because he was a big, mean man; I wouldn't have been afraid because God is stronger than any mean guy.)

Let children return to the hunt until they find shape 20. If the children have trouble finding it, give them hints.

Once they've found the hay bed with baby Jesus, have the children gather around it.

Ask: • **Why do you think the wise men brought gifts to Jesus?** (They knew how special he was; they wanted to show him that they loved him.)

- **Why do you think they would travel such a long way to see him?** (Because they knew he was very important; because they wanted to see him for themselves.)

Say: ► ***Jesus is the greatest gift of all. The wise men knew how special Jesus was when they saw his star in the sky. They knew it was worth a long, tiring journey to find Jesus. They wanted to see him and give him gifts to show they knew how important he was. We can give gifts to Jesus, too.***

Collect the *stuffed animal*, *manger hay*, and *shiny shapes* and place them out of sight.



BIBLE POINT ►

A Gift Box

SUPPLIES: Bible, "Gift Box" handouts (p. 55), markers, safety scissors, pencil, tape, yarn

Give each child a photocopy of the "Gift Box" handout. Have children cut out the boxes and use markers or crayons to decorate the unprinted side of the cutout to look like wrapping paper. Let children use markers to write their names on their boxes. Follow the instructions on the handout page to help children fold and tape the box with the decorations on the outside.

Raise your hand to get children's attention. Wait for them to respond by raising their hands and focusing on you.

Say: ► ***Jesus is the greatest gift of all.*** Say that with me: "Jesus is the greatest gift of all." Jesus brings us love and the chance to become God's children. Open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 4:15.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:15, "Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!" Let's show Jesus how much we appreciate what he gives to us by giving gifts to him. Let's pretend that these little boxes can hold whatever gift we would like to give to Jesus. Your gift could be promising to love your family, remembering to thank Jesus for loving us, or just promising to tell Jesus every day that you love him. Let's take turns telling what gifts we'd like to give to Jesus. I'll go first. My gift to Jesus is that I'll try to be the very best teacher I can be.

Give children a few minutes to share their ideas. As the children share their ideas, have them put their gift boxes next to the Nativity mural they made during Lesson 2. At the end of class, let the children take their gift boxes home to remind them of their gifts to Jesus.

Closing

God Guides Us

SUPPLIES: none



Give one star-shaped *shiny shape* to each child. (If you have more children than available star shapes, use additional *shiny shapes* as well.) Have children lie on their backs and hold the shapes above them.

Say: **The wise men followed a star to Bethlehem. God sent that star as a gift to guide the wise men. Do you remember our Bible verse for today? It comes from John 3:17. ► "God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." Say that with me: "God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." God loves us so much that he gave us the greatest gift of all—his Son, Jesus—so that we could love God, too, and follow him. Do you see the way the object you are holding twinkles in the light? That is like a twinkling star that reminds us to follow God and share his love with others as we tell them why ► *Jesus is the greatest gift of all.***

Ask: • **When do you need to be reminded that God is guiding you and taking care of you?** (When my parents fight; when kids at school are mean; when I'm sad or angry.)

• **What's one way you know how much God loves you?** (The Bible says so; God sent us Jesus.)

Say: **Whenever you look at twinkling stars in the sky, you can remember that God loves you and is guiding you every day. Let's thank God for taking care of us and sending us the gift of Jesus.**

BIBLE POINT



Jesus is the greatest gift of all. This is the timeless message of Jesus' birth. Remind your children that they can be thankful for God's greatest gift every day of their lives.



BIBLE VERSE

BIBLE POINT





BIBLE POINT ▶

Pray: **God, thank you for ▶ *Jesus, the greatest gift of all.* We want to thank you for your gift by following where you lead us just as the wise men followed the star. Help us to share the gift of Jesus with others. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Collect the *shiny shapes* and return them to the Learning Lab for future use.

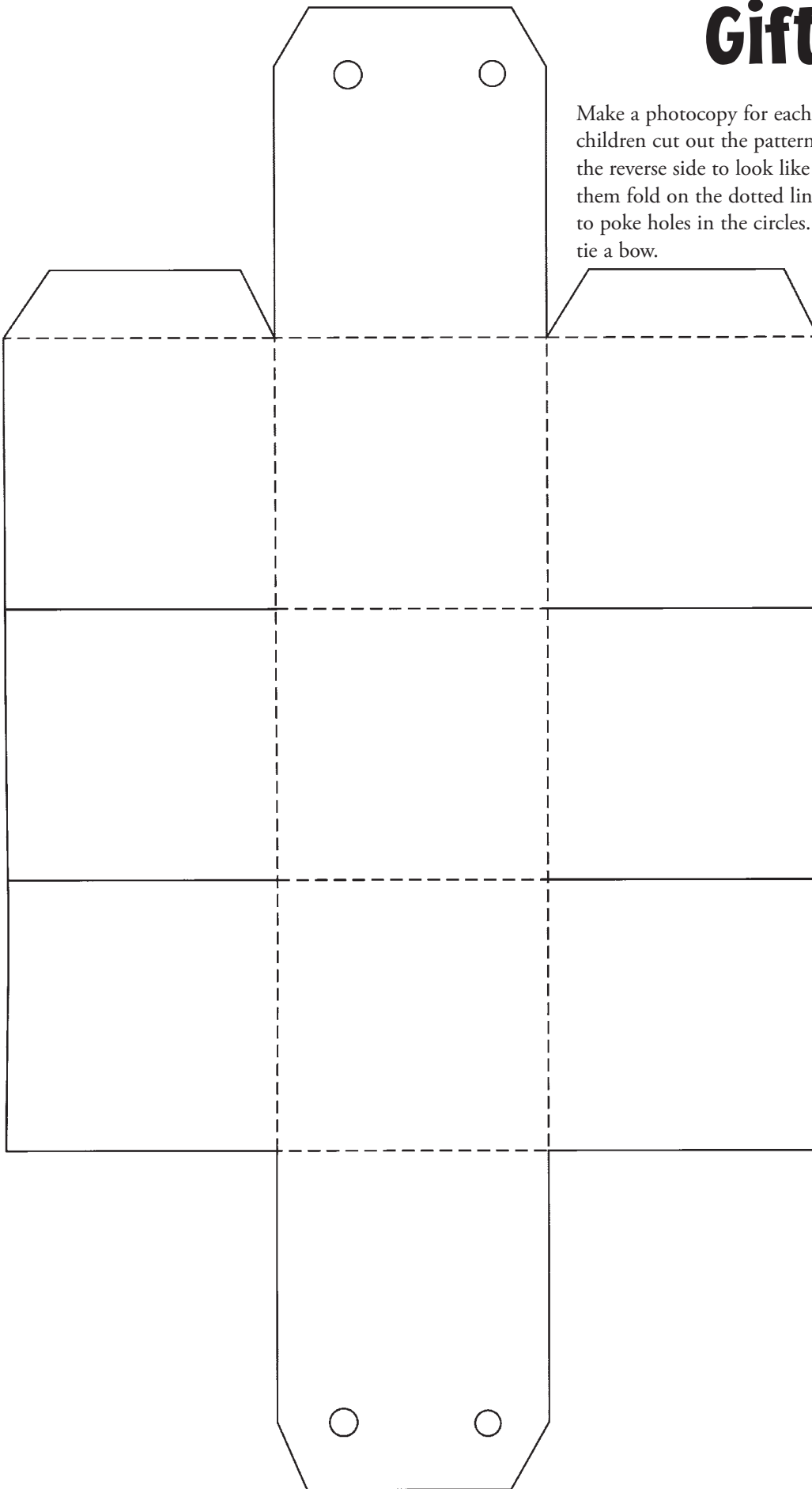


Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Growing Together” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage children and parents to use the handout to plan meaningful activities on this week’s topic. Follow up the “Growing Together” activities next week by asking children what their families did together.

Gift Box

Make a photocopy for each child in your class. Have the children cut out the pattern on the solid lines and decorate the reverse side to look like wrapping paper. Then have them fold on the dotted lines and tape the box. Use a pencil to poke holes in the circles. Put yarn through the holes, and tie a bow.



Growing Together

Jesus' Birth 4:
Jesus is the greatest gift of all.

Bible Story
Wise men bring gifts to Jesus.
(Matthew 2:1-12)

Key Verse
"God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

In Touch

Today your child learned that, of all the gifts we could receive, there is none more precious than Jesus. The wise men knew what an important gift Jesus was. Wise people still seek Jesus. Use these activities to help you and your child celebrate God's greatest gift.

Starry Night

Choose a clear night this week to look at the stars. Find the brightest one and the faintest one. Look for constellations. Talk about how people have used the stars for centuries to guide them to their destinations. Talk about which was more important to the wise men: the star or the destination. What do you think was special about the Christmas star?

Praise Prints



Show your child the hidden star that appears when you cut an apple horizontally rather than vertically. Together, dip apple halves into tempera paint and make prints on newsprint or tissue paper to create star-covered wrapping paper for your child's gifts to family members.

Sweet Stars



Make star-shaped cookies with your child. Put yellow food coloring in the dough or decorate the cookies with colored sugar. Use nontoxic markers to decorate paper plates with scenes of the wise men giving gifts to Jesus. Add the Scripture reference

Matthew 2:10-11. Deliver the starry treats to neighbors and friends.

Family Gifts

Talk about the gifts you wanted when you were a child and compare those to your child's wish list this Christmas. Tell your child how you felt when you got a special Christmas gift. Tell your child what a special gift he or she is to you. Talk about the difference between gifts you find under the Christmas tree and gifts of love.

