

Paperless Christmas 2009

The Adventures of Mary and Joseph – The Road Movie

Episode 7: The wise men

Introduction

The following lesson outline offers you a way to work through the story in the video with your class group. There are a variety of possible activities. There are also links to other related videos and to further web resources and books available from Barnabas.

Preparation

Download the episode and any associated film clips in advance (www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads) so that these are easily accessible to use on a whiteboard during the session. Print off a copy of the Bible story as well as the discussion starters and activity suggestions to be used with small groups.

Development

1. First Impressions – [The wise men](#)

Play this episode to the class. This tells the story of the journey of the wise men, who brought gifts for the baby Jesus.

Ask the class:

What did you like best about this episode?

What made you smile?

What did you find surprising?

What didn't seem to make sense?

What would you say was happening in this episode?

What do you think the wise men were expecting to find in Bethlehem?

What would they have made of this strange birthplace for a special King?

Which part of this story made the biggest impression on you?

2. Group work – what is wisdom?

Hand out the following discussion starters to small groups.

- What is the difference between knowing things and being wise? Is being wise the same as being clever?
- If you had to choose between having fame, becoming wealthy or being wise, which one would you choose?
- How do people get to be wise? Can it be learnt in school? From your family? From books? Or are you just born wise?
- Some people say that the positions and movements of the stars can tell us about the future. What do you think of this?
- Is there anything that is so important to you that you would be prepared to leave your home and travel hundreds of miles to another country in order to find it?
- What would be the most precious gift you could wrap up and give to a special newborn king?

Allow ten minutes for this and then ask one child per group to report back on what they talked about and what ideas they came up with.

Play the video [Global Jesus](#), which shows a set of images of Jesus from around the world. The story of the visit of the wise men reminds Christians at Christmas that Jesus is a gift for all people.

3. The Story in the Bible

Read the Bible story for episode 7. You will find this below in the Contemporary English Version (CEV). There is also an easy-to-read retelling of this story in [The Barnabas Schools' Bible](#), stories 250 and 251.

Matthew 2:1-12

The Wise Men

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, 'Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, 'Where will the Messiah be born?'

They told him, 'He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, "Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel."'

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, 'Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too.'

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

Here is a [word search](#) based on this reading.

Talk about the Bible story:

- What is in the Bible story that is not in the video? What is in the video that is not in the Bible story? Does the video help you understand the Bible story better? Which parts of the Bible story do you find puzzling?
- I wonder what it was like for the wise men to follow that star for hundreds of miles? I wonder if they ever felt like giving up? I wonder what they talked about at night around the campfire?

4. A Carousel of Group Activities

- There are lots of ideas about who the wise men may have been. If you were writing the story today, from which countries would you choose them to travel and why?
- Use reference books and the Internet to find out more about some key words and ideas that relate to this story: magi, astrologer, the Bethlehem Star, desert travel, King Herod, prophecy, myrrh, frankincense.
- In the Bible story the wise men assume that a new king would be born in a big city, which is why they visit Jerusalem first. Here they meet King Herod. Do you think these 'wise' men made a mistake in going to the palace? Imagine their conversation after they had left Jerusalem; also

imagine what King Herod and his advisers said together, once the wise men has set off for Bethlehem.

- Many people believe that the gifts have special meanings. Frankincense was used in worship; myrrh was used in healing and to prepare a body for burial; gold was for a king. But maybe they had practical purposes too. Work out how Joseph and Mary might have used these gifts to help them look after the newborn baby.
- The arrival of people from abroad to Bethlehem must have caused quite a stir in the town. Write up the newspaper report for the *Bethlehem Times*, in which you, as the local reporter, have put together some eye-witness accounts of this visit.
- The wise men must have been as surprised at what they found 'beneath the star' as Joseph and Mary greeted them. Imagine what one of them wrote in his diary a few days later when he looked back at this strange meeting.
- There is a group exercise based on the carol 'We three Kings', in [Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#), published by Barnabas, pages 136-7.

5. Classroom Drama Ideas

Play the video [The wise men](#) again and use it to prompt some drama exercises:

- Put each of the wise men in turn in the [hot seat](#): ask one about how the journey started; ask the second about the visit to King Herod; ask the third about what happened in Bethlehem.
- Create your own class idea of a [freeze-frame](#) depicting what it was like when the wise men were received by King Herod in Jerusalem. You will need lots of courtiers, officers, priests and servants as well as the main characters. Decide how and where each will stand and also what each will be thinking or saying. Add in some simple movements (for example, bowing, opening up the ancient books, fanning the king, and so on). Put this all together in a sequence of movement and dialogue so the scene comes to life.
- Use the video [Bad in all of us](#). Herod was certainly an evil King. We know that later he had all the babies killed in Bethlehem in an attempt to get rid of Jesus. This video suggests that the sort of bad in him can be in all of us. What do you think?

6. Final reflection questions looking back on the session

- I wonder what this story of the three wise men brings to the big story of Christmas? Could we leave it out and still have all the Christmas story we need?
- I wonder why only one writer in the Bible includes this story of the visit by the wise men?
- In the story the presents are given to Jesus. So why, at Christmas, do we give presents to each other instead?
- Think of the story from Herod's point of view. I wonder how I would have reacted if I discovered that there was someone else who was about to take away my throne?
- What has this story to say to us about wisdom?

7. Further web links and useful Barnabas books

- [Joy to the World \(including a PowerPoint presentation of Christmas artwork from around the world\)](#)
- [The story of the other Wise Man](#)
- [The giving of gifts](#)

- [Make an Indian Christmas star](#)
- [Prayer idea based on the gifts of God](#)

Useful Barnabas books

[Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays Volume 2](#)

[Getting Ready for Christmas](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Puppets](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Cards & Crib](#)

[Christmas Make & Do](#)

[Have you seen Christmas?](#)

[The Road to Christmas Day](#)

[The Christmas Journey](#)

8. **Play Episode 7 again to finish off the lesson and as a taster to the next session**