



R.E. LESSON PLAN - WATFORD SCHOOLS TRUST

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| LESSON TITLE Christmas - The gifts of the wise men – video lesson | LEARNING STAGE LKS2 | WST TEACHER/DATE Mrs Tricia Bastable Mrs Johanna Jordan |
| AIM: To consider what is significant about the gifts of the wise men at Christmas and how this links with Easter. LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To describe and explain the significance of the wise men's gifts. | MAIN AREAS/ OF LEARNING (Herts R.E. Agreed Syllabus 2017-22) Beliefs and practices Symbols and actions Other AOL covered: Prayer, worship and reflection Ultimate questions | LESSON RESOURCES WST provides: Video lesson Worksheets are available on our website www.watfordschoolstrust.org/lesson-plans School to provide: (Optional) Samples of frankincense and myrrh (essential oil) can be bought on Amazon/Ebay to let children smell them. Colouring pencils Scissors Glue sticks |

Introduction

A short introduction clip plays to create the atmosphere of Christmas. In this lesson we will explore why people give presents at Christmas and what the significance is of gifts in the Christmas story. Johanna asks why people might give presents to each other and why at Christmas? We suggest to pause the video to allow for children to discuss this in pairs.

At Christmas, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus. Johanna asks the children what they remember of the story of the birth of Jesus. A picture is shown of our knitted nativity characters we might have brought in for lessons in previous years. Do the children recognize them and remember what role they play in the Christmas story?

Main content

Johanna briefly recaps the story of Christmas. This lesson focusses on the part of the story where the wise men visit Jesus. (Johanna apologizes for the slight mispronunciation in the video of the word 'wise men').

A video clip called 'Jesus and the wise men' from 'Saddleback Kids' is shown to tell the story of the wise men in more detail.

The wise men are thought to be astrologers/astronomers, well-respected, very wealthy, and definitely not Jewish people. Probably originating from Persia where the stars were used to foretell future events. We sing about the wise men in the song "We three kings from Orient are..." but in the Bible there is no reference to them being kings or that there were 'three' wise men. There might have been more. But we are told that they brought three special presents for Jesus.

The gifts of the wise men seem to have been carefully chosen to celebrate the birth of someone long-awaited in Jewish Biblical history. All the gifts would have been regarded as expensive in their time. They were the kind of gifts that one might give someone very special (and not necessarily a baby!), but they each had a symbolic meaning that would foretell something about Jesus' life in the future.

Johanna talks about each gift individually:

- **Gold – a gift for Jesus the King.** Gold is a very precious and valuable metal. Gold was given as a gift from one king to another king. The gift of gold symbolizes that Jesus was a King. For Christians, Jesus would become a king, but not a conventional king who sits on a throne and wears a crown. He could be described as the King of people's hearts, as he would describe himself as 'the way' to God, the person through whom people could be friends with God again. He was called a King when people mocked him at the cross, when he would be forced to wear a crown of thorns. The Roman governor Pontius Pilate put a sign on his cross – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The Bible says that Jesus now reigns in heaven.
- **Frankincense – a gift for Jesus the priest.** Frankincense starts off as a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark and allowing the gum to flow out. The resin can be burnt as it is or made into oil. Frankincense is sometimes used in worship. It is a symbol of holiness. When incense is burned it produces a pleasant smell (aroma) and the smoke produced is seen as a symbol of people's prayers going up to God. A priest is someone who teaches about God, and who is also the link between God and his people. It indicated that Jesus would be worshipped, but also that he would become the lasting link between God and people when he gave himself up on the cross as a sacrifice for people's sins. People used to make burnt offerings to God to represent their sins for which they wanted to be forgiven. Jewish people had long believed that God was going to send a Messiah (saviour) into the world, someone who would be able to forgive all the sins of the world. Jesus would say that he was that Messiah, who would take the blame for everybody's sins – the ultimate sacrifice.
- **Myrrh – a gift for Jesus the ultimate sacrifice.** Myrrh is extracted from a tree, like frankincense. When the resin goes hard, it is dark red/brown, and some people think it looks like blood-stained tears. In Biblical times myrrh was made into a special oil that used to be spread on someone's body when they had died, to prepare them for burial (embalming). Sometimes it was mixed with wine and used/drunk as a painkiller. It tastes very bitter, which is why it would be mixed with wine, to make it more palatable. It is a symbol of the pain, suffering and death that Jesus would go through on the cross. It would have been used on Jesus's body had he not been resurrected before his friends got to his tomb to prepare him for burial. The Bible says that Jesus was offered a pain-killing drink made from myrrh and wine when he was dying on the cross, but he refused it. So, when the wise men gave Jesus myrrh they were foretelling his death.

Christians celebrate Christmas because Jesus is so special to them. They believe that he came to make them friends with God again and that gives them hope and happiness and a real reason to celebrate Christmas.

Activity

We suggest that the children make a fact file about the gifts of the wise men. Worksheets with coloured pictures of the three gifts are provided on our website and can be used as part of the fact file.

Things to include could be: facts about the wise men (Who were they? Where did they come from? Legend says they even had names!), pictures of the gifts of the wise men and their symbolic meaning, reasons why Jesus is so important to Christians and why they celebrate Christmas.

The website [whychristmas.com](https://www.whychristmas.com) has lots of interesting information about all aspects of Christmas and the story of the Nativity:

<https://www.whychristmas.com/story/wisemen.shtml>

Deeper Questions - Possible follow up/class discussion suggestions

Which event do you think is more important for Christians – Christmas or Easter?

Why do some people light incense (frankincense) when they pray?

Class teacher's notes

For further lesson plans, resources and support material visit
www.watfordschoolstrust.org or email info@watfordschoolstrust.org

