

THEME 2

Christmas

Christmas gifts are important to children. They enjoy being in the circle of love that gives and receives gifts. At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of God's son. Unit 5, "Jesus, God's Greatest Gift," emphasizes the gifts of the wise men, given in response to God's gift of love in Jesus. Because of God's generous love, we can share our love with others.

Grade 3—Unit 5

Jesus, God’s Greatest Gift

Jesus was God’s gift of love to us. The arrival of God’s son in human form fulfilled God’s promise to the people of Israel generations earlier. This unit celebrates the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ.

LESSONS

1. God’s Greatest Gift, Part 1
2. God’s Greatest Gift, Part 2

Unit 5: Jesus, God’s Greatest Gift

Unit Information

SUMMARY

During the Christmas season, we celebrate God’s great gift of love to us in sending us Jesus. The shepherds came to worship the newborn king. The wise men traveled a great distance to bring gifts to the Christ child. God’s love continues to be revealed as Jesus’ love lives in and through the people of God.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Isaiah 9:1-7

John 3:16, 17 (memory verses)

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 2:13-38

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

God’s Greatest Gift

The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. That promise was miraculously fulfilled at the birth of Jesus. At Christmas, we celebrate God’s greatest gift of love to the world—the gift of Jesus, who teaches us how to live and love. This ultimate gift of God’s love continues to bless us. That love calls us to share gifts of joy, love, and peace each day, as well as during the Christmas season.

The wonder of Jesus’ birth touched the shepherds, who heard angels proclaim the news. The shepherds hurried to see the baby for themselves, and excitedly told others about the Savior’s birth. The wise men, also known as magi, traveled from far away, led by a star. Knowing that royalty was born, they brought expensive gifts to the Christ child.

We continue to share with others in Christ’s name. Giving the priceless gift of ourselves turns any gift into a presentation of love.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- God’s promise to send a Messiah was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.
- God’s love was revealed in God’s gift of Jesus.

WORSHIP

1. The gift of Jesus to the world is a gift that continues to touch people’s hearts 2,000 years later. Talk about ways we can share God’s love with others. What can the class do? What can families do? Make a book of decorated coupons to give a parent, sibling, grandparent, or friend for Christmas. *Ideas: setting the table, one free hug, walking the dog, mopping the floor, reading a bedtime story to a sibling, going to bed without being asked, washing the car, helping with supper, breakfast in bed, ten minutes of quiet, etc.* Staple coupons together with recipient’s name on the outside.

2. Have students set up a crèche at the worship center.

3. Focus on how the angels, shepherds, and wise men responded to God's gift. The angels rejoiced through their singing. The shepherds knelt before the baby, then ran and told others. The wise men recognized the star and followed it with great faith, bringing their gifts for the new king. Use the following Scripture passages, hymns, and wonder questions. Include a prayer time. Reflect on how we can respond to Christ's birth.

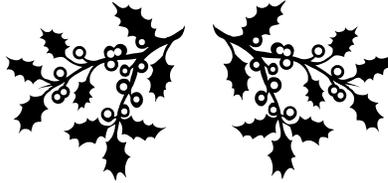
- **Angels worship the Christ child.** Read Luke 2:13-14. Sing "Angels from the Realms of Glory," verse 1. Wonder questions: I wonder what it sounded like to hear the angels sing. I wonder how the angels felt inside when they saw baby Jesus. I wonder how it would feel to be an angel.
- **Shepherds worship the Christ child.** Read Luke 2:15-20. Sing "Angels from the Realms of Glory," verses 1 and 2. Wonder questions: I wonder what the shepherds were thinking when they saw and heard the angels. I wonder how the shepherds felt as they hurried to the stable.
- **Wise men worship the Christ child.** Read Matthew 2:1-11. Wonder questions: I wonder how the wise men recognized this special star announcing the birth of the Christ child. I wonder if the wise men were ever lost on their way to Bethlehem. I wonder how they chose their special gifts.

MEMORY PASSAGE

The memory verse passage is provided in large format on pages 49-52, to be used as posters or overheads.

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

- As students work in small groups, listen to their interaction to evaluate their comprehension of the material. Note contributions and involvement in the story discussions.



For God so loved the world
that he gave his one
and only Son, that whoever
believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life. For God did
not send his Son into the world
to condemn the world, but to
save the world through him.

John 3:16-17



Jesus, God's Greatest Gift

LESSON 1: GOD'S GREATEST GIFT, PART 1

Objective

Students will realize that we give gifts at Christmas because God gave us the gift of Jesus.

Key Concepts

- God sent Jesus into this world to show his love for everyone.
- At Christmas we celebrate the gift of God's son.
- The wise men were watching and waiting for the coming of the Messiah and wanted to offer their best to the special baby.
- Love motivates us to give to others.

Texts: Isaiah 9:1-7; John 3:16-17; Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 2:13-38

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bible
- Recording of Handel's *Messiah*
- CD player or tape player
- *Caspar and the Star* by Francesca Bosca; *The Story of the Three Wise Kings* by Tomie dePaola; and/or other children's books about the wise men's journey
- For Extend the Lesson: Bible memory journals, Christmas stickers

Teacher Preparation

- Cue CD or tape of Handel's *Messiah* to the song, "For Unto Us a Child Is Born."

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Read Isaiah 9:1-7. Isaiah and the other prophets told about the coming of a Messiah, or Savior. The Jews had waited many years for the birth of the Messiah. They expected him to be a king who would once again make Israel a great nation. Listen to the song, "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," from Handel's *Messiah*. Then read Luke 1:26-33, the story of the angel foretelling Jesus' birth to Mary.

LESSON STEPS

- 1. The gift of Jesus** to the world is a gift that continues to touch people's hearts 2,000 years later. Read as a class Luke 2:1-16.
- 2. Read Matthew 2:1-12** as a class. Explain that the *magi* were educated men, so they are also called "wise men." They brought expensive gifts, so people have sometimes assumed they were kings.
- 3. Discuss the wise men.** Break into smaller groups and have each group read a children's book about the journey of the wise men. Have the groups compare the

scripture account with their book. Ask the students to write down their findings and keep them for the next lesson, when they will share them during class time.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Bible memory journals.** Students may add the John 3:16-17 memory passage to their journals. Provide Christmas stickers for decorating the margins. While children are working, ask why this might be a good memory verse to learn at Christmas. At Christmas time, we remember how God sent Jesus to the world; at Easter we think about how Jesus died to save us from our sins. Be sure to mention that although we focus on these events at special times of the year, it is helpful for us to remember them all through the year.

Jesus, God's Greatest Gift

LESSON 2: GOD'S GREATEST GIFT, PART 2

Objective

Students will realize that we give gifts at Christmas because God gave us the gift of Jesus.

Key Concepts

- God sent Jesus into this world to show his love for everyone.
- At Christmas we celebrate the gift of God's son.
- The wise men were watching and waiting for the coming of the Messiah and wanted to offer their best to the special baby.
- Love motivates us to give to others.

Texts: Isaiah 9:1-7; John 3:16-17; Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 2:13-38

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bible
- Books about the wise men's journey from last session's study groups
- "We Three Kings" song (from old curriculum, p. 230)
- *The Candymaker's Gift* by David and Helen Haidle
- Paper, crayons/markers
- "A Litany to Remember" (p. 144)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: Faith Hero T-shirts, fabric crayons/markers
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: *The Clown of God* by Tomie dePaola, *Papa Panov's Special Day* by Mig Holder, *The Other Wise Man* by Henry van Dyke, *Elijah's Angel* by Michael J. Rosen, OR other books about the true spirit of giving
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: Bible memory journals, crayons/markers and/or Christmas stickers for decorating
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: "God's Greatest Gift" unit review (pp. 145-146)

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies or an overhead of the song, "We Three Kings."
- Make copies of "A Litany to Remember," one for each student.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option four, make copies of the review sheet.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Remind students about the term *magi*. Ask them to give other names for the magi, such as "wise men" or "kings." Have the book study groups from the last session look over their findings, comparing children's books about the wise men with the scripture passage you read. Give a few minutes for students to prepare a report to the class.

LESSON STEPS

1. Invite the book study groups report to the class. They should be able to

compare the book they studied to the scripture account of the wise men. How is the story the same as the scripture account? How is it different? How did the illustrator picture the wise men?

2. Make a comparison chart, as a class. On one side, list all the facts about the wise men from Matthew 2:1-12. On the other side of the chart, under the heading “Other Stories,” list the details that have been added by storytellers. Discuss your findings.

3. Sing the Christmas song, “We Three Kings.” Note the similarities and differences between the song lyrics and the Matthew account of the wise men.

4. Read *The Candymaker’s Gift* by David and Helen Haidle. Discuss the following questions and provide paper and crayons/markers for the writing and drawing activities.

- Who are the main characters in this story?
- What gifts did the candymaker give?
- Katie had an idea for the candy, too. What was her idea?
- Write or draw some of God’s gifts to you.
- Write what you and a friend can do for each other or give to each other.

5. Read “A Litany to Remember.” Hand out copies of the litany (p. 144) and read it as a class.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Work on Faith Hero T-shirts.** Invite students to add Jesus’ name and a symbol from the Christmas story to their T-shirts.
- **Read and discuss stories about giving**, dividing into smaller groups. Some examples of books: *The Clown of God* by Tomie dePaola; *Papa Panov’s Special Day* by Mig Holder; *The Other Wise Man* by Henry van Dyke; and *Elijah’s Angel* by Michael J. Rosen. These books illustrate the true spirit of giving at Christmas.
 - Have each group present its book creatively to the rest of the class.
Ideas: dramatize the book, write a skit or puppet show based on the book, write a sequel to the story, create a similar story with a different twist, make a display to tell the story visually, create a diorama of the story, pretend to be characters from the story and tell it in your own words.
 - After students have shared their presentations, talk about gifts anyone can afford. *Examples:* writing a kind note to someone, giving a compliment, praying for someone, making a coupon book for a parent, sibling, grandparent, or friend.
- **Bible memory journals.** Give students more time to complete the John 3:16-17 page in their journals.
- **Complete the unit 5 review, “God’s Greatest Gift”** (pp. 145-146). You may use this as an assessment.

A Litany to Remember

- All:** O God, you kept your promise and sent Jesus to live on earth, so we would know the way you want us to live. We ask you to guide us during this Advent season as we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.
- Leader:** When we make our family plans for Christmas.
- Class:** Help us to remember whose birthday it is.
- Leader:** When we look in toy catalogs and stores and want more and more and more.
- Class:** Help us to remember whose birthday it is.
- Leader:** When we think of all the boxes, gift wrap, and ribbon that go into the trash.
- Class:** Help us to remember whose birthday it is.
- Leader:** When we forget about people who are hungry, sick, lonely, or in prison.
- Class:** Help us to remember whose birthday it is.
- Leader:** When we make our Christmas lists for family and friends.
- Class:** Help us to remember whose birthday it is.
- Leader:** Lord, forgive us when we are selfish and forget who you are and why you have come. Help us to remember to celebrate your birthday by giving and sharing our love with others. Help us, Lord. Amen.



Name _____

God's Greatest Gift

Unit 5 Review



Directions: Circle the letter for each correct answer.

1. Which prophet told about Jesus' coming in the Old Testament?
A. Magi B. Gabriel C. Isaiah
2. What is the angel's name who told Mary she was going to have a baby?
A. Magi B. Gabriel C. Isaiah
3. What is another name for the wise men who traveled to worship Jesus?
A. Magi B. Gabriel C. Isaiah
4. How did the wise men know where to find Jesus?
A. They had a map. B. They followed a star. C. An angel told them.
5. Why didn't the wise men report to Herod where Jesus was?
A. Joseph told them not to go back.
B. They got lost on their way back.
C. They were warned in a dream not to go back.

Directions: Fill in the blanks to complete John 3:16-17.

6. For God so _____ the _____ that he gave His one and only _____, that whoever _____ in him shall not perish but have _____ life. For God did not send his Son into the world to _____ the world, but to _____ the world through him.

God's Greatest Gift—Answer Key

1. C Isaiah
2. B Gabriel
3. A Magi
4. B They followed a star.
5. C They were warned in a dream not to go back.
6. For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
7. T
8. F
9. F
10. F
11. T
12. T
13. Why wasn't Herod happy when Jesus was born?
He didn't want there to be another king besides him.
14. Why do people give gifts at Christmastime?
Christmas celebrates when God gave us the greatest gift, so we give gifts, too.
15. What are some ways your family celebrates Christmas?
Answers will vary.