

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



TRAVEL TO FOLLOW THE STAR

Matthew 2:1-12 Wise men come to visit Jesus

The wise men followed the star to discover the fulfilment of God's promise in Jesus. Along the way they met a king who was not willing to bow down and worship. Following the wise men's story, we will discover more of what it means to have a covenant relationship with God and be reassured of the many promises God has made to those he loves.

Each child will need:

- Bible verse wristband
- A strip of white paper (A4 paper cut in quarters, lengthways), scissors and pens/pencils
- Access to a Bible: book, online Bible or Bible app
- Covenant Sunday prayer cards (optional)
- Printable Covenant Sunday prayer cards are also available (optional)
www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/covenantsunday2023
- Pens/pencils and paper

You will need:

- To display this month's memory verse
- To display the Bible promises references – see Action It section

Start It

Ask: Have you ever made a promise and then regretted making it?

- 🗨 **Say:** To get ready for our opening game, watch this *Bluey* clip. In the clip Bandit, Bluey and Bingo's dad, has promised to play in the library a game of toddlers – without finding out what it is first.

Video

Promises Bluey Official Website (34 secs)
www.bluey.tv/watch/season-3/promises/

- 🗨 **Say:** So, I have a question for you. Do you promise to play my game?

Discuss the children's responses to your question. This will depend on your group, but some of the children may want to know more detail about what is involved in the promise. They may have some questions they want answering first – for example, 'Will you make me look silly?' Others in the group might say yes straight away. Explore why that's the case. Is it because they trust you?

- 🗨 **Say:** The game we're going to play is 'Simon says'.

Play a game of 'Simon says' with the children to get them moving. The aim of this starter is to get the children thinking about what decision goes into making a promise. What do we need to consider before we promise to do something? Does it depend on who is asking us to make the promise? In the end, the children were only promising to play a game of 'Simon says', but at the time they made the promise they had no idea what was ahead.

Sing It

🗨️ **Say:** Today's song reminds us that we serve a faithful God who keeps his promises.

'Promises' by Horizon Kids (2 mins 41 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns0MZ2-0DUY

Tell It

🗨️ **Say:** In our last session we looked at two important characters in the Christmas story. They had waited many years for God to fulfil his promise.

Ask: What were their names and what do you remember about them?

🗨️ **Say:** Simeon and Anna were waiting for God to keep his promise, and then met Jesus in the Temple. It's a special feeling when someone keeps a promise. Simeon and Anna trusted God and believed that he would keep his promise.

🗨️ **Say:** In today's story we meet another group of people who trusted God to fulfil his promises. Their story is found in the book of Matthew.

'Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We have come to worship him."

'When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. They answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

**'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are important among the rulers of Judah.**

A ruler will come from you.

He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites." [Micah 5:2]

'Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, "Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come and tell me. Then I can go worship him too."

'The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshipped the child. They opened the gifts they had brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country by a different way.'

— (Matthew 2:1-12 *ICB*)

🗨️ **Say:** The wise men followed the star to find the promised baby boy, Jesus, King of the Jews.

Ask:

➔ Why do you think King Herod was 'troubled' by this news?

➔ What was he afraid of?

🗨️ **Say:** The wise men spoke the words found all the way back in the Old Testament book of the prophet Micah that shared the promise of Jesus. They were excited to meet Jesus, but Herod was afraid. He did not want a new king, even if that king was promised by God.

Ask:

➔ King Herod told the wise men he wanted to worship the new king. Would you have believed him? If not, why not?

➔ The wise men went to worship Jesus. What gifts did they bring?

🗨️ **Say:** The wise men didn't just bring gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh; they brought the gift of themselves.

Ask:

- ➔ What do you think that means?
- ➔ How do we bring ourselves as a gift to Jesus?

🗨️ **Say:** When we say we believe in Jesus, he becomes part of who we are. We are part of a covenant with God. This may sound like a strange word, but it means we bring all of ourselves to him, and he brings all of himself to us.

🗨️ **Say:** Our memory verse for this month helps us to understand this more.

Display the memory verse for the group and read it together.

'If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God.'

— (1 John 4:15 ICB)

Spend some time going over the memory verse for this month and create a set of actions to go with the words. Give each member of the group a memory verse wristband to help them learn the verse when they get home.

Action It

🗨️ **Say:** The wise men followed the star to discover Jesus, God's promise fulfilled here on earth. Today we are going to make a star garland for you to hang up at home, which will remind you of the promises of God.

Star craft

Show the children how to make a star garland.

Video (for leaders)

How to make a star garlands – Christmas garland decoration ideas by Helpful Arts & Crafts
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jz7FfewidVrQ

Once the children have made their star garland, they can write the reference to a different Bible promise on each star and decorate it. Take some time to show the children how to look up verses in their Bible or use an online site (like BibleGateway) or a Bible app. The garland will be used as part of the 'Explore It At Home' activity, so they will be able to get additional help at home.

🗨️ **Say:** Hang up your promise garland when you get home. Each day, follow a different star to discover one of God's promises.

Promise Bible references

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| ➔ Isaiah 41:10 | ➔ Romans 8:28 | ➔ Philippians 4:19 |
| ➔ Deuteronomy 31:8 | ➔ Isaiah 40:29 | ➔ Proverbs 3:5-6 |
| ➔ John 16:33 | ➔ James 1:5 | ➔ Isaiah 41:13 |
| ➔ Psalm 32:8 | ➔ 1 John 1:9 | ➔ Joshua 1:9 |
| ➔ Psalm 37:23-24 | ➔ John 3:16 | |
| ➔ Exodus 14:14 | ➔ Mark 11:24 | |

Pray It

The 'Pray It' section today will depend on whether the children have had an opportunity to read and respond to the Covenant Sunday material. During this part of the session, you can either reflect on the promises the children have made and read the prayer together, or give the children an opportunity to read and sign the Covenant Sunday prayer card.

Video

If you would like some music to share during this time of reflection, then some music by Paul Baloche fits with the theme of the session.

'Offering' (Christmas version) by Paul Baloche (4 mins 11 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Z2NxURQ6s

Dear God,

Your love for me never ends, no matter what I do.

The amount of love you have for me is too much for me to understand!

I hope to get to know you better and show your love to others in everything I think, say and do.

I am going to write my name on this card to show that I want to be close to you and always have you in my heart.

Help me bring your love to this world and everyone in it.

Amen.

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

JANUARY
—
SESSION 01

TRAVEL TO FOLLOW THE STAR

 Matthew 2:1-12 Wise men come to visit Jesus

FOR ME



Create

Our memory verse for this month is:

'If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God.'

— (1 John 4:15 ICB)

See if you can remember the actions you made up together in this week's session.

Create a version of the memory verse to put up at home and help you to learn the verse by heart. This could be: a drawing, a poster, Lego characters holding up different parts of the verse ... Be as creative as you wish!

TOGETHER



Share

In this week's 'Explore It' session you made a star garland filled with promises from God. Hang it up at home, and each day look up a different Bible verse and share it with someone.



Song for the week

'Promises' by Horizon Kids

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns0MZZ2-0DUY



Memory verse

'If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God.'

— (1 John 4:15 ICB)

KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!

