

Love is an action


Bible verses:

Matthew 2:1-12

Wise men come to visit Jesus


Aim:

To see how the wise men faithfully responded to God's gift of Jesus, and to learn that we can also respond by giving ourselves fully to God


Today's fruit:

Faithfulness



In this session we meet the wise men, travellers who faithfully followed God's sign in the night sky.

Their story reminds us that love is not just a feeling, but something we do. The wise men gave their time, energy and gifts to worship Jesus. Their love was an action, and through them we learn what it means to live faithfully for God. We also introduce Covenant Sunday, a special time when Salvation Army members and friends renew their promise to give 'all of me for all of you forever'.

We can respond with faithfulness to the love God gave through the gift of Jesus.

Each child will need:

- A star that can be drawn/written on – from a template or pre-cut star, a ribbon / piece of string, scissors, glue/tape and pens/pencils
- *Explore It ideas* handout

You will need:

- A large cut-out star for each team leader – see Start It
- Fruit of the Spirit poster: *Faithfulness* – download from **Salvationist**
- To set up a display area for a 'Sky full of faithfulness' – see Action It



Start it

Play a game of *Follow the star*. Divide the group into smaller teams. Choose a sensible leader for each team and give each one a large cut-out star.

Say:

The aim of the game is to follow your star. Your star is going to move around the room, without crashing into any other stars, and your job is to follow it faithfully.

Explain to the 'stars' that they can weave in and out of the chairs or objects in the room, but everyone needs to walk sensibly and stay together as a group. The following track can be used as background music.

Listen

'A sky full of stars' (official audio) by Coldplay (4:34)

After about a minute, call everyone back and sit down together.

Ask:

- Was it easy or hard to keep your eyes on the star?
- How did your team help one another to stay together?

Say:

Today we're going to discover what happened when the wise men decided to faithfully follow God and keep their eyes on the star that would lead them to Jesus.

**Sing it****Say:**

Before we sing, let's remember our memory verse, the promise we have been learning this month. God kept this promise when love came down at Christmas.

Memory verse

**'For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

And he will be called

**Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

(Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

Say:

Our song for today reminds us that Christmas is not just about presents or lights; it's about a celebration of God's love for each one of us.

Song

'What Christmas is about' song by Orange Kids Music (lyrics and actions) video by Zoom Kids (2:33)



Share it

Say:

Over the Advent season we've been discovering how love came down at Christmas as the gift of Jesus from a loving God.

- We met Zechariah and Elizabeth, who patiently waited for God's promise to come true.
- We heard how Mary and Joseph said yes to God and followed his plan for their lives.
- We celebrated with the shepherds, who were the first to hear the good news that Jesus had been born.

Ask:

- Why do you think God chose the shepherds to hear the good news first?
- What did that show us about God's love?

Say:

God's love reached the shepherds out in the fields, and today we'll see that it also reached people from far, far away. Some travellers from another country saw a bright star in the sky, a sign that God had sent his promised King. They followed it all the way to Jesus. Let's watch the clip to find out what happened.

Video

***The story of Christmas (Jesus and the wise men)* by Saddleback Kids (3:30)**

Say:

Now that we've seen an overview of the story, let's see what the Bible has to say about the wise men.

Read:

'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 came to worship him."'

(Matthew 2:1-2 ICB)

Ask:

- What did the wise men see that made them start their journey?

- Why do you think they wanted to find Jesus?

Say:

As soon as the wise men saw the star, they were drawn to it. Without even seeing the baby boy, they trusted that the star was a sign from God and set off to find the newborn King.

Read:

'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."

'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 and worship him too."

(Matthew 2:3-8 *ICB*)

Ask:

- Why do you think King Herod was 'troubled', instead of happy, when he heard about Jesus?
- How were Herod's actions different from the wise men's?
- What do you think the wise men might have felt when Herod asked them to come back and tell him where Jesus was?

Say:

King Herod only pretended he wanted to worship Jesus, but the wise men truly wanted to find and honour him. Even when faced with a powerful and untrustworthy ruler, they stayed faithful to God's sign and kept following the star.

Read:

'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 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 2:9-12 *ICB*)

Ask:

- How did the wise men feel when they saw the star stop above the place where Jesus was?
- What did they do when they finally found him?
- What do their gifts tell us about how special they believed Jesus was?
- What did the wise men do after God warned them in a dream?

Display the *Faithfulness* sign.

Say:

The wise men didn't just talk about loving God; they showed it by what they did. They followed God's star, gave their best gifts, and worshipped Jesus.

Being faithful means keeping close to God, trusting him, and doing what's right even when it's hard.

Say:

God kept his promise and showed his faithful love by sending Jesus. When we follow Jesus, we can show our love for God every day.

Ask:

In Matthew 2:10 it says that the wise men 'were filled with joy' when they saw the star. Why do you think that was?

Say:

When we follow God faithfully, like the wise men, we also discover joy. It's the joy of knowing that God's love lights our way.

**Action it****Say:**

God has given us the most wonderful gift of all – Jesus. Just like the wise men, we can respond to that gift by giving something back to God. It doesn't need to be gold, frankincense or myrrh; it can be our hearts, our time, and our love.

Explain that the children are going to create a 'Sky full of faithfulness'. Give each child a star and ask them to write or draw on it one way that they want to give their best to God. It might be using their talents, showing kindness, choosing to pray, helping others or thanking God each day.

They could also write the following prayer on the back of their star:

Dear God,

I give you my best and want to follow you faithfully.

Amen.

Attach the ribbon or string to each star. When everyone has finished, collect the stars and hang them together to make a 'Sky full of faithfulness'. You could even display them in your church so that others can see how the children are responding to God's love.

Say:

These stars remind us that God showed his faithful love by sending Jesus. We can respond in faithfulness, too, when we show God's love in action every day.

Ask:

What do you notice when you look at all our stars shining together?

Say:

These stars remind us that God showed his faithful love by sending Jesus.

As you look at our 'Sky full of faithfulness', notice how the stars fill the space together. Each one is special on its own, but together they make the sky shine brightly. That's how it is when we follow Jesus; we are not on this journey alone.



Pray it

Our Pray It activity gives the children the opportunity to look at the stars on the 'Sky full of faithfulness' and reflect on what they have learned today. This is a joyful and celebratory moment, rather than a quiet reflection. The following music clip can be used as part of this activity.

Listen

'A sky full of stars' by Coldplay performed by Epic Orchestra (5:45)

Say:

Today we've made our 'Sky full of faithfulness'. Each of these stars shows how we want to give our best to God and the ways we can show love in action every day.

Say:

Just as the wise men brought their gifts to Jesus, we can bring our own gifts to God. Our gifts aren't gold, frankincense or myrrh, but they are just as special. We can bring our kindness, our prayers, our time and our faithfulness.

Invite the children to stand or gather where they can see the display. Explain that while the music plays, they can look at the stars, think about their gift to God, and thank him for loving them. They may even want to have a joyful dance!

Say:

In a couple of weeks we will take part in a very special day known as Covenant Sunday. This is a time when we remember that God has been faithful to us, and we promise to be faithful to

him. We'll celebrate Covenant Sunday properly soon, but today we have already begun thinking about what it means to give all of ourselves to God, for ever.

Bring the session to a close in prayer.

Explore it

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



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Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



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Today's fruit:
Faithfulness



Create

Cut out a small star or use a sticker and keep it somewhere you will see it every day. Each morning when you see your star, say this short prayer:

Dear God, help me to shine for you today and to follow your light faithfully.



Walk

Wait for a clear night and go for an evening walk together. Take time to look up at the stars. Tell the people at home all about the journey of the wise men and everything you have discovered during this week's session.



Song for the week

'What Christmas is about' song by Orange Kids Music (lyrics and actions) video by Zoom Kids



Memory verse

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to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

(Isaiah 9:6 NIV)