

Epiphany

They left for their own country by another road.

—Matthew 2:12 NRSV (3:12 IV)

Explore

maps of local area
for each teen plus
one more, markers

Frequently Traveled Roads

Pass out copies of maps for your area to each teen. With a marker direct each teen to trace their route to the class meeting site. Describe to each other the view along the way. Post a new map on the wall and have each retrace their route to view a group picture of the territory the class covers.

Extract

Bible, paper, pens

One Star, Two Kings, Three Gifts

Briefly review the story of Jesus' birth. Then read Matthew 2:1–12 (Matthew 3:1–12 IV).

The following may be done as a general discussion/class response, information written on separate slips of paper to be drawn for role playing, or the teens may select from the options and respond to one as a journal entry. Be sure to define unfamiliar terms.

Matthew 2:1–12/
(3:1–12 IV)
Micah 5:2

You are the wise man who sighted the star. What do you say to your colleagues to convince them of the star's importance and to follow it with you?

You are Herod, king of the Jews. Foreigners gain an audience with you and ask, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2–8/Matthew 3:1–8 IV). What are your thoughts as the reigning king?

You are among the leading priests and teachers who remember what the prophet foretold about this event. Do you believe this is the prophecy fulfilled? (Read Micah 5:2.) Is this the Jewish Messiah? What are you feeling?

You are one of the wise men who attended Herod's secret meeting. What is your assessment of the meeting? What does experience with royalty in your own culture suggest to you about this meeting?

You are filled with excitement as the star has shown the place where the child lives. You can worship the new king for whom you've been searching. What thoughts are racing through your head? How will you worship?

You are the wise man who brought the gift of myrrh. Why did you choose this for your gift and not the gift of gold or frankincense?

God warned you in a dream to avoid King Herod and return to your country a different way. Do your companions agree? If not, how do you convince them?

Revealed to the World

The Christian tradition of Epiphany celebrates the wise men bringing gifts to the child Jesus. Epiphany means “to reveal.” Because the wise men from the East—foreign lands—came to recognize and worship Jesus as “King,” their actions suggest that Jesus came for all humankind. God’s work would not be limited to a small region but would be revealed to a wider world. Today, Epiphany is known also as the Twelfth Day of Christmas, el Día de los Tres Reyes (Three Kings’ Day), and Theophany.

The Epiphany season focuses on our mission to reveal Christ and his teachings to our fellow humans. It emphasizes the sharing of our light, our understanding to neighbors, friends, and those at this time unknown. It is a time to work toward reconciliation and healing, a time for learning about and appreciating the diverse gifts of others, and a time to narrow the divisions that separate humanity and their world. Teens may have heard someone say, “I’ve had an epiphany!” That speaker was referring to an “aha” moment when new knowledge or insight suddenly became clear. To go home a different way, whether it is by an alternate route or the same road with new understanding, provides us opportunity to live out our Christian mission. It calls us to the application of our belief in Christ.

Experience

The Journey

paper, markers

The visit of the wise men is a journey of faith. They embarked on their journey with their educated knowledge of the night sky and a unknown heavenly light as their guide. Where does or did our own faith journey begin? Pass out blank paper and markers. Ask the teens to create a line graph of their own faith journey. Ask them to identify where it began/begins, indicate any potholes and detours they’ve encountered so far; add additional lines to show forks in the road where choices had to be made. If the choice was a poor one, draw the shortcut that got them back on the right path. Draw construction signs at places along the journey. Draw themselves on the path at the point where they consider themselves to be now. Draw in other people who have joined them on their journey. How did they influence them? Share graphs with the class.

Ask: “Where do you want your journey to go after today?” Using a dotted line, have the teens anticipate their journey into the future.

A Different Path

The epiphany to the wise men was the knowledge that the child they found brought new light, a new way of living, to the world. Think back to the opening activity, “Frequently Traveled Roads.” Using first the individual maps and then the group map, discuss how the sights along the way would be viewed by a disciple of Christ. What would be different? Identify two or three things in your local area that the class can work on as Christ’s disciples. Check with those in charge to see what assistance can be offered.

Expand

Go Home a Different Person

paper, pens

Today is the first Communion Sunday of the new year. Today offers the opportunity to repent, to be forgiven, to go home a different person. What new ways of living can become a part of your life? Respond on the paper provided.

Lectionary scriptures—Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72:1–7, 10–14; Matthew 2:1–12/3:1–12 IV; Ephesians 3:1–12; Jacob 3:9–17; Doctrine and Covenants 3:14