



LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

Even when we are afraid, God loves and cares for us.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that when they trust God, he will take care of them.

KEY PASSAGE:

Matthew 2:1-13. The Magi Visit the Baby Jesus.

INTRO

Two weeks ago, we talked about how the birth of Jesus had been predicted by Isaiah and the other prophets hundreds of years before Jesus' actual birth. The people of God were enduring a season of sadness and hopelessness. The Kingdom of Israel was divided in two, and the human rulers that served as kings were making some terrible decisions. God was not happy with the people, but he also loved and cared for them so very much. God promised them that he would send them a King, a Messiah that would save them not only from their enemies, but also from their sins. This new King would be God's own Son.

Last week, we went back to the very first Christmas. Jesus was born in the humble little town of Bethlehem, not in a palace in Jerusalem. That first night, Jesus had to sleep in the manger the animals ate out of in the stable. His first visitors were shepherds, a group that most people would have thought weren't that important.

Shepherds weren't the only ones to visit baby Jesus. There were a group of men who came from a place far in the distance. Sometimes, we refer to them as the Wise Men. The Bible calls them Magi. They were stargazers, and when Jesus was born, lo and behold a new star appeared in the sky. These Magi believed the star was a sign of a new King. They followed the star looking for him.

But before they reached Bethlehem, the Magi stopped in the city of Jerusalem. This is where the current king, King Herod, lived in his palace.

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And as we read the Bible story, you'll see that not everyone was as happy as the Magi that a new King had been born.

READ Matthew 2:1-13

MAIN POINT

Herod was an evil king. He was selfish and loved his own power. He didn't want God to send a new King. The birth of Jesus meant that Herod's rule as king was in jeopardy.

Jesus came to be the King, not only of Jerusalem, but of the entire world. God loves and cares for each of us, and that is why he sent Jesus. Jesus came as not only our King, but our Savior. This is what we call "the good news," but Herod didn't care about any of that. Herod didn't see all that Jesus would do for the world. All he saw was that his own power was threatened.

That's why Herod crafted a plan to kill Jesus. He told the Magi that when they found Jesus they should report it back to him. Herod lied and said he wanted to worship the baby. But he was really planning to kill Jesus. That was Herod's plan.

But God had other plans. After the Magi found Jesus and presented him with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; they were warned in dreams not to go back to Herod. So when the Magi went back to their homeland, they went back a different way.

Eventually, Herod realized the Magi weren't coming back. But that didn't matter. If Herod didn't know where in Bethlehem the baby Jesus was, he would just have all of the babies in Bethlehem killed. And that's what happened, Herod ordered his men to go through Bethlehem and kill every baby boy. Herod would not give up on his plan.

Once again, God had other plans. Before Herod's men did their dirty work, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him to take Mary and Jesus to another land. God loved and cared for his Son, and made sure to protect him.

DRIVE IT HOME:

The things Jesus had to face even as a little baby were pretty scary. But we get to read in the Bible how God loved him and took care of him.

Guess what?! God loves and cares for you too. Our problems may not be as difficult or scary as the ones we read about in the story of King Herod. But we all have problems and troubles. Sometimes we have to face things that scare us, like going to the basement, or moving to a new school. Sometimes we come up against obstacles that we just don't know how to deal with, like maybe your parents are getting a divorce, or someone you love is very, very sick.

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But it's okay. No matter how big or small our troubles are we can remember that God loves us and cares for us. Sometimes, he shows His love by just taking away the hard situation. But a lot of times, we have to face up to the scary situations. But we can gain strength to make it through those situations, when we remember that God loves us and cares for us.

We can turn to him no matter what we face.

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER

Dear God,

Just as you loved and cared for Joseph, Mary, and Jesus; we ask you to love and care for us when difficult times arise.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*