

Bible Point ▶

Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him.

Bible Verse

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem” (Matthew 2:1a).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- follow a star as the wise men did,
 - hear how the wise men worshipped Jesus,
 - make gifts of love for friends and family, and
 - help Whiskers learn that the best gift to give Jesus is our love.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

■ The wise men worship Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-12



The wise men, or Magi, were likely religious leaders from Persia or Babylon. The Magi, following a most unusual star, set out for Jerusalem to see if the star actually signaled the birth of this great king.

Some suggest that the “star” was actually the result of the alignment of planets that happened sometime between 7 and 4 B.C. Others say it was a special, localized phenomenon provided by God specifically to guide the Magi to Jesus. Whatever it was, it was used by God to let people outside of Israel know about the miraculous birth of Jesus.

King Herod, hearing rumors of the birth, not only intended to kill the baby Jesus but also schemed to use the innocent Magi to lead him to the right baby.

The Magi did not visit Jesus shortly after he was born; they actually arrived months later and visited Jesus at the house where he and his parents were staying. The three gifts they presented to Jesus indicate their wealth and prominence, since the gifts were costly. One theory suggests that the gold represented Jesus’ kingly nature, the incense his divinity, and the myrrh (a resin often used in burial) his humanity or mortality.

Prayer

- Read Isaiah 11:1-5.
- How does this passage explain why Jesus is the greatest gift of all?
- Pray: Heavenly Father, help me and my students understand why Jesus is the greatest gift of all as we...

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart on the next page.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned...” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome Time	Welcome! —Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.	"Angel Name Tags" (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape	
Let's Get Started Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Option 1: Loving Hearts —Make fingerprint hearts to show that they love Jesus.	"Loving Hearts" handout (p. 79), scissors	
	Option 2: Camel Rides —Carry each other on "camels," and hear how the wise men traveled to Bethlehem.	Blanket	
	Option 3: Stencil Stars —Make star pictures, and hear how the wise men followed a star.	Poster board, masking tape, damp sponges, colored chalk	
	Pick-Up Time —Sing a song as they pick up toys and gather for Bible Story Time.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Setting the Stage —Follow a path of stars to the <i>Learning Mat</i> .	Red and yellow construction paper, CD player, scissors, "Shining Star" handout (p. 80)	
	Bible Song and Prayer Time —Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.	Bible, CD player	
	Hear and Tell the Bible Story —See and hear how the wise men worshipped Jesus, and then decorate the wise men on the <i>Learning Mat</i> .	Bible, "Gifts of Love" handout (p. 81), green and red construction paper, scissors, crayons, markers, fabric scraps, glitter glue, tape, aluminum foil, CD player	
	Do the Bible Story —Do an action rhyme to enact the wise men's journey to Jesus.		
Closing 	A Perfect Gift —Help Whiskers decide what to give Jesus.	Small toys	
	Hearts of Love —Pass a heart around a circle, and tell Jesus they love him.	Paper heart used in Setting the Stage activity, glue, CD player	

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: “Angel Name Tags” (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape

- Kneel down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s “Today I Learned...” discussion. Use questions such as “What did you tell your family about the shepherds?” or “How did your family worship Jesus this week?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him.**
- Hand out the angel name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help children attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopyable handout.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and direct children’s conversation toward the point of today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “What gift could you give Jesus?” or “How could you show Jesus that you love him?”

■ Option 1: Loving Hearts

SUPPLIES: “Loving Hearts” handout (p. 79), scissors



Before class, photocopy the “Loving Hearts” handout, and cut out the heart. You’ll need one handout for each child.

Read children the words on the handout, and talk with them about ways they can show they love Jesus. Then help them use the *ink pad* from the Learning Lab to make fingerprint hearts, as shown in the margin illustration. Let them decorate their heart shapes with as many heart fingerprints as they want. As children work, remind them that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him. Suggest that they hang the hearts at home or put them under the tree as birthday gifts for Jesus.

■ Option 2: Camel Rides

SUPPLIES: blanket

Lay an old blanket or a sturdy sheet on the floor. Tell children that today they’ll learn about some men who traveled a long way to see baby Jesus. Explain that the men may have traveled on camels. Have one child sit in the middle of the blanket while other children pull the blanket “camel” around the room. Let children take turns riding

teacher tips

It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.

◀ BIBLE POINT



teacher tips

Children will need help making the fingerprint hearts. Guide their fingers, and help them make one or two hearts; then let them try making their own. If fingerprint hearts are too difficult for some children, encourage them to make a border of individual fingerprints near the edge of the heart.

If you wish, provide red or green construction paper hearts for children to glue their finished hearts onto.



teacher tips

For even more camel-ride fun, invite one or two parents to come and give children camel rides on their backs.



BIBLE POINT

the “camel.” As they play, point out that the wise men didn’t mind traveling for a long time because they knew that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him.

Option 3: Stencil Stars

SUPPLIES: poster board, masking tape, damp sponges, colored chalk

Give each child an 8-inch poster-board square and at least six pieces of masking tape. Show children how to apply the masking tape to the poster board to create a star shape. Then invite children to help you rub colored chalk on several damp sponges. Help them press the sponges all over their taped poster-board squares. The chalk will stick to the paper.

As you carefully peel off the masking tape to reveal the stencil stars, explain to the children that today they’ll hear a story about some men who followed a star to find baby Jesus. Remind them that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick-Up Time

SUPPLIES: CD player



track 2

Lead children in singing “Come Along With Me” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Come and Go With Me.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.



SING

**Come along with me and pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things.
Come along with me and pick up all our things
So our room will be clean.**

(Repeat 2x.)

Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: red and yellow construction paper, CD player, scissors, “Shining Star” handout (p. 80)



track 4



Before class, place a red construction paper heart and a yellow construction paper star inside the *gift box* from the Learning Lab. Make 8 to 10 photocopies of the “Shining Star” handout on yellow paper, and cut out the stars. As children are cleaning up their Let’s Get Started activities, use the stars to make a trail around the room. Start the trail in your story area. Hide the *Learning Mat* at the end of the trail.

Tell the children you'll clap your hands three times to get their attention. Explain that when you clap your hands, the children are to stop what they're doing and repeat the clap. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Ask: • **What did you make or do when you came to our class today?** (Made a heart present for Jesus; rode on a blanket; made a star appear.)

Say: **Some of you made fingerprint hearts to show your love for Jesus. Some of you took rides on blanket camels. Some of you made special star pictures. You were all learning important things about our Bible story. Today we're going to learn about some men who traveled a long way to see baby Jesus. They knew that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him.**

Bring out the *gift box* with the heart and star inside. Hold up the box, and say: **Speaking of gifts, let's see what's in our gift box. Our gift box should have something in it to help us with our Bible story today.**

Ask a child to open the box and hand you the heart and star. Hold up the heart, and say: **A pretty heart! What could this heart have to do with our Bible story about Jesus being born?** (Mary and Joseph loved Jesus; God wants us to love Jesus.)

Then say: ► **Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him. We'll use this heart later to help us tell Jesus we love him. Then we can put it on our Learning Mat.**

Hold up the star, and say: **A star. Some of you have already learned about a star today. Raise your hand if you made a star picture.** Pause.

Ask: • **What could a star have to do with our Bible story?** (The men followed the star to find Jesus; it was nighttime.)

Say: **God put a special star in the sky to help the wise men find baby Jesus. I've put some special stars in our classroom to help us find the picture of baby Jesus on our Learning Mat. Can you be wise and help me follow the stars?**

Return the star and heart to the *gift box*, and set it aside. Have children line up as you begin playing "We Three Kings" on the *CD* (track 9). Say: **Is everyone ready? While our music is playing, let's follow the stars and see where they lead us.**

Have children follow you from star to star. In between stars, say things such as "Where do we go from here? Oh, you're right! Good eyes! You're so wise!"

When you reach the last star, have children help you find the *Learning Mat*. Then have children return to your story area. Turn off the *CD*, and hang the *Learning Mat* on the wall.

Say: **That was fun! You were very wise. You followed the stars to just the right place! Let's get our Bible and find out how the special star helped the wise men find Jesus.**

■ Bible Song and Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player



tracks 3, 4

Say: **Now it's time to choose a Bible helper to bring me the Bible marked with today's Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, we'll pass around our special Bible. The person who's holding the Bible when the music stops will be our Bible helper today. Remember that each week one of you will get to be the Bible helper.**



◀ BIBLE POINT



◀ BIBLE POINT

Lead children in singing “I’m So Glad for the Bible” (track 3) with the *CD* to the tune of “Give Me Oil in My Lamp.” As you sing, pass around the special Bible.



**I’m so glad for the Bible.
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
I’m so glad for God’s book today.
I’m so glad for the Bible.
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’—
Keep me learnin’ all about his way.**

**Let me hear ’bout God’s love—
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
Let me hear ’bout God’s love for me.
Let me hear ’bout God’s love—
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
Let’s shine the light for all to see.**

(Repeat first verse.)

When the music stops, invite the child who’s holding the Bible to bring it to you. Stamp the child’s hand with the *angel stamp*, and thank him or her for bringing you the Bible. Then stamp the other children’s hands. Return the *angel stamp* and *ink pad* to the Learning Lab.

Say: **I’m thankful for [name of child who brought the Bible], and I’m thankful for everyone in our class today. Let’s thank God together for all our friends in this class.**

Lead children in singing “I’m So Glad We’re Together” (track 4) with the *CD* to the tune of “Give Me Oil in My Lamp.”



**I’m so glad we’re together.
Keep us prayin’, prayin’, prayin’.
I’m so glad we’re all here today.
I’m so glad we’re together.
Keep us prayin’, prayin’, prayin’—
Prayin’ for each other every day.**

Lead children in folding their hands and bowing their heads as you continue to sing.

**Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful.
Thank you for everyone who’s here.
Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful—
Thankful for our friends both far and near.**

■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, “Gifts of Love” handout (p. 81), green and red construction paper, scissors, crayons, markers, fabric scraps, glitter glue, tape, aluminum foil or Mylar paper, CD player



Before class, copy the “Gifts of Love” pattern onto green paper. Lay a sheet of red paper behind the green paper, and fold them in half together with the red on the inside.

Open your Bible to **Matthew 2**, and show the story to the children. Say: **Our Bible story comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible. Our Learning Mat shows us pictures of our Bible story.**

Point to the *Learning Mat*, and say: **Look how beautiful our Learning Mat looks! Today we’ll get to finish it. Listen now as I tell you our Bible story.**

Matthew 2:1 tells us that ► “Jesus was born in Bethlehem.” When Jesus was born, only a few people knew he was a special baby. Those people knew that Jesus was God’s Son because an angel had told them.

Ask: • **Do you remember whom the angel talked to?** (Mary; Joseph; shepherds.)
• **Can you find those people on our Learning Mat?**

Say: **An angel talked to Mary, to Joseph, and to the shepherds. God also used a special star in the sky to tell some other men about Jesus’ birth. The men watched and watched for the star. When they saw the beautiful, big star in the sky, they knew a special baby would be born. So they packed up their camels and started on their way to find baby Jesus. They kept following the star across the sky until it stopped right over the place where baby Jesus was. Can you find baby Jesus on our Learning Mat?**

As children point to the picture of Jesus in the manger, take the folded green and red paper with the gift pattern copied on it and cut from A to B.

Ask: • **Does anyone know what the wise men brought to Jesus?** (Presents; gold.)

Open up the papers, and then fold the gift figure back on Lines 1 and 2 so only the gift shows. Hold it up, and say: **They brought gifts! The wise men gave baby Jesus special gifts of gold and sweet-smelling perfumes called frankincense (FRANK-in-sens) and myrrh (MUR).**

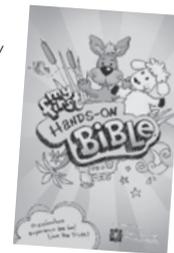
Ask: • **Why do you think they brought gifts to baby Jesus?** (Because they loved him; because it was his birthday.)

Open up the gift figure all the way, and then fold it again on the center line with the green side still showing. Cut away Sections 1, 2, and 3 while you say: **The wise men showed their love for Jesus by bringing him gifts. ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him, too.**

Ask: • **What gift could you give Jesus this Christmas?** (My toys; love; cookies.)

Open up the papers, and fold the red heart sections to the front. The heart halves will meet, showing a red heart against the green gift. Hold it up, and say: **There is one thing Jesus wants more than anything else. Jesus wants your love more than anything! Who would like to give Jesus their love? Let’s tell Jesus together, “Jesus, we give you our love.” Ready? “Jesus, we give you our love.”**

This Bible story is featured in *My First Hands-On Bible*. Order several now for your ministry at group.com.



◀ BIBLE VERSE

◀ BIBLE POINT



Pass around the heart and gift shape if the children want to see it. Then set it aside, and say: **Now it's time to decorate the last section of our *Learning Mat*. I have crayons and markers for you and some pieces of fabric and things to decorate the wise men with. I'll play our wise-men song while we work.**

Set out markers, crayons, glitter glue, and fabric scraps. If possible, include fabrics such as velvet, satin, or silk. Also set out tape and aluminum foil or Mylar paper for children to decorate the wise men's gifts. Play "We Three Kings" (track 9) from the CD while children work. When they're finished, outline the large star on the mat with glitter glue.

Say: **Our *Learning Mat* looks great. You've worked hard on it. It shows a lot of love. ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him.**

Ask: • **How did the wise men feel when they finally found Jesus?** (Happy; excited; surprised.)

• **Why did they bring gifts to Jesus?** (They loved him; they wanted to; he was special.)

Say: **The wise men had waited and waited for Jesus. They knew that ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him. We've been learning that, too! We can give Jesus gifts of love this Christmas, just as the wise men did. Let's learn a fun rhyme about the wise men who visited Jesus.**

■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: none

Stand in a circle with the children.

Say: **God put a star in the sky that the wise men could follow to find Jesus. Let's say a rhyme together to remember this story. Follow my actions.**

Traveling, traveling, oh, so far. (*Walk in place.*)

Following that twinkling star. (*Make fingers "twinkle."*)

Looking for the newborn king. (*Put hands over eyes as if searching.*)

Special gifts for him we bring. (*Hold arms out as though carrying something.*)

Traveling, traveling, on we go. (*Walk in place.*)

Step it up; let's not be slow. (*Walk faster.*)

Look—the star is shining down. (*Point; then move twinkling fingers from high to low.*)

The baby Jesus we have found! (*Spread arms wide.*)

Frankincense, myrrh, and gold so bright (*Hold arms out as though carrying something.*)

We lay before him—what a sight! (*Pretend to lay gifts on the ground.*)

And now before him on one knee, (*Get down on one knee.*)

We bow and worship thankfully. (*Still on one knee, bow head low.*)

Encourage kids to do the motions as you say the rhyme again. Then sit down in a circle.

Ask: • **How did the wise men worship Jesus?** (They brought him gifts; they came a long way to see him; they bowed to him.)



• **How can you worship Jesus?** (I can give Jesus gifts; I can sing to Jesus; I can give him my love.)

Say: **The wise men brought special gifts to Jesus. But Jesus is God’s special gift to us. We can worship Jesus by giving him gifts, by singing, and by giving him our love!**



Say: **A prayer is another special gift that we can give Jesus. Hold your hands out as though you were cupping water in them. Show children how to do this, if necessary. Say: Our gift to Jesus is right here in our hands. When we say, “We give you our prayers, Jesus,” straighten your fingers out and close your hands as though you were praying. First, hold your cupped hands out in front of you. Ready?** Have the children join

you in saying, “We give you our prayers, Jesus!” When they’ve closed their hands, encourage them to each say a silent prayer of love to Jesus.

Ask: • **Do you think Whiskers knows about the gift of love? Let’s visit with him and share what we’ve learned today.**

Closing

■ *A Perfect Gift*

SUPPLIES: *small toys*

Bring out Whiskers the Mouse, and go through the following puppet script. (You’ll need a couple of small toys such as a tiny car and a little rubber ball.) When you finish the script, put Whiskers away and out of sight.





Whiskers: *(Comes out with small toys in hands. Holds them up, one at a time, looking at them.)* Hmm-mm. Maybe this one. No, maybe this one. Or oh-h, I'm just not sure.

Teacher: Hi, Whiskers. What are you doing?

Whiskers: Well, I heard your Bible story about the wise men. They brought gifts to Jesus. I wanted to give him a gift, too. Which one do you think he'd like best? *(Holds up the toys.)*

Teacher: Whiskers, I think your friends can help you with that. They learned during our Bible Story Time that there's one gift that Jesus wants more than anything else.

Whiskers: Oh, goody! Tell me, tell me! I want to give Jesus the perfect gift!

Teacher: Children, can you tell Whiskers what gift Jesus wants most?

(Lead children to tell Whiskers that the best gift we can give Jesus is our love.)

Teacher: You see, Whiskers, the wise men gave Jesus gifts because they knew he was special. The shepherds loved and worshipped Jesus, too. So did Mary and Joseph. ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him. Our love is the perfect gift for Jesus.

Whiskers: I didn't know that! I do love Jesus.

Teacher: That's great, Whiskers. Just give Jesus your love every day. You'll make him very happy.

Whiskers: You just made me very happy—now I know what to give Jesus! Thanks! 'Bye!

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■ Hearts of Love

SUPPLIES: paper heart used in *Setting the Stage* activity, glue, CD player

Hold up the heart from the *gift box*. Say: **Remember this heart? I put it in our gift box to help us remember to love Jesus. Before we go, let's pass the heart around. When it comes to you, say, "I love you, Jesus."**

Pass the heart around, and encourage each child to say, "I love you, Jesus." If some children don't want to say it alone, have everyone say it together. When everyone has had a turn, lead children in saying together: ► Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him.

Put some glue on the back of the heart. Choose a child to glue the heart above the manger on the *Learning Mat*. Say: **Our Learning Mat is all finished now. Isn't it beautiful? You did such fine work.**



I'm so glad that Jesus was born for us in Bethlehem. Let's sing about that very wonderful day when Jesus became our special gift.

Lead children in singing "Jesus Christ Is Born" (track 8) with the *CD* to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell."



SING

**Jesus Christ is born!
Jesus Christ is born!
Born today in Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ is born!**

**Lying in a manger;
Lying in a manger;
Born today in Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ is born!**

**Glory to God!
Glory to God!
Born today in Bethlehem
Jesus Christ is born!**



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with the children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week's topic.



For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

Lively Learning: Learning Mat Review



Have children gather in the story area, and hang the *Learning Mat* on the wall. Let children use the *Learning Mat* to retell the Bible story to Whiskers. They can take turns using Whiskers and telling parts of the story.

As you finish each section, lead children in the corresponding song or rhyme from the list below.

- **Lesson 2:** “Away in a Manger” (p. 28)
- **Lesson 3:** “Jesus Christ Is Born” (p. 43)
- **Lesson 3:** Shepherd finger play (p. 49)
- **Lesson 4:** “My Heart Rejoices” (p. 62)
- **Lesson 5:** Wise-men action rhyme (p. 74)

As children tell the story, lead them in repeating the Bible Point: ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him.

Make to Take: Swirling Stars



Before class, cut newsprint circles to fit into the bottom of a salad spinner. You’ll need one newsprint circle for each child in your class.

Let children watch as you place a paper circle in the spinner and then drip a few drops of yellow tempera paint onto the paper. Snap the lid on the spinner, and spin the handle. Open the spinner, and carefully remove the swirling star print. Remind children that the wise men followed a special star to find Jesus.

Have children form groups of three. Call one group at a time, and let children take turns putting in the paper, dripping the paint, and spinning the handle. Let the child who spins the handle remove and keep the swirling star print. While children are waiting, let them make their own star trails around the room with the stars you set out during Setting the Stage.

Treat to Eat: Cheese Stars



Set out star-shaped cookie cutters and cheese slices. Let children use the cookie cutters to cut cheese stars. If you don’t have star-shaped cookie cutters on hand, let children use plastic knives to cut the cheese into triangles. Then show them how to put the triangles together to make stars. As children create and enjoy their cheese stars, point out that the wise men followed a special star to find baby Jesus.

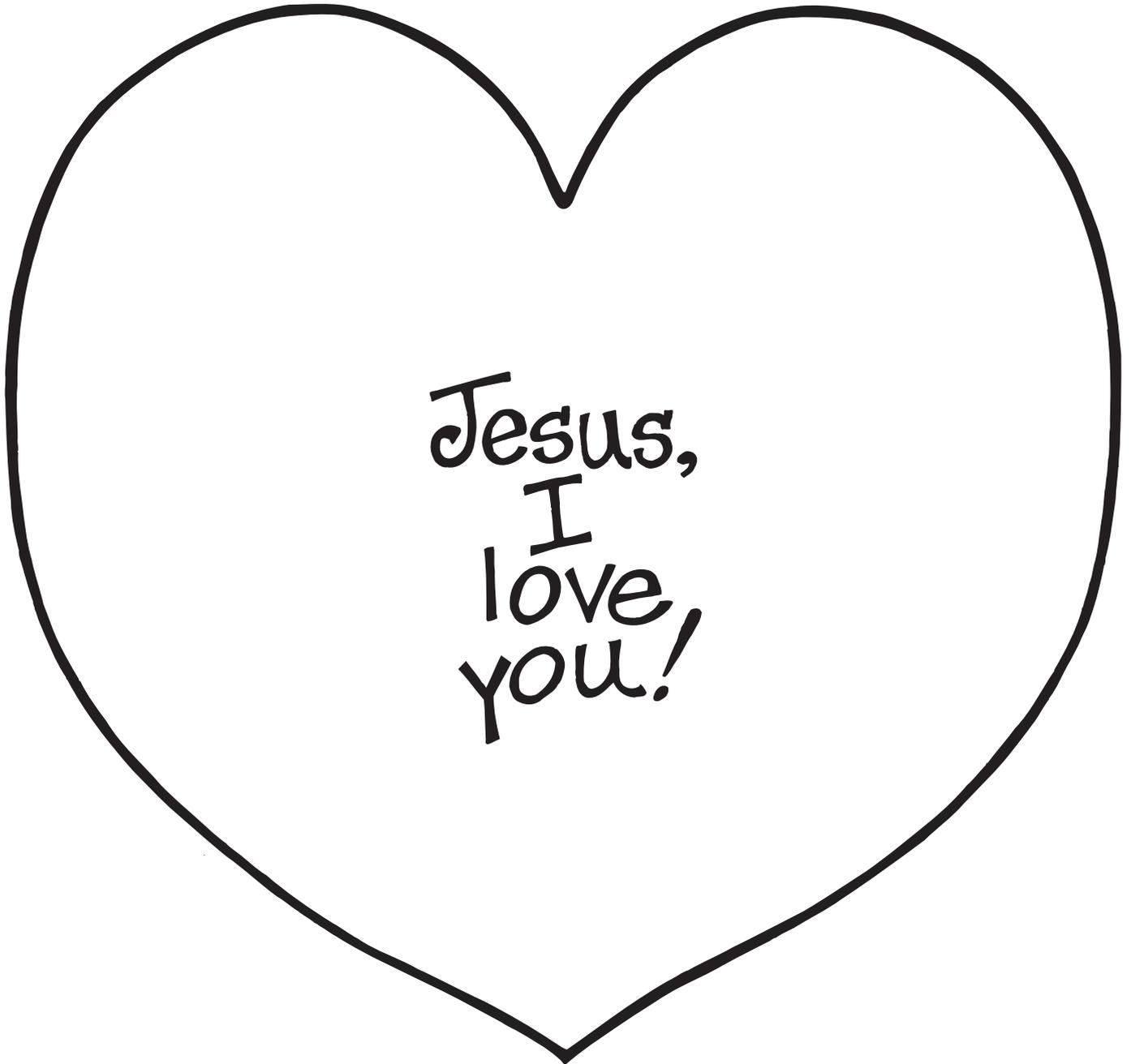


Story Picture: Wise Men Bring Gifts to Jesus

Give each child a copy of the “Today I Learned...” handout. Set out crayons or markers, and invite children to tell you about the wise men as they color their pictures. Then bring out scented extracts or perfumes. Let children choose their favorite smells, and help them dab a drop of scent on each of the wise men’s gifts. As they work, remind them that ► Jesus is God’s special gift, and we love him.

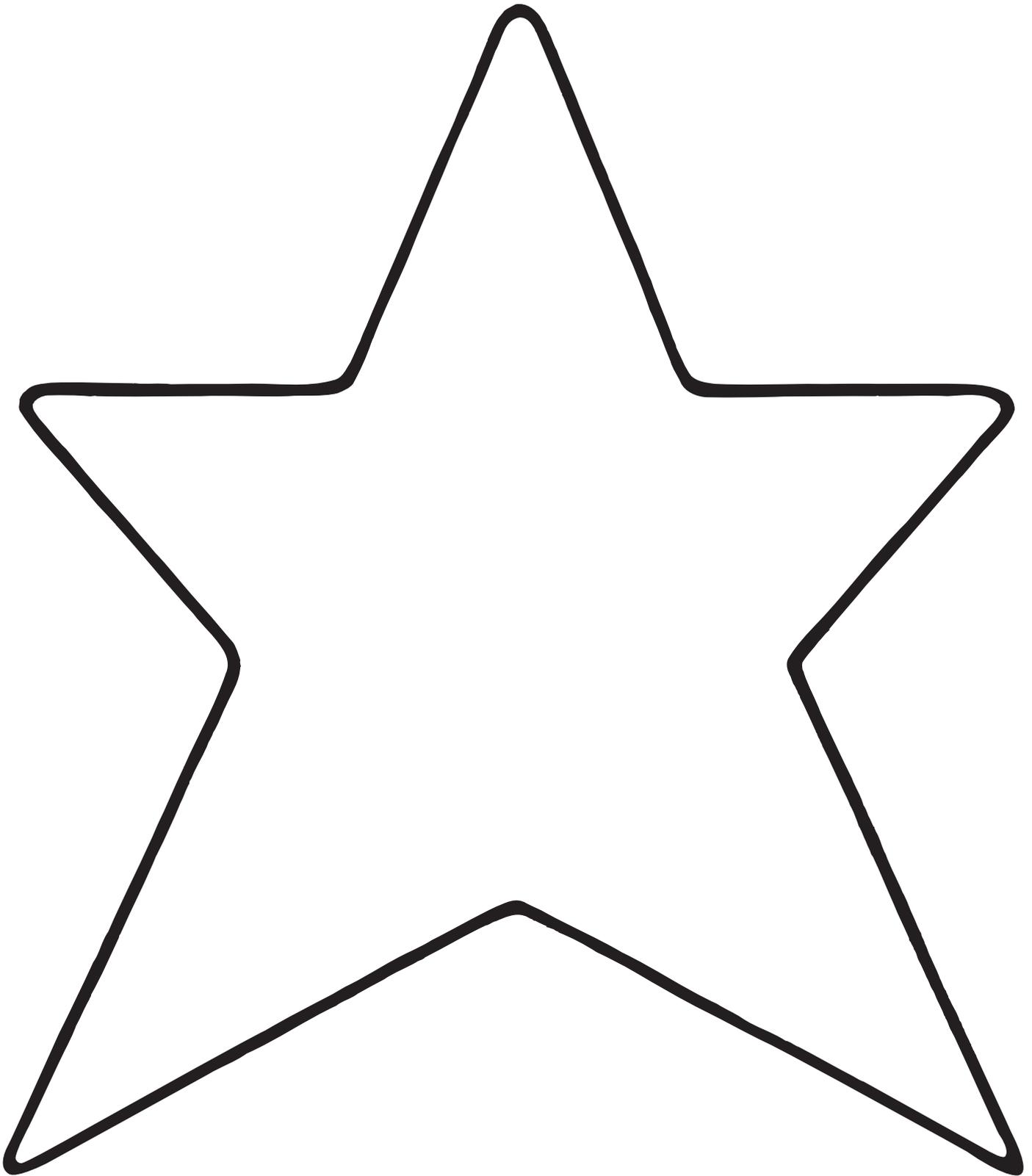
Loving Hearts

Photocopy the handout, and cut out the heart. Make enough copies for each child to have one.



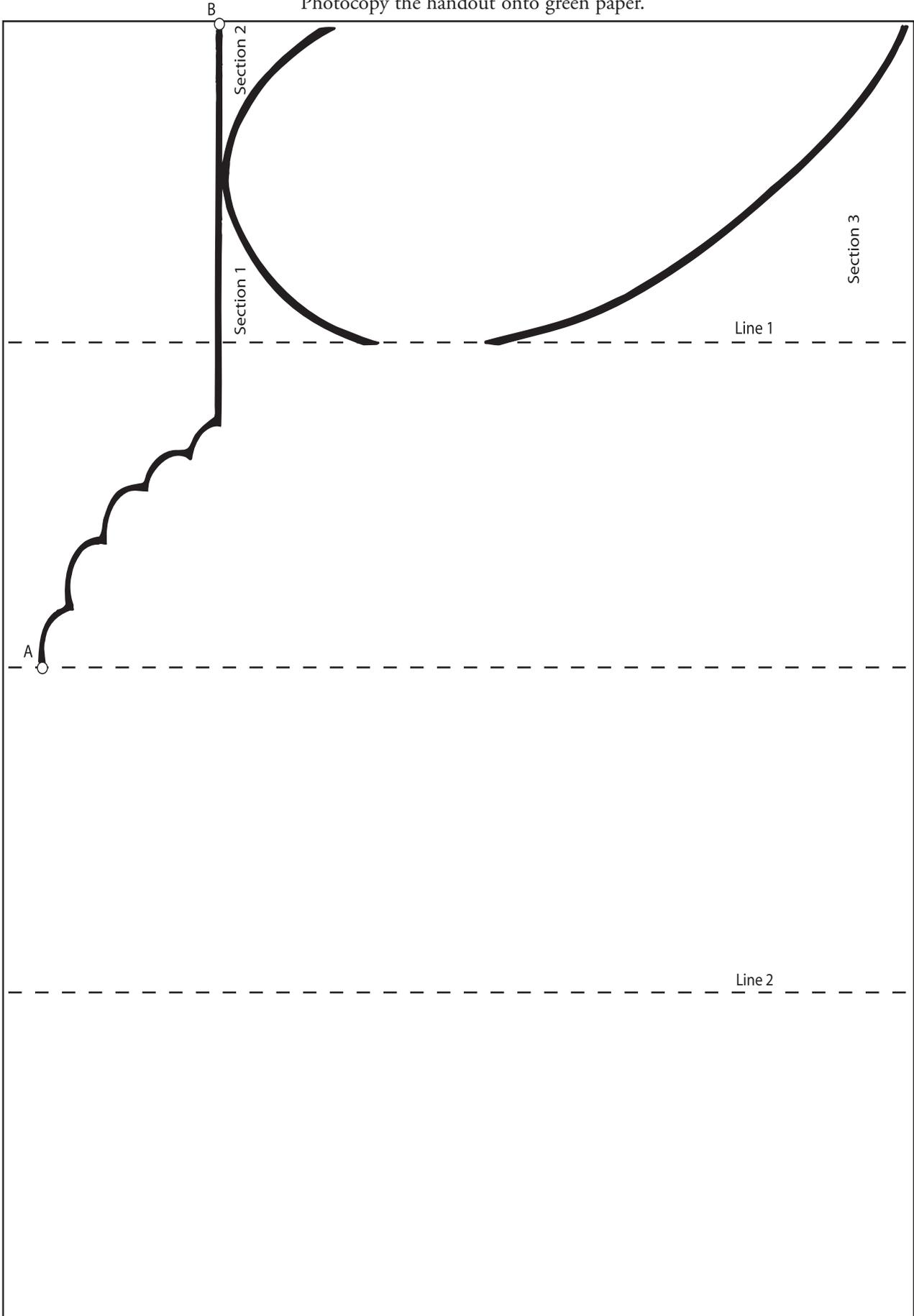
Shining Star

Photocopy and cut out the star. You'll need 8 to 10 stars.



Gifts of Love

Photocopy the handout onto green paper.



Today I learned... Jesus is God's special gift, and we love him.

Help me learn this:

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem"
(Matthew 2:1a).

Ask me:

- What did the wise men do to show their love for Jesus?
- What can you give to show Jesus you love him?
- What can our family do to show Jesus we love him?

Family Fun

- Sing this Scripture song with your child to the tune of "Ten Little Indians."

**My heart rejoices,
My heart rejoices,
My heart rejoices,
In God, my Savior.**

Lesson 5
Today your child learned that **JESUS IS GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT, AND WE LOVE HIM.** Children heard how the wise men brought gifts to Jesus. They learned that the best gift to give Jesus is their love.



**Wise Men
Worship Jesus**
(Matthew 2:1-12)