

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
December 27, 2015
“It’s a Joyful Life!”

Memory Verse

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”
Luke 2:10 NIV -

The Big Idea

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12; Hab 3:18-19; Isaiah 51:11, 55:12; Psalm 100; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Luke 1:44, 2:10
Title: “What this world needs is joy!”
ESS: Expressions of joy burst forth in the presence of greatness and triumph.
SS Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12; *“It’s a Joyful Life!”*
Key Terms: **Magi:** “magus” the name given by the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Medes, Persians, and others, to the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augers, soothsayers, sorcerers etc.

Presentation

The lesson today is called, *“It’s a Joyful Life!”*

We will study the journey of the magi to visit Jesus and to worship him. We will also examine the response of both Herod and the religious leaders to the news of the birth of Jesus. Here we will find clues that help us find joy for life!

What activity in your life brings you the highest, most lasting joy?

Today we will find out how Jesus came to bring us joy for life’s journey.

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Look prayerfully for spiritual clues in the Scripture that teach us about the willingness of the various people in the story to be drawn into a joyful celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Explain:

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12: Wise Men look for a reason to joyfully celebrate Jesus!

What level of education and status did these wise men have? What made them willing to travel a great distance and ask questions of foreign leaders and religious experts?

1. Wise Men have been misunderstood! Who were they really?
2. Wise Men are on a mission of joy!
3. Wise Men seek help on their journey! We sometimes need help on our journey to be joyful!
4. Wise Men are willing to humble themselves and lift up Jesus in worship!
5. Wise Men are prepared to be generous to Jesus!
6. Wise Men are sensitive and obedient to the direction of God in their lives!

What lessons do we learn from the Wise Men as they seek to celebrate the newly born king?

Matthew 2:3, 7-8: Some men are looking for trouble!

Does our lifestyle have anything to do with our ability to joyfully celebrate the great things God is doing around us? What makes people respond differently to the same good news?

1. Herod had a history of being angry: Anger and selfishness go hand in hand! Most of Herod's evil deeds were based in his pride. His great achievements are not what he is remembered for.
2. Some men bring trouble to those around them! "Misery loves company." Herod spread his troublesome attitude to the entire city.
3. Some men live deceptively and pretend to be joyful when they are not! Is there something you are hiding that is the root cause of your lack of joy? If there is an addiction, sin, or heartache, then share it with God and seek wise help and healing!
4. Some men plan destruction instead of planning for joy! What are you planning in your life that will allow you to be joyful about Jesus?

Matthew 2:4-6: Some religious people have much knowledge but no joy!

Are you allowing what you know about Jesus to make an impact in your life? Does your "religion" and your "life" really connect in a positive way?

1. Knowledge without action creates depression rather than joy!
2. Study of the Bible should always lead us to pursue God more passionately!

Are you willing to act on the very next truth God teaches you? This will bring you great joy!

Apply:

We have seen three different responses to Jesus, and all people respond in one of these three ways.

1. Are you like Herod? Are you displaying an open hatred and hostility toward Jesus?
Action: Repent and seek help in overcoming the source of your hostility. Seek counseling or accountability with a strong spiritual friend.
2. Are you like the religious leaders? Are you indifferent toward Jesus, all the while appearing "religious" and respectable?
Action: What truth have you failed to act on? Go back to the last thing God clearly told you to do and begin by doing that. Make a habit out of being passionate in your obedience to God's Truths!
3. Are you like the wise men? Do you seek out Jesus, and worship Him - even at great cost? Do you worship him with your status, money, and obedience?
Action: Be prepared to be generous to God's work this week! Plan to humble yourself and do something that will lift up Jesus in your life.

Bible Study Notes: From David Guzik as found on Blue Letter Bible December 2012

Matthew 2:1-12

1. The wise men were looking for a reason to be joyful! They were looking for the messiah. Verses 1-2
 - a. Misconceptions and legends abound about these wise men. They were not kings, but wise men, which means they were astronomers. There were not only three, but probably a great company. They seem to have not come on the birth night, but many days (or even months) later.
 - b. These ancient scientists from Persia were on an important mission. They probably had been alerted to the prophetic significance of their times by the prophecies of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. This shows us that the whole world was looking for the Messiah, not only Israel.

- c. There has been considerable speculation on this star they saw in the East. Some say it was a curious conjunction of planets, others a comet. These are possible, but it is also possible God provided a completely unique phenomenon for them to see. Whatever it was, it is significant that God meet them in their own medium: He guides the astronomers by a star.
 - d. The wise men come first to Jerusalem, assuming that the leaders of the Jews would be aware and excited about the birth of their Messiah. The wise men are about to find that this isn't the case at all.
2. Herod was looking for trouble! Verse 3, 7-8
- a. Herod the Great: (one of several Herods mentioned in the Bible and the ancestor of the others) was famous for both his magnificent public building projects, and his ruthless, cruel paranoia. The Jews tempered their great hatred of him with admiration for his building projects, such as the magnificent improvements made to the second temple. Motivated by his great paranoia and cruelty, he murdered the members of the Sanhedrin, his wife, his mother-in-law, and his three sons. When Herod knew that his death was approaching, he had the most distinguished leaders of Jerusalem arrested on false charges. He ordered that as soon as he died, they should all be killed - he knew well no one would mourn his own death, so he was determined that *some* tears be shed when he died.
 - b. He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him: Due either to the fact that the people of Jerusalem rightly feared what sort of paranoid outburst might come from Herod upon hearing of a rival king being born, or because of the size and dignity of this caravan from the East.
 - c. Herod attempts to use wise men to find the child that he may kill Him. Verses 7-8
 - d. Determined from them what time the star appeared: Because Herod commanded that all boys two and younger be killed in the area, we can assume that the wise men first saw the star, on the night Jesus was born, a year or so previously. Herod ordered the execution of children two and under just to be safe.
 - e. Bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him: The irony is strong. Herod claims a desire to worship Jesus, when he really wants to kill Him.
3. The religious leaders were not looking for anything. Verses 4-6
- a. Sadly, these experts have the right information (quoting from Micah 5:2), but seem personally uninterested in meeting the Messiah for themselves, just like some "Bible scholars" today.
4. The wise men present gifts to Jesus and leave without informing Herod. Verses 9-12
- a. The star continued to guide them, apparently re-appearing. Surely, this was a supernatural phenomenon.
 - b. They presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh: The idea that there were three wise men comes from the fact that there were three gifts. Gold representing royalty, frankincense representing priesthood, and myrrh representing death.
 - c. Fell down and worshipped Him: More important than their gifts is the fact that they worshipped Jesus. It must have been a curious sight to see these impressive dignitaries bowing before a young child.
 - d. Being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way: Their worship is also manifested in obedience. They are obedient to the heavenly dream and leave without serving as Herod's informants.
5. We see here three different responses to Jesus, and all people respond in one of these three ways.
- a. Herod displayed an open hatred and hostility toward Jesus.
 - b. The chief priests and the scribes were indifferent toward Jesus, all the while retaining their religious respectability.
 - c. The wise men sought out Jesus, and worshipped Him - even at great cost. They worshipped with their status, money, and obedience.

Additional Study: www.blueletterbible.org