

The Epiphany of Our Lord

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Are any parts missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O God." Reason: "by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles." Petition: "Lead us, who know You by faith." Purpose: "to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence." Ending: "through the same Jesus Christ..." All five are present.*

2. The collect sets knowing God "by faith" now beside enjoying Him fully in heaven. How does that compare with the wise men?

***Answer:** They followed a star and saw the child. We know Him by faith through His Word. In heaven we will see Him fully.*

3. Why do the words "to the Gentiles" matter for most of us?

***Answer:** Most Christians today are Gentiles. Epiphany celebrates that the Savior promised to Israel came for all nations.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." **3** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: **6** 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." **9** After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

1. Herod "was troubled" (v. 3). Why would a king be troubled by a baby?

Answer: *The wise men called the child "king of the Jews." Herod saw a rival to his throne.*

2. The chief priests knew exactly where the Christ would be born (vv. 5-6), yet they did not go. What does that show?

Answer: *Knowing the facts of Scripture is not the same as believing. The outsiders came to worship; the insiders stayed home.*

3. Matthew does not explain the three gifts. How do they fit who Jesus is?

Answer: *Gold suits a king, frankincense was burned in worship of God, and myrrh was used in burial. Together they point to the King who is God and who would die.*

4. How did God guide the wise men?

Answer: *By the star, by the Scriptures quoted by the priests, and by a dream warning them away from Herod (v. 12).*

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: *"The leading of a star" matches the star that went before them (vv. 2, 9-10). "Made known... to the Gentiles" matches wise men from the east (v. 1). "Lead us, who know You by faith" matches their journey of faith. "The fullness of Your divine presence" matches the moment they saw the child and worshiped Him with great joy (vv. 10-11). Any two, well explained, are enough.*

2. Today's Old Testament reading says, "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:3). How did the wise men fulfill it?

Answer: *Gentiles from a far nation came to the light of the newborn Christ and brought gifts, as Isaiah foretold.*

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Second Petition. Thy kingdom come. **What does this mean?** The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. **How does God's kingdom come?** God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Cross-reference. "This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Ephesians 3:6)

1. Luther says God's kingdom comes when the Father gives His Holy Spirit "so that by His grace we believe His holy Word." How did the Word work in this story?

Answer: *The Scriptures pointed to Bethlehem (vv. 5-6). God used His Word together with the star to bring the wise men to Christ.*

2. Luther says the kingdom "comes by itself without our prayer." Herod tried to stop it. Did he succeed?

Answer: *No. God warned the wise men, and He protected the child. Nothing could stop the King from coming.*

3. Ephesians says the Gentiles are "fellow heirs." What does that mean for you?

Answer: *We share fully in God's promise. Gentile believers are not second-class members of His family.*

Parent note: the question they may ask. "God used a star. Does that mean it is okay to follow horoscopes?" No. God used a star once to bring the wise men to Christ, and there they stopped looking at stars and worshiped Him. Scripture forbids seeking guidance from the stars (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 47:13-14). Christ, not the stars, rules our lives,

and His Word is how He guides us now.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "O God, You led the wise men by a star to worship Your Son. Lead us by Your Word to Jesus, that we may worship Him with joy and offer Him our lives; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for people from every nation, including you?

Answer: *He came to be the Savior of all people. He leads me to Himself through His Word, just as the star led the wise men.*