

Epiphany

Epiphany is a Greek word that means “showing forth.” The date of its celebration is January 6th. It was originally concerned with the commemoration of the Baptism of Christ and later became associated with the Magi. Today it is often thought of as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today’s lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today’s story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today’s presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church’s custom)
- Nativity figures of Jesus, the manger, Mary, Joseph, donkey, sheep, shepherd and wise men
- *optional*: candle snuffer
- *optional*: You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called “Miniature Advent,” available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit www.godlyplay.com.)

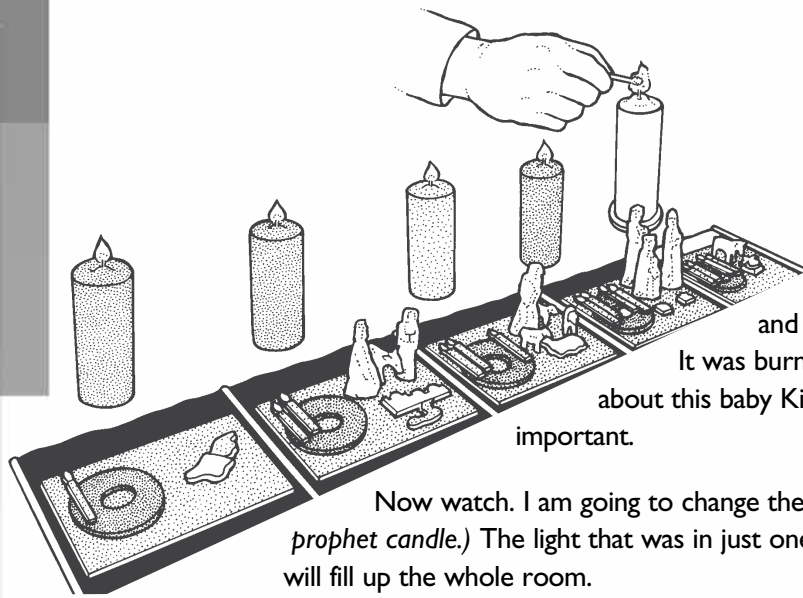
Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying “Amen.”

The Presentation

On Epiphany we remember the three kings. They followed the star all the way to Bethlehem, but they came from so far away that they got there after the baby was born. Every year they arrive on January 6th, but we remember them at Christmas anyway, because, like us, they too are on the way to Bethlehem.

Here is the candle of the prophets. (*Light the candle for Advent I.*) This is the candle of the Holy Family. (*Light the candle for Advent II.*) Here is the candle of the shepherds. (*Light the candle for Advent III.*) Here is the candle of the wise men. (*Light the candle for Advent IV.*) Here is the Christ candle. (*Light the white candle.*) Let’s enjoy the light.

(*Indicate again the candle of the wise men.*) The wise men brought gifts to the Christ child. They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. They brought the gold to give to a king, but because it was a different kind of king, they also brought frankincense. Frankincense is something that was used for worship, and it is still used sometimes today. Frankincense comes from a tree. When it burns, the smoke is



black and then turns white. That is when the fragrance, the scent, is released into the air so you can smell it.

Myrrh comes from a tree, too, and it was not a gift for an ordinary king. It was burned at funerals. There was something about this baby King's death that was going to be important.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. (*Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.*) The light that was in just one place is now spreading out. Soon it will fill up the whole room.

(*Repeat for the Holy Family candle, the shepherd candle and the three kings candle.*)

Now I am going to change the light of the Christ candle. (*Gently snuff or blow out the Christ candle.*) Look. It too is spreading out to fill up the room. As it spreads out, it gets thinner and thinner until you can't see it at all. That doesn't mean that it's gone. It only means that you can't see it. You can still feel the Christmas light. It is filling up the room with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds and the three kings. Anywhere you go, you can come close to them.

Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 5)

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

Godly Play, as a form of religious education, carefully avoids several dangerous yet common religious education "traps":

- Religious education as *compulsion*: The best religious education does not use force, but displays deep engagement in a *voluntary* activity.
- Religious education as *entertainment*: In this kind of religious education, a teacher creates passive consumers of religion, emptying children of life rather than stimulating them to play and be filled with life.

- Religious education as *manipulation*: Here the teacher directs activities to produce a product that meets the teacher's needs, severing the learner's links to creativity and learning. Godly Play meets the child's spiritual needs.

- Religious education as *competition*: In this game the teacher competes with the learners or encourages learners to compete with one another. The product becomes winning and not playing for the play itself. For every winner, there are many losers. Godly Play encourages children to play together on the same team with God, so that everyone wins.

These four traps all block children's access to real play, which leaves no room for God to be part of the experience.