

“Epiphany and Dinosaurs”

A simple lesson about being amazed when you learn about Jesus for the first time

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Katie McRee

Key verses:

Matthew 2:1-12

Objectives:

- To show that we do not have to TRY to show people why Christ is awesome... we just have to reveal him and his awesomeness will be evident!
- To emphasize that the epiphany of the Jesus as the messiah to the wise men was a sign that Jesus came for EVERYONE not just the Jewish people.
- To consider how we can play a role in providing someone else with the epiphany that Jesus is Lord.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- Hook: “We have a T-Rex.” (10 mins): watching a clips from Jurassic Park
- Book: They have the Messiah! (10 mins): reading the verses about when the wise men discovered Jesus
- Look: Personal Epiphanies (10 mins): Watching a video of a super fundamentalist group that puts on a haunted house with the intention of scaring people into repentance.
- Took: Sharing the Treasure of our Epiphany (10 mins): Thinking about the responsibility we have to show people

The Supplies:

- Copies of lesson
- Bibles
- AV equipment that will allow you to show the Jurassic Park clip
- Glow in the dark stars
- sharpies

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

We have a T-Rex (Hook, 10 mins)

You will be watching clips from Jurassic Park and discussing

- Cue up the two video clips for the youth. You may want to also set up the scene for them if they have never seen the movie, “Jurassic Park.” Basically a very rich man has found a way to recreate dinosaurs and has invited two respected paleontologist to come and give their feedback. Upon arrival, they still haven’t been told about the details of what they will find.
 - Clip one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMwbkX4oXU4>
 - *****note that at 1:20, Jeff Goldbloom’s character says “crazy SOB.”** I have found that the best way to edit that out is to just mute the sound at that time!
 - Clip two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Nz8YrCC9X8>
 - Stop at 0:42... you are just trying to get that initial conversation.

After you have finished watching the clips, here are a few questions to consider:

- When have you had an epiphany?
- What epiphany do they have in Jurassic park? (that dinosaurs are ALIVE in the park)
- What were they learning for the first time? (that Dr. Hammond figured out a way to make dinosaurs)
- What was their reaction to the realization that dinosaurs were living in the park? Were they faking it to be polite?
- Who was responsible for presenting the revelation? (Dr. Hammond and his staff)
- Who did Dr. Hammond want to share his dinosaurs with? How was this different from the lawyer’s desire?
- If Dr. Hammond wasn’t in it for the money, then why did he go to the trouble? (for the joy of sharing his dinosaurs with the world)

Transition/Say something like:

The dinosaurs are AWESOME- no convincing was necessary... they just have to have someone uncover the treasure... and Dr. Hammond wants the experience of dinosaurs to be accessible to EVERYONE!

We have the Messiah (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we are reading the verses about when the wise men find Jesus and comparing it to the amazed reaction that the scientist had in Jurassic Park.

- Have everyone look up Matthew 2:1-12 and choose one more youth to read out loud. Here are the verses for your planning purposes:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

*'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Discussion Questions:

feel free to talk them through these details if that works better for your group. The whole thing doesn't have to be Q and A- mix it up!

- Who were the wise men? (they were astrologers and they worked for Herod- the guy who wanted to kill baby Jesus- they were NOT Jewish)
- Why did the wise men set out to find the child/Jesus? (Herod sent them so he could later kill Jesus... the wise men were likely unaware of his plan, but they were part of the plot to kill Jesus)
- How was Jesus revealed to them? How did they find him?
- How did they respond when they found him? Why did they respond that way? (they worshipped him because they could sense his greatness as God!)
- How was the wise men's response to Jesus similar to the response the scientists had to dinosaurs? (they immediately amazed- it took no convincing! They worshipped him.)
- How is the wise men's ability to worship Jesus similar to everyone (not just the wealthy) being able to see the dinosaurs? (Jesus came for EVERYONE, not just the Jewish people, just like the dinosaurs were intended to be enjoyed by EVERYONE, not just the super wealthy.

Personal Epiphanies (Look, 10 mins)

Take some time in this section to let them think about times where they had their own personal epiphanies.

- say something like: *We have just learned about 2 different kinds of epiphanies. An epiphany that Dr. Hammond successfully made dinosaurs, and THE EPIPHANY that Jesus is God and came to save all people.* (Remind them that an epiphany is a realization- like uncovering a great treasure that was there the entire time, you were just unaware of it)

*****think about these questions ahead of time- you may have to share a personal experience to get them going:*****

- Have you ever had an Epiphany about God?
- Was your reaction similar to the way the wise men responded? Or the people in Jurassic Park?
- Did someone play a role in helping you have that epiphany? (If not a person, it was the Holy Spirit!)
- Is your personal epiphany about God something that could be helpful for other people to hear?

Sharing the Treasure of our Epiphany (Look, 10 mins)

In this final section, we will be considering what responsibility we have in revealing Christ to the people around us... and also considering what part is NOT our responsibility.

Say something like:

Today we learned though dinosaurs and wise men that God reveals the truth about himself to us in all different kinds of ways, but that when we “get it” it’s undeniable! We also learned that the truths we learn about God are intended for EVERYONE!

But sometimes sharing the things we have learned can be intimidating because we are worried people won’t understand what we are trying to tell them. We might feel like we have to get them to agree with us in order to have “successfully” shared. But here is the thing... all we have been asked to do is show people the treasure we have found! We are NOT responsible for convincing people that the treasure we found is valuable- that’s God’s responsibility! Sometimes we will show people the treasure we found in Christ and they won’t be amazed, but other times, when the Holy Spirit is at work, they will immediately see the treasure for what it is and be amazed- just like the scientist were with the dinosaurs and how the wise men were when they met Jesus! No one had to convince them, they immediately knew... but still, someone or something had to show them the way.

Discussion Questions

- How can you tell someone about your epiphany without spending too much energy worrying about if they will understand?
- Can you think of anyone specific in your life who could benefit from the personal epiphany you had about God that we discussed earlier? (Challenge them to think about the less likely people, not just Jewish people and super wealthy, metaphorically speaking!)
- Would you be willing to pray for that person or group of people for a chance to show them your treasure? To tell them about your epiphany?

Closing Activity/Prayer:

Pass out the glow in the dark stars and let them share sharpies. Ask them to write initials or draw a symbol on their star to represent the person/people in their life that would benefit from understanding the epiphany that they have had. They should take those stars home as a reminder to be praying for the opportunity to share about their epiphany- they can put it somewhere where they can see it from their bed so that they see it when they turn out their lights and say a quick prayer before they fall asleep.

***if the kids are struggling to think of an epiphany that they have had, then maybe they can think about something about God that they don't really understand but would like to. They can write a symbol or a few words on there to represent their own need and use it to pray that god would give them an epiphany.

Close in prayer, saying something like:

(warn them that you will be pausing though out so that they can silently lift up their own thoughts)

Father, thank you that you have revealed yourself to us though your Son and that he came as a gift for everyone. Thank you for all the personal epiphanies we have had about you, and that you have revealed yourself to us in special ways just when we needed it.

(pause)

Father, help us to show others the joys that we have found in you in our personal epiphanies. Help us to feel no anxiety in telling people about the treasures we have found.

(pause)

And help the people we are praying for to see clearly the things what we share with them.

(pause)

All this we ask in your name, AMEN.