We sing the song, "We Three Kings of Orient Are"––but we don't know that there were three of them––and we don't know that they were kings––and the word "Orient" may be stretching things just a bit far.

• We call them "three" because they gave three presents, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. You might know their names––Balthasar, Melchior, and Caspar––but those names are not found in the Bible. They first appeared in an Italian church mosaic.

• We call them "kings," because of an obscure Old Testament reference to kings bringing gifts (Psalm 72).

• We say that they are from the "Orient" because the Bible says that they came from the East but we don't know how far east. These men were probably from Persia –– modern Iran.

• We think of them as astrologers, because they were following a star.

• We call them "wise men," because that is how many English language bibles translate the word *magi*.

Wise men? That reminds me – someone made the observation that, if the wise men had been wise women:

• They would have asked for the directions.

• They would have arrived on time.

• They would have helped to deliver the baby.

• They would have cleaned the stable.

• They would have made a casserole.

• They would have brought practical gifts, and

• There would be Peace on Earth.

Life would have been very different!

But we love the wise men just as they are – just as we see them every year in the Christmas pageants – dressed in royal robes – bearing rich gifts – kneeling before the baby Jesus.

The kneeling part is real, by the way. Matthew tells us that, when they saw the child, they "fell down and worshiped him" kings kneeling before The King.

And that, I believe, is why this story is in the bible. These men were **not** Jews. They were educated but **not** biblical scholars. They were **not** clergy. They had **not** been devout followers of the one true God.

They are unlikely candidates ––not the kind whom you would expect God to call to be actors in this beautiful little drama that gets played and replayed every year in every church around the world.

**I wonder**. Is this a lesson we could learn from today?