



# We Give in Gratitude

**Goal:** To discover that no gift is too small in the eyes of God.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Mark 12:41-44

The contrasts in this story are striking. When Jesus watched people put money into the temple treasury box, he saw “many rich people” throwing in “lots of money” (v. 41). Then “one poor widow” put in “two small copper coins worth a penny.”

Jesus assured his disciples this poor widow had contributed “more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.” He lifted up the one, poor widow as making a greater contribution than many rich people. Why? Because “all of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had, even what she needed to live on” (v. 44).

The greater gift in the eyes of God was from the one who, in her “hopeless poverty” contributed all she had; this was in contrast to those who lived with abundance and contributed only such a small amount—their “spare change.”

The widow knew she lived by trusting God’s grace—meal to meal. So, she gratefully gave “everything she had.” Others made no such sacrifice. Today, we give in gratitude and give all we can to serve God. We rejoice that no gift is too small in the eyes of God.

### . . . In Your Children’s Experiences

One of the first things younger children learn is about sharing—sharing toys, sharing time with a parent, taking turns. This story will help children make the connection between the act of sharing with faithful practices in response to God’s love for them. The news often highlights stories of children’s generosity in helping others, like the widow who was very poor. Connecting this story with the community in which you are living will be a good way to help the children consider the ways they can serve God by giving.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story can connect to the lives of the children you teach in several ways. Younger children can be helped to think of the ways that they can serve God by giving. Interpreting giving as helping others is a good way for them to connect with this story. Older children who have more experiences and confidence will be able to both name their own experiences with giving and think about new ways that they can serve God by sharing their time, talents, or money.

*Dear God, you have shown us generous love through your blessings.  
Help me to show the same to the children. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*



## Supplies

Music & Melodies  
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More  
(SCM) i–iv, 11, 15, 23

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white cloth

baskets or offering  
plates

two pennies per child

bag full of coins

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

## Responding

### Claiming

pennies, aluminum foil,  
round cookies, snack  
size ziplock plastic bags

### Extra

copies of **GN 2**, pennies

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Before the session, take time to listen to the song “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)”—**MM 4**—and to learn the pronunciation so that you can teach it to the children.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Extra Activity” require more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing **F** **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!” These words are spoken during Eastertide, the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Eastertide), a variety of offering plates and baskets, and several pennies to place on the table. Invite the children to use construction paper to cut out small hearts and to place them on the table.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

As children are creating the worship space, invite the children to think about their giving. Ask: “When did you give something to someone else?” (For example, giving clothes to a cousin or a neighbor; usable toys to a charity or a day care center.) Children may give part of their allowance to the church. When they have named several examples of their generosity, say that today’s story is about someone who was generous with what she had.

Admire the efforts of the children to create a welcoming worship space.

### Singing

Sing “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)”—**MM 4**; **SCM 15**. Tell the children that the lyrics are a paraphrase of Psalm 117 and come from Ghana, a country in Africa. This text was originally created in the Twi language. After you feel that the children know the song, invite them to come up with motions for “praise,” “God,” “nations,” “love,” and “forever.”

### Praying

Turn on the candle.

Wonder aloud how God must feel when we offer gifts to God.

After the children have responded, suggest that they breathe deeply and quietly for a moment. Then pray:

God of grace, you are the giver of all good gifts. Give us generous hearts too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**T** Children may require additional time or explanation when making transitions. Use the visual schedule to alert them to change.

### Preparing to Hear the Story

Offer that, in the story they will hear today, Jesus is at the temple, watching people bring their offerings.

Show **SCM 11**. Ask the children what they notice about the image.

Invite the children to take turns holding the bag full of coins. After getting a feel for the weight of the bag, offer two pennies for each child to hold as you read the story.

Explain that the central figure in the story is a widow. Help the children understand the role and situation of widows in ancient times. Widows were a particularly impoverished group in biblical Palestine, when women did not work at paying jobs. Widows had neither husband nor father to provide for them.



### Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find Mark 12 in the Bible. Read **SCM 11** or listen to the story audio. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Before reading the story a second time, invite the children to hold up the two coins they were given. Read the story again. Use the following actions as the children hear the story for a second time:

- When you read, "They made a big show of putting their money into the box," drop the bag of coins loudly several times.
- When you read, "she dropped her two small coins into it," prompt the children to put their coins into one of the offering plates.
- When you read, "Then she bowed her head, said a short prayer to God, and went home," pause for a few moments.

### GN 1 Solution:



### Reflecting on God's Grace LG LD

Give each child a copy of **GN 1** and a pencil. Tell the children that the words in the word bank come from today's story. Allow time for the children to work on the puzzle, inserting the words from the word bank where they fit in the puzzle. Encourage the children who finish quickly to help others find the solution.

Discuss:

- I wonder, "Why did the widow give her last two pennies as an offering?"
- I wonder, "Why did Jesus praise the widow?"

### Singing

M

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing together “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**. Encourage the children to devise simple hand motions to go with the song. Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



### Claiming God’s Grace

F FA SD

*Before the session, for each child, tape a penny to an index card. Try to have the “IN GOD WE TRUST” side up.*

Explain that the group will make a snack, part of which can be eaten during the class, and part of which can be taken and shared with others.

- ▼ Cover the table. Give every child a penny and four squares of aluminum foil, each large enough to cover a cookie.
- ▼ Invite the children to place each square of foil over the penny and press the foil firmly with their finger so that the impression of the penny comes through on the foil. Then pull the foil from the penny.
- ▼ If the children touched the coins, have them wash their hands.
- ▼ Give each child four round cookies and have them wrap the cookies with the foil squares to resemble silver coins.
- ▼ Provide halved index cards. Ask them to make a tag for their bag to give away. The tag could say, “No gift is too small in God’s eyes.”
- ▼ Put two cookies in a ziplock plastic bag with the tag.

Encourage the children to share this gift with someone else, taking time to tell the story of Jesus and the poor woman’s offering. Enjoy the remaining cookies together.

**SD** *Some children with sensory issues have difficulties with sound. Common sounds such as crinkling aluminum foil may be painful or overwhelming. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning.*

### Praying God’s Grace

TD LG

Provide each child a lump of play dough.

- ▼ Ask them to mold it into the shape of an offering plate, basket, or box. As they shape it, ask them to quietly consider what good things God has given to them and what gifts they can offer God.
- ▼ As the children hold their hands cupped together, lead them in a time of imagining a gift they can offer to God.

- ▼ Ask them to imagine placing that gift in the shape they have fashioned.

End by singing the Doxology as everyone holds their offering in their hands. Tell the children that the Doxology is usually sung after the offering in a worship service. If the tune is unfamiliar, have the children repeat after you as you say the words to the Doxology.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. /  
Praise God, all creatures here below. /  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host; /  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. /  
Amen. /

### Offering God's Grace



Invite the children to think about the offerings that they share with others. To move the focus away from only gifts of money, it may be helpful to mention that we can all share our time and talents to help others. Ask the children to name some of the non-material things that they give to others. Invite them to write or draw these on index cards and place them in envelopes.

- ▼ Gather in a circle with a table in the middle.
- ▼ Place the offering plate or basket on the table.
- ▼ Ask the children to recall in silence the gifts that are named in their envelopes.
- ▼ Quietly have each person place his or her envelope in the offering plate or basket on the table.

When all have offered their gifts, lead the following echo prayer:

Giving God, /  
help us to reach out to others who need our help. /  
Help us to give from the heart, /  
whether we are giving food, money, or a hug. /  
Thank you for the love and care you have given each of us. /  
Amen. /

If desired by the group, present the offering envelopes to the stewardship or finance committee of your church.



### Extra Activity



Comment that a gift given joyfully and in faith is always pleasing to God, even if we think the gift is small. Wonder aloud if the woman from today's story was worried that her gift was small.

Provide copies of **GN 2**, pennies, crayons, and glue sticks. Ask the children to choose a few hearts from the worship table to add to their sheets.

Ask the children to consider gifts of the heart that they can offer, remembering that no gift given in faith is too small in God's eyes. Ask them to write their ideas on the hearts and glue them on their sheets. Provide time for children to do coin rubs. Show them how to place a penny under **GN 2** and use a crayon to color over it. Encourage them to rub the front and the back of a penny on their sheet. Offer a prayer over their sheets, asking God to provide ways for them to offer their gifts and thanking God for being faithful.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Use "With My Hands Open Wide"—**MM 20; SCM 23**—as an action prayer. Invite the children to gather in a circle. Play the song and lead them in the following movements:

*With my hands open wide, I will give to you (extend open hands forward from chest, then extend arms outward, repeating three times)*

*all that you need. (face palms out with thumbs together at chest height, then make wide circular motions with hands, meeting thumbs in the center with each circle)*

*With a happy heart, I will give to you. (thump hands on your heart in rhythm with the music, then extend arms outward, repeating three times)*

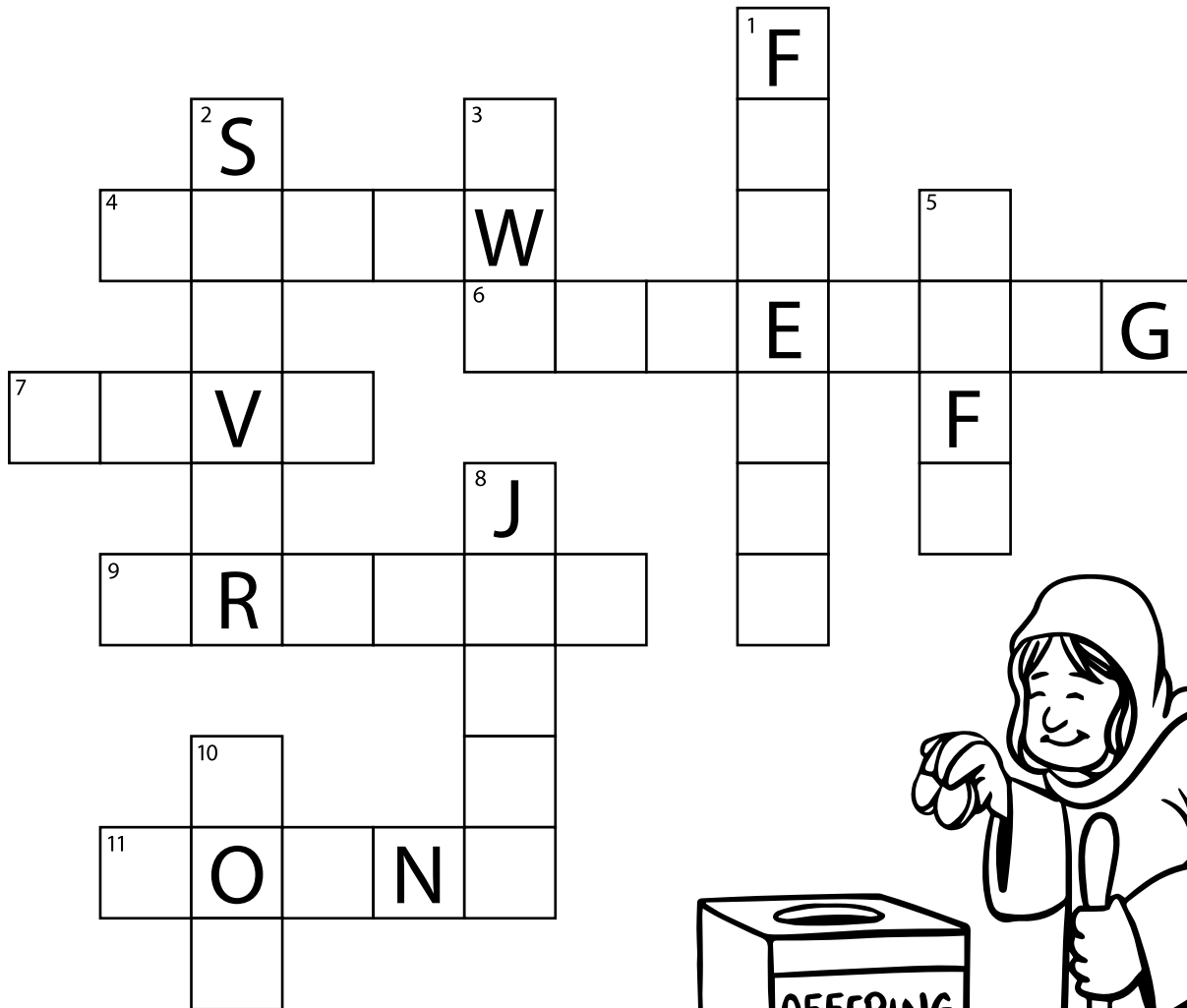
*With a loving heart, I will give to you. (place hands on heart, then cross them over chest, and then extend your arms outward, repeating three times)*

Send the children by laying your hand on each child's arm or shoulder and saying, "(Name), go live generously. God's grace be with you."



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

<b>WORD BANK</b>	COINS	JESUS	SILVER
	FRIENDS	LOVE	TWO
	GIFT	OFFERING	WIDOW
	GOD	PRAYER	







IN GOD'S EYES,  
NO GIFT IS  
TOO SMALL.

