



Miriam Rejoices

Goal: To express joyful gratitude for God's gracious presence.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 15:20-21

Sometimes you just have to sing and dance!

That's the way Miriam felt. She was the sister of Aaron and Moses. As one of the people of Israel, liberated from Egypt and on the way to the Promised Land, Miriam was deeply grateful for God's presence and protection. Through the power of God, the armies of Pharaoh, which had been pursuing the children of God, were drowned in the sea. The people could proceed in safety. Miriam and other women led the people in rejoicing by singing, dancing, and playing tambourines. They sang, "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (v. 21).

Miriam was grateful for God's help in danger. The people could have been killed. Now they were safe. God was with them and protected them. No wonder they felt like singing, dancing, and playing music!

God is with us too. God protects us. We may not have dramatic experiences like Miriam and the people. But day to day, through our years, God is with us, protecting and preserving us. We should always remember God's power surrounds us. So we also praise, sing, and dance with grateful hearts to God!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Our most common ways of saying thank you to God and rejoicing in God's care are experienced through prayer and singing in worship. In this story, we see how Miriam sang and danced to express her thanksgiving to God. It's a reminder that we can thank God with our whole bodies, something that many children do naturally. Some of your children will also be interested in expressing their thanksgiving through dance and music. Be aware of children who might want to find other ways to say thanks to God through artistic expression, words, or even mime.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story of Miriam is full of joy and happiness. She danced in grateful response to God's protection in leading the children of God out of danger. Acting it out with music and tambourines is a great way for children of any age to experience the feeling that Miriam had of thankfulness to God. As the story is told, children will be able to imagine their own responses to what it must have been like to have been saved by God from the armies of Pharaoh and then identify the many ways of expressing thanksgiving. They will be able to share the ways they say thanks to God.

*O God, help me sing a new song of praise to you
for you are gracious and steadfast in your love. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 5, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

green cloth

candle

various colors of thin or
curling ribbon

six jingle bells per child

bowl of water

Responding

Claiming

six or more images of
“Miriam dances” from
internet search, YouTube
video “Miriam’s Song by
Debbie Friedman” ([bit.ly/GGGMiriamSong](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jy/GGGMiriamSong)),
internet-connected
device

Celebrating SCM 20

Offering

portable light

Extra

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

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,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

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

Welcoming and Preparing



Play “Dance and Sing”—**MM 3**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship center with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to make tambourines:

- ▼ Decorate the back side of a paper plate with crayons or markers.
- ▼ Fold the paper plate in half.
- ▼ Cut 12" lengths of six ribbons in various colors.
- ▼ Punch six holes through both layers along the curved edge of the folded plate.
- ▼ Thread a bell on a ribbon and tie it to a hole. Repeat for each ribbon.

As the children work, invite them to talk about things in their life that make them feel joyful or ways they celebrate gracious things. The children will use the tambourines throughout the session.

Singing




Play and sing “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 20**. Use the tambourines as the children clap, dance, shout, and praise to the music.

Praying



Turn on the candle. Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond to each share with “Hear our prayer, gracious God.” Affirm each child’s response. Respect those who do not wish to share.

 *Sensory issues may affect hearing, touch, or taste—or may affect a number of senses. For some children, sounds may be painful or overwhelming. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning, allowing them time to process the stimuli.*



Preparing to Hear the Story

C L M

Ask the children what they know about Moses from the time of his birth until he leads the Hebrew people out of Egypt. Write each suggestion on an index card or half sheet of paper. Use the following points to put the suggestions the children gave in order, or tell the story, if necessary:

- ▼ As a baby, Moses' mother put him in a basket in the Nile to save him from Pharaoh.
- ▼ Miriam, Moses' sister, watched over him.
- ▼ Pharaoh's daughter pulled him from the river and raised him as her son.
- ▼ Moses fled to the desert after killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave.
- ▼ Moses became a shepherd.
- ▼ Moses saw a burning bush in the desert where God spoke to him, telling him to go back to Egypt and save the Hebrew people.
- ▼ Moses went to see Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go!" Pharaoh wouldn't let the Hebrews leave, so God sent ten plagues on the Egyptians.
- ▼ After the last plague, Pharaoh let the Hebrews go. They left quickly, but Pharaoh changed his mind and the Egyptians chased after the Hebrews.
- ▼ The Hebrews faced the Red Sea with the Egyptians coming after them. God parted the sea and Moses led them through the sea. When they reached the other side, the sea swallowed up the Egyptian army.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Tell the children that this is the place where today's story begins.

Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Exodus 15 in the Bible. Read **SCM 5** aloud to the children. 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 center.

Tell the children that they will help you with reading the story again. Each time they hear you say, "God is my strength," they will respond with "God is my song." Then all of you will join in saying, "God has saved us." Read the story again or listen to the story audio.

- Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.



Reflecting on God's Grace



Ask the children to imagine their responses to what it must have been like to have been saved by God from the armies of Pharaoh. Wonder how many ways you could express thanksgiving to God for being free. Encourage the children to take turns sharing with the group—with either words or motions—how they would express their joy.

Singing

Play the tambourines. Invite one child to tap out a rhythm on his or her thigh and encourage the other children to copy the rhythm. Repeat until each child has had a turn as leader. Keep in mind that accuracy in copying the rhythm is not important—enthusiasm and fun are.

Chant or rap words and phrases to the beat, such as “God is gracious,” “We are free,” “Be with us, God,” and so on.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



Claiming God's Grace



Before the session, do an internet image search for “Miriam dances.” Choose at least six images to share with the children.

Watch the YouTube video “Miriam’s Song by Debbie Friedman” (bit.ly/GGGMiriamSong, 2:45). Have the children pay attention to the variety of artist depictions of the scene. Ask how the art and music made them feel.

Show the children the images of “Miriam dances” that you have chosen. Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ How do these pictures make you feel?
- ▼ What are the similarities or differences between the pictures?
- ▼ Is there a particular picture you are drawn to? Why?

VI *Sighted children learn by looking at the whole picture before exploring the parts. Many visually impaired children experience things the other way around. Describing color, height, and other physical characteristics may not be helpful. Try describing what a main person is doing and what other people in the scene are doing, and then give more general physical characteristics. By doing so, you can help the child put these pieces together, providing detailed explanations that help build the total scene.*

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Celebrating God’s Grace



Dance as Miriam did in celebration of God’s protection. Invite the children to dance using the tambourines they made. Play “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23; SCM 20**—and dance in a circle together. For example:

- Stand in a circle, holding their tambourines.
- Walk in one direction while tapping the tambourine, then the other.
- Skip in one direction, then the other.
- Step backward to make the circle as big as you can while holding hands.
- Step forward to make the circle as small as you can.
- Lift hands up, lower hands, and send a “wave” around the circle.

Have fun! Dancing can help children burn energy and build relationships. Dance enthusiastically with the children. This will encourage them to “let loose” and overcome their own fears of dancing with their peers.



Offering God’s Grace



Ask children what they think the word *praise* means. When they agree on a definition, write it at the bottom of a sheet of mural paper posted on the wall. Invite children to make a shadow picture of Miriam and her friends dancing on the shore.

- Have volunteers stand a few feet in front of the paper in dancing poses with their tambourines.
- Ask them to hold still as you shine a light on the scene.
- Move the light until you can see the dancers’ shadows on the paper.
- Have volunteers trace the shadow shapes onto the paper.
- Remove the mural paper from the wall and invite children to paint in the scene.

Label the mural “Miriam and Her Friends Praise God.” Display the mural near the sanctuary as a reminder to praise God joyfully.

Extra Activity

Provide copies of **GN 1** and pencils. Allow time for the children to find the ten differences in the two pictures. If time allows, provide crayons for the children to color the pictures.

GN 1 Solution:

bag, boy, bush, man, sandals, sheep, jugs, strings, tambourine, trees



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. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather around a bowl of water and remind them of how the sea became a means of escape for the Hebrew people. Challenge the children to name ways they will express thanksgiving to God during the week.

Close by calling each child by name and saying, “Rejoice! God is always with you. Go in grace to love and serve the Lord!”



