



The People Give God Thanks

Goal: To give thanks to God with willing hearts.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 35:20-29

The tabernacle or “tent of meeting” was the place where the people of Israel worshiped God while they were on their wilderness journey. It was a place where people could worship in praise and thanksgiving for all God’s works, and especially for their deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

Women and men in the community prepared and offered gifts to be used for the tabernacle. All “who were of a willing heart” (v. 22) brought offerings to the Lord. “Skillful women spun with their hands” (v. 25); leaders brought “onyx stones and gems” (v. 27). All whose hearts were willing brought “anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord” (v. 29).

These grateful Israelites gave thanks to God with willing hearts. They offered gifts for the tabernacle as a sign of their gratitude for the grace and love God had given to the community of faith. Each responded personally by freely presenting a gift, an expression of his or her thankful heart. These people knew, as we do today, that God’s loving grace had saved them. They wanted to show their thankfulness by offering a gift to God.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

It is such a common response, and one of the earliest we teach our children: “Say please and thank you.” We teach children that when someone does something nice for them, the appropriate response is “thank you.” This story provides a wonderful opportunity to explore this familiar response and how we can say thanks with both words and actions.

The story of the people contributing a variety of skills and talents to make the tabernacle beautiful illustrates how God can use all of our gifts of thanks. It also helps children see how working together as a group helps everyone grow in God’s love.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The stories this fall have focused on words and actions of worship. Giving thanks or expressing gratitude is our response to God’s grace. The Israelites responded to God’s grace of salvation by making the tabernacle “beautiful for God” as it says in the story for today. This story offers a natural connection to helping the children name some of the gifts they have that could make something “beautiful for God.” Invite children to name some of their gifts, or invite children to take turns naming the gifts they think a child has. Be attentive to a child who might not think she or he has a gift.

*O God, I give you thanks for your wonderful gifts of grace in my life.
Help me radiate thanksgiving in all I do and say. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 6, 15, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

colorful blankets or
sheets

Ten Commandments
tablets from the
previous two sessions

snack

Guided Play

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

choice 3: large
cardboard box, two
wrapping paper tubes,
yellow crayons and/or
markers

Exploring

choice 1: items for a
worship center (Bible,
flowers or potted plant,
small cross, offering
plate, tablecloth,
battery-operated
candles, other items of
your choice)

choice 3: 6" squares
of cardboard; 8" strips
of various fabrics or
ribbons, 1/2"–1" wide;
poster board; hot glue
gun, glue sticks


choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner, and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, obtain the Ten Commandments tablets made in the previous two sessions.

Make an Ark of the Covenant box by taping or gluing a wrapping paper tube to two opposite sides of a large cardboard box, to use as carrying rods. You will use the Ark of the Covenant in this session and future sessions.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play


  

Greet children as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain that the children will hear a story about the Israelites building the tabernacle (tent of meeting).

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. **Playing Instruments**—Listen to “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!” Use rhythm instruments to play along with the song.
2. **Coloring**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Wonder with the children what the picture is.
3. **Making the Ark of the Covenant**—Provide a large box prepared with wrapping paper tubes attached to two sides (to be used as carrying rods). Tell the children that the Ark of the Covenant, the special box that held the Ten Commandments, was like this box. Invite the children to color the sides of the box with yellow crayons and/or markers to make the box look golden.

 *For some children, consistency in transitions is the key. Growing in Grace & Gratitude utilizes familiar songs and rhymes as a way to incorporate routine without letting things feel stale.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “To the Promised Land”—**SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

God’s Good Rules

L MS

Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions. Sing to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”:

(Sing)

Up, up, up the hill, (*walk fingers up one arm*) /
Moses heard God’s call. (*put hands to mouth, as if calling*) /
Down, down, down he came (*walk fingers down one arm*) /
with God’s rules for all. (*hold hands, palms up*) /

(Say) How many rules did God give? (*count fingers*)

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10! Ten!

(Sing)

Ten, ten, ten good rules (*hold up all ten fingers*) /
to follow in God’s way. (*walk fingers away from you*) /
We will love one God and friends, (*point up and then to friends*) /
love them every day. (*hug yourself*) /



Hearing the Story

L C MS

Invite the children to collect the tent they colored in “Guided Play” choice 2. Explain that it is a big tent for worshiping God. Tell the children the wonderful tent had two names—*tent of meeting* and *tabernacle*. Let the children have fun saying *tabernacle* several times. Ask the children to describe tents they have been in. Wonder why the people wanted to make a special tent for God.

Open the Bible to Exodus 35, to show that the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible in front of you.

Read **SCM 6**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Remind the children that God gave the people some special words on stone tablets. The words helped the people know how to live God’s way.

- ▼ I wonder, “What were these special words called?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What were some of these commandments, or rules?”



Read the story again, stopping when the people say, “Let’s make a beautiful tent for God.” Invite the children to set up a tent by placing colorful blankets or sheets over a table or several chairs in a circle facing outward. Continue reading the story.

Remind the children that the Ten Commandments were God’s rules to love God and love others. They were placed in the Ark, which was placed in the special tent of meeting. Ask for two volunteers to get the Ark of the Covenant made in “Guided Play” choice 3 and bring it outside of the tent. Place the Ten Commandments tablets in the Ark and then move the Ark into the tent.

Wonder together how your church’s place for worship is like the tabernacle of long ago. Ask if there is a place where God’s Ten Commandments can be found in your church. Perhaps you have a special window or carving depicting Moses and the Ten Commandments. There is always the Bible in the sanctuary and children’s Bibles in your room that you could point out to see the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE



1. Making a Worship Center

A C MS

Before the session, scatter the worship items around the meeting area.

Tell the children that they will create a worship center. Invite the children to locate worship items around the room and help you arrange a center for worship in your meeting place. Accept the children’s ideas of what other things would make good additions to the worship center. Children can help arrange mats or chairs for sitting.

You may or may not have a worship center as a regular part of your meeting place. Either way, you can plan this activity as a way to emphasize the special purpose of the tent of meeting. Wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, “What special things have you brought to our worship center?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How is our worship center like the tabernacle or tent of meeting?”



2. See the Beauty in Your Church

MS B

Take a field trip around your church and sanctuary, if possible. Explain that many people helped make this beautiful place. Some people gave money to buy things; some people helped build the sanctuary or made things for the sanctuary. Point out things you know people in your congregation made or gave, such as banners or candlesticks.

When you return to your space, give the children paper and crayons. Invite them to draw a picture of something they saw on your trip around the church that they thought was beautiful or special. Encourage the children to display their drawings around your room—making your worship space beautiful with their gifts.



3. Cooperative Art

F LG A FM

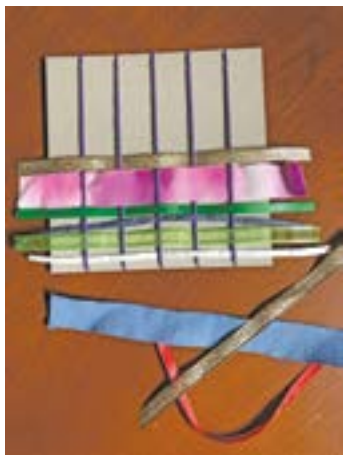
Before the session, cut a 6" square of cardboard for each child. Notch opposite sides at 1" intervals. Tape yarn on the back on the cardboard at the first notch. Wrap the yarn around the cardboard, notch to notch, to form the loom. Tape, then cut the yarn (see sidebar photo). Title a piece of poster board: "We Bring Our Gifts to God."

Remind the children that the people of God brought their gifts to make their worship place beautiful as a way to give thanks to God. Tell them they will make woven squares that will be joined together into one piece, sharing their gifts with the whole group.

Give each child a prepared cardboard loom. Place fabrics and ribbons in a basket. Show the children how to weave a strip of fabric or ribbon by threading the piece under the first line of yarn, then over the next, under the next, and so on. Demonstrate a second strip of fabric or ribbon by threading it next to the first one but beginning over the line of yarn, then under, then over, and so on. Assist the children as needed. As children complete the weaving, help them turn over the cardboard and wrap the loose ends of fabric or ribbon, taping them to the back.

When everyone has completed the weaving, invite the children to bring them to the tent of meeting. Give thanks to God for all their gifts. Hot glue the weavings to the prepared poster board. Display the poster in a common area of your church.

LG Activities that encourage teamwork and self-reliance model qualities of good leadership.





Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

Save the tablets and the Ark of the Covenant for use in the future sessions.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why do we give thanks for rules?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What is something special you can do, or offer, to God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What do you give thanks to God for?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so forth.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to help you clean up the space.

Call the children to snack time, singing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

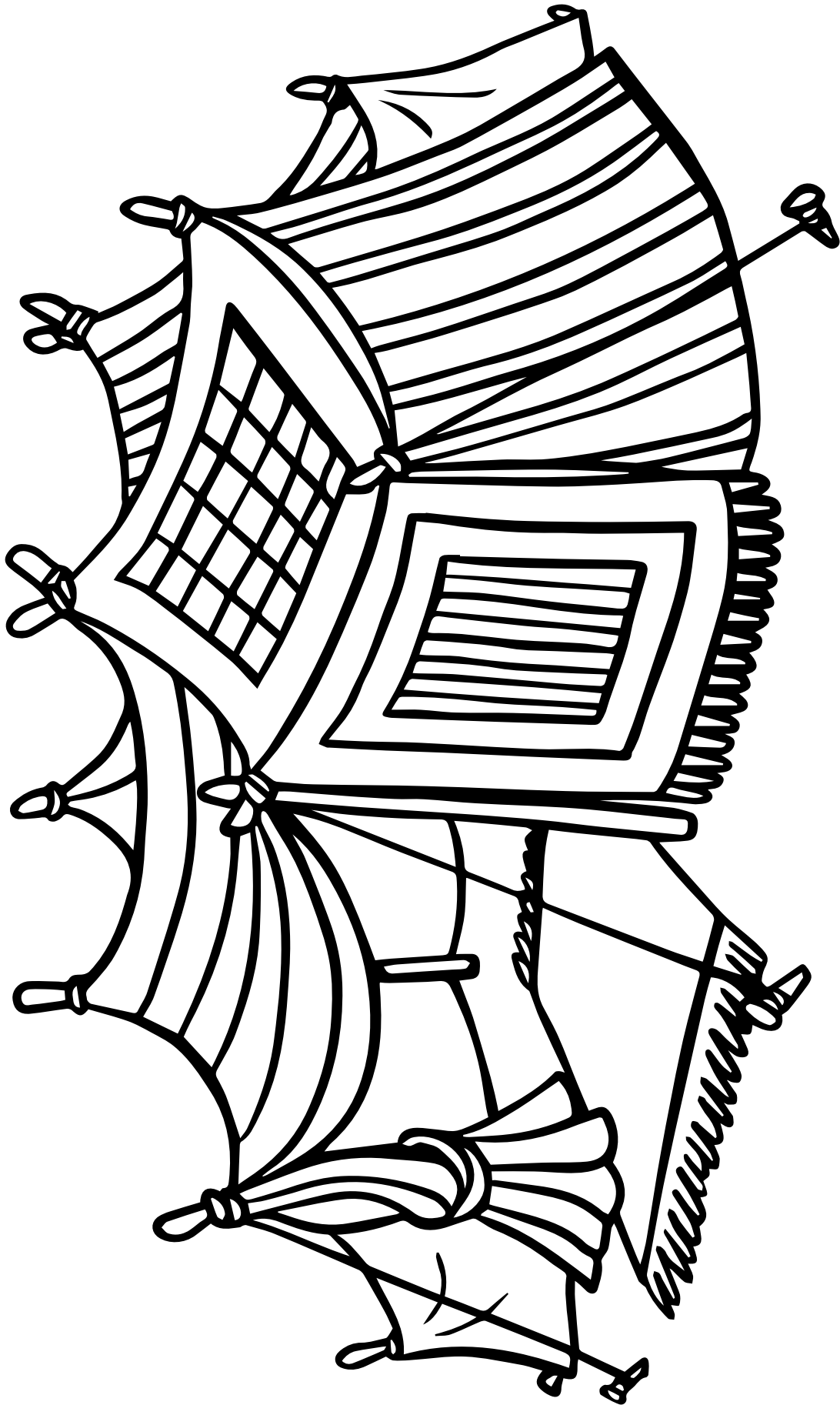
Serve the snack that you have planned and say a blessing, such as the following:

Food to eat,
food to share.
We thank you, God,
for all your care.

Enjoy the snack.

As the children feel comfortable, invite them to share hugs, high fives, or handshakes with one another. Remind them that these are ways to thank God by offering God’s love to one another.

Send each children with a blessing, saying, “(Name), give thanks to God. The grace of God be with you.”



The People Give God Thanks



God's people gave thanks to God by building a beautiful tent of meeting.

