



Joseph's Dream

Goal: To claim the promise of God's loving presence in Jesus.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 1:18–24

Mary and Joseph were engaged. But before they were married, Mary “was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18). What to do?

Joseph's plan to “call off their engagement quietly” (v. 19, CEB) was overruled by an angel from God who appeared in Joseph's dream. The angel assured Joseph that Mary's baby was from the Holy Spirit and that a son would be born to them. The angel even indicated the name for the baby: Jesus. This name is appropriate because it indicates what Jesus will do: “He will save his people from their sins” (v. 21).

We can hardly imagine greater grace given! God was sending a deliverer, a savior to save people from their sins. Now the brokenness of the relationship with God can be healed; our sin, forgiven. Jesus is Savior.

God's pure grace is being born as a baby, in the person of Mary and Joseph's son. Amazing! Jesus is “‘Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us’” (v. 23). God reaches out and becomes a human person to save us—greatest grace! No wonder Joseph did what the angel commanded. He must have marveled greatly in gratitude—as we do—at God's wondrous love!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

This vivid story is one that children can easily engage in many ways. Consider the action of naming. The angel told Joseph that Mary would give birth to a son whom Joseph should name Jesus, because he would save his people. The prophet Isaiah told about the birth of Emmanuel, which means “God with us.” Your children may know about their names and why they got their names. They can know that, just as Jesus' birth would mean God was with all God's people, so, too, God is with each of us today when we show God's love to each other.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The story for this week focuses on Joseph and the visit of the angel to him. As you tell this familiar story of the birth of Jesus, be aware of children who might know couples who have a child and aren't married. You can help them remember that the times and customs in which Mary and Joseph lived were very different from today. One of the ways to engage them with their own curiosities about this story is to invite them to imagine what it would have been like to have been Joseph when he heard the news from the angel.

*God of hope, peace, and love, thank you for the days
of Advent to ponder your promises to us. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 4, 14, 15

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

Advent calendar poster
from previous sessions

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: pillows,
blankets

choice 2: picture books
about Jesus' birth

choice 3: child-friendly
nativity set

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **GN 1**,
gallon-sized ziplock
bags, shaving cream

choice 2: card-stock
copies of **GN 2**,
envelopes

choice 4: copies of
GN 3

Suggested children's
Bible: *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.

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, **LG** **T**) 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!

Continue the Advent calendar that you started in Winter 1.
“Exploring God's Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

B **M**

Welcome the children by name as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the response, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time.

Explain to the parents/caregivers that the children will hear a story about how an angel comes to Joseph in a dream to speak about Jesus.

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

1. Pretending—Provide pillows and blankets, and pretend to get ready to go to sleep. Help the children think about what people do to prepare for bed (*brushing teeth, washing face, putting on pajamas, reading a story, fluffing up the pillows, turning back the covers, saying bedtime prayers*). Pantomime the activities with the children. Tell the children that the Bible story they will hear today is about Joseph, who received wonderful news.

2. Reading—Provide children's Bibles and picture books about the birth of Jesus.

3. Playing with a Nativity Set—Invite children to play with the characters and animals of a nativity set.

T Give the children a signal when it's time for something new; sing a familiar song or repeat a phrase such as: “One, two, something new.” Expect this to be difficult for some, especially if they are new to your group. It may be helpful to give a child a specific task.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner.

Joseph Had a Dream



Sing this to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell.” Invite the children to join in singing as they pick up the pattern of the song. Encourage them to follow your actions.

Joseph had a dream, Joseph had a dream.
An angel came to Joseph when Joseph had a dream.
(Fold hands on side of one cheek as if sleeping.)

Do not be afraid, do not be afraid.
The angel said to Joseph, “Do not be afraid.”
(Wave index finger in front of you, signaling “no.”)

Take Mary as your wife, take Mary as your wife.
The angel said to Joseph, “Take Mary as your wife.”
(Pretend to link arms with someone.)

A baby she will have, a baby she will have.
The angel said to Joseph, “A baby she will have.”
(Rock a baby.)

The baby is God’s son, the baby is God’s son.
The angel said to Joseph, “The baby is God’s son.”
(Rock baby, then point up.)

Jesus is his name, Jesus is his name.
The angel said to Joseph, “Jesus is his name.”
(Make the American Sign Language word for Jesus—place the left middle finger in right palm, then the right middle finger in left palm.)

Come and Hear



Say or sing the following song to the tune of “The Bear Went Over the Mountain.” Invite the children to sing and do the motions.

O come and hear God’s story. (walk four steps to the right)
O come and hear God’s story. (walk four steps to the left)
O come and hear God’s story. (walk four steps to the right)
Sit down and fold your hands. (fold your hands in your lap)

Go to bit.ly/SLJesus to see how the sign is made.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Hearing the Story

L MS

Play and sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”—**SCM 14**—as an opening to story time.

Open the Bible to Matthew 1, so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that the story is about how an angel comes to Joseph in a dream to speak about Jesus.

Draw the children’s attention to the Advent calendar poster with the four envelopes. Tell them that today is the last Sunday of Advent, a time when we look forward to the coming of the baby, Jesus.

Open envelope 4, and take out the story. Read **SCM 4**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again, inviting the children to act out the story. Ask them to be Joseph, trying to rest, but tossing and turning because he is worried. Then he falls asleep. Then they can pretend to be the angel, tapping Joseph on the head, and telling him not to be afraid. Repeat as desired.

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE



1. Playing with the Story

SD TD

Make Joseph’s dream cloud.

- ▼ Give each child a copy of **GN 1** and washable markers or crayons.
- ▼ Have the children write their names on the back of the paper or write it for them. Invite them to color the pictures.
- ▼ Lay a gallon-sized ziplock bag on the table in front of you.
- ▼ Place the picture face down on the bag and tape it to the bag.
- ▼ Open the bag and help the child put three squirts of shaving cream into it.
- ▼ Seal the bag, being sure to let out as much air as possible.
- ▼ Have the children lay their bag on the table so the paper side is lying on the table with the bag on top of it. Invite them to smooth out and push around the shaving cream. By carefully pressing their fingers down on the bag and pushing the “cloud” around, they can see what Joseph dreamed about.

As each of the figures of Joseph’s dream appears, invite the children to tell what they know about the story. Help the children play with the dream cloud bags, searching for the images from the story.

SD *Smells can affect our memories, emotions, and behaviors. For children with sensory issues, smells can be a source of anxiety, which can be distracting and overwhelming. If the scent is overwhelming or difficult for the child, allow him or her to walk away from the activity.*



2. Remembering the Angel's Message

FM

Remind the children that God sent an angel to tell Joseph about the baby that Mary was going to have. The angel said that the baby's name would be Jesus. Help the children know the baby's name.

Provide card-stock copies of **GN 2**, crayons, and scissors. Invite the children to color the puzzle and help them cut the pieces apart. See if they can put the puzzle back together. Provide envelopes for the children to take the puzzle home or to share it with a friend.

3. Share a Message

F LG MS

Remind the children that Joseph got a message from an angel.

Play a game like "Duck, Duck, Goose" to have children pass along the message that "Jesus is Emmanuel." Invite the children to form a circle and sit on the ground with their head on their hands, pretending to sleep. Have one child be the angel. Tell that child to tap each child around the circle, saying, "Joseph, Joseph . . ." or tap a person and say, "I have a message for you." At that point, the sleeping child pops up, and both children run in opposite directions around the circle, proclaiming, "Jesus is Emmanuel!" The child that reaches the empty space first sits down and the game continues.

Make sure all who wish have the opportunity to be the angel. Invite the children to share the message that "Jesus is Emmanuel" with a family member when they get home.

4. Coloring Page

C

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of the angel delivering a message to Joseph. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, "Could Joseph sleep after receiving the message from the angel?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What would you do if an angel spoke to you in your dreams?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What message might the angel bring from God to you?"

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

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.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor. If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time.

Remind the children that Christmas is coming. Sing “Away in a Manger”—**SCM 15**. Go over the words with the children, and repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Remind the children that Joseph listened to the angel’s message and followed God’s plan. Ask the children how they might share God’s message about Jesus this week.

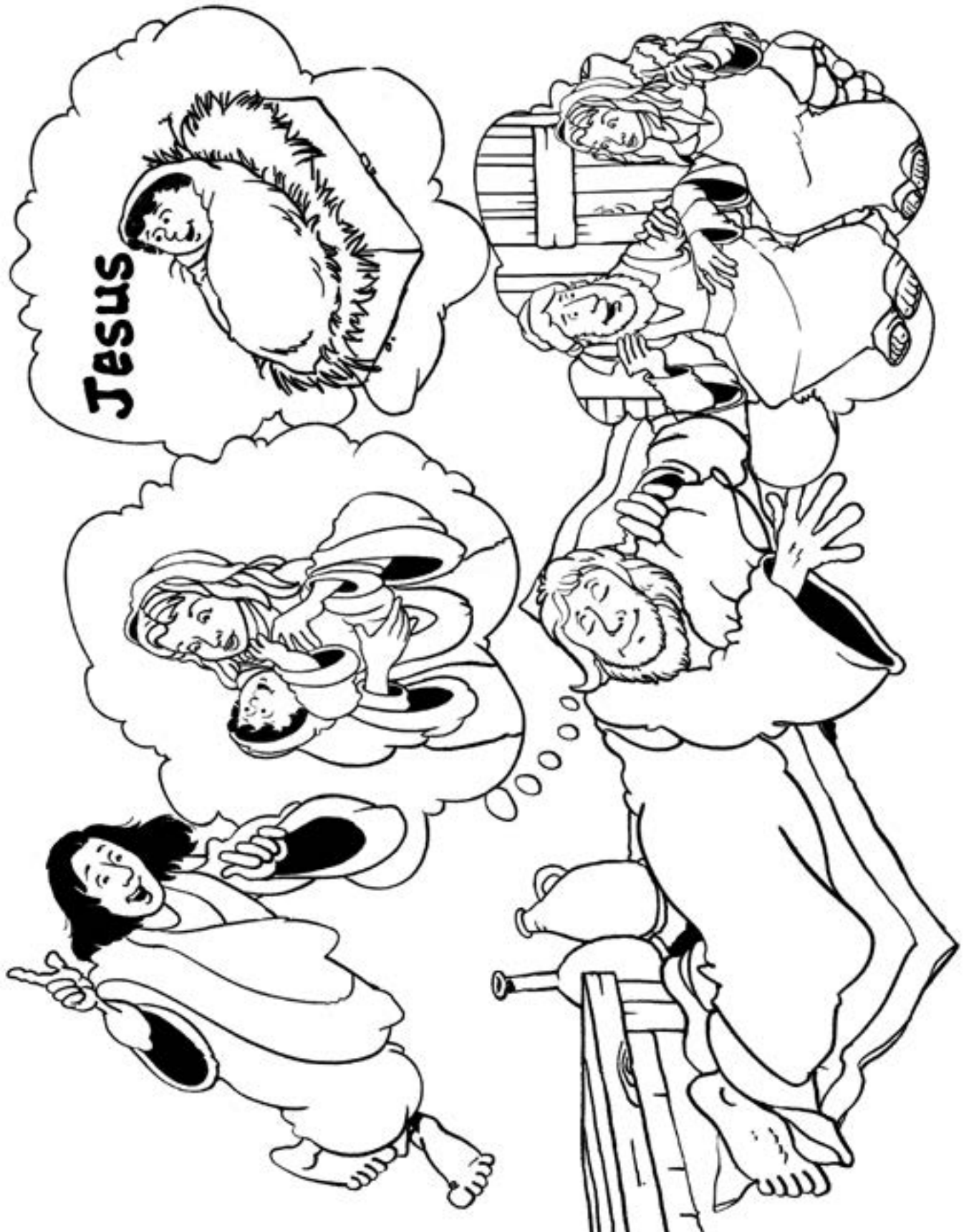
Lead a prayer:

Wonderful God, thank you for the message we heard from the angel today. Help us share the message of Jesus with others. Amen.

As the children leave, say, “May the grace of God be with you.” Ask the children to respond, “And also with you.”



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).



Jesus



J e s u s

Joseph's Dream



An angel visited Joseph in a dream and told him about Jesus.

