



# Gifts for the Baby King

**Goal:** To practice gift giving as a grateful response to God's grace.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Matthew 2:1-12

It's hard to imagine the determined devotion of the magi, those "wise men from the East" (Matthew 2:1). They followed the star and traveled innumerable miles to come to honor "the child who has been born king of the Jews" (v. 2). Their interview with Herod sent them to Bethlehem, after the king had ascertained from the Jewish religious leaders where the Messiah was to be born.

Led again by the star, which "stopped over the place where the child was" (v. 9), the magi were "overwhelmed with joy" (v. 9). When they saw Jesus with Mary in the house, they fell to their knees and honored Jesus. They gave important gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were costly gifts, fitting for a king. They were sure to be important when Jesus' family had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath.

The magi, non-Jews, recognized who Jesus was and worshiped him. They brought expensive gifts, expressing gratitude for God's grace in sending the Messiah for the people. The magi's response to Jesus in offering gifts of costly devotion is a model for us. Whatever is costly to us should be offered in gratitude to God for the grace we have experienced in Jesus Christ.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

The magi brought expensive gifts to baby Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Your children may need help in understanding what frankincense (a resin from tree bark used in incense and perfumes) and myrrh (also a tree resin that is an essential oil) are. Children will be able to understand that they brought these gifts because they wanted to give Jesus the best things they had. It is also important to help children understand that when we give a gift, we give the best thing we can give and sometimes that is something simple, such as love, care, a hug, or a kind word.

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

Because this is the week after Christmas, children may want to talk about the gifts they gave and received, and how they spent Christmas Day. It will be easy to connect their stories with the one for today, the visit of the magi to Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, who was no longer a newborn baby. As you talk about the beautiful and expensive gifts that the magi brought, it might be fun to engage their imagination with this question: "If you had been one of the magi, what gift would you have brought to Jesus?"

*O God, make my heart grateful for all good gifts from your hand so my hands may be generous in Jesus' name. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 5, 5a, 15, 16, 17

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

white cloth

white candle

biblical costumes

chalk

*Home by Another Way*  
by Barbara Brown Taylor  
(optional)

## Responding

### Claiming

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

### Celebrating

plastic wrap; small  
gifts such as pennies,  
individually wrapped  
candies, stickers, and  
so forth; **SCM 5b**

### Praying

**SCM 5c, 5d**; clear  
contact paper

### Extra

copies of **GN 2**

## 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.

Consider obtaining *Home by Another Way* by Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Praying God’s Grace” require more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**A B M L**

Play “Away in a Manger” as children arrive. Welcome each child with, “Happy Fourth Day of Christmas, (Name).”

Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a white cloth, a Bible, and a white candle to signify the Christmas season.

Invite the children’s creativity in setting the worship space for “Hearing the Story.” They could print “Bethlehem” and “Jerusalem” on separate sheets of paper. Designate spots as Herod’s palace and the house in Bethlehem. Make a star and place it over Bethlehem.

If you choose to do Option 1 in “Reflecting on God’s Grace,” encourage the children to make other props, such as a crown for King Herod and bags or other containers for the gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The children might use strips of cloth for headdresses and real bags and boxes for the gifts, or they could create signs indicating who the characters are.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite two volunteers to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

### Singing

**L**

Play “Away in a Manger”—**SCM 16**. As the children listen, say that this song helps us remember the story of Jesus’ birth. Then join in singing.

**LG** *Communication is key to leadership and relationships. By nurturing communication skills, children are given the ability to build relationships and inspire others.*

### Praying

**LG**

Turn on the candle. Take time to show gratitude for God’s gifts. After each line, prompt the children to respond, “We thank you, God.”

For shining light to the world,  
**we thank you, God.**



For the gifts you give us,  
**we thank you, God.**  
For grace and peace,  
**we thank you, God.**  
For showing us how to live in your way,  
**we thank you, God.**  
Amen.

The word *epiphany* is derived from a Greek verb that means “to reveal” or “to make known.” On Epiphany, Christians celebrate that God is made manifest—made known—to all people in the person of Jesus Christ.

### Preparing to Hear the Story C

Comment that, in some countries, people give gifts or do something kind on January 6 (the Epiphany). They remember the magi, or wise men, who traveled a long way to bring gifts to Jesus. Share any traditions that you have and ask the children to do the same.

Explain that today’s Bible story begins in the town of Bethlehem, located in Judah. Help the children recall what other stories happened in Bethlehem. Show **SCM 5a** to remember locations for the stories of Jesus’ birth (Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem).

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



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](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find Matthew 2 in the Bible. Ask two volunteers to read Matthew 2:1–12. 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.

Give black construction paper and chalk to your group. Invite them to draw a nighttime scene on the paper while you read a retelling of the story using **SCM 5** or listen to the story audio. Invite the children to share their chalk drawings.

### Reflecting on God’s Grace A

**Option 1.** Distribute Bibles and review Matthew 2:1–12 together. Identify the characters in the story who speak. Assign a child or two to act as narrators. Then ask volunteers to role-play each of the other characters using the props made earlier. Encourage children to use dramatic voices and act out the story. After the skit, discuss:

- ▼ What do you like or dislike about the story? Why?
- ▼ Why do you think Matthew told this story?

**Option 2.** Read *Home by Another Way*, by Barbara Brown Taylor, showing the children the pictures as you read. Discuss the story using the same two questions above. Add the following question:

- ▼ How did the author and illustrator imagine the story that you may not have thought about from the Scripture passage?



### Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play, listen to, clap, and sing “These Wise Men”—**SCM 17**. Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

### Claiming God’s Grace

M

Encourage the children to think of gifts they can give that would honor Jesus. These gifts could be service to the church (picking up bulletins after worship), to the family (helping to clear the dishes after a meal), to the community (picking up trash along a sidewalk or road), or to other children (sharing games or toys, offering kind words). Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to write or draw the gifts that they will offer. Encourage the children to take the sheets home and post them as a reminder to offer these gifts.



### Celebrating God’s Grace

MS F

*Before the session, cut apart coupons on **SCM 5b**. Make a gift ball by wrapping a few small gifts and a coupon with a piece of plastic wrap. Place a small gift or two and a coupon on the ball and add another layer of plastic wrap. Repeat this process as many times as it takes to get all of your gifts and coupons wrapped. Make sure there are plenty so that each child has an opportunity to unwrap something.*

Play a game to experience the joy of gift-getting as well as gift-giving.

- ✦ Hand the gift ball to the first player.
- ✦ Play “These Wise Men.”
- ✦ Invite them to begin taking off the plastic wrap, revealing a gift or coupon, while the music plays.
- ✦ Stop the song at a random point.
- ✦ Pass the ball to the next player.
- ✦ Continue playing until all the gifts and coupons have been revealed.

To make the game easier, you can use one continuous piece of plastic wrap.

Have the children read the coupons that they received. Invite the children to give these gifts to friends and family.



## Praying God's Grace

M LG

*Before the session, cut out the stars from **SCM 5c** and **SCM 5d**. Cut two squares of 4" x 4" clear contact paper for each child.*

Tell the children that there is a practice in some churches of receiving a “Star Word” as a gift for the year. Explain that a Star Word is a word written on a star that is handed out or chosen at random. The words are not assigned. The word is a gift from God, something to think about, to see how it might be a part of your life in the coming year.

Place the Star Words in a paper bag. Invite each child to draw a star from the bag and look at their word. Invite the children to share their Star Word. Give each child two squares of clear contact paper. Have them peel the backing off one square and place their star face down on the contact paper. Then have them peel the backing off the other square and place it on the back of the star, sealing the star. Encourage them to cut around the star to trim the contact paper. Have the children punch a hole in the top of the star, string a piece of yarn through the hole, and knot the ends of the yarn together.

Have the children sit in a circle and hold their stars high over their heads. Lead them in the following guided prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of a star and its word.  
May this word fall gently upon us (*move star to head*)  
as we pause and consider why this word is a gift to us at this  
time . . .

May we hold this star and its word close to our hearts (*move  
star to heart*)  
as we pause and consider what we might do with the gift of  
this word in our lives . . .

May we find space in our lives to hold on to this word (*move  
star to hands in lap*)  
even if we lose this star in the busy-ness of our days.

Encourage the children to take their Star Words home and hang them where they will be reminded of their word throughout the year.

**LG** *Providing opportunities for children to express generosity, welcome others, and offer kindness helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*



### Extra Activity

M

Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Allow time for the children to solve the puzzle. While the children find their way through the maze, use the following questions or ones of your own to engage them in a discussion about stars:

- ▼ Have you ever looked up at the night sky to see the stars?
- ▼ Did you notice one star that shines brighter than all the others?
- ▼ What did that star make you think about?

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Turn on the white candle. Explain that the white candle is a reminder of Jesus, the light of the world. Remind the children that God gave us such a wonderful gift in Jesus. It is out of gratitude for this gift that we share gifts with others.

Sing stanza 5 of “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**.

Ask the children how they can use their Star Word from “Praying God’s Grace” to remember God’s gift to them. Encourage them to think of ways they can share that gift with others.

Pray aloud, prompting the children to echo each phrase:

Thank you, God, /  
for being with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. /  
Thank you for leading the magi by the star. /  
Thank you for being with us /  
wherever we go, /  
whatever we do. /  
Amen.

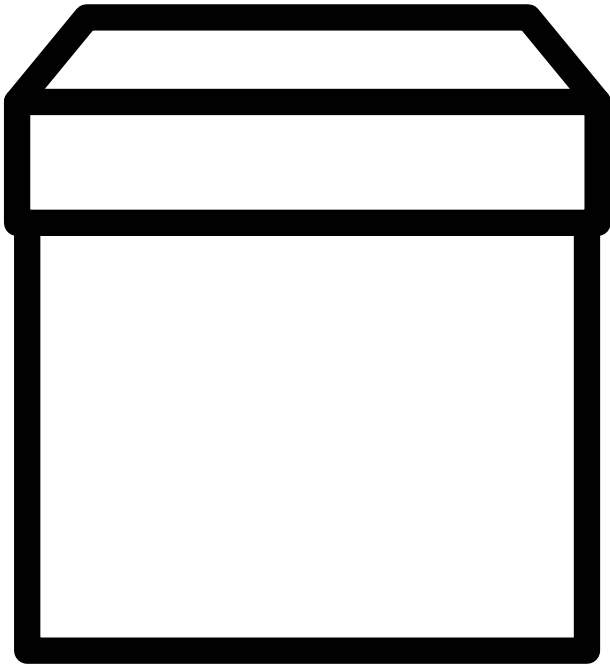
Send the children with these words: “May the grace of God be with you.”

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.

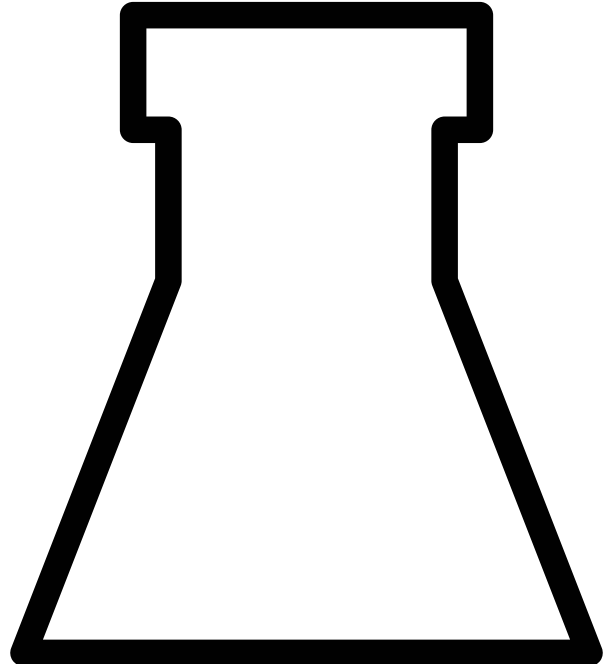


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

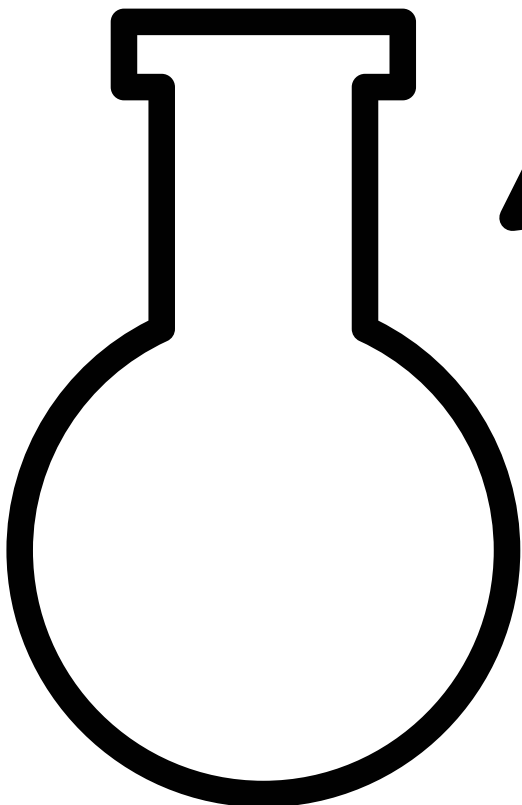
# My Gifts to Share



Church



Community



Family



Other Children





