



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, 16

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

large cardboard box,
two wrapping paper
tubes

sheets and blankets

cardboard “Ten
Commandments”
tablets from previous
two sessions

incense, holder, matches
or a bowl of potpourri

costume jewelry,
aluminum foil, various
colors of yarn, cinnamon
sticks, colorful fabric
pieces

Responding

Claiming

paper bags with three
objects

Offering

prepared copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1,
paper grocery bags

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.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **B** **M** **C**

Play “To the Promised Land” 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 set the scene for today by getting the Ark of the Covenant ready. Explain that the Ark was a large box that carried the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Give the children a large cardboard box and two wrapping paper tubes. Invite them to decorate the Ark by coloring it with crayons or markers. Explain that it was thought to have been covered in gold, but they may color it as they choose. Have them tape the tubes to the sides of the box to carry it.

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

Singing

SD **MS**

Play the song “To the Promised Land”—**SCM 15**—as the children listen. Play the song again and, together with the children, clap out the rhythm. Then join in singing. If desired, have the children dance to the song.

Praying

SD

Build a tent by setting up chairs and covering them with sheets. Ask volunteers to ceremoniously place the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant and then move the Ark inside the tent. Have the children place blankets on the floor around the opening. Invite the children to sit on the blankets. Place a Bible, candle, and incense holder in your midst.

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Light the incense and place it in the holder. Explain that in biblical times incense was often used in worship. The beautiful scent reminded people of the beauty and wonder of God. The smoke rising to heaven helped people to imagine their prayers rising up to God. If you do not wish to use incense, pass around a bowl of potpourri. Invite the children to smell the scent. Explain the role incense had in worship.



Ask children to imagine they are worshiping in ancient Israel. Wonder what they see, hear, smell, and taste.

Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing as if they were among the ancient Israelites. Prompt the children to respond to each share with “Our prayers rise like incense, O God.” Affirm each child’s response. Respect those who do not wish to share.

SD *For children with sensory issues, smells can be a source of anxiety, which can be distracting and overwhelming. If the scent is too much for a child, allow them to walk away from the activity.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

L M

Explain that today’s story is about a tabernacle that God asked the people to build. Wonder what a tabernacle is.

Explain that the tabernacle was a worship tent. When the Israelites moved about the desert, they dismantled the tent and took it with them. When they stopped, they camped around the tent. The tabernacle housed the Ark of the Covenant, which held the Ten Commandments, the most holy of the Israelite sacred symbols—a sign of God’s presence with them.

Remind the children that the people were in the desert. Wonder where the people found the materials to build the tabernacle. Ask the children to listen closely to the story for the answer.



Hearing the Story

L M

Invite a child to find Exodus 35 in the Bible. Have one or two volunteers read Exodus 35:20–29. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Talk about the different gifts that the people brought to decorate the tabernacle. Place costume jewelry, aluminum foil, various colors of yarn, cinnamon sticks, and colorful fabric pieces in your midst. Invite them to choose a gift and decorate your tent as you read the story again using **SCM 6** or listen to the audio story. Use your voice, expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

After the story, admire the tabernacle holding the Ark and Ten Commandments. Comment that Moses and God were very pleased with the offerings the people made. It was a great day to celebrate.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C

Ask the children to imagine that they are among the Israelites. Moses tells you that God has asked you to build a tabernacle as a dwelling place for God. The tabernacle will include an ark containing



the Ten Commandments and an altar. Wherever you journey, you will take the tent and carry the Ark to remind you that God is in your midst. To build the tent, Moses calls for offerings from the people. Wonder aloud:

- ▼ I wonder, “What kinds of offerings could people give to God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What offerings do you give to God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How does it feel to give an offering to God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How does giving an offering say thank you to God?”

Singing



Offer God an offering of music. Remind the children that the tabernacle was a place of worship. Celebrate by singing “Bim Bam”—**SCM 16**—while circling the tent.

Turn off the candle and extinguish the incense.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Before the session, place three random objects in a paper bag. Make a bag with different objects for each three-person team you may have.

Form three-person teams. Give each team a prepared paper bag. Explain that each team will use all the objects in the bag to create a skit that has something to do with today’s story: building the tabernacle, people giving thanks to God, or people giving offerings to be used by the community. Allow five minutes to create the skits. Perform the skits for one another.

Wonder together what the story of the tabernacle can mean for us today. Ask the children what gifts—tangible items or gifts of skill—they have to share with your congregation.



Celebrating God’s Grace



Before the session, cut a 24" piece of yarn and knot the ends, making a circle. Cut 36" pieces of yarn for each child.

Remind the children how the people worked together to build the tabernacle. Place a circle of yarn in an open space and have the children stand around the circle. Use the following points to set up a game of cooperation.

- ▼ Invite the children to imagine the circle is the center of the community, the tabernacle.
- ▼ Place a paper plate on the circle of yarn and say that it represents the Ark of the Covenant, which signified the promise of God’s presence.
- ▼ Place a small ball, such as a ping pong ball, on the plate. The ball represents the Ten Commandments, God’s rules to live by, loving God and loving others.

- ▼ Tell the children that they will work together to keep God and God’s commandments in the center of the group.

Remove the plate and ball from the yarn circle. Give each child a 36" piece of yarn and have the children tie one end of their yarn to the circle of yarn. With all the yarn on the floor, replace the plate and ball on top of the yarn circle.

Invite the children to pick up their yarn and try to lift the circle while keeping the plate and ball in place. They will need to work together, gently pulling on their yarn, but not so much that it knocks the plate and ball off the circle. Once the children are standing and confident holding the circle, plate, and ball in place, have them walk in a circle. If they are feeling very confident, play “God Is So Good” and have the children sing while moving in a circle.

Give thanks for all the children working together, sharing their abilities to keep God and God’s way of living in the center.



Offering God’s Grace

LG

*Before the session, inform your mission committee about your food collection project. Get input as to where the items may be donated. Add information to **GN 1** before you make copies.*

Children will practice giving generously with their families. Review giving to others as a way of showing gratitude to God. Distribute paper grocery bags, copies of **GN 1**, markers, scissors, and glue sticks. Read, or ask an older child to read, the letter aloud. Tell the group more about the organization that will receive the food. Have them glue the letter to one side of the bag and decorate the other sides with drawings of food.

Have the children take the bags home and do some of the activities in the letter as a family. Be sensitive to children whose families have limited resources. Suggest that children talk with their parents about asking extended family members, neighbors, or friends to join them in this project. Tell them to bring their bags with food the following session.

Extra Activity

F LG A C LD

Play a game giving thanks to God for the many gifts God blesses us with. Hand out copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to color their game boards as they wish. Have the children form pairs or triads. Invite them to choose a marker from a small item in the room or make a personalized marker with a small square of paper. Give each team a die. Teams will use one game board, but each child will have a game board to take and play at home.

Tell the children that this game is played like “Chutes and Ladders.” As they advance, if they land on a ladder, they may climb to the new space. If they land on a rope, they slide down the rope to the



You will use the Ark of the Covenant and Ten Commandments tablets in the next session.



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).

designated space. As they land on spaces with pictures, they share something they give thanks for and why. Use the key on the game board to explain what each picture indicates.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

B

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather the children in a circle. Hold the end piece of a ball of yarn and throw the ball of yarn to one child. Ask the child to name something they have or can do for God or the faith community. After naming a way, ask the child to hold the strand of yarn and to throw the ball of yarn to another child. Tell the children not to let go of their piece of yarn once they are holding it. When every child has had a turn, a web of yarn will connect the children to one another. Notice how everyone is connected together in God's family. Close with a prayer.

Gracious God, you give us what we need every day. Thank you for the many ways we can show our gratitude for your gifts. Watch over (*name each child*) this week and gather us together again in your name. Amen.

Bless each child by saying, “(*Name*), offer your gifts to God. Go in grace to love and serve the Lord!”

Dear families,

We are growing in grace and gratitude by encouraging people to donate canned foods or dry goods for

As you and your child consider what you might donate, talk about what it means to give to others in gratitude to God. Here are some activities to try together:

During dinner preparation, add up the cost of each item.

How much does this dinner cost? Talk about whether the dinner costs more or less than what you usually eat.

Look through your kitchen shelves. Can you find five items that could be used together to create a meal? If so, is it a meal your family would enjoy eating? Why or why not?

Find the biggest can and the smallest can in your pantry. How many servings does each can include?

Look at some grocery store ads in the newspaper or online. If you had only \$5 to spend on canned food or dry goods, what would you select? Why?


Count the plates in your kitchen. How many people could you serve at the same time? Talk about the times that your family has had many guests for a meal.

Consider how many items each person in your family could donate. How might the number of items change if you had a bigger or smaller family or if you had more or less money?

Please return your donations with your child next session.

Thank you!



 family member	 something in your home	 animal
 person who is not a family member	 food	 special skill you have

