



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
(MM) 2019–2020

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 5, 15, 16, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

two or more gift-
wrapped packages
containing small gifts

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: child-friendly
nativity set

choice 2: boxes,
wrapping paper

choice 3: card-stock
copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, pipe cleaners

Exploring

choice 1: potpourri, 6"
square pieces of cotton
cloth

choice 2: copies of **GN 2**

choice 3: scarves or
streamers (optional)

choice 4: copies of
GN 3



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!

For “Guided Play” choice 3, cut crowns and stars from card-stock copies of **GN 1** and 2" strips of construction paper.

Place small gifts that can be shared by all, such as stickers, in a box. Wrap the box in several layers of paper. Make two or more boxes for “Transitioning to Story Time.”

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Welcome the children by name as they arrive, and say, “You are God’s beloved child.” Prompt the response, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.” 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 the wise men giving gifts to Jesus.

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

- 1. Playing with a Nativity Set**—Provide a children’s nativity set and invite the children to play with the figures. Encourage them to play out the story of Jesus’ birth and the visit of the wise men.
- 2. Wrapping Gifts**—Provide a variety of boxes, wrapping paper, tape, and scissors. Encourage the children to wrap boxes as gifts. Wonder what gifts they might give to Jesus.
- 3. Making Magi Crowns**—Provide one crown and star from **GN 1**, and a 2" x 12" construction paper strip for each child. Invite the children to decorate the crown front and star. Help the children tape one end of a pipe cleaner to the back side of their crown at the center point. Show them how to bend the pipe cleaner in a “U” shape and tape the star to the other end of the pipe cleaner. Help the children tape the construction paper strip to the edge of the crown. Hold the crown to their head and tape the other end of the strip to fit their head. Explain they will hear a story about wise men who had followed a star. Set aside for “Hearing the Story.”



- 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." This may be difficult for some, especially if they are new to your group.

Transitioning to Story Time

T

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing "Away in a Manger"—**MM 8; SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Unwrapping Game

FM TD

Let the children handle the gift-wrapped boxes that you prepared and play an "unwrapping" game. Stand or sit in a circle. Play "These Wise Men"—**MM 9; SCM 16**—while the children pass the gift around. When the music stops, the child holding the gift begins to unwrap it. As soon as the music starts again, the gift is passed until the music stops. When the gift is finally unwrapped, share the gift with all. Play the game again, with a different gift box.

Follow the Star

M MS A

If you made magi crowns in "Guided Play" choice 3, invite the children to put them on. Explain that, at the end of each line of the poem (marked with asterisk), you will point a direction. Instruct them to take two steps forward in the direction you pointed as they say "Follow the star! Follow the star!" following the star on their crown. Practice pointing and moving a few times before reading the poem aloud:

Follow the star! Follow the star! *
Here come the wise men from the East, *
looking for a newborn king. *
Where will they find this little one? *
Their trip is long; their trip is hard. *
Finally they come to Bethlehem. *
They find Jesus and Mary in a little house. *
The wise men give gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. *
And then they leave to go home again. *



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), pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

A L C

Open the Bible to Matthew 2, so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that the story is about the wise men giving gifts to Jesus.

Read **SCM 5**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Invite the children to put on, or keep on, their crowns from "Guided Play" choice 3. Read the story again. Pause when the wise men choose a gift for the baby, and invite the children to collect the boxes they wrapped in "Guided Play" choice 2, or find something in the room that they would give the baby Jesus. Have them bring the gifts to the circle. Ask them to say what gift they would give Jesus and share why they chose it. Finish the story.

Tell about a Christmas gift that you received. Invite each child to name one gift that he or she was given. Comment that the wise men brought gifts to Jesus. Thank the children for the gifts they found to give Jesus. Remind them that we can give gifts to other people as a way to say thank you to God for sending Jesus to us.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Making Gifts

SD M MS TD

Before the session, cut 6" squares of cotton cloth, one for each child. Arrange a visit with an older adult group or invite older adults to your room.

Make gifts of potpourri and deliver them to a group of older adults. Put the potpourri on a paper plate. Invite the children to smell the potpourri. Tell them that one of the gifts from the wise men was a sweet-smelling incense, like a candle. This potpourri will be a reminder of the gift to the baby Jesus.

Have the children pick up a small amount of potpourri and place it in the center of one of the pieces of cloth. Help them gather up the corners to make a bag. You might want to secure the bag with a rubber band first, then let them help you wrap a length of ribbon around the bag to close it. Tie the ribbon tightly.

During the visit, ask the children to tell the story of the wise men to the other group. They could sing "These Wise Men"—**MM 9**; **SCM 16**—and the others could join in the singing. Let the children help decide. Give them some time to rehearse, so they know what to expect and what is expected of them.



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. Decorating Coupons

LG FM

Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Explain what the coupons are, a promise to do what is on the coupon when the recipient would like it done.

Briefly discuss with the children the ideas that are on the coupons. Encourage their ideas about why the coupons would be a good gift for someone and to whom they might give their coupons.

Invite the children to decorate their coupons with crayons or markers. As they work, spend a moment with each child. Ask the child to name the recipient of the coupon and then write that name on the coupon. If some children can write their names, let them put their own name on the coupon.

Punch holes in one corner of the coupons and tie them together with yarn or ribbon.

3. Giving Thanks

M L C

Wonder aloud about what Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the wise men might have been thankful for.

Ask the children what they are thankful for. Say a short prayer of thanks using the children's ideas. Then invite the children to thank God with their voices and bodies. Play "Thank You, Jesus"—**MM 30**. Consider giving the children scarves or streamers to wave to the music.

4. Coloring Page

C L

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of the wise men giving the baby Jesus gifts. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, "How did Mary and Joseph feel when the wise men arrived?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What did the wise men give the baby Jesus?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Who are the other men outside the home?"

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

Say a personal word to each child. It might be no more than "I'm glad you were here" or "I'm sorry you have such a bad cold," but let each child know you paid attention to him or her today.

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

LG

Have each child put away one toy or object.

Call the children to snack time, singing “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—**MM 25; SCM 20**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Remind the children that the wise men gave Jesus gifts because they were thankful for God’s gift to them of Jesus. Ask the children to give thanks this week to someone who has given them a gift.

Lead an echo prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

Thank you, God, for your love. /

Thank you, God, for wise men and women. /

Thank you, God, for your gift of Jesus. /

Help us to share your love with others. /

Amen. /

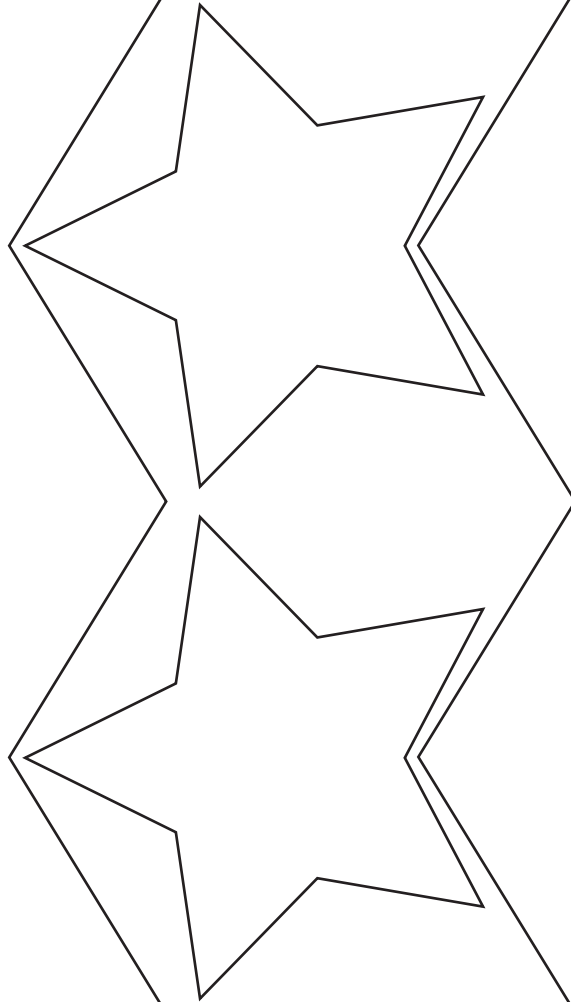
Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor. Enjoy a snack.

As the children leave, say, “God has given you a wonderful gift in Jesus. Go in God’s grace.”



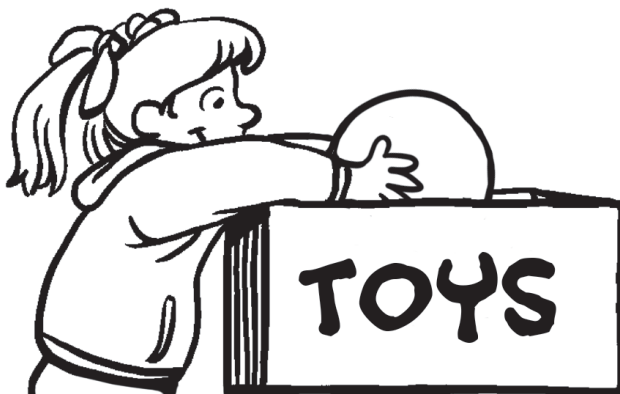
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).

When they saw the star,
they were filled with joy.
—Matthew 2:10



When they saw the star,
they were filled with joy.

—Matthew 2:10



Gifts for the Baby King



The wise men give gifts to the baby Jesus.

