



Praising God

(based on Psalm 8)

It was a clear, beautiful night. The stars blinked and winked and seemed to smile on the earth below. Matthias and Abigail, along with their children—Myriam, Beni, and Yakov—and Abigail’s mother—Esther—were walking through the hills outside their village. They stopped and laid down on the grass.

“Look up!” Abigail exclaimed. “The skies are magnificent tonight.”

Yakov whispered, “Awesome!”

Myriam nodded. “Thank you, God,” she prayed.

Esther breathed, “Amazing!” She thought of a psalm, a prayer of gratitude to God. It was sung and prayed long ago and recited by the Jewish people throughout the years.

She started to pray, “O God, you are . . .”

Everyone said, “Amazing!”

She said, “How wonderful is your name. You made everything.”

Abigail chimed in, “You made the moon and the sun. And millions of stars that twinkle in the night sky.”

Matthias said, “O God, you are . . .”

Everyone said, “Amazing!”

Esther continued, “How wonderful is your name. Why do you care so much for us and all people? When we are so small compared to the heavens?”

Abigail said, “But you love all people. You crown us all with glory.”

This time Beni said, “O God, you are . . .”

And they all said, “Amazing!”

Esther exclaimed once again, “How wonderful is your name! Everything that is alive praises you.”

Matthias prayed, “Help us care for the world as you have cared for us.”

The whole family said, “O God, you are . . .”

All of the children said, “Amazing!”



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Psalm 8 is a song of thanksgiving to God for the creation. Create a daily prayer of thanks based on Psalm 8 for your family's use.
- Make up a tune to sing the following song to:
I look up in the sky at night.
I see the moon and stars.
I think of all that God has made.
And feel God's love shine down on me.



Responding to God's Grace

- St. Francis was a wealthy man who lived in Italy a long time ago. He left his comfortable life and started communities in which people lived simply, close to God and to nature. Some of these communities continue today. We remember St. Francis for his care of animals and the environment. St. Francis saw that all created things bring their own kind of praise to God. Locate "The Canticle of the Creatures" (also known as "The Canticle of Brother Sun") on the Internet or at the library. The canticle is adapted from a prayer St. Francis wrote hundreds of years ago. Say the prayer with family members. Name ways family members can care for all God's creatures.
- Go outside together to look at the night sky. Share what you notice. Wonder together how the sky looks in early morning, in the evening, and at night. Name the time of day you like best and what you like about that time of day.
- Fill a container with potting soil and plant flower or vegetable seeds. Water the seeds, perhaps pretending the water is rain. Talk about how God provides the sun, soil, and water so plants can grow. Check to see how much growth has taken place every day. Share responsibility for watering the plants.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Invite your children to appreciate all God's gifts by inviting them to finish the sentence "I thank God when I see . . ."
- Pray this prayer this week:
Thank you, God, for giving us plants that feed us, living seas filled with amazing creatures, and a world filled with beauty. Help us to care for your creation. Amen.