



A Child Will Be Born

Goal: To hear a message of hope, that Jesus is light in the darkness.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Isaiah 9:2-7

A beautiful and blessed promise revealed to Isaiah is that “a child is born to us, / a son is given to us, / and authority will be on his shoulders. / He will be named / Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, / Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (v. 6, CEB). This is a promise full of hope to the people of Israel, exiled in Babylon. A child of messianic hope will come; One given by God to fulfill a promise of “establishing and sustaining” the kingdom of David; One who exercises “vast authority” and brings “endless peace,” ruling with “justice and righteousness / now and forever” (v. 7).

God's promise of a coming child shows us most wonderfully that God will send a person to reign in Israel in a way greatly superior to all others who have ruled in the nation. The names for this coming One convey the greatness of this One who brings peace, and rules in the way of God, with “justice and righteousness.” This One will reign forever!

God will help the helpless people by grace. Their gratitude will know no bounds or ending! Now we have received this child of Messianic hope: Jesus Christ! We are grateful, forever!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Invite the children in your group who have younger brothers or sisters to tell about when they were born, what they were expecting, and how it turned out. Be prepared for funny stories. Someone in your group might also be waiting for a new sister or brother to be adopted or born into their family. This will be a nice way to begin the story from the prophet Isaiah about the promise God made of a child. The children can compare the words they used to describe their sibling with the words used here, which we use to describe the birth of Jesus, the Messiah.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children at this age are very literal and concrete thinkers. The concepts of light and dark introduced in this Isaiah passage may be interpreted as such—that people were on a journey walking in darkness, at night, with no light. Help them understand the metaphors of dark and light. Explore what times of darkness may feel like and what light feels like. Be sensitive to those who express feelings of sadness or loneliness, troubles in their lives or community. Remind the children of the hope found in the light of Jesus in the world.

*God, help me radiate your goodness and love for all to see.
In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 15, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

Advent wreath with
four battery-operated
candles

Responding

Claiming

blindfold

Celebrating

light source such as a
high-powered flashlight
or outdoor floodlight

Praying

SCM 1a

Extra

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

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” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

L

Greet the children by name and with the words, “The grace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words. Invite children to help set the scene. This is the First Sunday of Advent. Provide a Bible, a purple cloth, and an Advent wreath with four battery-operated candles.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to draw as many sources of light as they can on different sheets of paper. Have the children place their images of light around the worship space.

Singing

L **D**

Listen to “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**. Sing the song several times so the children become familiar with the words. This song will be used throughout Advent when we light the candles.

Praying

SD

Invite the group to gather around the Advent wreath. Share with the group that the only thing that breaks the darkness is light.

Sing the first verse of “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**. Darken the room. Turn on one candle. Share with the children that today’s session is about light and dark. The light in today’s session is a reminder of God’s promise of hope. God shines light on darkness through Jesus Christ.

Remind the children that, when you light a candle, it can remind you that God is present. Have a volunteer turn the lights on during the second line of the prayer. Pray:

Dear God of light, we praise you today for bringing light to the world. Thank you for never leaving us in the darkness and for bringing us hope. May your unending love and faithfulness set our hearts aglow and radiate your goodness and love for all to see. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



SD *Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Help these children by altering activities to avoid the situation or providing them with a pocket-sized flashlight when lights are dimmed.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

Wonder together how it feels to turn on a flashlight or light a candle when all the lights have gone out during a power outage. Ask if anyone has a nightlight in their room or bathroom. Suggest that it can be comforting to have a small light in the darkness.

Introduce the reading by sharing that the prophet Isaiah speaks to the people of God in difficult times for them, what might be called “dark” times. He shares God’s promise of good days ahead, days of peace and justice. Explain that darkness and light are *metaphors*. Help the children understand that a metaphor is like a word picture. It uses words to paint or describe a picture. In this case, when Isaiah talks about darkness, he is not saying that there was no sun or light in the world, but that the difficult times felt like darkness. God’s promise of hope will feel like light in the darkness.

L *When telling a story, slow down and speak clearly. Above all, have fun! If you enjoy the story, the children will too.*



Hearing the Story

M L

Invite a child to find Isaiah 9 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 1** or use the story audio. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Encourage the children to listen for the images and words about light and hope mentioned in the reading as you read the story again. Suggest that when they hear something about light or hope, they take one of the pictures of light that are in the worship space and hold it in front of them.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

Wonder together:

- ▼ What words spoke of darkness in the story?
- ▼ How is hope described in the story?
- ▼ What are the good things that hope, or light, will bring?
- ▼ How does light give people hope?

Singing

Play, sing, and dance to “Jesus Bids Us Shine”—**SCM 22**. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

SD LG

Engage the children in a conversation about the difference between light and dark. Invite a child to be blindfolded, and ask for a volunteer to guide them around the room. Encourage the children to avoid obstacles. Offer all children a chance to be blindfolded and guided.

Invite the group to go on a walk to identify points of light around the church building. Discuss the different ways light is helpful and the benefits of light. Encourage the children to notice different aspects of light. Ask, “What would happen to the trees and plant life if there were no light?”

Remembering the metaphor of dark and light, together ask:

- ▼ When have you experienced kindness? How was the kindness like light in the darkness?
- ▼ When have you experienced peace? How was the peace like light in the darkness?

SD *Children who are uncomfortable in darkness may object to being blindfolded. Suggest that if they opt out of being blindfolded, they may guide the blindfolded children.*



Celebrating God's Grace

B SD MS D

To proclaim a message of hope that Jesus is coming, invite the children to do a shadow dance to the music of “For unto Us a Child Is Born” by Quincy Jones (bit.ly/2HdfjJO). The music is based on Handel’s *Messiah*. Use a flat blank wall or projector screen and a light source, such as a high-powered flashlight or outdoor floodlight, to create the shadows.

Tell the children that the song celebrates Isaiah’s message of hope to the people of God. Read Isaiah 9:6. Have the children find their own space to stand between the wall and the floodlight. Play “For unto Us a Child Is Born” and ask the children to come up with different shadow dance moves that go with the words and the rhythm of the song. Play the song again, pausing the music periodically and asking the children to freeze and pay attention to the shadows they are making.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will be praying,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Praying God's Grace



Remind the children that Advent is a time when we wait for the coming of Jesus, God's light in the world. The Advent candles are visual reminders of the coming light, as we light each candle. Ask the children what might be other ways to demonstrate light coming into darkness. Suggest that a simple way to experience darkness and light is with our eyes and hands. Lead the children in a guided prayer using **SCM 1a**, encouraging them to follow the directions you give.

Extra Activity

Remind the children that Isaiah gave the people a message of hope about a baby who would be born to bring peace to the world. He says that this baby, whom we know is Jesus, will bring light into the world.

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the squares with pictures of a baby yellow and all the other squares (moons and stars) dark blue or black. When they have finished, ask the children to read the letters that are now yellow. They spell out the name "Jesus."

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning the worship space.

Play "Jesus Bids Us Shine"—**SCM 22**. Invite them to listen to it again, thinking about how they can be light in situations of darkness. Then sing the song. Let this song serve as a prayer, asking God to give light to all.

Remind the children that, like Isaiah, they too can share God's hope, kindness, and peace with others.

End the session with each child becoming a messenger of good news. Have the children point their hands and fingers in different directions and say, "Hope be with you and you and you!" As they say this, encourage them to point in many different directions to include the whole group in their departing message of hope.

Encourage the children to go out into the world and spread the message with others.



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).



