



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, 14, 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

Bible reference books

The Night of His Birth by Katherine Paterson

Responding

Celebrating

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

Praying

copies of **Grace Notes** (GN 1), flashlight (optional)

Offering

clear plastic bottles with screw-top lids, hair gel, glow-in-the-dark paint, small glow-in-the-dark plastic shapes or beads, glitter or glitter glue, super glue

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 using *The Night of His Birth* by Katherine Paterson (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2019), www.pcusastore.com, in “Reflecting on God’s Grace.”

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require 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. Ask for a volunteer to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

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.

Tell the children that today’s story is about the prophet Isaiah. Encourage children to find out what they can about Isaiah using Bible reference books or an internet search. Ask for each child to find one fact to share during “Preparing to Hear the Story.”

Singing L D

Listen to “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**. Darken the room. 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.

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.*

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. Turn out the lights.



Sing the first verse of “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**. 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.

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.

Invite any children who have found facts about Isaiah to present them. Introduce the reading by sharing that the prophet Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah 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*. Ask if anyone can tell the group what a metaphor is. 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. Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 9:2–7. 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.

Encourage the children to listen for the images of light mentioned as you read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. 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.

Invite the children to write the names for Jesus they heard on the pictures of light they have.



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?
- ▼ Where do we see darkness and times of hope in the world today?

Consider reading *The Night of His Birth* by Katherine Paterson to the children. Wonder together how dark and light are reflected in this story of Jesus' birth. If time permits, Listen to the a mom and her son read the story "3J Story Time with Mom | The Night of His Birth | Read with Us Christmas Stories" (bit.ly/NightOfHisBirth). Have the children pay attention to the boy's questions and the mom's responses.

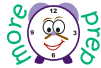
Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.

Singing

Play and sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"—SCM 14. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



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. Ask someone to 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.

- ⓑ *Providing opportunities for children to dance in front of others can be fun and can build children's confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*



Praying God's Grace

A

Remind the children that Isaiah spoke of a time when people walked in darkness and God sent a message of hope, saving light. Jesus is the saving light and brings joy, peace, and justice to the world.

Give each child a copy of **GN 1** and invite the children to create a prayer poem about light and the hope that it brings using the letters L, I, G, H, T to form the first word of each sentence of their prayer.

When the children are finished with their prayer poems, invite them to share their poems and thoughts with each other. Consider using a flashlight to shine a light on each child as they read their poem.



Offering God's Grace

A B L

Provide each child a sturdy, clear plastic bottle with lid and several glow-in-the-dark shapes or beads. For the group, set out a bowl with glitter and a spoon or several bottles of glitter glue.

Invite the children to make a glow-in-the-dark bottle using the following steps.

- ▼ Drop the glow-in-the-dark shapes or beads in the bottle.
- ▼ Add a spoonful of glitter or a squirt of glitter glue.
- ▼ Squirt a little glow-in-the-dark paint in the bottle.
- ▼ Fill the bottle about $\frac{2}{3}$ full with hair gel.
- ▼ Top off with water.

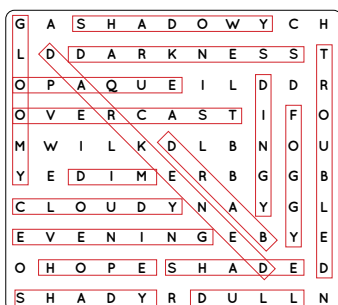
While the children work, engage them in conversation by asking the following questions:

- ▼ If someone is having a bad day, how can you help bring God's light and hope to them?
- ▼ Where there is tension or strife, how can you bring peace?
- ▼ What is your favorite way to spread joy, peace, or justice?

As the children finish making their bottles, super glue the lid on the bottle for them. Have them shake the bottles. Encourage the children to give the nightlight to a younger sibling or offer it to their family for use in a bathroom.

GN 2 Solution:

A child will be born.



Extra Activity

LD

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 2**. Invite the children to find hope, in the midst of darkness and difficulties, in the word search. Encourage them to find all the words listed in the word bank. The words may be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. After they have found all the words, instruct them to write the unused letters in the spaces at the bottom of the page to find out what Isaiah proclaims our hope is.



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).

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.

L

I

G

H

T

Word Bank

cloudy
evening
darkened

darkness
dim
dingy

drab
dull
foggy

gloomy
hope
opaque

overcast
shaded
shadowy

shady
troubled

G A S H A D O W Y C H
L D D A R K N E S S T
O P A Q U E I L D D R
O V E R C A S T I F O
M W I L K D L B N O U
Y E D I M E R B G G B
C L O U D Y N A Y G L
E V E N I N G E B Y E
O H O P E S H A D E D
S H A D Y R D U L L N

Isaiah proclaims our hope is that:

_____ !

