

References

Luke 1:26-38, 46-55;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 81, 82, 98



Memory Verse

"Thanks be to God
for his
indescribable gift!"
(2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV).



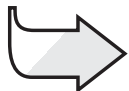
Objectives

The children will:

Know that Jesus is the
greatest gift of all.

Feel grateful to God for
the gift of His Son.

Respond by thanking God
for His gift.



The Message

Jesus is God's
gift to me.

Call Me Blessed

Monthly Theme

God is our best Friend.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

An angel appears to Mary, a virgin pledged to marry Joseph. The angel tells Mary that she is highly favored and will give birth to a son. She will name her Son Jesus, and He will save His people from their sins. Mary responds by praising God.

This is a lesson about grace.

The promise of the Saviour's birth was the greatest gift in the history of the world, both to Mary His mother, and to all human-kind. Jesus Christ is God's supreme gift to humanity; a gift motivated by unfathomable love.

Teacher Enrichment

"The English word 'love' is altogether inadequate to express the depth of solicitous interest expressed by the Greek words *agape*, 'love,' and *agapaō*, 'to love.' . . . Love is the preeminent attribute of the Creator with respect to His creatures. It is the controlling force in divine government. . . .

"The supreme expression of divine love is the Father's gift of His own Son (John 3:16), through whom it becomes possible for us to be 'called the sons of God' (1 John 3:1). . . .

"Love is genuine only when it is in action. God's love for sinners led Him to give all that He had for their salvation" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 929).

Room Decorations

Decorate the classroom with Christmas decorations emphasizing Jesus' birth, with a nativity scene, angels, shepherds, etc.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>God's Wonderful Gift Game</i> B. <i>Gift In the Bag</i>	small gift for each child, Bible gift-wrapped present for class to share, brown bag, Bible
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> gift-wrapped box with a picture of Jesus and a slit in which to insert offerings 1-month blank calendar grid for each child, stars and stickers, glitter, etc., writing instruments
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	two Bible-times costumes, two teenagers or adults, six index cards, six gift bags or boxes Bible chalk or dry erase board, chalk or marker, Bibles, paper
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Thanking in Rhythm</i>	none
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Advertisement for Jesus</i>	paper, art supplies

***Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.**

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome children at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they're pleased/troubled about. Have them begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- small gift for each child
- Bible

A. God's Wonderful Gift Game

Ask the children to stand in a line, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing you. (Form more lines for large classes.) Say: **When I say the word *God's*, you are to take one step to the left. When I say *wonderful*, you are to take a step to the right. When I say *gift*, you are to stand still. Any child who makes a wrong move will be asked to sit down. The last child left standing will receive a gift.**

Call out the words in random order, eliminating players who make a wrong move. Increase the speed with which you call out words until it becomes difficult to keep up.

When only one child is left, give that child all the gifts, but ask him or her to give one to each child in class, then take one for himself or herself.

Debriefing

Ask: **Did you like playing "God's Wonderful Gift"? Why? Based on the rules of the game, did you earn a gift? No, only (name of winner) did. Did you deserve it? Why did you get one? (It was a gift.) God has given us a gift, too. He gave us the gift of Jesus. Our memory verse today is "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift." That's found in 2 Corinthians 9:15. Our message today is:**



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- gift-wrapped present for class to share
- brown bag
- Bible

B. Gift in the Bag

Before class, gift wrap a present the entire class can share, such as stickers or pencils, and hide it in a brown bag.

Show the gift. Say: **I have a gift that someone in our class is going to get to open. But I can't just give it away. It is valuable. It has to go to just the right person. What would you give me for this gift? (Let the children make offers.) What might you be willing to do so that you can be the one to open the gift? (Again, let the children make offers.)** Give the gift to the person who opens the gift or offers the *least* for it.

Debriefing

Who was willing to do the most to get this gift? (Take answers.) Ask that student: Why did you want this so badly? How did you feel when I gave it to (name of student)? (It wasn't fair.) Why do you think I chose him/her? (Because he/she didn't try to earn it.) By this time the gift should be open. Ask the child who opened the gift to pass it around. Read aloud 2 Corinthians 9:15. **How are your gifts like the gift of**

Jesus? (We couldn't earn them, they weren't just for one person, etc.) **Today's message says:**



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the children's joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Give a special warm greeting to visitors and introduce each by name. Acknowledge birthdays or special events.



Suggested Songs

"John 3:16" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 24)

"For God So Loved Us" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 36)

"O, How He Loves You and Me" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 28)



Mission

Use a story from *Children's Mission*.



Offering

Say: **Our offering goes to help other people learn about the gift of Jesus.**

You Need:

- a gift-wrapped box with a picture of Jesus on the outside and a slit on the top in which to insert offerings (Save for the rest of the quarter.)



Prayer

Help the children add to the calendar grid the date for each day of December. Furnish art supplies and have them decorate it to make a "Prayer Calendar." Help them write in specific people, projects, or events to pray for on each day. When they see specific answers to prayer, they should make a star on that day and thank Jesus for the answer. Have them take these calendars home to use during the month.

During Sabbath School prayer time this month invite the children to share the answers to their Prayer Calendar prayers.* Also, thank God for the gift of Jesus and ask God to help the children remember that Jesus is the greatest gift of all.

You Need:

- 1-month blank calendar grid for each child
- glitter, etc., to decorate calendars
- writing instruments
- stars and stickers

* (Adapted from Barbara Manspeaker, compiler, *Children—Ideas for Ministry*, Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 1999, p. 25.)

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- two Bible-times costumes
- two teenagers or adults
- six index cards
- six gift bags or boxes

Experiencing the Story

Characters: Mary the mother of Jesus, the angel Gabriel dressed in Bible-times costumes

Pause where appropriate for Mary and Gabriel to speak lines. If necessary, they can repeat them after you've read them.

Read or tell the story.

It was a normal day in Nazareth. That's where Mary lived. (*Point to Mary.*) The biggest thing happening in Mary's life was her engagement to Joseph. She was probably thinking about and planning her wedding, and getting things ready for her new home.

Other than that her life was pretty quiet. But on this normal, everyday day, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, Gabriel, an angel, appeared before her. (*Gabriel enters.*)

Gabriel said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was surprised to see Gabriel, of course, but she was more surprised at what he said. *Why is an angel coming to see me?* she thought. *Why am I highly favored?*

Gabriel could see that Mary was greatly troubled at his greeting. He didn't want her to be afraid. He had great news for her. He was excited about what he had to tell her, and he wanted her to be excited, too. "Don't be afraid, Mary," he said. "You have found favor with God. You're going to have a child—a son—and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be wonderful! He'll be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and His kingdom will never end!"

Mary was surprised to hear all this. She was just an ordinary, poor girl, but the angel said she was going to have a son who would grow up to be a king. "How can this be," she asked the angel, "since I'm not even married yet?"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," explained Gabriel. "The power of the Most High will overshadow you. The Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."

Mary probably felt the need to sit down. This was all so sudden and so startling. But Gabriel seemed to be waiting for an answer. Mary finally whispered, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." With that, the angel disappeared, leaving Mary alone to think.

The more she thought about it, the more awesome it became. God had chosen her to be the mother of His Child. This Child would be different from all others. He would be holy. He would grow up to save His people from their sins. She had been given an honor greater than any woman had ever been given. She would be the mother of the Son of God. And this Child was a gift to all people everywhere, unlike any other gift in the history of the world. He would have the power to forgive their sins!

Mary praised God for the gift He had given to her and to all the world. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour," she said. "From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me."

Debriefing

In advance, write each of the following questions on an index card. Put each card in a small gift bag with tissue paper or wrap it as a present in a small box. Number each card and the corresponding

present. Hide the presents around the room for the children to find. Ask the six students who find them to unwrap the presents and read and answer the questions in order. They may read and answer themselves, or ask another child to do so.

1. How would you feel if an angel suddenly appeared before you?
2. Why was Mary troubled?
3. What news did the angel bring to Mary?
4. What would be special about the baby Mary would have?
5. What gift did God give to Mary?
6. What gift has God given you?

Say: **Remember our message?**



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

Say that with me.

Memory Verse

You Need:

- Bible

Say: **Today's memory verse is "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians**

9:15, NIV).

Use the following body movements to help the children memorize it:

Thanks be	Raise hands, look up.
to God	Point upward.
for his	
indescribable	Raise hands, look up, shake head in disbelief.
gift!	Touch palm of left hand with middle finger of right hand; then touch palm of right hand with middle finger of left hand.
2 Corinthians 9:15	Palms together, then open.

Bible Study

In advance, write the following texts, one on each slip of paper:

1. 2 Chronicles 9:1, 9, 23, 24
2. Genesis 37:3
3. Exodus 35:4-9
4. Genesis 24:53
5. Psalm 127:3
6. Romans 6:23
7. Ephesians 2:8
8. John 3:16
9. Luke 1:35

Ask the children if they can think of any other gifts mentioned in the Bible. Distribute the papers to children who are willing to look up and read texts. As they read, list the gifts referred to in the texts where all can see. Adults assist as needed.

Debriefing

Ask: **Are any of these gifts bad? Which are best? What makes possible the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 6:23? (Jesus)**

Ask the children to repeat the memory verse, 2 Corinthians 9:15: **"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" What's our message today? Let's say it together.**



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

You Need:

- chalk or dry erase board
- chalk or marker
- Bibles
- nine slips of paper

3

Applying the Lesson

Thanking in Rhythm

Ask the students to pair off and to sit facing their partners. Students will get a clapping rhythm going by first clapping their own hands together, then their partner's right hand with their right hand, then their own hands together, then their left hand with their partner's left hand, and repeating from the beginning.

Once the rhythm is going, add the chant that follows. To make it work, each student will need to think of something to thank Jesus for to insert in the blank. Students are to go back and forth taking turns filling in the blanks without stopping or interrupting the rhythm until neither one can think of anything different to say.

| | | | | | |
 Je-sus is God's gift to me.
 | | | | | | | |
 I thank Him for ____ ____ me.

(Suggestions: I thank Him for loving me, for saving me, for protecting me, for helping me, for hearing me, for dying for me, etc.)

Debriefing

Gather the group back together. Ask: **What are some things you were thankful for?** (Take answers.) **Those are all things we receive because God gave us the gift of His Son. What's our message today? Let's say it together.**



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

4

Sharing the Lesson

Advertisement for Jesus

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Give each group five minutes to create an advertisement for Jesus. They may create a radio, TV, or print advertisement.

Debriefing

As they create, discuss the following:
Why would you want to give someone else the gift of Jesus? How would you give that gift to someone? Why is the gift of Jesus better than any other gift?

When time is up, ask each group to share their advertisement with the rest of the class by acting it out or showing it.

Place the papers on a bulletin board or wall in the hall. Keep them on display and have the children explain them to visitors who ask about them.

End by saying today's message together:



JESUS IS GOD'S GIFT TO ME.

Closing

Ask a child to pray and thank God for His gift of Jesus—the best gift of all.

You Need:

- paper
- art supplies

Call Me Blessed

References

Luke 1:26-38, 46-55;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 81, 82, 98

Memory Verse

"Thanks be to God for
his indescribable gift!"
(2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV).

The Message

Jesus is God's gift to me.

Have you ever been surprised by good news or with a present you weren't expecting? How did you feel? How did you feel about the person who gave you the surprise? A long time ago, a young woman had an unexpected visitor who brought her amazing news.

It started out as a normal, everyday sort of day. Mary was up with the sun, helping with the chores of a Judean household.

First there would be breakfast to help prepare. After that there would be water to haul, and figs to pick, and wool to spin, and the garden to tend. There would be more meals to fix, of course. And if the day went well, she would find a few minutes to work on wedding plans. Her wedding! She really needed time to plan. Time to gather the things she would need to set up her own home, her home with Joseph. Time was flying by, and she had so much to do.

And then, suddenly, out of nowhere, an angel stood before her.

He was just there, as if he belonged. As if he'd always been there. As if Mary shouldn't have been stunned to see him. And the words that came out of his mouth were even stranger than the sight of him.



"Greetings!" he said. "You are highly favored! The Lord is with you!"

What?! thought Mary. I am highly favored? The Lord is with me? But . . . why? What have I done?

The angel hurried to reassure her. "Don't be afraid, Mary," he said gently. "You have found favor with God! You will soon be with child. You will give birth to a son, and name Him Jesus. He will be wonderful! He will be the Son of the Most High! The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!"

Mary's head was spinning. This was so strange, so unexpected. *Be with child . . . a son . . . name Him Jesus . . . David's throne . . . kingdom will never end.* It was all so startling! She felt the sudden need to sit down.

"But I'm not married," Mary stammered. "How can I have a son?"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. The Child who will be born will be holy—the Son of God," the angel explained.

Mary was speechless. What was there to say to a message like that? "I am the Lord's servant," she finally whispered. "May it be to me as you have said." And with that, the angel vanished.

Then Mary had time to think. This day, this everyday, ordinary day, had suddenly turned into the most extraordinary day ever. Neither her life, nor the world, would ever be the same. God was sending His Son to earth! And she had been chosen to be the mother of His Child. This Child would grow up to save His people from their sins. He would establish a kingdom of righteousness that would never end. And she was to be His mother! What greater honor could God have given her? Through her, God was giving the greatest gift imaginable to all people everywhere.

"From now on all generations will call

me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me," she told her cousin later. There was a lot she still didn't know about the Son she would have. But there was one thing she *did* know. The birth of this Child was truly a gift like no other.

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- With your family, find a quiet place outside, close your eyes, and imagine that you are Mary. How would you feel if an angel came to you? Read the Bible lesson together.
- Read 2 Corinthians 9:15 together. What does the gift mean to you?
- Sing "For God So Loved the World" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 26). Then thank God for the best gift of all.

Sunday

- Read Luke 1:26-38, 46-55 with your family. Ask your parents if they ever received an unexpected message. From whom? What was the message?
- Draw a picture of the angel's visit to Mary. Write the angel's name here. _____ (See Luke 1:26.) Who visited Zechariah in the temple? Write the name here. _____ (See Luke 1:19.)
- Say your memory verse. Tell what it means.

Monday

- During family worship read Matthew 1:21. The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the word "Joshua," which means "the Lord saves." Who or what does the Lord save?
- Write the letters *J - E - S - U - S*, one under the other, down the left side of a paper. List names of family, friends, and others that begin with the letters. Jesus is a gift of salvation to those people. Pray for each one.
- Say your memory verse together. Then give thanks to God.

Tuesday

- Read Luke 1:26-45 with your family. If possible, look at your baby pictures together. Cut out pictures of baby things needed for a new baby. Paste the pictures on construction paper and write

"Waiting for Baby" at the top. How do you think Mary and Joseph prepared for Baby Jesus? Thank God for your family.

- Say your memory verse. Tell how you feel about God's gift.

Wednesday

- With your family, read Mary's song of thankfulness found in Luke 1:46-55. Another Bible mother celebrated and thanked God for giving her a son. What she said reminds us of Mary's song. Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Who was she? _____
- Make up a tune for your memory verse. Clap your hands or use rhythm instruments to celebrate the gift of Jesus as you sing.

Thursday

- During family worship read John 3:16. Say your memory verse together. What is God's indescribable gift?
- Think of someone you know who needs to know about God's gift. Write that person's name here. _____ When and how will you tell that person? Make a plan with your family. Pray for that person every day.
- Sing "John 3:16" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 24).

Friday

- Ask your family to help you act out the Bible lesson during family worship.
- Say your memory verse together. Ask each one to tell why they are thankful for God's indescribable gift.
- Have a gospel song fest. Sing songs about the good news of salvation in Jesus. Sing one song, follow immediately with another song, and then another, until you run out of ideas. Read together Ephesians 5:19, 20. Then thank God for His goodness to your family and for His gift of Jesus.