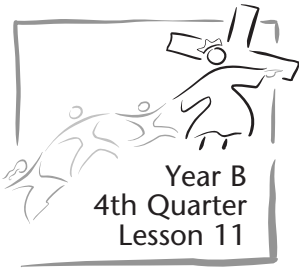


LESSON



The Best Gift

GRACE

God's grace is His gift to us.

References

Luke 2:15–20; Matthew 2:1, 10, 11; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 48, 59–67.

Memory Verse

“Today . . . a Savior has been born” (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Objectives

The children will:

Know that Jesus is a precious gift to them.

Feel the joy of praising God for the gift of Jesus.

Respond by giving gifts to family, friends, and those in need.

The Message



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Getting Ready to Teach

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Many people are happy that Jesus is born: Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi. The Magi bring gifts for Jesus. We thank God for the gift of Jesus and worship Him by giving Him gifts: our offerings and gifts to people in need.

This is a lesson about grace.

Jesus is God's wonderful gift of love

to all of us. The baby born in a manger lived and died for us. He is our salvation, our joy today and in the days to come. Nothing is better than that.

Teacher Enrichment

“The twenty-fifth of December has long been commemorated as the day of Jesus' birth, and in this article it is not my purpose to affirm or question

ELEVEN

Program Outline			
LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Activities	up to 10	A. <i>Gifts</i> B. <i>Stable Birth</i>	small gifts baby lotion, music box, audio player, straw, soft cloth or blanket
* Prayer and Praise *	up to 10	See page 113. *Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.	
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story	simple costumes for children, baby doll, small towel, wise men's gifts
		Bible Study	Bible
		Memory Verse	Bible
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>The Best Gift</i>	gift boxes; items or pictures of God's gifts; picture of Jesus, a baby, or the word "Jesus"; <i>Little Voices Praise Him</i> songbook
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Angel Star Ornament</i>	Star pattern (see p. 149), card stock, scissors, hole punch, string or yarn, crayons, glue, glitter

the propriety of celebrating this event on this day, but to dwell upon the childhood and life of our Saviour. It is my purpose to call the attention of the children to the humble manner in which the Redeemer came to the world. All heaven was interested in the great event of Christ's advent to earth. Heavenly messengers came to make known the birth of the long-promised, long-expected Saviour to the humble shepherds who were watching their flocks by night on the plains of Bethlehem. The first manifestation that

attracted the notice of the shepherds at the birth of the Saviour, was a radiant light in the starry heavens, which filled them with wonder and admiration" (Ellen White, in *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1889).

What will be your primary focus this holiday season? How will you help the children see the real meaning of Christmas?

Room Decorations

See Lesson 11. Place a baby doll in the manger (perhaps during the story).

Teaching the Lesson

Welcome

Welcome children at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share any experiences from last week’s lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

A. Gifts

You Need:

- inexpensive gift for each child

Give each child an unexpected, unearned gift.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **What do you think about getting a gift for no reason? Why do we give gifts? Why do we wrap gifts?**

What is the best gift you ever received? God gives us many gifts, because He loves us. Our Bible story today is about the very best gift God ever gave us. Today’s message is:



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Say that with me.

B. Stable Birth

You Need:

- baby lotion
- music box
- audio player
- straw
- soft cloth or blanket

Say: **Baby Jesus was born in a stable, which is like a small barn. It was not like a house where you live. It smelled differently.** Talk about the difference between nice-smelling baby lotion and manure. Put a little lotion on each child and let them rub it in. Say: **It also sounded differently. Baby Jesus didn’t hear a music box playing; He heard animal sounds.** Have the children make the sounds of animals that would be in a barn. Record the sounds they make. Play it back for them and let them make more sounds. Say: **Baby Jesus’ mother didn’t have a nice soft bed in which to lay Him. She had to put Him on a bed of straw.** Let the children feel

the difference between a soft cloth and straw.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **How many of you have been inside a barn? What was it like?** (smells bad, noisy, cold or hot, light or dark) **How would you sleep in a barn with animals? What smell would you like? Why? Which sounds would you like to hear when you go to sleep at**

night? Why? Would you rather sleep on a bed of soft cloth or straw? Why?

These things remind me of our Bible story. Jesus, God's most precious gift to us, was born in a stable. Baby Jesus definitely is the best gift that God ever gave us. Today's message is:



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Say that with me.

PRAYER AND PRAISE



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review the memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"Away in a Manger" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 141)

"Baby Jesus" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 142)

"Christmastime" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 144)

"God's Best Gift" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 145)

"Little Baby in the Manger, I Love You" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 149)

Mission

Say: **Not all people in the world know about God's best gift, Jesus. Let's hear a story about someone who learns about Jesus.**

Use a story from *Children's Mission*.

Offering

Say: **God gave us the best gift ever—Jesus! We gladly give what we have for others so they can know about God's best gift ever.**

Prayer

You Need:

- bag
- gift items

Bring a bag full of things children might get as gifts during the holiday season (toy, mittens, book, candy, etc.). Let the children pull them out and say what they are. Ask: **What is the best gift of all?** (Jesus) **Let's say a prayer thanking God for His gift. Dear God, thank You for giving us Jesus, the best gift of all. Help us to remember what Christmas is really about: Your gift of Jesus. Amen.**

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

2

Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

You Need:

- simple costumes for children
- baby doll
- small towel
- wise men's gifts

Use the room decor of a nativity scene, including a manger with Baby Jesus wrapped in a towel.

Have the children play all the roles: Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men, sheep, donkeys, etc. Or have adults be Mary and Joseph, and have a real baby. Play the animal sounds recording made in Readiness Activity B, or make some of your own in advance. Have Mary, Joseph, and the baby in place to begin.

Setting the scene:

Say: **Baby Jesus was born in a stable, which is like a barn. It was not a nice place like where we live. It smelled differently. It sounded differently.** [Play the recording of animal sounds.] **And there was no nice furniture, not even a bed.**

Read or tell the story.

Mary stared at her precious tiny baby sleeping soundly in her arms. She looked up at Joseph. "He's so perfect!" she breathed. "He's so perfect!"

Joseph smiled back. Baby Jesus was finally born! And God had given Him to *their* family! Joseph could hardly believe it. He leaned over and took one of the baby's little hands between his big strong fingers.

All mothers and fathers are proud of their new babies. They think their babies are special. But Mary and Joseph *knew* that their baby, Jesus, was truly the most special baby that would ever be born. Even though He had been born in a stable, He was God's Son. And God had picked them—Mary and Joseph—to take care of this priceless gift that He had sent to the world.

[Have the shepherds come, with some

children acting as sheep. Let the shepherds get close and look at the baby.]

Joseph heard scuffling noises behind him. He turned around to see what was going on. Shepherds were coming softly through the door. They tiptoed awkwardly across the floor to the place where Mary and Joseph rested on the hay. "We've come to see the baby," they explained. "Angels told us that our Saviour has been born tonight!"

"Angels?" Mary asked wonderingly. "Angels?"

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph all about the most marvelous sight they had seen in the sky only a little while before. They told Mary and Joseph about the glorious music they had heard. The shepherds lingered a long time in the stable. They believed what the angels had told them. They knew that this baby was God's own special Son. They left to tell all their friends the good news.

Some time later, after Joseph and Mary had moved from the stable to a little house, a group of strangers arrived at their door. They had been following a special star in the sky for a long, long time and for many, many miles. They knew the star was leading them to Jesus. And the star had stopped over this particular house. One of their servants went up to the door. *Knock! Knock! Knock!*

The door opened and Joseph looked out. He saw camels and servants and important, richly dressed travelers outside—wise men from a faraway country. "Come in," Joseph said in a surprised voice. "Come in."

The wise men went into the house. They saw Mary sitting quietly in a chair, holding her baby.

The wise men bowed down and worshiped the Baby Jesus. Then they gave Mary and Joseph the presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh they had brought for Him. They praised God for giving them the gift of Jesus. They worshiped Him with their gifts and their love.

And Mary and Joseph smiled. God had given them a wonderful gift—the Saviour of the world.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about having their baby born in a stable?**

What were the shepherds thinking when they saw Baby Jesus? How did they feel about the baby?

Who came to bring gifts to Jesus? How were they dressed? Why had they come?

Do you remember our message? Let's say it together again:



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Bible Study

Open your Bible to Luke 2:15–20 and Matthew 2:1, 10, 11. Point to the text and say: **This is where today's story is found in the Bible.** Read the verses aloud, paraphrasing as necessary.

You Need:

Bible

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **Where was Jesus born?** (Bethlehem, stable) **Who came to see the baby?** (shepherds and wise men) **What did they say?**

What did the wise men see that made them so happy? (star) **What gifts did they give Baby Jesus?** (gold, frankincense [incense] and myrrh) **Why did they bring gifts?**

Who is God's best gift to us?



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Memory Verse

Turn to Luke 2:11 and say: **This is where we find our memory verse in God's Word, the Bible.** Read the text aloud. **"Today . . . a Savior has been born."** Then proceed to teach the memory verse as outlined below.

You Need:

Bible

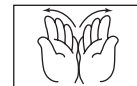
Today . . . a Savior Point upward.



has been born. Pretend to hold a baby in your arms.



Luke 2:11 Palms together, then open.



3

Applying the Lesson

The Best Gift

You Need:

- ❑ two wrapped gift boxes (see activity)
- ❑ items or pictures of God's gifts
- ❑ picture of Jesus, a baby, or the word "Jesus"
- ❑ *Little Voices Praise Him* songbook

Have two gift boxes wrapped, one fancier than the other. In the less fancy box, place items that God gives to us (picture of family, birds, animals, water, food, etc.). In the other, put a picture of Jesus, a baby, or the word "Jesus."

Allow responses as you ask:

What gifts does God give us?

Have the children take the gifts out of the simply wrapped box, and talk about them. Do not open the fancier box.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask:

Which gift box looks nicer? (The one they haven't opened yet.) **God gives us a lot of nice gifts, but one gift is better than all the others.**

Have a child take the best gift out of the box. Say: **What is the best gift God gives us?** (Jesus)

Yes, Jesus is the best gift that God has ever given us. Without Jesus we wouldn't be able to someday live with God in heaven. Let's sing together about God's best gift. Sing "God's Best Gift" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 145). **What is our message again?**



Jesus is the best gift from God.

4

Sharing the Lesson**Angel Star Ornament****You Need:**

- Star pattern (see p. 149)
- card stock
- scissors
- hole punch
- string or yarn
- crayons
- glue
- glitter

In advance, copy the Star pattern (see page 149) onto card stock. Cut it out, and punch a hole at the tip of one point. Insert string or yarn into the hole to hang it from a Christmas tree.

Let the children color the star and glue glitter onto it.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **What did you make? Do you remember what the angels looked like in the sky above Bethlehem? (a star) They were shining over the best gift**

ever given. What is that? (Jesus)

You can take the star you made home with you and share it with someone as you tell them the good news of God's gift to us. They can hang it on their Christmas tree to remind them of Jesus' birth.

And when someone gives you a gift at Christmas, you can thank them and then tell them that Jesus is really the best gift of all. Let's say our message together one last time:



Jesus is the best gift from God.

Closing

Pray and thank Jesus for loving everyone and for being God's best gift to us.

STUDENT LESSON

The Best Gift

References

Luke 2:15–20;
Matthew 2:1, 10,
11; *The Desire
of Ages*, pp. 48,
59–67

Memory Verse

“Today . . . a
Savior has been
born” (Luke
2:11, NIV).

The Message

Jesus is the
best gift
from God.

Can you think of the best gift you’ve ever received? Were you excited? Is that the way you feel about Jesus, the really, truly best gift ever?

Mary stared at her precious tiny baby sleeping soundly in her arms. She looked up at Joseph. “He’s so perfect!” she breathed. “He’s so perfect!”

Joseph smiled back. Baby Jesus was finally born! And God had given Him to *their* family! Joseph could hardly believe it. He leaned over and took one of the baby’s little hands.

All mothers and fathers are proud of their new babies. They think their babies are special. But Mary and Joseph *knew* that their baby, Jesus, was truly the most special baby that would ever be born. He was God’s Son. And God had picked them—Mary and Joseph—to take care of this priceless gift that He had sent to the world.

Joseph heard scuffling noises behind him in the stable. He turned around to see what was going on. Shepherds were coming softly through the door. They tiptoed awkwardly across the floor to the place where Mary and Joseph rested on the hay. “We’ve come to see the baby,” they explained. “Angels told us that our Saviour has been born tonight!”

“Angels?” Mary asked wonderingly. “Angels?”

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph all about the most marvelous sight they had seen in the sky only a little while

before. They told Mary and Joseph about the glorious music they had heard. The shepherds lingered a long time in the stable. They believed what the angels had told them. They knew that this baby was God’s own special Son. They left to tell all their friends the good news.

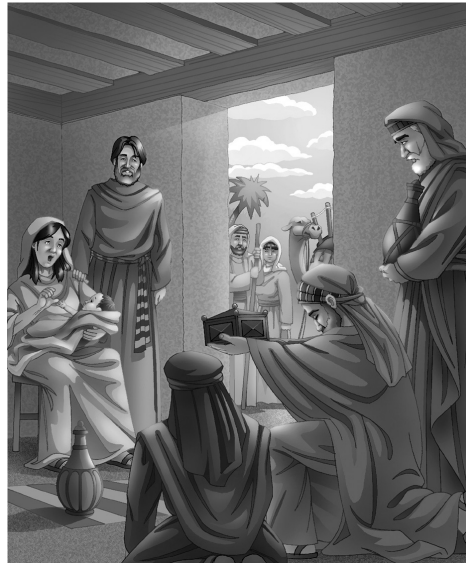
Some time later, after Joseph and Mary had moved from the stable to a little house, a group of strangers arrived at their door. They had been following a special star for a long, long time and for many, many miles. And the star had stopped over this house. One of their servants went up to the door. Knock! Knock! Knock!

The door opened and Joseph looked out. He saw cam-

els and servants and important, richly dressed travelers outside—wise men from a faraway country. “Come in,” Joseph said in a surprised voice. “Come in.”

The wise men went in and saw Mary sitting quietly, holding her baby. They bowed down and worshiped Jesus. Then they gave Mary and Joseph the presents they had brought—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They worshiped Jesus with their gifts and their love.

And Mary and Joseph smiled. God had given them a wonderful gift—the Saviour of the world.



Do and Say

Sabbath

Each day this week, read the lesson story and re-view the memory verse:

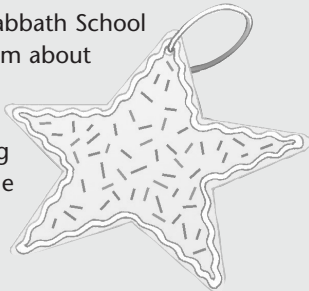
Today . . . a Savior . Point upward.

has been born. Pretend to hold a baby in your arms.

Luke 2:11 Palms together, then open.

Sunday

Encourage your child to share the star ornament they made in Sabbath School with someone and tell them about Baby Jesus' birth. (Or draw a star shape, cut it out, and decorate it. String yarn or thread through one point.)



Monday

Read together Luke 2:15–20 and Matthew 2:1, 10, and 11. Ask: How do you think the barn in which Jesus was born smelled? Who came to see Baby Jesus? How do you think they felt when they saw Him? Why did Jesus come to the earth?

Let your child pretend to be a shepherd and run to a designated location to find Baby Jesus.

Tuesday

Have your child count how many wise men visited Jesus and how many gifts they brought. Ask: What kind

of gifts were they? (gold, frankincense [incense], and myrrh) Explain the value and use of the gifts. Let your child smell some perfume.

Sing "Away in a Manger" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 141); then thank God for Jesus.

Wednesday

Go outside at night, and look for stars in the sky. Ask: What do you think the star that the wise men saw looked like? When will people see many angels in the sky again? (When Jesus comes again.)

Thursday

Light some candles on a small cake or muffin to celebrate Jesus' birthday and to remind your child that Jesus is the best gift from God! Ask: Why do we give gifts to one another on Christmas?



Friday

Have the whole family "dress up" and act out the nativity story. (Robes and towels make costumes.) Use a box with a towel as a manger, and add a baby doll. Ask: What gift would you have given Jesus?

Ask: What is God's best gift to us? (Jesus) Why did Jesus come to the earth?

Sing about Jesus' birth; then thank Him for dying for your family.