



Glory to the Giver and the Gift

- Large and Small Group Sessions for Kindergarten-Grade 3 and Grades 4-8
- 2 Dramas
- Complete Christmas Program
- Songs and CD
- Crafts, Games, and Other Photocopiable Pages

Glory to the Giver and the Gift

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Walk With Me

Grades K-8

Christmas, Book 2: Glory to the Giver and the Gift

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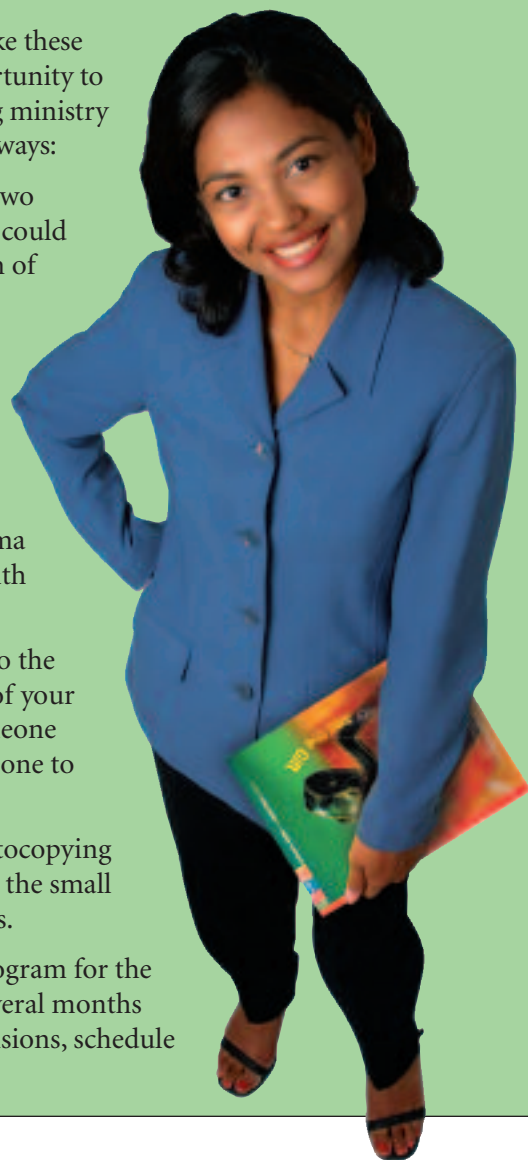
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Ways to Get Others Involved

You'll need the talents of many people in your congregation to make these two sessions come alive for your children. What a wonderful opportunity to involve adults and teens who usually don't take part in the teaching ministry of the church! Consider using volunteers in some of the following ways:

- *Drama Team:* You'll want to find actors to play the roles in the two dramas. Your middle school kids could take these roles. Or you could invite adults and older teens to prepare and present one or both of the dramas.
- *Set (and Lighting) Person(s):* Whether you'd like a very simple set with a few props for the dramas or a more elaborate backdrop and set, you will want to find one or more people who have visual gifts to plan and prepare these for you. If you plan to use any kind of lighting, find a volunteer to manage that too.
- *Costume Gatherer(s):* Simple costumes will add a lot to the drama presentations. Look for a volunteer who'd be willing to work with others or alone to plan and prepare costumes.
- *Musicians:* Whether you plan to present a Christmas program to the church and community or just to enjoy songs together as part of your opening worship on these two Sundays, you'll want to find someone with musical gifts to teach songs and lead the singing and someone to play the accompaniment.
- *Materials Gatherers:* Look for people who are willing to do photocopying and gather any materials you might need to provide teachers in the small groups as they work on specific projects during these two weeks.
- *Program Planners:* If you plan to have the children present a program for the church and community, you'll want to appoint a committee several months ahead of time—people who will make some of the content decisions, schedule rehearsals, and attend to all of the details.



How to Use This Book

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” —John 3:16

Christmas—a time to give glory to the Giver for his one and only Son; a time to give glory to the Gift, the child in the manger, our Savior and Lord. Glory to the Giver and the Gift!

Our goal is teach children about Jesus, our gift from God. We pray that leaders, children, and all who participate in the sessions and in the Christmas program will come to know Jesus. To help meet this goal, we’ll focus on the theme of God’s giving his Son to us and our giving glory back to God and to Jesus.

This book offers a variety of ideas and options for large group sessions, small group sessions, and a Christmas program. Use the ideas and options that work best with your church school. Ideally, the large group session would take about 15-20 minutes; then the children would break up into their small groups for about 30-40 minutes. You may also need to schedule an extra practice time or two if your church is planning on presenting the Christmas program.

Finding time to do everything in this book may be difficult, so choose what you think your group will be able to handle. You will need one copy of this book for each of your leaders. As the purchaser of this book you are granted permission to photocopy the dramas and the patterns and activities on reproducible pages 55-63 and 81-106.

Getting Started

Because these materials suggest a different format and approach than the regular *Walk With Me* units, you’ll want to spend some extra time planning and preparing to teach these sessions. Although each church situation is unique, you may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

- In the early fall, appoint a small committee to read through this book and decide which of the many suggestions would work best for your church.
- After the committee makes its recommendations, recruit actors, song leaders, accompanists, and teachers, as necessary.
- Recruit volunteers who are willing to gather materials for these special sessions. Give them plenty of time for this task (a month or two) since they will likely want to ask the congregation to save and/or gather some of the items.
- Schedule rehearsals for the drama team.
- If you’re planning a Christmas program, schedule a final rehearsal that includes drama, singing, recitation, and so on.

Large Group Sessions and Christmas Program

The large group session materials in this book contain a drama for each week and suggestions for songs that the whole group can learn. (The songs are also recorded on the CD that accompanies this book.) Each drama takes about ten minutes and requires eight to twelve actors.

The costumes may be as simple or as elaborate as you would like. (See suggestions on pages 10 and 34.)

You'll probably want to choose middle schoolers or a team of older teens or adults to play these roles. Each drama offers ways to include younger children in non-speaking roles as well, if you wish to do so. Be sure to schedule ample rehearsal time.

The dramas and songs can be used not only for the large group sessions but also for a Christmas program. You'll find a sample program along with ideas for organizing and producing it on pages 77-79.

Small Group Sessions

Small group sessions will give you the opportunity to help apply the story to the children's lives. If you are unable to present the story as a drama in the large group setting, you can still use the drama or another form of the story in the small group setting. It's a story you want children to hear!

Each small group opens with a **Hello** step designed to catch the children's interest and get them thinking about the lesson's theme.

Next comes the **Know** step (telling the story). If the children have already heard the story in the large group session, you'll want to use this time for a brief review. If you did not participate in a large group session, use either the drama or another interesting way to present the story to the group (see sessions for suggestions).

The **Grow** step will help children understand what the story means for their lives, and the **Show** step will guide them to respond to what they learned in this session.

The small group session includes options for activities and crafts that leaders (or the committee you appointed earlier) should carefully consider well ahead of teaching these materials. Once you've decided which crafts and activities to use, you may want to appoint two or more volunteers (possibly parents of children in the group) who will spend the time needed to gather the materials, cut out patterns, and assemble all the items you'll need. Having a helper in the classroom is also a plus when doing crafts and other activities with young children.

We trust that you and your congregation will experience the glory of Christ this Christmas. The greatest gift has been given. Glory to the Giver and the Gift!

Scheduling Rehearsals

1. Let cast members know rehearsal times when you ask them to participate. Stress that agreeing to participate means making a commitment to come to all practices.
2. Schedule at least two well-planned all-cast rehearsals.
3. Request that all lines be memorized by the first rehearsal.
4. Build community at rehearsals. Pray, practice, and enjoy a snack together.
5. If you are presenting the dramas as part of a Christmas program, use your final rehearsal to go through the entire program, including music, recitations, and so on.

Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Children Learn

How do young people learn? The answer to that question can be almost as varied as the kids in your group. Some learn best through words. Others through music. Still others through nature or through movement.

Sessions in the *Walk With Me* curriculum try to respect the many ways kids learn. *Walk With Me* sessions include a wide range of activities that speak to kids with the following types of intelligence (based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences). Within each session, the icons below highlight the learning styles represented by each activity. As you teach, you'll begin to get a sense for how the kids in your group learn best. Children who are



Word Smart

learn best through verbal activities (listening, reading, or speaking), including discussions, worksheets, writing, reading, storytelling, and word games.



Number Smart

learn best by exploring patterns and relationships through activities such as problem solving, logical puzzles or games, making charts and graphs, or putting things in sequence.



Picture Smart

learn best by visualizing concepts. These kids enjoy viewing maps, slides, pictures, videos, and diagrams; making jigsaw puzzles; and expressing their ideas with shape, color, and design.



Body Smart

learn best by using their bodies, acting things out, using puppets, moving—anything hands-on.



Music Smart

learn best through sound, music, and rhythm—playing musical instruments, writing their own songs and raps, listening to recordings, singing, and so on.



People Smart

learn best through doing things with others, cooperating and working in small or large groups, role playing, conversations, brainstorming, and other interactive exercises.



Self Smart

learn best by working independently through such things as writing in a journal, meditating, reading, and reflecting.



Earth Smart

learn best through activities connected to living things and natural phenomena, through nature walks, examining plants and animals, nature experiments, and activities that focus on ecology.

—The ideas on this page are based on material from the following resources: *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong, © 2000, and a chart prepared by Donald L. Griggs, Livermore, California.



Jesus Is Coming

Scripture

Luke 1

Memory Challenge

John 3:16

Focus

The long wait is almost over! God's promise to send Jesus, the greatest gift of all, is coming true.

WORDSearch

Think About It

In Luke chapter 1, something we know all along in Scripture is revealed to us in an almost palpable way. Instead of just *understanding* it, we can almost *feel* it. We're talking about waiting. The wait for the gift of a Savior, the Messiah, seems to have gone on forever. Think of all those generations of God-fearing (and sometimes not-so-God-fearing) Jews. They waited for what must have seemed an eternity. Years of tyranny under a frightful Pharaoh. Years of wilderness wandering. Years of judges, kings, prophets, and priests. Israel waded and waited through all of it. And still their promised Messiah had not come.

Pray About It

How will God move in the lives of each of the children or young people you teach? Who will God use to make himself known? How can you be a part of bringing your kids to the point of jumping up and down as they wait for Christ to come, not only into their hearts, but also into our world when he comes again? Pray about that. Pray that God, in a miraculous way (it always is!) would use your own expectancy for the gift of Christ to show your children how to wait and rejoice and receive the gift when it comes to them. Pray that you will be used to show them how to wait with leaping joy and praising hearts.

But here, in Luke 1, we are finally getting close. At last, we're just a birth or two away from the gift of salvation. And so the waiting has reached a kind of fever pitch. Remember how as children we felt that excitement of the wait just before Christmas? It wasn't too bad until Dad and Mom set out the presents under the tree. Then the waiting became almost unbearable.

Children who are waiting for Christmas tend to get giddy. They start to snoop. They shake their gifts for clues. They leap up and down with excitement. Some even play with the tape that holds the wrapping paper on the gift, yearning for one tiny glimpse of what's inside. For a child, waiting for Christmas is not just something you just think about—it's something you *feel*.

And here we are in Luke 1, so close to the big day. Reading Luke 1 is like going to bed on Christmas Eve and knowing that tomorrow when you wake, everything will be changed. That's how close we are. You can feel the wait.

Throughout Luke 1 that feeling only intensifies. Here we meet righteous Zechariah and godly Elizabeth. Like everyone else, they are still waiting. For them it is a fierce longing. Zechariah is empty of heirs and Elizabeth is full of barrenness. And they're both well along in years. So who would have ever guessed that very soon Elizabeth would be well along in a pregnancy? But that's exactly what happens: nine straight months of waiting for Elizabeth—talk about feeling the wait (and weight)! And how about Zechariah? Nine long months of no talking. For sure, all Zechariah wanted to do was take back what he said to the angel and shout praises all day long, but God kept his larynx locked up tighter than a drum. He could write, think, see, smell, taste, listen . . .

Tell About It

Tell the children that God has a wondrous gift for them too. Jesus is that gift—the greatest gift ever.

he learned to do these things better than ever. But most of all, he learned to wait and wait some more.

Then there's Mary's visit—it's not in our skit, but you as leader can't ignore it. Unborn John is leaping up and down in the womb with excitement. The bearer of the gift of salvation has entered the room. And even little Johnny knows that the wait is close to being over. The Holy Spirit kicks their waiting into overdrive: palpable expectancy. How fitting for a house full of pregnant women! John is jumping. Elizabeth is exalting. Mary is magnifying. Poor Zechariah—nothing to do but wait!

Finally, with just one more birth to go, Zechariah is allowed to let loose. Once his vocal cords are reattached, he lets his voice rip. For Zechariah, the wait is as good as over. While carrying his newborn son around, this geriatric dad is already praising the birth of another. Zechariah knows for sure, you see, that despite all the waiting, God is as good as his word. And the gift of salvation is *about* to come—well, for Zechariah, he's *already* come. His son, John, is proof of it. The wait is over. The gift is about to be opened.

Planning the Session

You are in charge of presenting the drama “The Wait Is Almost Over!” to all the children in your church school—from kindergarten to eighth grade. That's quite a challenge! But kids of all ages can relate to the theme of waiting—especially waiting for Christmas. Today's story points them toward the wonderful gift God is about to give, a gift that gives Christmas all of its meaning.

Depending on how much time you have available for your large group session, you'll probably want to take five or ten minutes for singing and another ten or fifteen minutes for the drama.

If you're going to be presenting a Christmas program, you may want to use part of the large group session to help the children prepare. You'll find suggestions for program planning on pages 77-79.

The suggestions in this large group session assume that you'll be dramatizing today's story to your entire Sunday school, preparing them to respond to it in small groups.

Singing

You may want to ask someone with musical gifts to lead the singing and teach new songs to the children during these two sessions. Be sure to share the tips in the box “Introducing a New Song” with that person.

The songs listed below (printed on pages 65-76 and included on the CD that accompanies this course) are among those you may want to sing. They were selected for their ties to the themes of the drama and the Christmas story. However, you may also want to choose other, more familiar Christmas carols for your two sessions, especially if your time for learning new songs is limited.

If you are planning to use these songs as part of a Christmas program, you will want to start teaching them to the group already in early fall so that they will know them well by the time you present the program in December. Also, please be aware that the songs we suggest can be divided up between groups of children; for example, children in K-3 might learn some of the easier songs, while those in grades 4-8 could learn the more demanding songs. Of course, if you prefer, you could have all of the children sing all of the songs.

Here's a list of songs from which to choose:

- “Glory to God in the Highest” (p. 65; CD, track 1)
- “Prepare the Way of the Lord” (p. 66; CD, track 2)
- “Come, Lord Jesus” (p. 68; CD, track 3)
- “His Name Will Be John” (p. 69; CD, track 4)



- “Mary Had a Baby” (p. 71; CD, track 5)
- “Praise to the Infant King” (p. 72; CD, track 6)

You may also wish to include favorite carols that the children know and love, such as the following:

- “Away in a Manger” (you could substitute stanza 3 for the prayer song “Come, Lord Jesus”) (p. 74; CD, track 7)
- “Joy to the World” (p. 75; CD, track 8)
- “Angels We Have Heard on High” (p. 76; CD, track 9)

Introducing a New Song

The way you introduce a new song is crucial. Of course you’ll want to know it well yourself. But you’ll also want to take time to think through how you’ll introduce it to your group. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- Most kids learn by rote and repetition. Listen to the CD or play the tune and encourage kids to join in on a line or phrase at a time. You may want to start by teaching them a phrase that repeats often.
- Make up motions to go along with simple words (such as “step” and “Jesus”) to help them remember the words.
- Be enthusiastic! Model your love of singing instead of being concerned about your performance.

Drama

Rehearsing and presenting a drama can be a fun and rewarding experience—both for the actors and for the people who view the drama. For this week’s drama—“The Wait Is Almost Over”—you will need a minimum of eight actors (assuming those playing the role of the neighbors also read the lines of the crowd; add three readers if you want separate actors for the crowd). Of course, you can add as many nonreaders to the crowd scene and the neighbor scene as you wish.

Consider finding a team of actors and begin working with them early. This could be a wonderful gift for your middle school group to offer to the younger children. Teens and adults can also be drama team members. And children of all ages can play nonspeaking roles—in today’s drama, for example, they could play the part of the crowd. You’ll also want to begin thinking about asking someone in the congregation (especially someone who sews!) to take responsibility for costumes and props.



According to Rev. Roger Groenboom, author of the dramas in this course, the kids enjoyed watching their pastor and other adults and teens acting in the skits. “They especially enjoyed it when I goofed up the lines,” says Roger. He said the drama team managed to “loosely” memorize their lines, giving them freedom to improvise a bit as they went along.

If your drama team doesn’t have time for memorization, reading the lines from scripts you provide will work (though not as well). Drama teams can still rehearse together, even though they aren’t memorizing their lines.

Costumes

Simple costumes are suggested on the first page of the script. The suggestions we offer are only that—suggestions. Use what you have available and what you can find to create your own costumes. Here are some general principles to keep in mind:

- Using a variety of fabrics with different textures and patterns can create interest. Adding interesting trims can help too.
- Generally, it makes sense to use the brightest tones for your main characters—in this case, Zechariah and Elizabeth.
- Cut-off legs of nylons work well for securing headpieces.

Props and Set

We suggest two basic areas for the play: the “home” scene with table and chairs (stage right) and the temple scene with altar (stage left). Leave the center stage area empty.

A few basic props are suggested on the first page of the skit. If you wish, you can easily add some items to suggest a “home” setting for Zechariah and Elizabeth: perhaps a rug, some dishes for the table, some vases or pottery, and a candle or two (or oil lamp). The temple scene could be enhanced with an altar made of bricks or stone (or simply drape the baptismal font with purple cloth).

If you wish, ask an artist in your congregation to design a backdrop for the temple scene and the home scene. You may also want to use lighting. But all of this is optional. You can effectively present the skit with only the simplest of costumes and the basic props suggested with the script.

Small Groups

After the drama, the children will meet in small groups. If your regular leaders are present for these two weeks, it would probably be best to have children meet with their groups as usual or to combine several groups together. Note that we have included only two session plans—one for children in kindergarten-grade 3 and another for children in grades 4-8. Each leader will need to adapt the plans to the needs of his or her age group.



No time or people for drama teams? You could present the dramas without rehearsal, “on the spot,” choosing your actors from the large group, distributing costumes and scripts, and walking your actors through the presentation. It won’t be smooth, but it’s doable. You’ll need to allow more time than you do for rehearsed performances by a drama team. And plan to have at least one adult “stage manager” who gets kids assigned to parts, distributes costumes, and, when necessary, acts as a prompter to keep things moving. It would also help to have an older teen or an adult—perhaps a small group leader—take a major role in the play. In this week’s drama, get two adults or older teens to play Elizabeth and Zechariah.