



Miriam Rejoices

Goal: To express joyful gratitude for God's gracious presence.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 15:20-21

Sometimes you just have to sing and dance!

That's the way Miriam felt. She was the sister of Aaron and Moses. As one of the people of Israel, liberated from Egypt and on the way to the Promised Land, Miriam was deeply grateful for God's presence and protection. Through the power of God, the armies of Pharaoh, which had been pursuing the children of God, were drowned in the sea. The people could proceed in safety. Miriam and other women led the people in rejoicing by singing, dancing, and playing tambourines. They sang, "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (v. 21).

Miriam was grateful for God's help in danger. The people could have been killed. Now they were safe. God was with them and protected them. No wonder they felt like singing, dancing, and playing music!

God is with us too. God protects us. We may not have dramatic experiences like Miriam and the people. But day to day, through our years, God is with us, protecting and preserving us. We should always remember God's power surrounds us. So we also praise, sing, and dance with grateful hearts to God!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Our most common ways of saying thank you to God and rejoicing in God's care are experienced through prayer and singing in worship. In this story, we see how Miriam sang and danced to express her thanksgiving to God. It's a reminder that we can thank God with our whole bodies, something that many children do naturally. Some of your children will also be interested in expressing their thanksgiving through dance and music. Be aware of children who might want to find other ways to say thanks to God through artistic expression, words, or even mime.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story of Miriam is full of joy and happiness. She danced in grateful response to God's protection in leading the children of God out of danger. Acting it out with music and tambourines is a great way for children of any age to experience the feeling that Miriam had of thankfulness to God. As the story is told, children will be able to imagine their own responses to what it must have been like to have been saved by God from the armies of Pharaoh and then identify the many ways of expressing thanksgiving. They will be able to share the ways they say thanks to God.

*O God, help me sing a new song of praise to you
for you are gracious and steadfast in your love. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 5, 16, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: sand table or
large tub of sand, sand
toys, drop cloth

choice 3: rhythm
instruments

Exploring

choice 2: rhythm
instruments

choice 3: flashlight,
tambourine

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet children as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about people rejoicing after being freed from slavery. Invite the children to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

1. **Playing in Sand**—If you don’t have a sand table, use a large tub filled partway with sand. Place a drop cloth under the sand area to protect the floor. Explore and play in the sand.
2. **Coloring**—Provide paper and crayons. Invite the children to draw a picture of themselves being joyful. While the children color, encourage them to talk about the ways they can express joy. For example: singing, dancing, and shouting joyful words like “Hurray! Wow! Yippee! Yay!” Encourage each child to choose one way to shout for joy.
3. **Playing with Rhythm Instruments**—Provide rhythm instruments and invite the children to experiment with the different sounds. Wonder together if some instruments or ways of playing an instrument can make them sound sad or happy.

T Give the children a signal when it’s time for something new; sing a familiar song or repeat a phrase such as: “One, two, something new.” Expect this to be difficult for some, especially if they are new to your group. It may be helpful to give a child a specific task.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Dance and Sing”—**MM 3**; **SCM 16**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Celebrate Joy B

Play a game. Begin with this warm-up. Invite the children to stretch their arms as high into the air as they can, taking a deep breath. Have the children bring their hands down to the ground, letting their breath out with a loud “ha ha” sound. Repeat with “he he” and “ho ho.” When you’ve finished stretching, shake out your bodies and voices.

Have the children stand in pairs, facing each other. Tell the older child in each pair to stay as serious as possible during the game. Tell the younger child in each pair that he or she is going to make the silliest faces, movements, and noises possible. The goal is to make the older child laugh. After a while, the children can switch roles.

Play a Walking Game A B M MS L

Tell the children about Moses and his people going on a journey when they left Egypt to go to the Promised Land. Explain that they must have had to walk through sand and over rocks and through deep grass to get to their new home.

Ask children to select places in the room (or outdoors) where they can move without bumping into anyone; then suggest that they pretend to walk through the following: sand, water, big rocks, tiny pebbles, deep grass, honey, popcorn, shaving cream, play dough, mashed potatoes.

Invite children to suggest other possibilities. Then try crawling or swimming through each of the substances.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty during story time. To help with focus and comprehension, suggest listening prompts, engage them with movement, or provide a specific item within the story picture to find.*

Hearing the Story L MS

Open the Bible to Exodus 15 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that today’s story is about people rejoicing after being freed from slavery. Read **SCM 5**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again and invite the children to repeat, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!” each time you say it. Suggest they can dance and leap as part of their celebration.



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Invite the children to help you say a thank-you prayer:

Thank you, God, for taking care of Moses and his people.

Thank you, God, for taking care of me.

Thank you, God, for caring for _____ (Ask children to say their names when you point to them.)

Amen.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Miriam Says

MS L A B

Play a game similar to “Simon Says.” Have the children stand, leaving enough space to move around without bumping into anyone else. Do not play this game as an elimination game, but encourage the children to help one another remember to wait for you to say “Miriam says” before they follow your request. If the children forget and do the activity even when you don’t say “Miriam says,” invite them to remain in the game and try again. Use the commands below, in addition to other ideas you create:

- ▼ (Miriam says) tell Pharaoh, “Let my people go!”
- ▼ (Miriam says) take three giant steps to the Promised Land.
- ▼ (Miriam says) lie down and sleep, protected under the stars of night.
- ▼ Get up.
- ▼ (Miriam says) hop around because the sand is so hot on your feet.
- ▼ Look up and laugh.
- ▼ (Miriam says) walk through the sea.
- ▼ (Miriam says) dance and sing for joy!

2. Dancing with Miriam

MS

Recall that, when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea to freedom, they rejoiced and thanked God for being with them. Miriam picked up her tambourine and began a joyful song and dance of celebration.

Play “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**. Invite the children to close their eyes and picture how Miriam and the people would have moved their entire bodies in praise. Suggest they practice swaying, leaping, clapping, swinging, and twirling. Then have the children create their own dance, using the rhythm instruments.

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate, such as instead of dancing and twirling, children could raise arms up and down or tilt head from left to right.*



3. Playing the Story



Choose children to be Moses and Miriam. Have them stand near you. Depending on the size of your group, invite one, two, or three children to be mothers or fathers. Ask the other children to lie on the floor and pretend to sleep. Tell Moses and Miriam that the king says Moses can take his people out of Egypt. Prompt Moses and Miriam to tell the mothers and fathers to wake everybody so they can leave. You might urge everyone to hurry before the king changes his mind.

While the children are getting up, tell Moses that he can walk however he wants to around the room with the others following him.

Wonder with the children which way they should go. Encourage the others to follow Moses wherever he goes.

Turn off the lights and give Miriam a flashlight to carry with the beam pointing up. Prompt Miriam to say “We are following God’s light.” Have the children follow Miriam.

After a few minutes, take the flashlight and give Miriam a tambourine. Say that God has brought the people to safety. Miriam leads the people dancing and clapping.

As long as the children are interested, give others a chance to be Moses and Miriam, leading the others and using the flashlight. Encourage Moses and Miriam to lead the others in creative ways, for example, zigzagging or going in and out around the chairs.

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.*

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What are the instruments the women are using?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What kind of joyful dance can you do?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What do we do when we are thankful?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so on.*

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children to snack time, singing “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23; SCM 20**. Invite the children to clap along with the song. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor to enjoy a snack.

Go around the circle, asking each child to name one thing for which she or he is thankful. End with a simple prayer, such as:

God, thank you for guiding us. Thank you for loving us. With our whole bodies and voices, we say thank you! Amen.

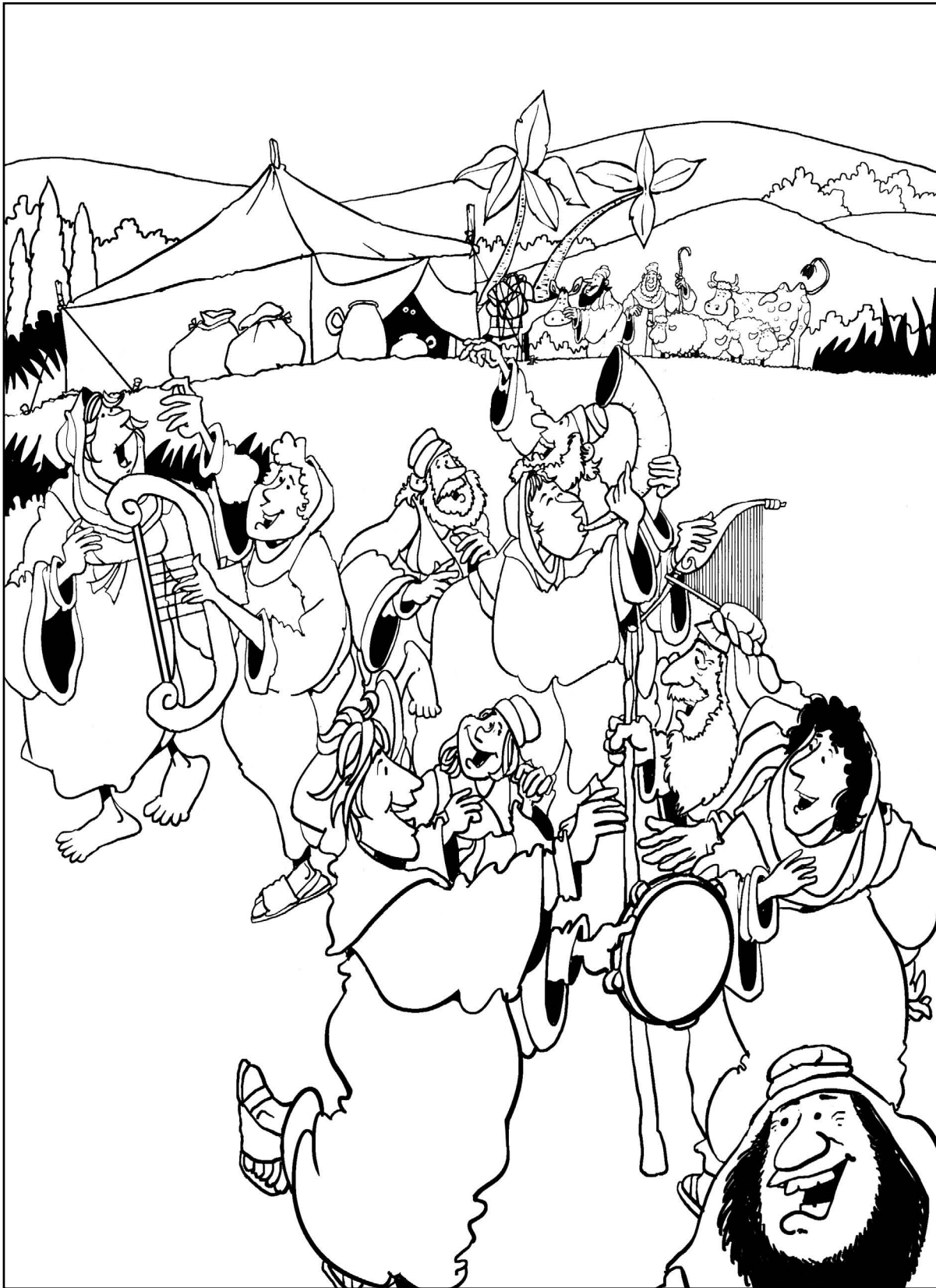
Explain that the Hebrew people celebrated God’s presence and care with joy during the long and hard journey. Ask the children to identify ways we show joy for God’s care (jumping up and down, giving high fives, helping others as God has helped us), and to find ways to do these things this week. As the children feel comfortable, invite them to share high fives with one another.

Bless each child as they leave saying, “(Name), God is with you always! Go in God’s grace.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

Miriam Rejoices



Miriam and her friends dance for joy and thank God for saving them.

