



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Younger Children's (K-4th Grade) Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives

Children will:

- Reflect on the characteristics of a good gift
- Discover Jesus as God's perfect gift
- Consider how we can give gifts to Jesus by serving others

Resources and Equipment

- Blank paper
- Markers/crayons
- Bibles for each participant (CEB preferred)
- Copy of the Younger Children's Activity Sheet on cardstock (one page of the box template and one page of gift tags for each participant)
- Scissors
- Glue stick, glue, or tape

Set Up

Depending on the age and abilities of the participants, you may want to cut out the template of the box (Younger Children's Activity Sheet) before the participants arrive.

GATHER (15 MINUTES)

As children arrive, give each of them a piece of paper and ask them to draw a picture of the best gift they've ever received.

Good morning! As our friends arrive this morning, I invite each of you to think of the best gift you've ever been given. When you think of your very favorite one, draw a picture of it on your paper.

When all children have arrived, open with prayer using the prayer provided or one of your own.

Loving God, oh, how you love us! Thank you for the ways you show us your love, especially through Jesus Christ. Help us to be aware of your presence with us as we meet together today. Amen.

Invite those who wish to share their gift drawing with the class. Ask each participant these questions as they share:

- Tell us the story of when you got the best gift ever.
- Who gave it to you?
- How did it make you feel?
- What did your face look like when you got this gift? What expression do you think you made?
- What made it the best gift ever?



Younger Children's (K-4th Grade) Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Now let's talk about the best gift you've ever given.

- What was the gift?
- Who did you give it to?
- How did giving the gift make you feel?
- How did the person who received it feel?

When all who want to have shared, ask:

- What makes the perfect gift?
- Why do we give gifts?

EXPLORE (40 minutes)

The Perfect Gift

Sometimes we love people so much that we want to show them how much we love them. One way we do that is by giving them a gift.

God is the same way.

God wanted to show the world exactly how much God loved the world. So God gave the world a gift. Let's see if we can read about what exactly that gift was.

Our story from the Bible today is from the very first chapter of the book of Matthew. Matthew 1:18–24. Would someone like to read for us?

Discuss the passage together:

- Joseph was told a story that seemed too strange to be true. *Invite the children to make the face that Joseph might have made hearing a story he doubted was true.*
- Did anyone catch what gift God was giving to the world?
- Emmanuel is a Hebrew word that means "God with us."
 - How is the very idea of God coming to earth to be with us through Jesus a gift to the world?
 - When we think about perfect gifts, this is the ultimate perfect gift God coming to the world in Jesus to show us what love looks like.

In this season of Advent, we're preparing to celebrate the gift of God With Us during Christmas. At this time of year, it seems everyone's making their lists and checking them twice — lists of presents they want to receive and lists of presents they want to give. How many of you have been asked what you want for Christmas this year?

During this time of year, sometimes we can get really focused on ourselves: What do I want? What am I going to get?



Younger Children’s (K-4th Grade) Lesson Plan *(continued)*

But the gift God gave us in Jesus reminds us that love is to be given away, not kept for ourselves. The gift of Jesus for us and the world is a gift that is meant to be shared!

A Gift for Jesus

We’ve said that giving gifts is one way to show our love. Did you know we can give gifts to Jesus, too?

Let’s read how that is possible in Matthew 25:34–40. *Invite a participant to read.*

According to this scripture, how do we give a gift to Jesus? (when we love others, we love Jesus)

We’re so focused at this time of the year on the presents we get, but let’s focus on the gift of love that God gave us to share. And as we share love with others, this is one way we can give a gift to Jesus.

Lead the children through the Gift for Jesus activity using the Younger Children Activity Sheet.

Once the boxes are made and you’re ready to talk about the Gift for Jesus tags, share the following:

When we share acts of love with others, they are both an act of love and a gift to Jesus. Each of you has a sheet of gift tags that says “My Gift to Jesus.” *Invite children to cut out their gift tags.*

Each time you do an act of love for someone else between now and Christmas morning, fill out a gift tag with a picture or description of the act of love and then place it in the box. Set the box under your Christmas tree as a gift for Jesus. On Christmas day, make this gift the first one you open and read your gifts to Jesus out loud with your family.

Let’s talk about acts of love together to get us inspired to share love with the world so that we may give Jesus these gifts.

One way to share God’s love and give Jesus a gift is to give to a special offering our church supports. The Christmas Joy Offering uses money given by churches across the country to support leaders. One way is by providing money to past or currently serving church leaders who might be experiencing a need because of something like a health issue or a natural disaster. The Christmas Joy Offering also supports future leaders by providing money to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges that are equipping communities of color. You can make a difference in the lives of these leaders, too! Ask your family about making a gift (however big or small!) to the Christmas Joy Offering.

What are some other ideas about how we can share God’s love and give Jesus a gift during this season? *Discuss together acts of love and service and have them think about which ones they might want to do as gifts for Jesus.*



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CLOSE (5 minutes)

You all thought of so many ways to share the gift of God's love with others. I'm excited to hear about what gifts you choose to give Jesus as you share love in acts of service to others.

Closing Prayer

Close in prayer together, using the prayer below or one of your own.

God who comes close to us, we thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for giving us the perfect gift and showing us what love looks like. May the ways we love others reflect our love for you. Amen.

Invite the children to take home their gift boxes for Jesus. Remind them to fill the boxes with acts of love, and then open them on Christmas morning.

Jenna Campbell, a Certified Christian Educator serving as the Director of Children and Youth Ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Oklahoma