14

The Great Gift Exchange

Key References: John 3:16, 17; Luke 1; 2; Matthew 1; 2; *Steps to Christ,* chap. 8, pp. 67-75; *The Desire of Ages,* chap. 17, pp. 167-177; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 1, pp. 95-98; vol. 10, pp. 189-191; Our Beliefs, nos. 17, 11, 4















powertext

"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).

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 103.

powerpoint

When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we offer Him our hearts.

"What did you get for Christmas?" You've probably heard and asked that question hundreds of times by now. The next time someone asks you, ask yourself, "What did I give?"

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
"'If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
"'If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part.
"'Yet what can I give Him? I will give my heart,'" Cinda read.

"Christmas is over," Jonathan whispered to Sunil.

"Thank you, Cinda," said Mrs. Barnabas, their Bible teacher. "Sunil, Jonathan, did you have a question?"

"No, Mrs. B," said Sunil. "We just wondered about the poem. After all, Christmas is over."

"And that's why I'm sharing it with you," said Mrs. B. "Think about what we learned during the past few weeks. What is this poem saying?"

Cinda raised her hand. "Yes, Cinda."

"The poem is about the birth of Jesus," explained Cinda.

14

Sunday

READ Read John 3:16, Hebrews 13:15, and this week's story, "The Great Gift Exchange."

CREATE Create an acrostic from or make some representation of the word GIFT. Review the power text.

PRAY Pray this prayer every morning this week: *Dear Lord, today take me as totally Yours. I give You all my plans. Use me to serve others. Stay with me and show me how to do everything in Your power. Amen.*

Monday

READ Read John 3:17.

STUDY According to this verse, what is God's part and what should be our response?

THINK What is the good news about Jesus' birth?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the morning prayer from Sunday's section.

Tuesday

READ Read 1 John 4:9, 10, 19.

THINK Who gave the first gift, God or us?

DO Make something special to give to someone.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write about what it meant to you to offer something special to someone.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the morning prayer from Sunday's section.

"The shepherd in the poem represents the ones who visited Jesus on the night He was born. The Wise Men are the Magi."

"Thank you, Cinda. Can someone tell me about what these visitors brought?"

Cinda raised her hand again. "The Bible doesn't say anything about the shepherds bringing gifts to the Baby Jesus," she remarked.

Jonathan raised his hand. "Everybody knows that the Wise Men brought three gifts," said Jonathan.

Sunil spoke out, "But they still brought the same thing the shepherds did."

"Would you explain?" asked Mrs. B.

"The shepherds responded to the Lord's message and were eager to find the Messiah and worship Him. When the angels told them to go, they went. They had faith that the baby was the Messiah."

"Even though the Wise Men brought gifts that Mary and Joseph could use to take care of Jesus, their real gift was that they worshipped Him," Jonathan said.

"Thank you, Jonathan," beamed Mrs. B. "Now, back to the poem . . ."

Sunil's hand shot up. "I know! Even if we don't have a lot of money and other things, we can still give *ourselves* to Jesus."

"Even if we do have a lot to give to Jesus, we still need to give ourselves," agreed Cinda, nodding.

"Nothing we do is more important than giving ourselves to Jesus," said Sunil. "Remember the message that is at the heart of the Christmas story?"

"That's right," added Cinda. "'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). If God didn't hold back anything from us but gave us His Son, Jesus, we have all the reasons to respond to His great love by giving ourselves to Him."

"Sunil and Cinda," said Mrs. B, her eyes shining, "you have just described God's gift of salvation."

Jonathan raised his hand.

"But how can I give myself to Jesus?"

14

Wednesday

READ Read Romans 5:8, 10.

SHARE Think of someone who could use some encouragement and share these texts with that person.

CHANGE Substitute "us" and "we" for the person's name.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the morning prayer from Sunday's section.

Thursday

READ Read Romans 12:1, 2.

TRANSFORM On a paper plate, draw a sad face. Turn the plate around with the mouth at the top and add other marks to make a happy face. In what ways can you change your thinking so that you are reflecting Jesus better?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the morning prayer from Sunday's section.

Friday

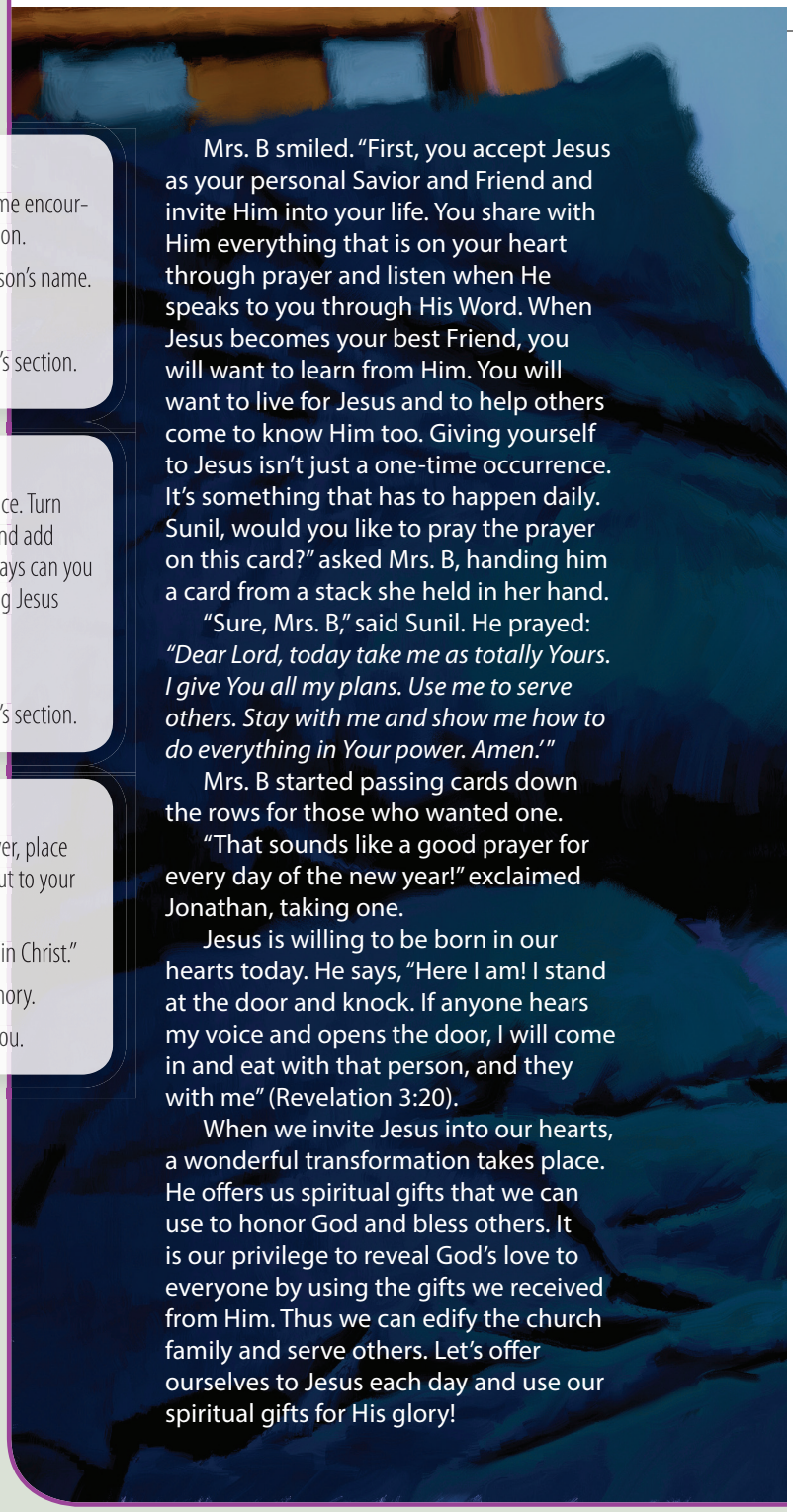
READ Read John 15:4, 7, 12.

SHARE Write out copies of the morning prayer, place each one in gift packaging, and hand them out to your family members during worship.

DISCUSS Discuss ways that you can "remain in Christ."

REPEAT Say the power text aloud from memory.

PRAY Praise God together for His plans for you.



Mrs. B smiled. "First, you accept Jesus as your personal Savior and Friend and invite Him into your life. You share with Him everything that is on your heart through prayer and listen when He speaks to you through His Word. When Jesus becomes your best Friend, you will want to learn from Him. You will want to live for Jesus and to help others come to know Him too. Giving yourself to Jesus isn't just a one-time occurrence. It's something that has to happen daily. Sunil, would you like to pray the prayer on this card?" asked Mrs. B, handing him a card from a stack she held in her hand.

"Sure, Mrs. B," said Sunil. He prayed: *"Dear Lord, today take me as totally Yours. I give You all my plans. Use me to serve others. Stay with me and show me how to do everything in Your power. Amen.'"*

Mrs. B started passing cards down the rows for those who wanted one.

"That sounds like a good prayer for every day of the new year!" exclaimed Jonathan, taking one.

Jesus is willing to be born in our hearts today. He says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20).

When we invite Jesus into our hearts, a wonderful transformation takes place. He offers us spiritual gifts that we can use to honor God and bless others. It is our privilege to reveal God's love to everyone by using the gifts we received from Him. Thus we can edify the church family and serve others. Let's offer ourselves to Jesus each day and use our spiritual gifts for His glory!



PUZZLE 14

YOUR GIFT TO GOD

Instructions: Start at the word "offer" (in red) and read a Bible verse concerning the best gift you can give to God. You may travel up, down, forward, or backward (but not diagonally). Not every word is used; finish at the word "worship" (in red).

one	any	offer	no	a living	sacrifice,
just	trouble	your	bodies	as	holy
are	yourself	not	to	pleasing	and
when	is	this	God—	just	as
two	your	true	and	hard	several
years,	when	worship.	proper	justice;	any