



Jesus Begins His Ministry

Goal: To model Jesus' ministry in our lives.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 1:16–39

A lot happens in the first chapter of Mark! After his baptism and affirmation by God, Jesus is tested in the wilderness. He is now ready to start his ministry. In twenty-three verses, we get seven stories of Jesus' ministry: calling disciples (vv. 16–20), teaching in the synagogue (vv. 21–22), exorcising demons (vv. 23–28), healing (vv. 29–31), more healing (vv. 32–34), praying (v. 35), and proclaiming (vv. 36–39). There is a breadth to all that Jesus does in ministry. These stories—that appear to have happened in the space of just a few days—are a foretaste of the next three years.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

It's hard to look at what Jesus did in his ministry and think we can model that, but we can—and more importantly, children can as well! Children are naturals at many of the acts of ministry. Calling disciples: Many children want others to come alongside them and join in their excitement. When they want to bring a friend to a church activity, they are calling a potential disciple. Teaching: Many children love to share what they've learned. It gives them confidence and self-esteem to know they have something to share. Healing: The laughter of children, the hug of a child, and the empathy of a child all bring moments of healing to another. Praying: Given the opportunity, children understand talking with God and share what is on their hearts and minds. Proclaiming: Telling others good news is something children love to do. Children need to be affirmed in their actions.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

We often talk about seeing gifts for ministry, but this is a bit different. This is about recognizing and naming acts of ministry that children are doing: inviting others, teaching, healing, praying, and proclaiming. It is also about modeling and naming those acts as you engage in them.

Observe what the children in your group like to do, what they are drawn to, and what they are good at doing. Some children will be the ones inviting others to join in. Others will want to share what they know. Some children may gravitate toward quieter activities and just like being near another or are the first to offer comfort. Help the children recognize the actions they do for what they are: acts of ministry like Jesus did. As children are affirmed in these ways, acting in ways like Jesus did will become second nature to these young disciples.

Gracious God, may I be a model of Jesus' ministry as I lead the children in my care. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 7, 20, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

blue cloth or crepe
paper

snack

Guided Play

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Exploring

choice 1: 9" x 12" piece
of netting for each child,
such as fishnet or tulle
fabric; fish from "Guided
Play" choice 3

choice 4: copies of GN 2

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 1 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

SD **F** **A** **B** **M** **MS**

Greet the 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 whom you do not know personally. Tell the parents/caregivers that today's story is about the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Following the Leader**—As children arrive, tell them that today we are going to hear a story about Jesus asking friends to follow him. Invite them to play a game of Follow the Leader. Encourage them to take turns being the leader.
- 2. Good News to Share**—Print the words "Good News!" at the top of a sheet of mural paper. Provide paper and crayons. Invite children to think of good news that they can share. Remind them that "God loves you!" is very good news too. Encourage them to draw a picture of their good news. Attach their pictures to the mural paper to make a banner of good news!
- 3. Fish**—Tell the children that, in the story, Jesus calls four fishing friends to follow him. Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color and cut out four fish each. Paper clip each child's fish and set aside for "Exploring God's Grace" choice 1.

T *If transition times have been difficult, consider introducing an object, such as a baby Jesus doll or a stuffed lamb. Show the children where the object will be next and allow them to follow. Assure them that the object will follow them throughout the session and that they will see it when they return again.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus”—**MM 16; SCM 21**. This is a difficult song; repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Jesus Calls the Fishermen

MS L

Lay a length of blue cloth or crepe paper on the floor to indicate the edge of the water. Invite all the children to stand at the edge of the water. Describe how fishing worked in Jesus’ time:

- ▼ Fishermen would stand on the side of the boat and throw their nets out onto the water. (*demonstrate casting a large imaginary net out toward the “water,” then have the children do the same*)
- ▼ They would wait for the fish to swim into the net. (*pretend to watch for fish*)
- ▼ Then they would work together to drag the net back into the boat. (*pretend that everyone is working together to haul the net into the boat*)

Haul the fish in two or three times. Then tell the children that, one day, Jesus walked by some fishermen and called them by name. (*call each child by name to drop the net and follow Jesus*)

Invite the children to respond, “Jesus is calling me!”

Once everyone is called, walk around the room with everyone following until you sit down for the story.

Hands Go Up

MS L T VI

Invite the children to repeat each line and follow your motions.

Hands go up. (*raise your hands in the air*)

Hands go down. (*move your hands down to each side*)

I can turn myself around. (*turn around in a circle*)

I can stand up on one foot. (*stand on one foot*)

I can listen. (*cup your right hand by your right ear*)

So can you. (*point to another person*)

I can sit. I’ll show you how. (*sit on the floor*)

Bible time is starting now. (*point a finger to your other wrist*)



Hearing the Story

L

Open the Bible to Mark 1 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that the story is about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and all the things he did.

Read **SCM 7**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Read the story again, inviting the children to act out each scene as you read it. Pause between paragraphs to allow the children time to regroup.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Fishing Nets

LD

Provide each child with a piece of netting and the fish they colored in "Guided Play" choice 3. Have the children write their name and the names of three other friends or family members on the back of each fish. Assist with writing as necessary.

Staple the netting to a piece of blue construction paper, making a pocket with the netting. Have the children put their fish into the net. Allow children to remove and replace the fish in the nets, calling each by name. Children may wish to add a boat, waves, the sun, and birds to their picture.

2. Teaching and Learning

L

Gather the children in a circle, seated on the floor. Tell the children that Jesus was always teaching good lessons to others, and they learned from him. Wonder what are some things they can teach. Suggest that they may know a story, song, rhyme, or math fact they could teach everyone. Invite the children to think of one thing they could teach the rest of the group. Go around the circle and let everyone have a chance to teach something.

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Be patient and encourage children to do the same.*



3. Jesus Prayed, and So Can We



Remind the children that one of the things Jesus did in the story was pray. Ask if anyone knows some good ways to pray. Tell them that you will practice three prayer words that can help you pray. On a sheet of newsprint write three headings:

- ▼ Thank You
- ▼ Please
- ▼ I'm Sorry

Ask each of the following questions and write down the children's responses under the corresponding heading:

- ▼ We say "Thank you" when we are grateful. What are some things we want to thank God for?
- ▼ We say "Please" when we want to ask for something. What are some things we want to ask God for?
- ▼ We say "I'm sorry" when we have done something wrong and we want to be forgiven. What are some things we need to say "sorry" for?

Pray this prayer:

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to call us, teach us, and heal us. And thank you for *(name things the children have mentioned)*.

Please help us to remember to share your good news and to pray every day. Please help us to learn more about you. And please *(name some of the things the children have mentioned)*.

We are sorry when we forget to pray or when we don't act in ways that are loving and kind. And we are sorry *(name some of the things the children have mentioned)*.

Thank you for loving us. Amen.

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.

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the pictures of Jesus beginning his ministry. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "What did Jesus' friends think when Jesus told them that they would 'fish for people'?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did the news about Jesus travel so fast?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What did Jesus pray for?"

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as jumping up and down, running in place, clapping hands, and so forth.*



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, singing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13; SCM 20**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Remind the children that Jesus did many things in his ministry. Ask the children to recall some of them, such as calling friends to follow Jesus, going to worship, teaching and learning, healing people and helping them feel better, praying, and sharing the good news of God’s love. Wonder how the children might do any of those things in the coming week.

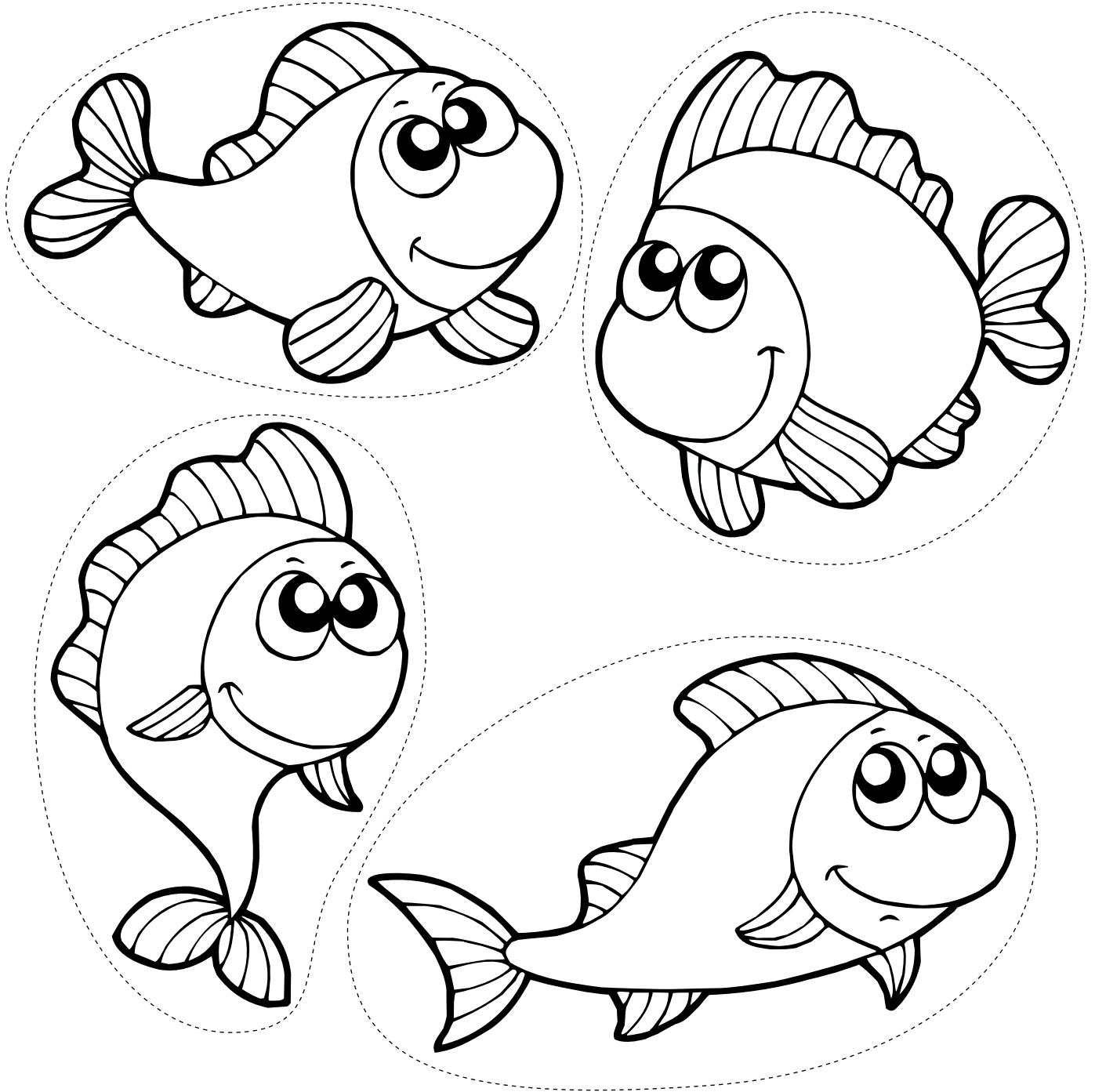
If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Pray:

For food to eat, (*raise a hand to your mouth*)
and friends to share, (*hold your hands out*)
for those we love everywhere, (*place hands over your heart*)
we thank you, God. (*put your hands together in prayer*)
Amen.

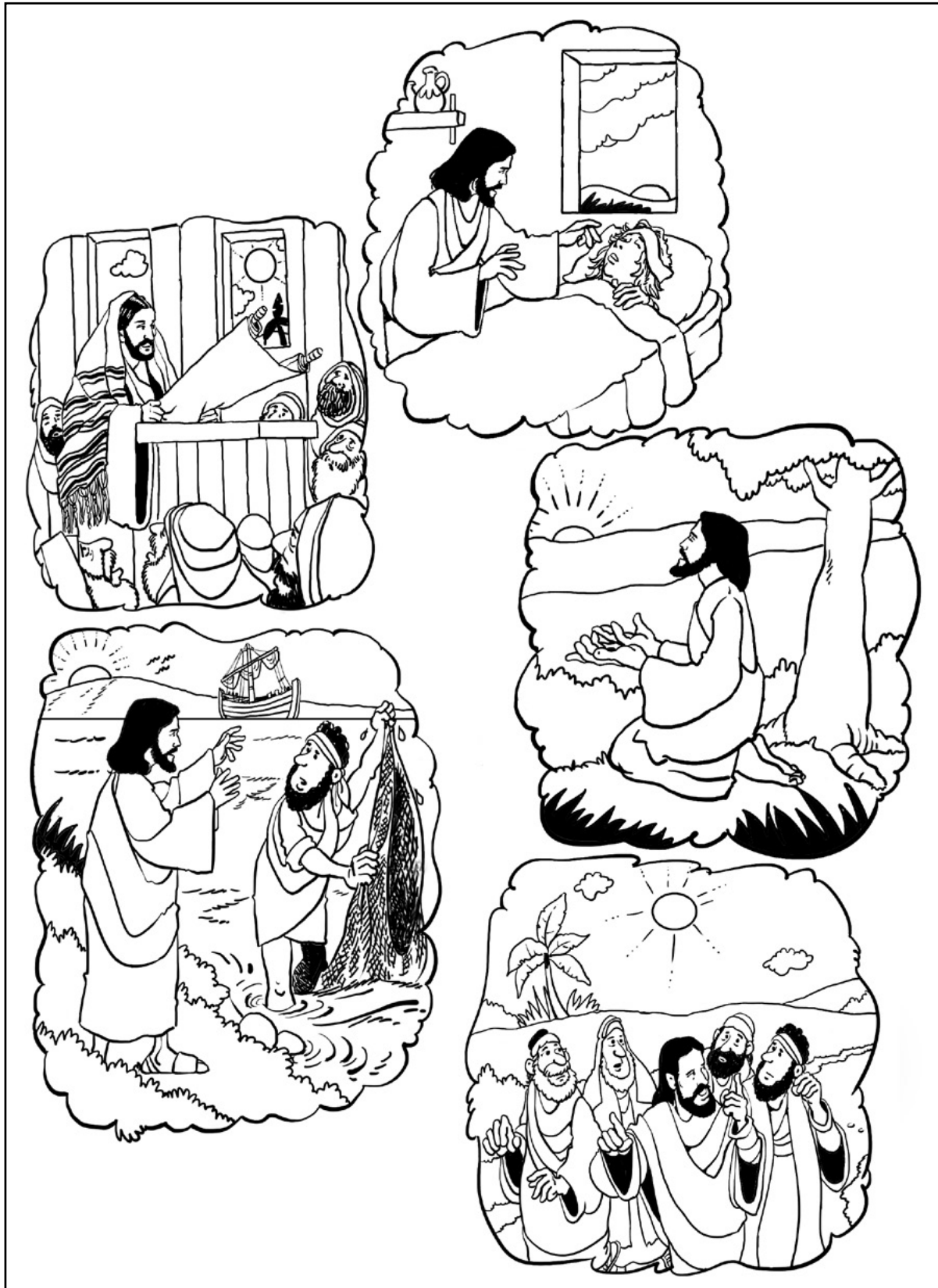
As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), Jesus calls you to follow him. Go share the good news of God’s love.”



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).



Jesus Begins His Ministry



Jesus calls disciples, teaches, heals, prays,
and proclaims the good news of God's love.

