



Peter's Denial

Goal: To hear that Jesus' friend made a mistake, and Jesus still loved him.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

It is never easy to accept that someone we love is going to die. Even when we think we are prepared for the death of a loved one, the tidal wave of grief that washes over us is a reminder that we always, on some level, want to deny death. For those who walked alongside Jesus, the predictions of death were predictions of the loss of everything: not just Jesus, but all that they had cared about for the previous three years. They couldn't imagine losing Jesus. Nor could they imagine that they would play any part in betraying him.

Probably by the time the early Christians read the Gospel of Mark, they knew that Peter had died the death of a martyr. They knew that his vehement protests that he would never deny Jesus were the desperate protests of a disciple who loved Jesus with all his heart. Peter's denials were like howls of fear and grief from a man who felt he was losing everything. Nonetheless, his betrayal was a serious matter. Peter knew, when he heard the cock crow the second time, that he had just let down the man he loved most in the world: his friend and savior, Jesus.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Most children have had at least some experience with the betrayal of a friend, either as the betrayer or the victim; we don't have to live long on this earth to learn that sometimes people let us down. Many, but not all, children have also learned that betrayal need not mean the end of the friendship. This story can be an excellent opportunity to help youngsters explore the pain of betrayal and the path to reconciliation. It will be worth taking a little time to discuss how Jesus continued to love and forgive Peter, and that their friendship continued in spite of Peter's failure.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story and the exploration of it presents an opportunity to help children understand that letting someone down, or being let down, need not mean the end of the friendship. Be a bit vulnerable and share a little of your own experience of betrayal or disloyalty. You need not go into detail; a simple statement such as "I once let my friend down, and I felt so terrible!" is sufficient. Invite the children to share some of their own experiences, and ask questions that invite them to consider how they can extend grace.

Gracious and loving God, we are grateful that you always love us, even when we fail. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 3, 15

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: three
containers; groups of
three items such as
blocks, large beads,
crayons, pencils,
stickers, and so forth

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Exploring

choice 2: paper lunch
bags; red, yellow, and
white construction
paper; craft feathers

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.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the 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 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

LD **MS** **T**

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 you do not know personally. Tell them that today’s story is about a time when Jesus’ friend, Peter, denied that he knew Jesus, not once, but three times!

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

- 1. Threes**—Set out items and three containers. Invite the children to group like items in threes: three blocks, three large beads, and so forth. Then ask the children to group three different items, three different colors, and three different sizes. Challenge them to find as many ways to make groups of three as they can.
- 2. Playtime x 3**—Invite children to play a game together. Have a volunteer perform an action, such as clapping, jumping, or making a silly sound. Tell the other players to respond by performing the same action, all together, three times. Encourage the children to respond ALL together, three times each time. Keep playing until everyone has a turn being a leader.
- 3. Cock-a-doodle-doo!**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the rooster. Tell them that they will hear a story with a rooster in it. Invite them to practice making the sound a rooster makes: “Cock-a-doodle-doo!”

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

T

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, playing and singing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13; SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Come and Hear

A MS

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” and do the motions indicated. Invite the children to join in with you.

Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*) /
Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the left*) /
Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*) /
Sit down and fold your hands. (*fold hands in your lap*) /

Follow Me

MS SD

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

I am following Jesus. (*march in place*) /
I am learning to share. (*move both hands away from you with palms up*) /
I am learning to serve. (*move both hands together in front of you with palms up*) /
I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor’s shoulder*) /
I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*) /



Hearing the Story

L

Open the Bible to Mark 14 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a time when one of Jesus’ friends, Peter, told people he didn’t know Jesus, not once, but three times!

Read **SCM 3**. 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 respond in the following ways:

- ✦ When you say, “No, I won’t!” they respond, “Yes, you will!”
- ✦ When you say, “Yes, you were!” they respond, “I was not!”
- ✦ When you say, “rooster,” they respond, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!”



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Count to Three

L C LD

Invite the children to help you retell the story. Tell them that you will count to three while they think about the answer to your questions. Remind them not to answer until you have counted to three. Draw out the first two words: "ooooooooonnnne, twooooooooo," and then say, "three!"

- ✦ Who was Jesus with in the story? (*his friends, Peter, the disciples*)
- ✦ What did they do together? (*ate a meal, shared bread and wine*)
- ✦ What did Jesus tell Peter? (*Peter would pretend he didn't know him, deny him*)
- ✦ What did Peter say he would do? (*he would never deny Jesus*)
- ✦ What did Peter really do? (*he did deny Jesus*)
- ✦ How many times? (*three times*)
- ✦ I wonder, "What did Peter feel like when that happened?"
- ✦ I wonder, "Why did Peter cry?"
- ✦ I wonder, "Did Jesus stop loving Peter because he made a mistake?"
- ✦ I wonder, "What do you think about this story?"



2. Rooster Puppets

L TD SD FM

Before the session, draw an approximately 3" triangle on yellow construction paper and two 2" ovals on white construction paper for each child.

Remind the children that Jesus said Peter would deny him three times by the time the rooster crowed twice. Invite the children to make rooster puppets to remember this story and Peter's denials.

Trace each child's hand on a piece of red construction paper. While they work on their puppet, cut out the hand for them to add as the rooster's comb for the top of its head.

Provide a paper lunch bag, the yellow and white prepared construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and feathers for the children to make their roosters. Show them how the bottom of the paper bag will form the rooster's face. Use the following directions to have the children make the puppets:

- ✦ Cut out the triangle from the yellow construction paper and glue it to the flap at the bottom of the bag, making sure the flap can open and close.
- ✦ Cut out the two oval shapes from the white construction paper and glue them at the top of the yellow triangle to make the rooster's eyes. Show the children how they can color a black circle in the oval to make the eyeballs.





- ▼ Glue feathers on the front and back of the paper bag.
- ▼ Glue the red hand shape over the eyeballs and the top of the rooster's head.

Take turns acting out the story, with children playing Peter, Jesus, the servant, and the rooster. Change parts and play again.

Invite the children to play with their rooster puppets, saying, "Cock-a-doodle-doo."

FM *To help children build fine motor skills, encourage enjoyment in activity participation instead of focusing on a "successful" outcome such as whether their craft actually looks like other children's.*

3. Button, Button

F B L

Use a button or other small object to play. Gather the children in a circle, seated in chairs or on the floor. Tell them that you are going to play a guessing game together. Explain that you have a little button (or other object) in your hands. Tell each child to cup their hands together and that, as you walk around the inside of the circle, you will pretend to put the little button in each one's hands. After you do that, they should cup their hands tightly so no one can tell who has the button. Explain that you will put the button into only one person's hands. Then ask, "Button, button, who's got the button?"

Tell the children that, if they have the button, they can deny it. They don't have to tell the truth at first in this game. Three people will guess. If no one has guessed correctly after three guesses, everyone will crow like a rooster twice, and then whoever has the button will tell. Play until several children have had a turn, or as time permits.

4. Coloring Page

C L

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Peter crying. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "How did Jesus know Peter would pretend not to know him?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Peter's actions make Jesus feel?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Did the others sitting around the fire believe Peter?"

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as jumping jacks, hopping on one foot, doing a tap knees/clap hands pattern, and so forth.*

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 together, playing and singing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13; SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate. Wonder together about times when we may have hurt someone’s feelings by not telling the truth and what may need to be done. Suggest that Jesus loved Peter and understood that Peter made mistakes. Comment that you are sure that Jesus still loved Peter.

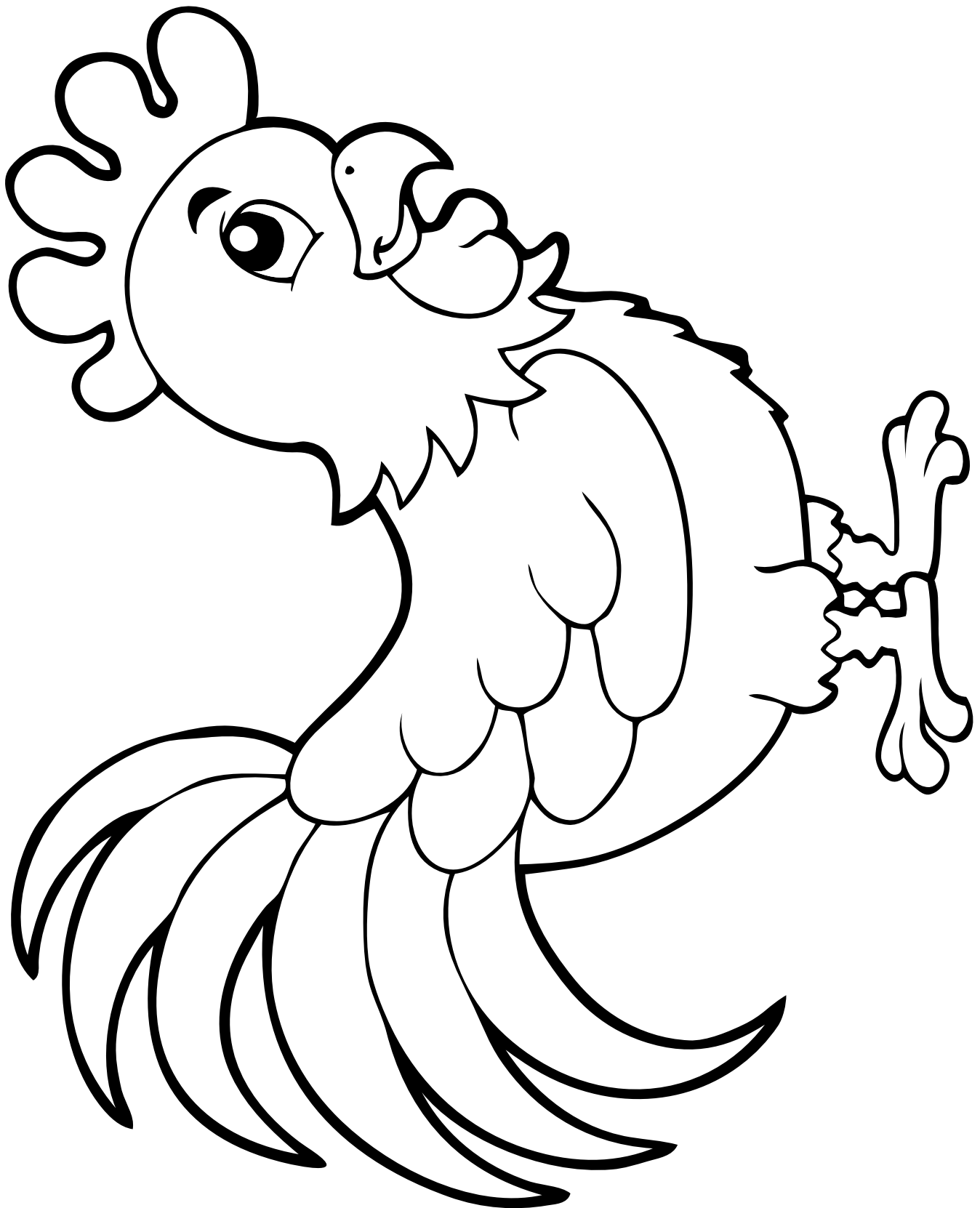
If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your actions as you pray:

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

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), Jesus loves you always. The grace of God is with you.”



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).



Peter's Denial



Peter says three times that he doesn't know Jesus. Then the rooster crowed!

