



# 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, 7a, 7b, 16,  
27

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

fishing net

box of tissues

blanket

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

## Responding

Celebrating  
GN 2

### Extra

air-dry clay; floral wire,  
five lengths about 12"  
long for each child;  
small paper cups;  
copies of **GN 3**

## GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post **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.

“Extra Activity” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing **LG T**

Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, *(Name)*.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a candle, a fishing net, a Bible, a box of tissues, a blanket, **SCM 7a** and **7b**, and a sheet of paper. Have a volunteer make a sign that says “God loves you!” Place the sign on the worship table. As children place the other items in the worship space, tell them that they are going to hear a story about how Jesus invited, taught, healed, prayed, and proclaimed. The worship space reflects the good work Jesus was doing to share God’s love.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

### Singing **MS**

Sing “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 27**. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 27** so the children can sing along. Invite the children to sing, clap, dance, shout, and praise as the song suggests.

### Praying **L C**

Gather in a circle or in front of the worship table. Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ presence with us. Pick up the net and Bible from the worship table and ask two people to hold them. Pray:

God, we give you thanks for the people in our lives who have taught us about your love and invited us to follow you . . .  
*(invite the children to name those who have taught them about God).*

Pick up the blanket and box of tissues and invite two children to hold them. Pray:

God, we give you thanks for those who have cared for us when we were sick or injured and especially needed care . . .  
*(invite children to name those who have cared for them when they were ill).*

Pick up the pictures of the girl praying and the figure proclaiming to the crowd (**SCM 7a** and **7b**) and invite two children to hold them. Pray:

God, we give you thanks for setting an example and teaching us how to pray. Give us the courage to stand up and share your good news of God's love with others.

Tell all who are holding an item to put it back on the worship table and rejoin the circle. Pray:

God, you have shown us, through Jesus, how to pray, care, proclaim, teach, and invite others. Help us to model our actions on his. Amen.

**L** *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each step.*

### Preparing to Hear the Story

**L LD**

Provide a copy of **GN 1**, scissors, tape, crayons, and five craft sticks for each child to decorate and make five signs to use during "Hearing the Story." Read the words together, making sure the children understand each word. Encourage the children to listen to the story and to hold up the appropriate sign(s) when they hear Jesus ministering in that way.



### Hearing the Story

**L LD**

Invite a child to find Mark 1 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 7**. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again from **SCM 7** or listen to the story audio. Pause after each paragraph to allow the children time to hold up one or more of their signs.

### Reflecting on God's Grace

**L C**

Invite all the children to hold up the same sign, such as "Invite." Ask them what Jesus did to invite people in the story. Do the same with each of the other signs. Ask the children if one action is more important than the others. Why or why not? Wonder together how your congregation ministers in these ways.



### Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing together “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6; SCM 16.**

Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

### Claiming God’s Grace



Gather the children in a circle. Affirm the work you see in people from within your church and in one another. Have children lay their signs in front of them. Explain that you will call out one word at a time (Invite, Teach, Heal, Pray, Proclaim) and ask them in what ways people do that action. Help the children place the actions in their context. Ask the children to name people from your church community who do that action. Encourage children to name as many people as they can think of for each action.

Then, go around the circle and identify the ways you see each child modeling Jesus’ ministry. Speak directly to each child, naming at least one action you notice they engage in. Invite them to speak to one another too, pointing out the ways they see one another modeling Jesus’ work.

### Celebrating God’s Grace



Play “Four Corners and the Center” to identify acts that model Jesus’ ministry. Designate each corner in your space with one of the actions: Invite, Teach, Heal, Pray, and the center of the room as Proclaim. Gather children in the center of the room. Tell them you will read a scenario and then they should move to the place that best describes the action being modeled. Tell the children to shout out the action.

Read the scenarios from **GN 2**. Every other scenario will bring the children back to the center with Proclaim. If anyone wonders why you are repeating the same phrase, “Tell someone God loves them,” explain that we cannot tell enough people or say enough times that God loves people. The last scenario also brings the children to the center of the room because proclaiming the good news of God’s love is not just the job of the pastor on Sunday mornings. We all can do it in different ways.

**MS** *As you select and plan activities, think about space children need to maneuver a wheelchair, a walker, leg casts, or crutches.*



### Praying God's Grace



Read this line from the story: "In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went to a quiet place to pray." Wonder together why Jesus went at that time of day, where he might have gone, and why it was important that he went alone. Remind children of all he had done so far. Explain that Jesus paused to pray, then went on to continue to serve.

Tell the children that, for the next few minutes, you will spend time alone in prayer. Invite children to get as "alone" as they can, spreading out, putting their heads down, closing their eyes, and so forth. Admit that sometimes silence is hard, but that for the next few moments you are all practicing silence as you pray. Offer no prompt or direction. Just provide quiet to pray. After several minutes, call them out of prayer with: Just as the disciples came looking for Jesus so they could continue to do good works, you are invited to let this time of prayer strengthen you so that you can do good too.



### Extra Activity



Tell the children they will make a story sculpture to help them remember the story about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and model it in their lives. Give each child a copy of **GN 3** and invite them to color and cut out the shapes. Once they have cut out the shapes, have them decorate the other side of them. Note that the shapes are a *fish* to represent Jesus inviting others to follow him, a *scroll* to represent his teaching, a *bandage* to represent Jesus healing people, *hands* to represent praying, and a *megaphone* to represent proclaiming the good news.

Explain that they will attach the ministry shapes to the ends of floral wire and stick them in a lump of air-dry clay to make their story sculptures. Give each child five lengths of floral wire, about 12" long. Show them how to roll the wire around a pencil to make a spiral or a ruler to make a zigzag shape. They may also leave wires straight to give different heights to their sculpture. Have the children use a small piece of tape to attach a ministry shape to one end of each of the floral wires.

Give each child a lump of air-dry clay and small paper cup. Have them put the clay in the bottom of the cup and the floral wires with the ministry shapes into the clay. Tell the children that, when the clay has hardened, in about a day, they can remove, or tear away, the cup so their sculpture can be displayed.



Ages 5-7

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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](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Play and sing together “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6; SCM 16**. Ask the children how the song reflects our call to follow Jesus’ model of ministry.

Gather in a circle and bless the children by saying, “You can model Jesus with your life. Leave today to invite, teach, heal, pray, and proclaim—all as a way to point to God’s goodness. Go in God’s grace.”

Teach

Invite

Heal

Pray

Proclaim





**Modeling Jesus' Ministry Scenarios**

1. Jenny's family notices a new family has moved in down the street and that they have a child Jenny's age. Jenny is excited to meet a new friend and knows that moving can be stressful and lonely, so she and her mother drop by and ask the family to come over and have tea and get to know them a little better. How did Jenny and her mom model Jesus' ministry?
2. Tell someone God loves them. What action of Jesus are you modeling?
3. Camden and Rachel are walking together through the store. Rachel thinks it would be fun to stick a chapstick in her pocket and walk out with it. Camden insists that she shouldn't do that, and when she asks him why, he tells her that he learned at church that God doesn't want us to steal, that stealing is wrong, and that he doesn't like to do things that he knows God would not be happy with. How did Camden model Jesus' ministry?
4. Tell someone God loves them. What action of Jesus are you modeling?
5. Mr. Sanchez is a good friend of Elizabeth's family. He is elderly and has had pneumonia. Elizabeth knows that she is a child and not a doctor; while she can't make his health problems go away, she can make a card to send him to lift his spirits while he is sick. What ministry is Elizabeth modeling?
6. Tell someone God loves them. What action of Jesus are you modeling?
7. Hayden's friend Caleb told him that his parents are getting divorced. Hayden knows that Caleb is really sad about that, so he asks his dad to pray with him for Caleb before bed. What ministry is Hayden modeling?
8. Tell someone God loves them. What action of Jesus are you modeling?
9. Every week that the youth group gathers, Julio plays games with them, provides dinner for them, and talks with them about the Bible. How is Julio modeling Jesus' ministry?
10. Tell someone God loves them. What action of Jesus are you modeling?
11. Bryce loves going to church on Sunday mornings. When his friend Preston tells him that he doesn't go to church anywhere, Bryce invites Preston to sleep over on Saturday night so that Preston can go with him on Sunday morning. What action of Jesus is Bryce modeling?
12. Tyson and Callie are in the church Christmas pageant. Tyson is the angel who visits the shepherds and says there is good news for all people! Callie is one of the shepherds who runs and tells others all that the shepherds have seen after visiting the baby Jesus. What actions of Jesus are Tyson and Callie modeling?
13. During worship, Donyale listens as others share their joys as well as the names of people who are sick or having a hard time. After worship, Donyale tells one of the people who spoke that things will be OK because God loves them. How is Donyale modeling Jesus' ministry?





