



Jesus Helps in a Storm

Goal: To identify with the disciples' fear and understand that Jesus offers peace in times of fear.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 4:35-41

We all have fears. We all have had times when we were afraid. We know we need help, and we cannot help ourselves.

Jesus' disciples experienced this when they were in a boat with Jesus. When high winds arose and waves crashed against the boat, the disciples were afraid they would drown. Where was Jesus? He was asleep in the back of the boat. They woke him up and asked him, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?" (v. 38, CEB).

Jesus commanded the wind to "Be still!" and everything became calm. The disciples were amazed that Jesus had power over the wind and sea. But Jesus asked the disciples: "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" (v. 40).

Faith was the key. We will always have times of fear. We will be afraid when we cannot control situations. But faith is the answer to fear. In faith, we trust Jesus to take care of us. We receive the promise of grace and the goodness Jesus gives us. He will be with us in and through our fears. We have faith; we trust in Jesus. We believe his grace is with us. Through faith, we live gratefully, depending on Jesus.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Invite the children to tell a story about a time when they were afraid. You may hear stories about being lost, being in the dark, being sick, a scary ride at a park, or a bad storm. Help them to say what it felt like to be afraid. Also, help them to say what helped them feel less afraid. Was someone there who helped them feel safe? Naming their own experiences with fear will help them connect with this story of the disciples and Jesus' reminder to them that, if they trust him, they will not be afraid.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you invite the children to share their stories, help them name not only what made them scared but also how it made them feel. Being scared is not a great feeling, and we always hope that feeling will be over quickly. That was also the experience of the disciples as they faced the bad storm. Help the children know that, when they are scared, adults are there to help them feel safe. When they are scared, they can also ask God for help in being calm. One way to do that is to practice saying a breath prayer—something that can be said to God in one breath. Invite the children to each say a breath prayer they could use when they are scared.

Dear God, when storm clouds threaten, come quickly to save us. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 9, 14

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

blue cloth

pillow

toy boat

black construction
paper

chalk

sticky notes

Responding

Claiming
SCM 9

Offering

card-stock cards cut
from **Grace Notes (GN) 1**,
3" craft foam square
(without adhesive
backing) for each child,
empty water bottle
for each child, cooking
oil, blue food coloring,
glitter (optional)

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing



Greet the children by name and with the words “The peace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words. Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a blue cloth, a pillow, and a toy boat.

Offer black construction paper and chalk. Encourage the children to draw storm scenes—suggest large bolts of lightning, big clouds, heavy rain, and strong wind. Have the children place their pictures on the worship table to help set the scene.

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

As children create the space, encourage conversation about storms. Ask how they feel about storms, whether or not they are scared, what they do during a storm, and so on. Invite them to make storm sounds: thunder, lightning, heavy rain and wind, and so on.

Singing

Sing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2; SCM 14**. Invite the children to make motions for the song. Sing the song again using the motions.

Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ presence with us. Draw attention to the storm drawings and invite children to imagine the sounds, sights, and feelings associated with stormy water. Wonder how some might feel during a storm at sea, or what other things might be scary.

Offer a couple of moments of silence and end with this prayer:

God of all that we love and of all that we are afraid of,
help us to put our trust in you, your goodness, and your
grace. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story TD

Provide sticky notes and pencils, and invite the children to write or draw one thing per sticky note that people may be afraid of. Don't comment or encourage conversation over fears. Offer that what they voice could be something they fear, or it could simply be general. Allow them to do as many as they wish. It is OK if there are duplicates. Stick the notes on the storm drawings.

Read several of the fears that have been added to the drawings.

Ask:

- ▼ What do you do when you are afraid?
- ▼ What helps you feel better?



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story L B

Invite a child to find Mark 4 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 9**. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

This story lends itself to engaging children with their voices and bodies. Read the story again using **SCM 9** or listen to the story audio. Pause at these designated points to invite children to participate:

- ▼ "... time to relax." (*stretch and rest back of head on hands*)
- ▼ "... a nice breeze filled the sail . . ." (*gently move arms back and forth*)
- ▼ "Swoosh went the wind!" (*roughly move arms back and forth*)
- ▼ "Lightning flashed across the sky and thunder roared." (*clap loudly and slap thighs; continue this until Jesus says, "Be quiet!"*)
- ▼ "Immediately, the wind stopped blowing. . . . Just like that." (*read this portion in a whisper*)

At the end of the story, practice looks of astonishment.

Reflecting on God's Grace C L

Use these questions to reflect on the story:

- ▼ How do you think Jesus could sleep through such a rough storm?
- ▼ How did Jesus care for the disciples?
- ▼ What do you think his voice sounded like when he said, "Be quiet!"?
- ▼ Why do you think the disciples were so surprised when Jesus calmed the storm?
- ▼ Do you think they told others about Jesus calming the storm? What do you think they said?



Singing

Sing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2; SCM 14.**

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Invite the children to gather in a circle. If your worship table has a toy boat on it, use the boat as the “sharing piece.” If there is not a boat, choose another item at your disposal as the “sharing piece.” Display **SCM 9** and invite conversation on the “peace” present in the picture. The disciples went from fearful to astonished when Jesus helped them. You should hold the “sharing piece” first and voice something that scares you (your willingness to give voice to a fear will encourage children to do the same). After you have shared, children can speak the words “Jesus brings us peace,” while using these motions:

- ✦ Jesus (*touch right middle finger to left palm and then left middle finger to right palm*)
- ✦ brings us (*move hands outward from chest*)
- ✦ peace (*hold up first two fingers in a “V”*)

Pass the “sharing piece” to the person next to you and continue around the circle, voicing fears and offering the affirmation after each person has shared.

Celebrating God’s Grace



Create a rain storm together. Offer a moment for the children to get settled in chairs.

- ✦ This storm begins with a gentle wind. First, guide the group to rub their thumbs on their fingers.
- ✦ After a few seconds, guide them to make a gradual change to rubbing their hands together.
- ✦ Then change to finger snapping, very softly at first, then loudly.
- ✦ Follow this with clapping hands, then slapping legs loudly.
- ✦ Stamping feet can add occasional claps of thunder.
- ✦ Remind the children that Jesus said, “Be quiet!” and the storm stilled. Shout, “Be quiet!” and have everyone hold their hands high.

Repeat the activity, asking the children to close their eyes and imagine that they are on the boat with Jesus and the disciples.

Encourage a discussion about how they felt during the storm.



The next session suggests an offering activity of participating in a food bank or food ministry. Consider suggesting that the children begin collecting appropriate food items as a way to provide assistance to hungry people in fearful situations.

Offering God's Grace

T TD B

Before the session, cut the boat template squares from card-stock copies of GN 1.

Remind the children that Jesus calmed the storm and also calmed the disciples' fears. Tell the children that they will make a "storm in a bottle" that they can shake up and watch the water calm as a reminder of the peace that Jesus gives us. The storm bottle can be an offering to their families to use when anyone is worried or fearful.

Give each child a card with the boat template, a square of craft foam, scissors, a pencil, and an empty water bottle. Use the following directions to make the storm bottle:

- ▼ Cut out the boat shape from the card and trace it on the foam square.
- ▼ Cut out the boat shape from the foam square.
- ▼ Roll the foam boat and place it in the bottle.
- ▼ Fill the bottle one-third full with water and add a few drops of blue food coloring. Put the cap on the bottle and shake gently to mix in the food coloring.
- ▼ Take off the cap and add cooking oil to the bottle, filling it about two-thirds full.
- ▼ Add glitter, if desired.
- ▼ Put the cap on the bottle tightly.
- ▼ Shake the bottle to create a storm and then hold the bottle and watch the storm calm.

TD *Some children who have tactile sensitivities react to stimulations that most people are not bothered by. Reactions may be interpreted as bad behaviors. Avoid using tactile materials such as sand and glitter.*

Extra Activity

C

Recall some of the fearful situations that the children mentioned in "Preparing to Hear the Story." Remind them that Jesus said to have faith. Provide copies of GN 2. Wonder together what the people in the four scenes might be afraid of. Discuss what might make the people feel better.

Have the children form groups of two or three and choose one of the pictures to tell a short story about to the rest of the group. Provide the following prompts:

- ▼ What led to the person's fear?
- ▼ What is going through the person's mind at the moment pictured in the scene?
- ▼ What or who could help calm the fear of the person?

Share the stories with the group.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



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

Repeat the storm from “Celebrating God’s Grace.” This time when the storm peaks, experience the calming of the storm by gradually changing to clapping hands, loudly at first, then softer, then snapping fingers gradually softer and slower, then rubbing hands together, finishing with rubbing thumbs on fingers. Remind children that even in times of storms, Jesus is with us, offering peace.

Remind children that they cannot go where God is not, and that even during storms and in our afraid times, Jesus is with us, offering peace.

Lead children in this echo prayer:

God, sometimes we are afraid /
and we need you with us. /
Thank you for your presence /
that never ever leaves us. /
We can trust you /
and we are grateful. /
Amen. /

Following the prayer, turn to the person to your left and say, “(Name), go in peace and share peace with others,” and ask that person to turn to the person to their left and speak the same words until they have been spoken to each person in the circle.



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).





