



Peter's Denial

Goal: To recognize that we sometimes betray others and Jesus, but Jesus knows and loves us.

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, 18, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

purple cloth

grapes

pita bread

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

Responding

Claiming

costumes (optional)

Offering

copies of **GN 2** and
GN 3

Extra

copies of **GN 4**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i-ii**, "Your Visual Schedule." Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

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 purple cloth, a candle, a Bible, grapes, and pita bread, and suggest they set up a table like the one that Jesus and the disciples would have eaten at.

Ask the children to help prepare today's "Responding in Gratitude" activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today's singing.

Invite the children to make a rooster to place on or around the worship table. Give each child a copy of **GN 1** and provide tempera paints and forks. Show the children how they can paint "feathers" on their rooster with their forks and different colors of paint. Be sure to use the fork to make the rooster's comb on the top of the head and a touch of paint for the beak. Have them write their name on their paper.

As you prepare the space, lead a conversation about who each person shares meals with around the table.

Singing

Sing "Let Us Break Bread Together"—**MM 14**; **SCM 18**.

Praying **M** **L**

Turn on the candle. Lead the children in a few moments of silence by inviting them to take three deep breaths in and out. Then offer the following prayer:

God of grace, you see the good we do and the wrong. You know the things about us worth loving and the things we do that aren't so loving. You know us at our best and our worst. For your love that never ends, we are grateful. Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story **B** **L** **T**

Ask children to recall a time when a friend let them down. It would be helpful to begin with your vulnerability, perhaps saying something like "I once let a friend down, and I felt so terrible," or "a friend once didn't act like a friend, and I worked hard to forgive them." Invite them to share their experiences (without using names). Simply listen



without offering advice. “Thank you for sharing; that sounds like it was tough” is a good response.

Offer that Jesus understands what it is to be let down by a friend. Encourage children to listen for how as they hear today’s story.

FA *Many children have food and other allergies. An allergy to wheat involves an allergic response to a protein in wheat. A wheat allergy can be commonly confused with celiac disease, but they are very different. Parents and caregivers should notify you of both conditions. Provide gluten-free options to keep children safe.*



Hearing the Story

L FA F

Invite a child to find Mark 14 in the Bible and place it on the table. Ask a child to take the pita bread from the worship table and pass it around until every child has a portion to eat as they listen. Offer that, in today’s story, Jesus was sharing a meal with his closest friends. Read **SCM 3** or use the story audio. 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 and invite the children to respond to the following prompts as indicated:

- ▼ “No, I won’t!”—“Yes, you will!”
- ▼ “rooster”—“Cock-a-doodle-doo!”
- ▼ “Yes, you were!”—“I was not!”

Reflecting on God’s Grace

L C

Use the following questions for reflection and discussion:

- ▼ Jesus was sharing a meal with his closest friends. He knew Peter would deny him. How do you imagine Jesus felt knowing that as he ate?
- ▼ Think about the people you said that you share meals with around the table most often. How would you feel if one of them betrayed you?
- ▼ What do you imagine Jesus felt about Peter?
- ▼ Why do you think Peter pretended he didn’t know Jesus?
- ▼ Can you recall a time you have ever done anything like that? What was that like, when you pretended not to know someone because it would look bad for you?
- ▼ The story ends with Peter crying. Why do you think he cried?

Singing

L

Give God an offering of music. Listen to “Gbemi, Jesu (Lift Me, Jesus)”—**MM 15; SCM 19**—a song sung in both English and Yoruba, a language spoken in many African countries. Invite the children to sing along as you play the song again. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Create an "If Only Peter Had Said . . ." skit. Form small groups or work as one group. Invite the children to recall the portion of the story where Peter's response was to deny knowing Jesus. In groups, brainstorm words Peter could have used to say that he knew Jesus, and then how those gathered might have responded differently. Suggest that groups come up with three responses Peter could have used. Provide costumes, if so desired. With each group, re-read the paragraph beginning with the line "Later that night . . ." and have the group present their skit from there.

After the skit(s) are finished, ask the children if they think it is harder to *say* we know and follow Jesus or to *show* that we know and follow Jesus. Wonder together what the difference between the two is.

- B** *Providing opportunities for children to be in front of others can be a fun way to learn from one another and can build children's confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*

Praying God's Grace



Offer prayers of confession for the ways we may deny Jesus. Recall together that Jesus knew that Peter would deny knowing him; still, he invited him to dinner. Jesus knew that Peter would deny knowing him, but he didn't stop being his friend, talk bad about him to others, or avoid him. Jesus offers us the same grace.

Consider together ways that we may deny knowing Jesus with our actions. Acknowledge that we may never say the words "I don't know Jesus" but that we may be guilty of denying we know him in the way we treat others, the words we speak, or actions we take.

Have the children get their roosters from the worship area and write or draw a prayer of confession on the back of their rooster for ways their actions deny who Jesus asks them to be. Explain that a prayer of confession basically says what you are sorry for, how you will do things differently the next time, and what you will do to fix things. Assist with writing as needed.



Offering God's Grace

LD

Create posters to display around your church. Wonder together what Jesus may have said to Peter after Peter denied him. Maybe Jesus would have said, "I still love you!" or "I forgive you!" or "Try again tomorrow!" Write responses where all can see. Tell the children that Jesus says those same things to us when we turn our backs on him.

Invite the children to choose a copy of **GN 2** or **GN 3** and have them fill the speech bubbles with imagined responses. Encourage children to be creative with their words and the way they create their poster. Hang them somewhere in your church for others to see and enjoy, anywhere that others can see and receive Jesus' words of grace.

GN 4 Solution:

Jesus loves us even when we fail.

Extra Activity

LD

Remind the children that Jesus knows and loves us. Hand out copies of **GN 4**.

Invite the children to use the key to solve the puzzle. Encourage children who finish first to assist others.

As they work the puzzle, ask:

- ▼ I wonder, "When have you done something that betrayed a friend?"
- ▼ How did your friend treat you afterward?
- ▼ What did (or can) you do to help make things better?



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).

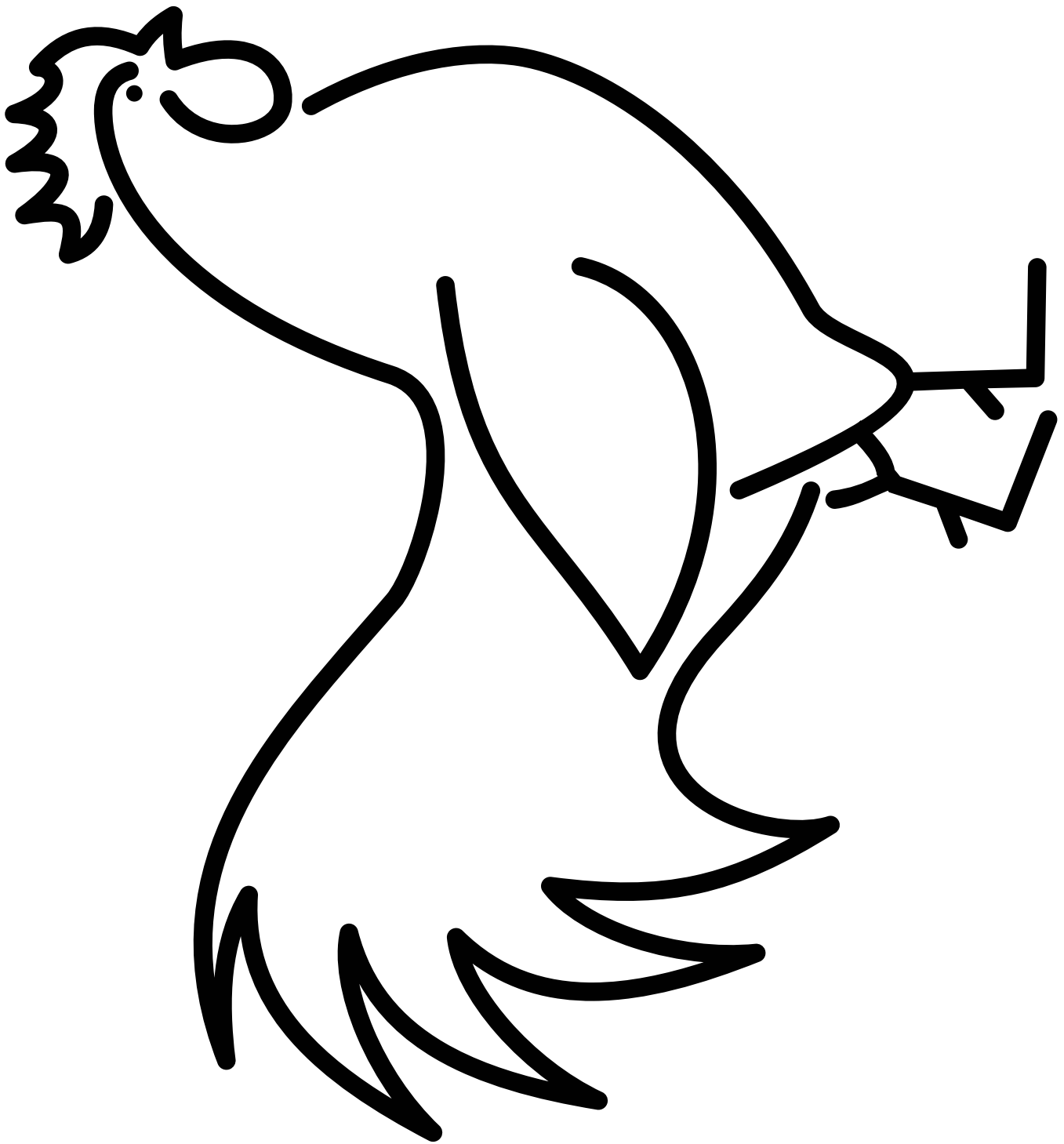
LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Lead children in cleaning up the worship space.

Invite each child to share one practical way that they can show they know Jesus this week: an action they can take, words they can speak, a prayer they can commit to daily, or anything that will affirm their knowledge of who Jesus is.

As the children leave, bless each one, saying, "(Name), go in God's grace knowing that Jesus loves you always."

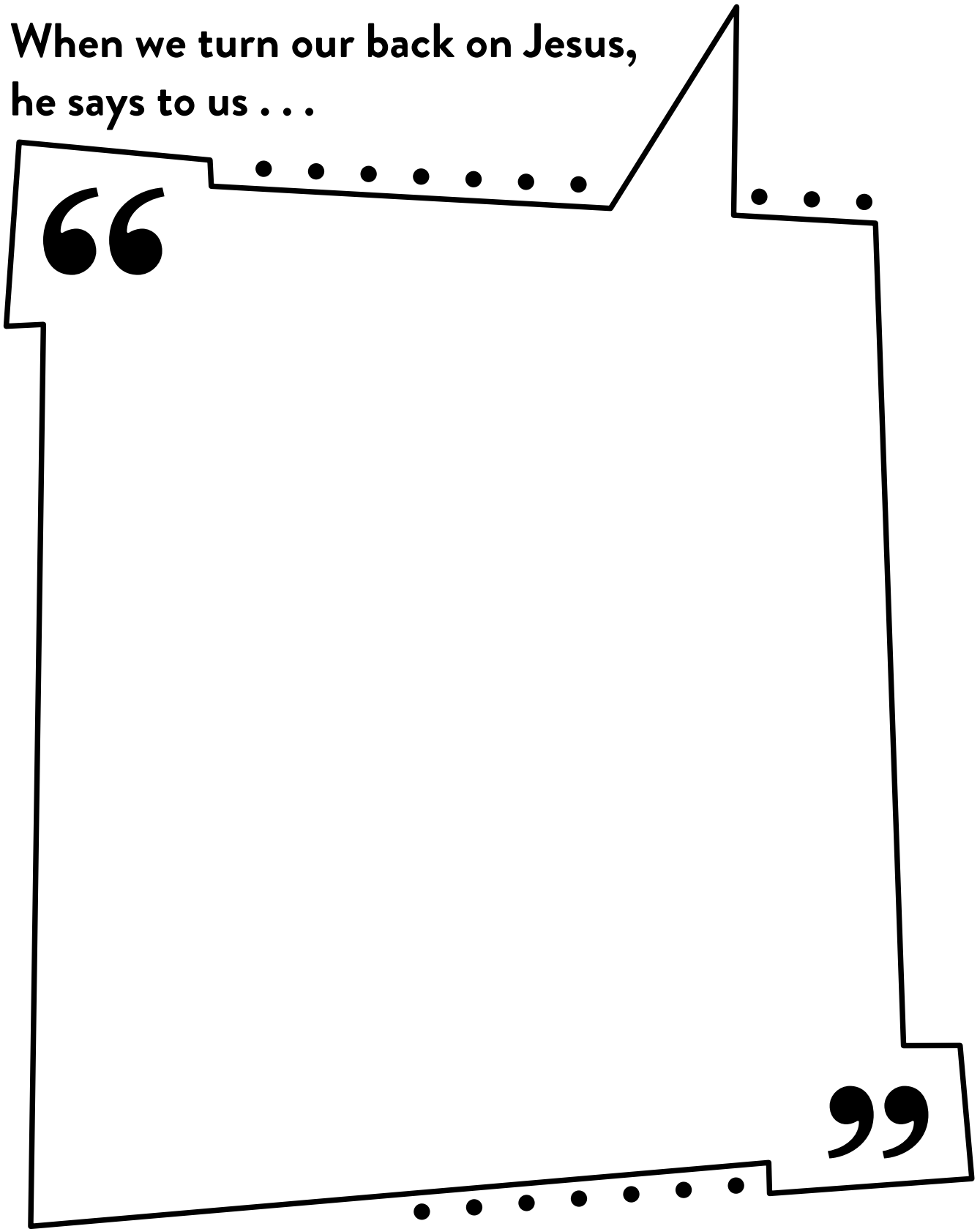
Encourage the children to take their roosters with them and to share the story they heard today with at least one person in their home.



**When we turn our back on Jesus,
he says to us . . .**

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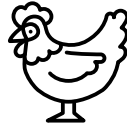
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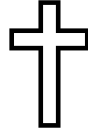
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