



Grain on the Sabbath

Goal: To practice ways of keeping the Sabbath to honor God and care for people.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 2:23-28

Jesus sometimes got in trouble with the religious leaders of his day. When his disciples began to pick some wheat on the Sabbath, leaders accused them of breaking the Sabbath law, which was that no work should be done on the Sabbath and “picking the heads of wheat” (v. 23; CEB) would be work.

Jesus appealed to an incident in the life of David when he gave his hungry friends bread that, according to the law, was reserved only for priests. This led Jesus to pronounce that “the Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath” (v. 27; CEB) and that the “Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath” (v. 28).

Jesus believed these rules or laws were hindering those in need—his hungry disciples. Even David showed that, sometimes, laws may be broken if there is a greater purpose involved. Jesus said he was “lord even of the sabbath” (v. 28). This means the example Jesus gives us—of loving and serving others, as he taught—is more important than the kinds of laws or rules that, otherwise, are good in themselves. We should always look for God’s grace and find ways of being grateful.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children will have no problem naming rules that they have been taught are important. They have experience with rules at school, rules at home, and rules with sports or scouts. Inviting them to talk about a time when they broke a rule and knew why they were doing it offers a good introduction to this story about Jesus’ breaking the Sabbath rule and feeding hungry people. Older children will be able to understand the significance of breaking a rule for a good reason. Younger children will need help in understanding that, when you break a rule, you need to know why you did it.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Sabbath rest is a concept that may need to be explained to the children. A way to begin would be to talk with them about what Sunday (Sabbath) is like in their home. What makes this day special or different from the other six days? In preparation for reading the story, you can help them understand how the people in Jesus’ day rested on the Sabbath, which meant they did no work. Invite the children to talk about things they could do on the Sabbath that would help them rest and would require no work.

Dear God, Jesus taught us that we can break the rules when we see someone in need. Open my eyes, O Lord. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 8b, 14,
23, 26

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white cloth

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

GN 2

Responding

Praying

bell

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

If you have a large group, create additional disciple puppets so that each child can participate.

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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **L** **FA** **LD**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!” These words are spoken during Eastertide, the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, and a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Eastertide), and **SCM 8a**.

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

On a large sheet of mural paper, invite the children to use art materials to draw or paint a field of grain. Display **SCM 8b** and explain that this is a field of wheat, one type of grain. Explain that the Bible story has something to do with Jesus, his disciples, some religious leaders, and a field of grain. Display their drawing in the area where you will tell the Bible story. Use it as a background to tell the story.

Invite the children to create simple craft-stick puppets for the following characters: Jesus, five disciples, three Pharisees, David, and two of David’s men. Provide copies of **GN 1**, scissors, and other craft supplies. Encourage the children to divide out the characters, then cut the faces from **GN 1** and glue them to large craft sticks before adding additional features with available craft supplies. Set aside for “Hearing the Story.”

Singing

B **MS**

Walk to the mural of the field. Play and sing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2**; **SCM 14**—while pretending to pick grain.

Praying

Turn on the candle and say a prayer:

Gracious God, thank you for this day when we come to church to praise you and learn of you. Make our hearts, minds, and souls ready. Amen.

L *When telling a story, slow down and speak clearly. Above all, have fun! If you enjoy the story, the children will too.*



Sabbath is a special day of rest when people do not work. Jewish people celebrate it from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night. Most Christians celebrate the Lord's Day on Sunday.



Preparing to Hear the Story

C L

There are two important aspects to this story for children to understand before they hear it. First is the practice of *gleaning*. Children may have heard this word in the story of Ruth. It was when farmers left grain or crops in their fields for people in need to take (this still happens today). When Jesus and his disciples walk through a grain field and take grain, they are breaking off the heads of grain and chewing on the hard raw wheat berries (show **SCM 8a**).

The second thing to know about this story is that Jesus talks about an event in the life of David. Let the children recall what they may know about David. Remind them that David was the shepherd who became king. The story to which Jesus referred is in 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

Briefly, tell 1 Samuel 21:1-6 in your own words. Explain that the “bread of the Presence” was twelve loaves placed on a special table in the temple (Exodus 25:30). The loaves were to be eaten only by the priest. On the Sabbath, the priest was to replace them with fresh loaves.

- ▼ Define *Sabbath*. What day of the week is Sabbath for Christians (Sunday) and for Jews (Saturday)?
- ▼ What did David do that he was not supposed to do? Why was it wrong?

Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Mark 2 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read Mark 2:23-28. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story a second time using **SCM 8** or listen to the story audio, encouraging the children to act out the story using the craft-stick puppets. Children may operate more than one puppet.

Reflecting on God's Grace

F B M C

Reflect on why Jesus thought it was OK to break the rule concerning the Sabbath.

- ▼ Why were rules so important to people in Bible times?

Present the situations from **GN 2**, one at a time, or include some situations of your own. Invite comments about what the characters in each situation might do. Cut the situations apart and have volunteers act out one or more suggestions for responses to each story. Help the children think about rules by asking questions such as these:

- ▼ I wonder, “What rules are helpful to you?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What rules are meant to protect?”
- ▼ What are some rules you disagree with that you have to follow? Why do you disagree?
- ▼ What can you do when you think rules are not helpful?



Singing

Play and sing “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**.
Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Ask each child to cut out seven colored paper strips (about 1" x 6"). Ask them to use pencils to write or draw one way that people can celebrate or honor the Sabbath. Collect the strips and mix them up.

Invite the children to choose, at random, seven strips and use them to make a paper chain. You can participate as well.

Suggest to the children that each day of the week they can draw a check mark on one of the paper rings from the chain and try to do what it says with their families. They might find that the ring suggests that they pray or that they read their Bible. Since the strips were chosen at random, they might be asked to pray two days in a row.

B *Children with behavioral issues (and even some without) may struggle with a long list of complicated rules. Keep guidelines broad and simple, such as: try your best, respect others, be polite.*



Celebrating God’s Grace



Before the session, print always, sometimes, and never on sheets of construction paper. Tape these three signs a good distance apart on a wall.

Explain that the group is going to look at some rules. Together you will be considering why some rules exist and whether or not those rules need to be followed.

Each time you say one of the following “rules,” ask children to stand under the sign that best describes whether they should follow the rule always, sometimes, or never:

- ▼ Wash your hands before eating.
- ▼ Cover your mouth when you cough.
- ▼ Go to church on Sunday.
- ▼ Do not chew gum in class.
- ▼ Do not talk to strangers.
- ▼ Share what you have with others.
- ▼ Tell a secret that was told to you.
- ▼ Spend all your money on yourself.



Each time, ask volunteers why they chose to stand where they did. Afterward, engage children in a general discussion, perhaps addressing the following questions:

- ▼ Are there good reasons not to follow a rule?
- ▼ I wonder, “What were Jesus’ reasons not to follow the Sabbath rules?”
- ▼ Jesus changed rules. When should we do the same?
- ▼ How can we know which rules to keep, change, or throw away?

Praying God’s Grace

D L MS

Sabbath time is *holy time*, time set apart for talking with and listening to God (prayer). On the Sabbath, as well as other days, we remember that God is with us.

Go on a walk, looking for things that make the children think of God. If the weather is conducive, walk outdoors. If the weather is not cooperative, walk through the church building, being careful not to disturb other groups.

Before you leave, prepare the children for the walk. Explain that, when they hear a bell ring (or your fingers snap or some other sound), they will stop and listen and look for things that remind them of God. Begin the walk, going toward an area where you can find reminders of God’s presence. Ring the bell (or other sound). After a few moments of silent reflection, invite the children to tell what they see or hear. Remind them that, on the Sabbath (Sunday), we come to church to remember God, but we can also remember that God is with us anywhere and anytime.

Extra Activity

LD

Reread the first paragraph of the story. Provide copies of **GN 3**. Allow time for the children to complete the puzzle. Encourage children to look for letters that are given in the puzzle and in the word bank, such as the first or last letter of a word or a word with a particular letter, such as *k*. Discuss what the solution means.

GN 3 Solution:

The Sabbath is a gift for us.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

Joyfully play, sing, and dance to “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 26**.

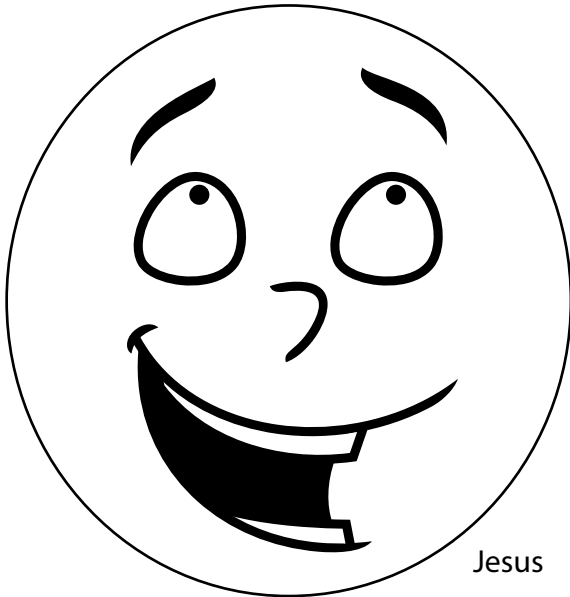
Remind the children that one of the things we do to feel God’s presence—in happy, sad, peaceful, and frightful times—is take time to communicate with and listen to God in prayer. Prayer reminds us that God is with us. Lead children in this echo prayer:



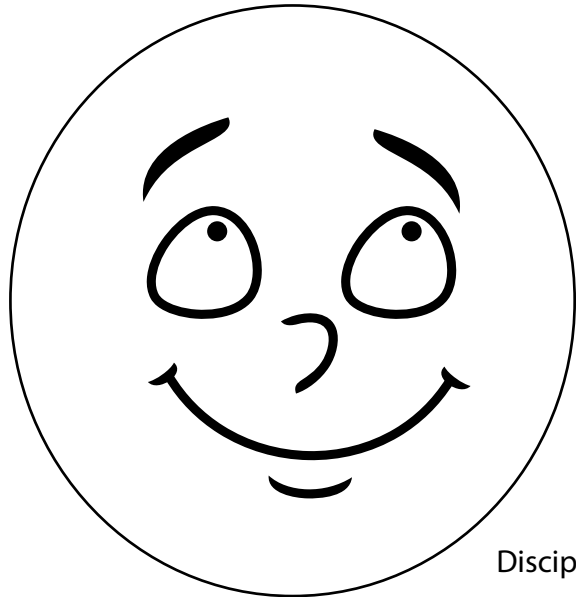
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

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

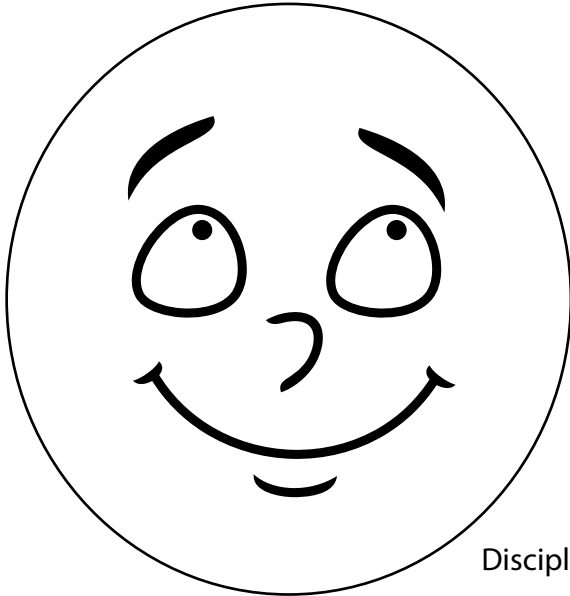
Following the prayer, turn to the person to your left and say, “(Name), God is with you, go in peace,” and ask that person to turn to the person to their left and speak the same words until it has been spoken to each person in the circle.



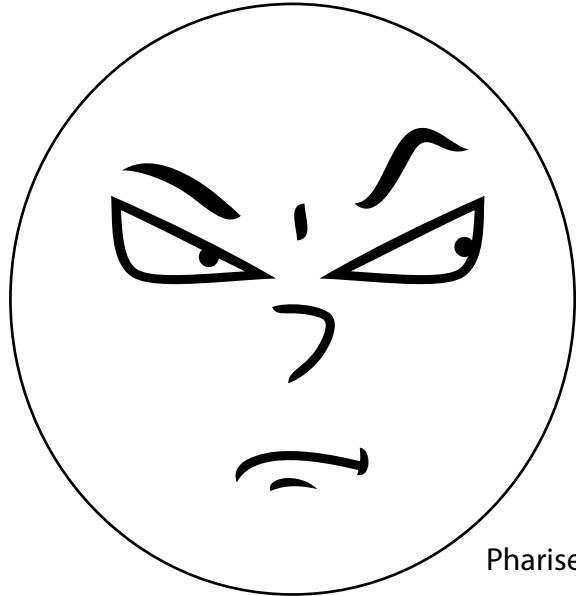
Jesus



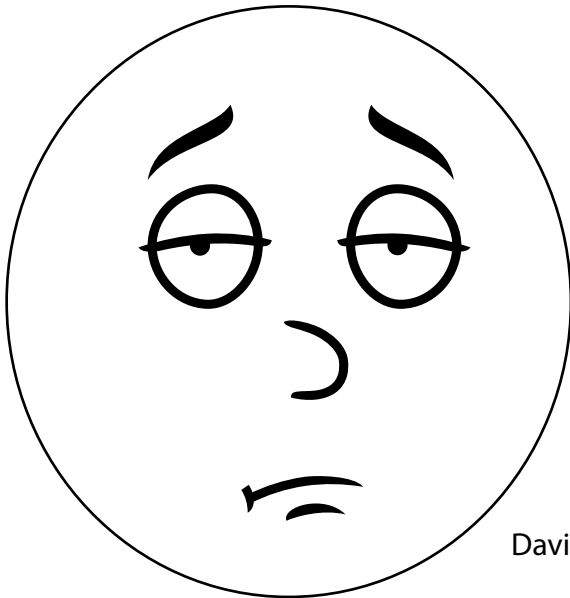
Disciples



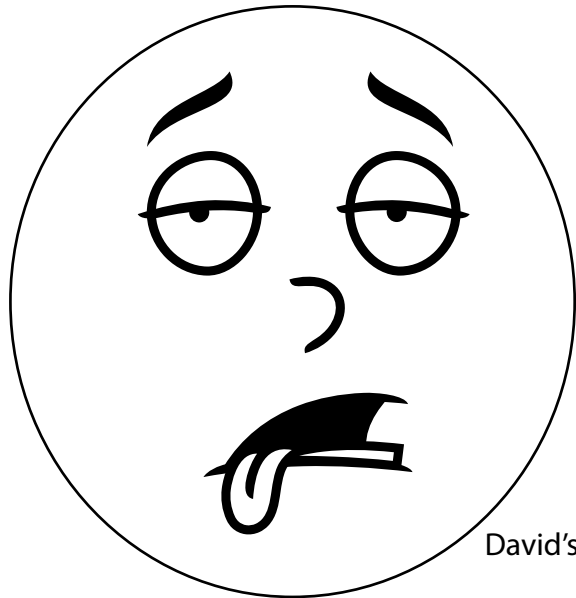
Disciples



Pharisees



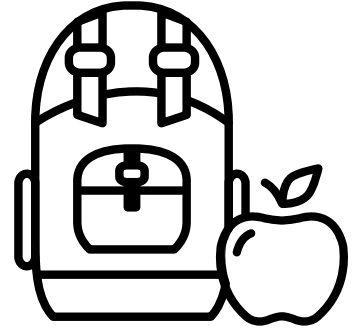
David



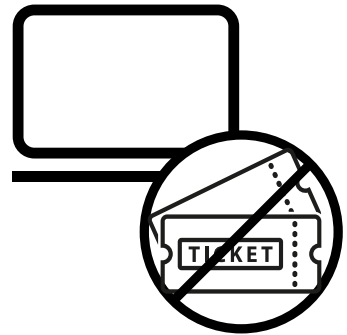
David's men

At School

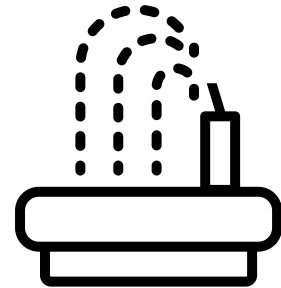
Carla has noticed that things are missing from her backpack. One day it was an apple; another day, she discovered that her colored pencils were gone. At first, Carla thought that her mother had forgotten to put the apple in or that she had left the pencils at home. Today, however, Carla saw Tim looking through another child's backpack. What will happen next?

**At Home**

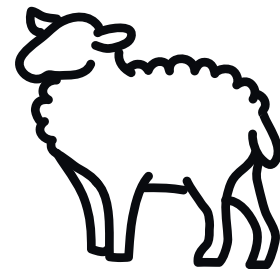
James likes to use the computer to play games. In fact, he likes it so much that his parents have set rules. James must have his homework completed before he can do any other activities. James had been invited to a movie with a friend. James got online to play a game and didn't pay attention to the time. An hour later, his friend knocked on the front door, letting him know he was ready to go to the movie. James had not completed his homework because he had been playing a game. What do you think will happen next?

**On the Playground**

An important rule on the playground is, "Never push while at the water fountain." Yesterday, as Suzanne was getting a drink, someone pushed her. She hit her mouth on the spout and her lip began to bleed. Several children were around the water fountain and Suzanne did not see who had pushed her. The playground supervisor has decided that everyone must be punished since this could have been a serious accident. What do you think will happen next?

**At Church**

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Taylor announced that every child who memorized Psalm 23 would get a special treat: a tiny stuffed lamb. By the end of the year, every child had said Psalm 23 to Ms. Taylor. Katie noticed, however, that while some children said every verse perfectly, others skipped verses or got them mixed up. Still, Ms. Taylor gave each child a stuffed lamb. What do you think will happen next?



Grain on the Sabbath Word Scramble

Based on Mark 2:23-28.

BREAD	GRAIN	STALKS
DISCIPLES	JESUS	SABBATH
FOLLOWERS	REST	WORSHIP
FRIENDS		

A word scramble grid consisting of 22 numbered circles and some letters placed in the grid. The grid is 12 columns wide and 8 rows high. The letters are: Row 1: D, C, L; Row 2: J, S; Row 3: I, E, D, S; Row 4: R, N; Row 5: S, K; Row 6: D; Row 7: S, H; Row 8: O, O; Row 9: S, P; Row 10: (empty circles).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

