



Love God, Love Others

Goal: To show God's love in our everyday actions.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

The book of Deuteronomy ("second law") features what came to be regarded as the greatest commandment: "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might" (vv. 4-5). This forms the beginning of the Jewish daily prayer, the Shema. It was quoted by Jesus when he was asked, "Which commandment is the first of all?" (Mark 12:28).

We believe the same thing. God is our only Lord. We know God in Jesus Christ and we follow him out of love. We show our love by worshiping and serving God, as the Scriptures teach. In what we say and do, we express our love for God's grace and we live in gratitude.

The book of Leviticus records the familiar command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). This command comes in the midst of other commands about relating to neighbors: Don't take vengeance; don't hold a grudge against your neighbor—in short, "love your neighbor as yourself." The command to love your neighbor is the umbrella way of relating to other people. Jesus recognized this when he cited this as the second great commandment (Mark 12:31).

We thank God for loving us and we express our gratitude to God by sharing God's love with other people.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children will be able to respond with what they think it means to love God. They will be able to come up with many ways to show their love for God when they are at home or when they are "out and about" (Deuteronomy 6:7, CEB).

Children learn about loving neighbors with words and actions. When they help take a meal to a neighbor or church member who is sick or when they assist in preparing and serving a meal, they experience ways to love a neighbor. There are so many opportunities for children of all ages to find their own ways to express love to others.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Encourage all children to tell stories of how they can show love to others in daily acts. Invite the children to imagine with you the ways that they have seen people love God with their whole heart. Then invite them to say the ways they can love God that way. Use these words as a blessing, calling each by name as she or he leaves today.

*Gracious God, I give you my heart, my soul,
and my might. Use me as you will. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 6, 18, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, GN 2

basket of small stones
(three stones per
person)

bowl of water

Responding

Claiming
SCM 6a

Offering
copies of GN 3

Extra
copies of GN 4

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.

Welcoming and Preparing

A **B** **MS**

Play “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship center with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons or markers. Invite children to write their name on the sheet then decorate it, creating a sign. You may suggest that they glue the sheet to colorful construction paper. When the children have finished, have them add their signs to the worship center.

Singing

MS

Play the song “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7**; **SCM 18**—as the children listen. Play the song again and, together with the children, clap out the rhythm. Then join in singing.

Praying

C **SD**

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to pray a “popcorn” prayer. Explain that you will open the prayer and then pause for people to say words or phrases, popping the words like popcorn. If more than one person speaks at a time, assure the children that it is all right. Pray:

Dear God, we love you with all that we are and all that we do.
These are some of the ways we show our love for you . . .
You want us to love our neighbors.
These are some of the ways we love others . . .
May all God’s children say, “Amen” . . .

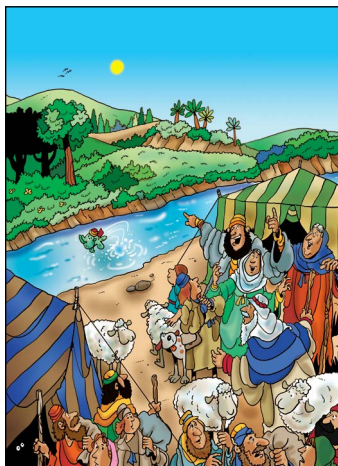
C Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.



Preparing to Hear the Story L M

On two sheets of newsprint, write the numbers 1–4 in a column on one sheet and 5–10 in a column on the other sheet. Ask the children what they know about the Ten Commandments. Write key words or phrases they suggest by each corresponding number. See **GN 2** for a list of commandments. Assist if children do not mention one or more commandments. If there are other suggestions that don't seem to fit any of the commandments, honor the suggestion and write it at the bottom of one of the papers, seeing if it might fall under the "Love God" or "Love Others" categories.

Ask children what the first four commandments have in common (*Love God*) and the second six commandments have in common (*Love Others*). Write those titles above each column.



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

Invite a volunteer to find Deuteronomy 6 in one Bible and another volunteer to find Leviticus 19 in another Bible. Read **SCM 6** aloud to the children. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bibles on the worship center.

Invite the children to collect their signs from the worship center. Help the children learn the call and response that is repeated in the story:

Leader: Love God with your whole heart, soul, and strength.

Children: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Read the story again or listen to the story audio. Encourage the children to hold up their signs and respond enthusiastically.

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ What do you think it means to love God with heart, soul, and strength?
- ▼ What do you think it means to love your neighbor as yourself?

Gather around the newsprint labeled "Love God" and "Love Others." Brainstorm ideas of ways we can show love to God and people. Record the children's ideas on the appropriate sheets. When all ideas have been given, invite everyone to add hearts to the sheets.



Singing



Play and listen to “Love”—**MM 24; SCM 21**. Play again, inviting the children to sing the adapted second verse on the lyric sheet.

Love

Love, love, love, love:
Christians, this is your call.
Love your neighbor as yourself
for God loves us all.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Teach the American Sign Language for the two commandments, using **SCM 6a**:

- ▼ Lead the children in saying the commandments after you.
- ▼ Teach the sign for *love*.
- ▼ Say the commandments together and sign *love* in each one.
- ▼ Teach the sign for *God* and repeat the commandments.
- ▼ Teach the sign for *neighbor (person near)*, repeating while signing.
- ▼ Teach the sign for *yourself*.

By this time, the children will know the two commandments by heart. Challenge the children to teach others the commandments using sign language.

To see the sign language, go to handspeak.com and look up the words.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

If desired, shorten the two commandments to “Love God. Love others.”



Celebrating God's Grace



God talked about loving others and ourselves with every part of our being. Brainstorm together ways to love the way God wants us to.

Take turns lying down on mural paper and tracing around each other's bodies. Cut out the figures.

- On the head, write or draw something you could say to express your love to someone you care about.
- On the left arm, write or draw something you could do to show your love for people who are poor or homeless or people who live in other parts of the world.
- On the right arm, write or draw something you could do to show your love for the environment (animals, land, water, and so on).
- On the left leg, write or draw something you could do to show your love for someone in your family or community.
- On the right leg, write or draw something you could do to express your love for yourself.

Show your drawings to one another. Name how all of the things on the drawings express our love for God. Encourage children to take their drawings home as a reminder to celebrate the many ways we can show our love for God, others, ourselves, and the world.

Offering God's Grace



Today's passage calls us to love God and others with everything we have. Invite children to participate in a "Pay It Forward" campaign. Explain that the idea is to do something kind for someone else without being noticed. They might do an extra chore for a parent without being asked or drop a treat into a friend's bag, leaving a note asking the recipient to pass on the favor.

Brainstorm ideas of things that the children might do for others. Hand out three cards from **GN 3** to each person. Decorate cards if desired. If you have time, calculate how many loving acts would be done if everyone in your group did three and the recipients passed it on to three more, and so on.

Extra Activity

Provide copies of **GN 4** and pencils. Allow time for the children to find their way from God to Neighbor. Challenge the children to write or draw ways to show God's love in our everyday actions, filling the space around the maze.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

B

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather around the water bowl. Pass the basket of stones and ask children to take three. Demonstrate dropping the stones in the water one at a time, while saying, "I can love God. I can love my neighbor. I can love myself."

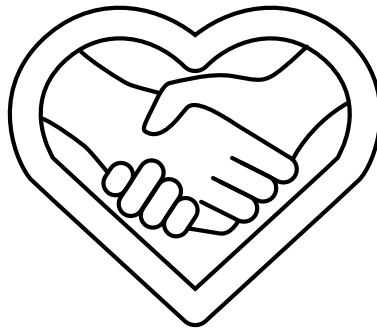
Have children take turns dropping their stones in the water and saying the words. After all have had a turn, offer this prayer:

Dear God, thank you for all our neighbors, especially these neighbors who are our church friends: (*say each child's name*). Thank you, God, for loving us so much that we have love to share with each other. Amen.

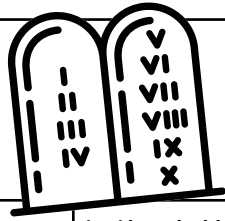
Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week. Close by calling each child by name and saying, "Rejoice! God is always with you. Go in grace to love and serve the Lord!"



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).



Love
your
neighbor
as
yourself.



Ten Commandments

Love God



	What the Bible says:	What a child might say:
1.	You shall have no other gods before me.	Love God more than anything else.
2.	You shall make no idols.	Worship only God.
3.	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	Speak God's name with love and respect.
4.	Keep the Sabbath day holy.	Have a day to rest and thank God.
Love Others		
5.	Honor your father and your mother.	Love and respect your mom and dad.
6.	You shall not murder.	Never hurt anyone with your words or actions.
7.	You shall not commit adultery.	Be faithful to your husband or wife. Keep your promises.
8.	You shall not steal.	Don't take anything that isn't yours.
9.	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	Always tell the truth.
10.	You shall not covet.	Be happy with what you have. Don't want what others have.

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