



Work for Peace and Justice

Goal: To explore ways we can work for God's justice and peace.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Micah 4:1-8

Micah proclaims a promise for God's universal peace grounded in God's teachings and justice.

Micah believed God will transform the sinful world into a land of peace for nations and individuals. In "the days to come," people will stream to the house of the Lord on Mount Zion (v. 1, CEB). They come to learn God's ways and "walk in God's paths" (v. 2). God will instruct the people in God's law and will "judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations" (v. 3).

An image of peace is captured: "They will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war" (v. 3). Imagine, war no more! All will live in security with fullness of life (v. 4). Those driven away (into exile) will be restored (v. 6). New life emerges!

This is possible because "the LORD will rule over them on Mount Zion from now on and forever" (v. 7). We work for peace and justice now because God's reign is universal and eternal. God's future pulls us forward.

By God's grace, we receive this promise of a peaceable world grounded in God. We are grateful!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The story of the prophet Micah and his words to God's people provide a great way to connect with children and their imaginations. Invite them to consider their response to a question such as, "What do you think the world would look like if we lived as God wanted us to live?" Younger children as well as older children will be able to respond with their ideas.

You can use this question and the children's responses as you connect with the story of the prophet Micah and his words from God to the people.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you prepare to tell the story of Micah and his words of prophecy to God's people, keep in mind the world in which the children are growing up. What has been in the news recently? Will the children have heard about events of violence? Imagine coming to them as Micah responded to the Israelites. What good news do you have to share? The story you will read to them invites children to hear responses about actions they can take in a world where God's peace is needed.

*O God, help me to work for justice, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 13, 13a, 13b,
17, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

green cloth

candle

several large boxes of
different sizes

metal rake, garden hoe,
shovel, or spade

Responding

Celebrating

ball

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, seed packets

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

LG **A** **B** **M** **MS**

Play “Praise God, All You Nations”—**MM 4**—as the children arrive.

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

Invite children to place a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible on the worship table. Have them stack the boxes, placing the largest one on the bottom. Have a child write *Peace on Earth* on one of the boxes.

Place the rake, hoe, shovel, or spade next to the stacked boxes.

Ask some children to print the following words on different sides of the stacked boxes in large letters: *prophet, vision, peace, fairness, God’s ways, justice, shared, stood up, and kind*. Explain that today we will be hearing a passage that speaks about those words. Wonder together what each word means or what pictures come into their minds when they hear each word.

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

Singing

LG

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing “Care Enough to Care”—**MM 27**; **SCM 23**. Wonder together what ways we can care for others. Suggest that the children pantomime some of the ways as they sing the song again.

Praying

F **C**

Turn on the candle. Ask the children to join you in front of the boxes. Encourage them to look at the words and imagine a world in which people treat one another kindly and there is no more war. Pray:

God, we know that you want all people to live in peace. Help us to work for peace. Amen.

F *The children may relate more directly to conversations about fairness as you introduce the concept of justice.*



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Invite a child to find the book of Micah in the Old Testament. Encourage the child to use the table of contents. Explain that today's story is about what the prophet Micah, a messenger of God, had to say.

Show **SCM 13a**. Have a child find Jerusalem. Explain that, in the time of Micah, Judah was around Jerusalem and below it. Micah spoke truth about how some people were greedy and treating others poorly, cheating them. He told about how people and countries fought with each other. Micah, however, had messages of hope for the people.



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 MS L

Invite a volunteer to open the Bible to Micah 4. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 13** 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."

Spread out the boxes that were created earlier. Read the story again or listen to the story audio. Ask the children to listen for the words on the boxes. Tell them that, each time they hear one of the words, they should go to that box and put a hand near the word.

Reflecting on God's Grace C TD

Show **SCM 13b**. Explain that the man is Micah. The speech bubble above his head is too small to write Micah's whole message. Wonder aloud how to shorten Micah's message so it can be written in the speech bubble.

Allow time for several responses before writing what they say in the speech bubble. Ask:

- ▼ Why is Micah's message a good one for the world today?

Invite the children to express Micah's theme of peace. Ask how Micah talked about what would happen in a time of peace. Give each child a lump of play dough. Have them think of elements of fighting or war and form them out of the play dough. Invite children to share their figures. Then have them turn those things of fighting or war into items that would be used during peaceful times. If necessary, suggest that Micah talked about turning swords into plows, meaning that items of war would be turned into things to help people plant and grow food. Wonder together what other things might be items used in times of peace. Have the children share their new creations.



Singing

MS

Listen to “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6; SCM 17**. Note that this song is sung in two languages—English and Spanish. Practice the words and sing together in both languages.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

F B C

Form small groups of two or three children. Give each group a situation in which they are to determine how to show peace or justice by making things more fair. Ask them to develop the situation into a skit. Use the scenes below, or ones of your own choosing:

- ▼ Luciana’s lunch money slips out of her pocket when she bends over to pick up her books. Shannon sees what happens, but picks up the money and doesn’t say anything.
- ▼ Andre rides your new bike. He hits a bump, falls off the bike, bends the fender, and ruins the tire.
- ▼ Rosita watched as George left the classroom. She was glad he’d gotten in trouble, but she knew that it hadn’t all been his fault.
- ▼ Derek has been looking at toy ads, making out his Christmas list. When he asked Tony what he wanted for Christmas, Tony said he wanted a warm coat for his mother and a job for his dad.

Encourage the children to practice their skits before performing them for the rest of the group.

B *Making skits is a fun way to process situations. Sometimes, children can let play-acting get a little rowdy or out of hand. Encourage creativity while reminding children to be respectful of all.*

Celebrating God’s Grace

LG A

Play a game in which all the children are encouraged to be peacemakers.

Tell players that they will create a peaceful place by sharing compliments. If needed, give some examples, such as “(Name), I think you do _____ well.” or “(Name), I like your _____.”

Begin by having the players sit in a circle on the floor. The person who sat down first begins as the peacemaker. All other people start with frowns on their faces. The peacemaker will roll a ball to another person as they give a compliment to that person. That person will smile and respond, “Peace to you,” then roll the ball and give a



compliment to another person, and so on. Encourage players to be sincere. The first round ends when all are smiling.

Play a second round, having the children frown again. Challenge the group to choose someone different this round and to make sure they say something different.



Offering God's Grace



Before the session, purchase seed packets for things that can be grown indoors, year-round, such as scallions, radishes, spinach, or herbs (basil, oregano, chives, and parsley).

Distribute copies of **GN 1** and have the children color the labels and cut them out. Together, read what the labels say: "Sowing seeds of peace" and "We are rooted in God to work for peace and justice." Have the children fold and staple the labels on the seed packets. Invite the children to identify people to whom they will give the seeds. What will they say when they give the seeds to that person? Reflect on how sharing food is one of the ways we can help fulfill God's vision for a peaceful world.

Extra Activity



Ask the children, "What do you think the world would look like if we lived the way God wanted us to live?" Welcome all answers and praise creativity in imagining what it might look like.

Distribute copies of **GN 2** and colored pencils or pens. Allow a few quiet moments for the children to begin coloring. Ask the children what the images are symbols for.

Explain the following meanings:

- ▼ The peace sign was created in the 1960s to express peace.
- ▼ The dove with the olive branch is from the Noah's ark story and was an indication to Noah that peace came back to the world.
- ▼ The hand gesture for peace came from "V" for victory, meaning that a time of fighting ended.
- ▼ The heart symbolizes the love and care we have for others.

Encourage the children to use the symbols to talk about peace at home.

C *Some children may need more time to formulate a response to questions requiring imagination. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Be patient and encourage other children to do the same.*



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to gather in a circle. Sing “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6; SCM 17**. Encourage the children to try singing in English and Spanish.

Ask the children to share one thing they will do to try to bring about peace and justice in the coming week.









Turn on the candle again. Pray, or have a volunteer lead, the following prayer:

May the light remind us that God sent us prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, and Micah to prepare the way of justice for all people. Help us, O God, to bring about a world of peace and justice for all. Amen.

Send each child with a blessing, saying, “(Name), go in peace 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).

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Sowing Seeds of Peace</p> |  <p>Sowing Seeds of Peace</p> |
| <p>We are rooted in God to work for peace and justice.</p>  | <p>We are rooted in God to work for peace and justice.</p>  |
|  <p>Sowing Seeds of Peace</p> |  <p>Sowing Seeds of Peace</p> |
| <p>We are rooted in God to work for peace and justice.</p>  | <p>We are rooted in God to work for peace and justice.</p>  |



