

Ages 3-5



# Growing

in  
Grace & Gratitude

Year 2, Fall





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## Introduction

Year 2, Fall examines Old Testament stories that reflect worship—ways we come before God in worship and ways in which God meets us, calls us, and sends us. Beginning with the beginning, in Genesis 1 we celebrate the grace, beauty, and joy in God’s good creation. Children hear that they are a part of God’s activity in the world—they are created in God’s image and God calls them very good. Our response considers Psalm 8, encountering the wonder of creation through praise.

The story of Moses’ call at the burning bush helps us to live into the promise that we, too, are recognized by God and called by name. In worship we are called to come just as we are, with our doubts and reservations, just as Moses did. Then as we receive the Word of God, we learn ways in which we love God and love others. As Moses and the Israelites offered their gifts and skills to create a tabernacle to represent God’s presence on earth, we, too, give thanks. As Joshua and the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, carrying God’s Word with them, they stopped and remembered God’s activity in their lives, marking the moment with ritual.

God’s people have opportunity, time and time again, to dedicate themselves to following God. Ruth can stay within her comfort zone, but instead she chooses to go with Naomi. Ruth’s words become an affirmation of faith, a commitment to follow God.

We hear two stories of David that express the joy and delight of worship. In the first story, David brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. In the second, he sings Psalm 122.

We turn to aspects of our participation in worship through confession and repentance, what God truly desires from us, and how to apply this to our lives. Jonah must confront his disobedience and turn back to God. Micah reminds us that God doesn’t want “stuff.” God wants us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

As we move toward Advent in the next quarter, Isaiah 56 reminds us that God calls all people to come together to worship. The coming glory of God begins with God’s actions among the people. God will act to save in the future as God has acted to save in the past. Everything begins with God!



## Overview of the Year 2, Fall Quarter

### Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence for Year 2 can be found at [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads).

The fall quarter typically begins with the first Sunday in September but occasionally is the last Sunday in August. It ends with Christ the King Sunday, the Sunday before Advent begins.

Since the date of Easter changes every year, the number of Sundays after Epiphany and before Lent and after Easter will fluctuate from year to year. Additional sessions are provided, but check your calendar and plan accordingly. You may not use one or more sessions in one year, and you may use extra sessions in another year.

#### Year 2, Fall 1

God Saw How Good It Was

Genesis 1:1–2:3

Goal: To celebrate the grace, beauty, and joy in God's good creation.

#### Year 2, Fall 2

Praising God

Psalms 8

Goal: To praise God for the gifts of creation and practice caring for the earth.

#### Year 2, Fall 3

Moses and the Burning Bush

Exodus 3:1–15

Goal: To learn that God knows us and calls us by name.

#### Year 2, Fall 4

Loving God

Exodus 20:1–11

Goal: To name ways to love God.

#### Year 2, Fall 5

Loving Others

Exodus 20:12–17

Goal: To name ways to love others.

#### Year 2, Fall 6

The People Give God Thanks

Exodus 35:20–29

Goal: To give thanks to God with willing hearts.

#### Year 2, Fall 7

What Do the Stones Mean?

Joshua 3:14–17; 4:1–8, 19–24

Goal: To mark times of God's activity in our lives.

#### Year 2, Fall 8

Your God Shall Be My God

Ruth 1:1–22

Goal: To trust and follow God.

#### Year 2, Fall 9

David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

2 Samuel 6:12b–15, 17–19

Goal: To celebrate God's presence with worship.

#### Year 2, Fall 10

Let Us Worship

Psalms 122

Goal: To worship with praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

#### Year 2, Fall 11

Jonah

Jonah 1–4

Goal: To recognize our mistakes and turn to God.

#### Year 2, Fall 12

What Shall I Give?

Micah 6:6–8

Goal: To recognize what God desires from us.

#### Year 2, Fall 13

Everything Begins with God

Isaiah 56:1–8

Goal: To extend God's gracious welcome to all people.

## Resources and Session Components

*Growing in Grace & Gratitude* curriculum is available for fall, winter, spring, and summer as downloadable PDFs. Each season's material for the leaders includes:

1. **Session plans for embracing children in the grace of God through engagement with the Bible**
2. **Session title, session goal, and background information**
  - ▼ *Recognizing God's Grace* helps leaders explore the Bible story with a focus on God's grace in Scripture.
  - ▼ "In Your Children's Experiences" and "In Your Relationships with the Children" provide leaders with an understanding of the children's needs, abilities, and interests.
3. **Three movements that echo Presbyterian and Reformed worship**
  - ▼ *Gathering in God's Grace*  
A hospitable welcome calls children to sing and pray to God; to hear and reflect on the Bible story.
  - ▼ *Responding in Gratitude*  
A choice of age-appropriate activities based on the group size and time available. Some activities (noted as "more prep") require advanced planning and/or additional supplies.
  - ▼ *Loving and Serving God*  
An invitation to discipleship that inspires children and their families to practice hospitality, generosity, and love.
4. **Grace Notes (GN)**
  - ▼ Black-and-white reproducible pages that provide activities and crafts.
5. **Stories, Colors & More (SCM)**
  - ▼ Colorful resources are provided to aid in the flow of the sessions.
  - ▼ The Support Map offers practical suggestions for working with children who have difficulty communicating, transitioning, reading, or writing, and children who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or in need of mobility support. The Support Map also provides tips for celebrating the strengths of children through leadership, generosity, and fairness.
  - ▼ Colorful illustrations of the Bible stories spark imagination. The stories appear on the back of the illustrations to make it easy for the leader to show the art while reading the story.
  - ▼ Other colorful resources, such as teaching pictures and maps are now organized in session order.
  - ▼ **Music and Melodies:** Song lyrics sheets are gathered in the back of the resource.



## Free Supplemental Resources

Download the following supplemental resources at [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads):

- **Music & Melodies** are song tracks with familiar lyrics as well as new child-friendly tunes.
- **Grace Sightings**, an online resource to print or email home, includes a summary of the week's session and age-appropriate activities for home use.
- **Audio stories** of the weekly Bible stories are available to listen to online or download.

## Basic Supplies

All materials beyond this list will be specified in the supply list for each session:

- Bibles
- CD player
- cleanup supplies
- coffee filters
- cover-ups or smocks
- craft supplies (e.g., cotton balls, craft sticks, glitter, stickers)
- crayons, large and small
- cups, napkins, plates, utensils, drinking straws
- glue and glue sticks
- hole punch
- office supplies (paper clips, rubber bands, self-adhesive notes)
- paint, paintbrushes
- paper (card stock, construction, drawing, index cards, mural paper, newsprint)
- paper bags (lunch-sized, grocery-sized)
- pencils, colored pencils, markers, pens
- pipe cleaners
- plastic bags (zip-closure, garbage)
- play dough
- rhythm instruments
- ribbon, string, yarn, scarves
- round-tip scissors (some left-handed)
- stapler, staples
- tablecloths
- tape (duct, masking, painter's, transparent)

## Reusing Materials

Encourage church members to collect a variety of materials for art projects, such as:

- buttons, ribbon, yarn
- clothespins
- egg cartons
- plastic containers
- shoeboxes
- old magazines, catalogs, newspapers
- paper tubes (from gift wrap, paper towels, or toilet paper)
- used gift wrap and cards

## Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by becoming familiar with the developmental terms, descriptions, and icons on the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM iii–iv**). Colorful icons (LG T) from the map and notes about specific needs are incorporated into each session to offer ways to adapt activities. (Note: While many of the activities could fit in multiple categories on the support map, for simplicity, only those that require particular attention have been identified.)

Use the Visual Schedule (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM i–ii**) to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group. By consistently using these tools, you will help your faith community discover and practice grace-filled ways to be the body of Christ with and for all children.

## Support Highlight: Transitions



Children deal with transitions differently; some move fluidly from one activity or area to the next, while others require advance warning and reminders. Keep in mind:

- Waiting can cause some children anxiety.
- Set parameters and expectations ahead of time to lessen stress and allow children to prepare for situations.
- Using a visual schedule such as the one provided on **SCM i–ii** allows children to see the progression of the session and anticipate change times.
- Use verbal cues such as, “In three minutes, we will move to story time.”
- Use strategies to smooth transitions, such as singing a song or using a snap-clap sequence.

Learning what works for your group helps all the children feel secure in their setting. *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* provides transition tips in many of the sessions.

## Ideas for Working with Pre-readers

- Keep small pieces of scratch paper handy so you can quickly write a word for a child to copy.
- If a child is struggling with an activity that calls for writing a word, write the word using dotted lines so he or she can trace it.
- Form pairs to solve puzzles. Encourage children to help one another—there's no need to cover their papers so others can't copy!
- If you observe a child struggling to work independently on an activity, offer to be his or her partner. If many are struggling, work as a group to complete the activity.
- If a child seems frustrated by writing an answer, suggest that he or she draw a picture of the response or act it out. You also might offer to write what the child dictates to you.
- Offer old family-friendly magazines with pictures that can be cut out and used to illustrate a response or complete a project.
- When a child is trying to sound out a word, don't be too quick to jump in and help. Whether he or she finally decodes the word or you provide it, affirm the new skill of reading and how hard the child is trying.

## Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books ([www.flyawaybooks.com](http://www.flyawaybooks.com)) is a children's picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. These books reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world, as well as retelling familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

## Scheduling Tips for Ages 3–5

Here are some suggestions for scheduling, depending on how long your group meets:

- If children are attending a session for one hour or less, allow ten to fifteen minutes for each session component, including cleanup and other needs.
- If children are attending a session for two hours or more—with some children arriving and leaving between the hours—allow fifteen to twenty minutes for each session component, repeating guided play, story time, and activities without repeating snack. Allow time for cleanup and other needs between components.

## Using Guided Play with Ages 3–5

Guided-play activities are part of the initial moments of the session, when children focus on a particular activity that encourages them to pretend and play. If your group meets in a room that is already set up for toddlers or three- to five-year-olds, it may have areas prepared for specific activities such as reading, building, pretending, or drawing. If so, use these areas for guided play. If your room is not organized in that way, use the suggestions provided in the session for setup and content. You may have other ideas. Feel free to design your own guided-play areas.

## What Do Children Ages 3–5 Need?

Young children need extended playtime for their physical and emotional development. You do not have to fill the whole session with structured activities. Your most important task is to show God's grace and love to each child.

There are big differences in children who are three years old and children who are five years old. You will need to adjust some activities depending on the ages of the children in your group. For example, five-year-olds may have experience with structured activities; three-year-olds are just learning those skills. Allow the children to be involved in activities at their level of ability and interest. Some children may just observe, and others may want to tell the Bible stories themselves.

Each session will include structured opportunities for experiencing God's grace and a response of gratitude. Those activities begin to teach the children about God's love and about ways they can respond thankfully in their lives, and they also provide children with opportunities to follow instructions and do what the group is doing. Exercise grace in inviting and encouraging them to participate, but also be graceful in allowing for flexibility and being aware of their needs.

Be alert to what activities your children enjoy, and don't be afraid to repeat their favorites. Repetition helps children learn.

## A Note about Candles

*Growing in Grace & Gratitude* suggests the use of a candle in the worship space for most sessions. “Jesus said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The lighting of the candle reminds us of this and signifies presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Most churches have a policy around candles and either lighting real candles or using battery-operated candles. While we simply state “candles,” *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* recommends using battery-operated candles for safety around children.

## Team of Contributors

The development team of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* is grateful to have an amazing team of educators and writers to collaborate in the production of this curriculum.

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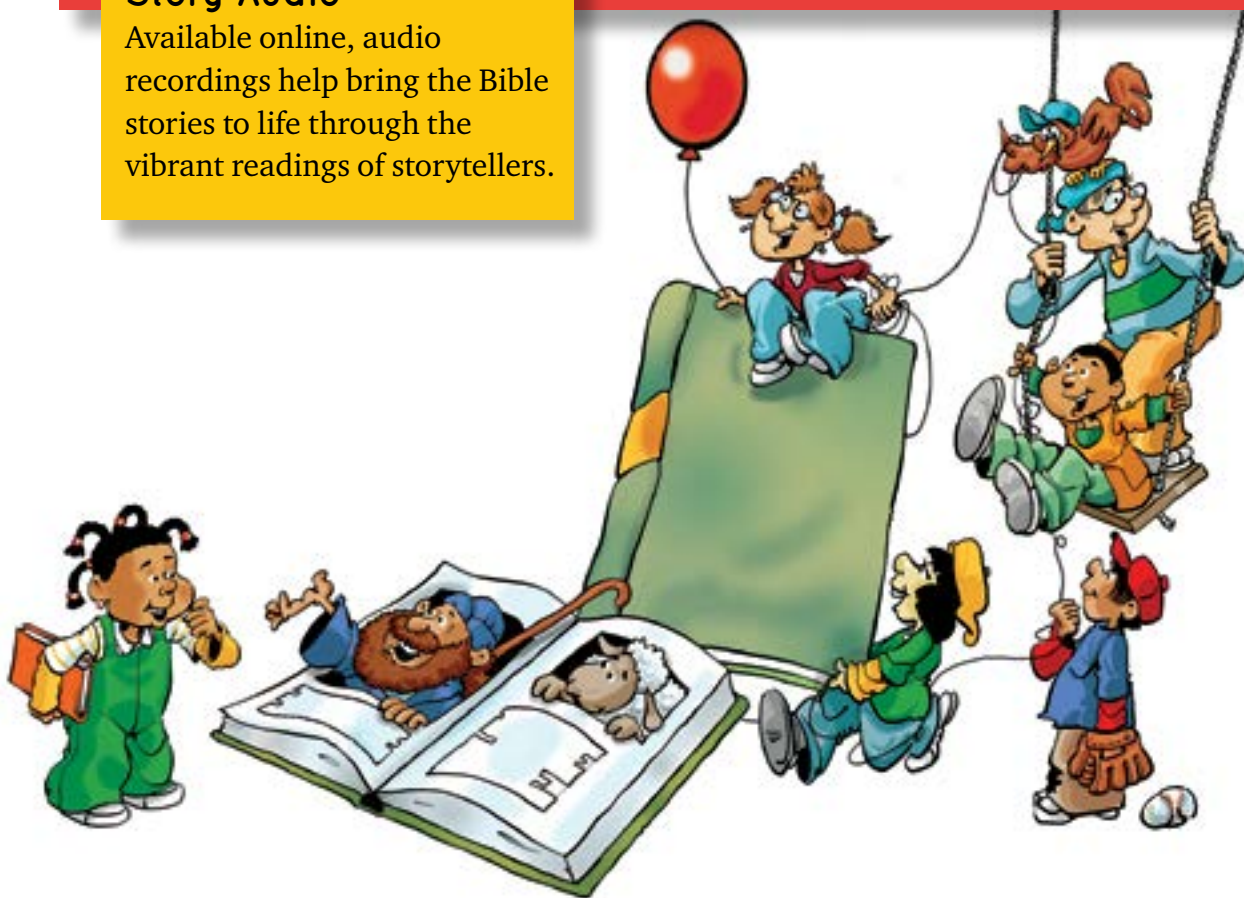
Free!

### ***Grace Sightings***

This online resource includes the story from the week's session and age-appropriate activities for children to do at home with their parents or caregivers. Each week's pdf shares the same colorful illustrations and Bible stories used in weekly sessions. With *Grace Sightings*, sessions reach beyond Sunday morning, encouraging children to live their lives as an expression of God's grace at home and at school.

### **Story Audio**

Available online, audio recordings help bring the Bible stories to life through the vibrant readings of storytellers.



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