

Ages 3-5



Growing

in
Grace & Gratitude

Year 2, Summer



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Introduction

This summer you have the opportunity to explore some of the stories of the Old Testament. The theme of God’s faithfulness runs throughout the Bible, in these stories and many others.

The great story of the exodus begins with God’s protection of the baby boy Moses. Through the brave and loving acts of midwives, his mother and sister, and even an Egyptian princess, Moses eventually will lead God’s people to freedom. Later, as Moses and the Hebrews flee Egypt and find themselves facing a sea, with the army pursuing them, God is faithful and makes a way for their salvation. With the Ten Commandments safely ensconced in the Ark of the Covenant, the people of God know that God is with them.

When the people are poised to enter the promised land, they falter, afraid. They let fear overtake God’s faithfulness. At that time, and then again years later after entering the promised land, Joshua stood firm as he chose to serve and love God.

God continues to call people to lead God’s people; surprisingly, many are young: Samuel, David, and Jeremiah. Through each of them children hear stories of God’s faithful voice, sometimes calling quietly in the night as with Samuel, understanding it is what is within a person that counts—even with all one’s human faults and frailties—like David, and giving the words that the people need to hear when one’s own words feel insufficient like Jeremiah. The message, however, is always the same: God is faithful and will continue to be faithful to God’s people.

Through David’s songs and prayers, God’s faithfulness is on display. In Psalm 23, David paints a picture of God as a loving and faithful shepherd caring for the flock. There is never a time the Shepherd is not with us. In Psalm 62, David recognizes God as a rock and a fortress, a safe haven in times of trouble. In Psalm 150, we get to give praise for all God’s faithfulness. With all creation, with instrument and voice, we all sing, “Hallelujah!” to God, praising God with our whole being.

Jeremiah is called by God to share God’s message. Jeremiah wonders what he can do, but God assures him, as God assures all of us, that God is with us.

Overview of the Year 2, Summer Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence for Year 2 can be found at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

The summer quarter begins with Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, and typically goes through the month of August.

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, Summer 1

Moses and the Basket

Exodus 1:8–2:10

Goal: To explore how it feels to be loved and safe with people who care for us.

Year 2, Summer 7

God Calls a Shepherd Boy

1 Samuel 16:1–13

Goal: To celebrate that God knows us inside and out.

Year 2, Summer 2

God Makes a Way

Exodus 13:17–22; 14:1–22

Goal: To trust that God is faithful and will always guide and lead us.

Year 2, Summer 8

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psalm 23

Goal: To recognize how God cares for us as a good shepherd.

Year 2, Summer 3

The People Care for God's Word

Exodus 25:10–22; 37:1–9

Goal: To treasure God's Word.

Year 2, Summer 9

A Shepherd Boy Grows Up to Be King

2 Samuel 5:1–5; 7:18–29

Goal: To consider how God was with David all through his life.

Year 2, Summer 4

Spying on the Promised Land

Numbers 13:1–14:9

Goal: To trust in God's faithfulness.

Year 2, Summer 10

God Is My Rock

Psalm 62:1–2, 5–7

Goal: To trust God's presence in times of trouble.

Year 2, Summer 5

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

Joshua 24:14–28

Goal: To make a choice to love and serve God.

Year 2, Summer 11

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

Goal: To praise God with all that we have.

Year 2, Summer 6

Here I Am, God

1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a

Goal: To recognize God's call to faith by listening.

Year 2, Summer 12

God Calls Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:4–10

Goal: To practice telling about God's love.

Year 2, Summer 13

The Potter Shapes the Clay

Jeremiah 18:1–6

Goal: To imagine God as a potter.

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:

- **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: Leadership and Generosity



Including children with disabilities in your church may be brand new, or something that you have been doing for a long time. The following suggestions may help you create an environment in which all children feel welcomed and included.

As you learn to meet the challenges posed by learning to accommodate children with disabilities, we also encourage you to see them as gifted members of your community, of your church, and of God's household.

Research shows that, although people with disabilities are participating in the life of faith communities at higher rates than before, they still have limited opportunities to share their gifts for leadership and to give back through service to others. As you learn to support children, look for opportunities for them to express generosity and demonstrate leadership, both in your weekly sessions and in the larger life of the church. Leadership tasks—such as passing things out, holding visual aids, helping other students, or serving as the example in games and activities—can be important opportunities for leadership.

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) 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.

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 the 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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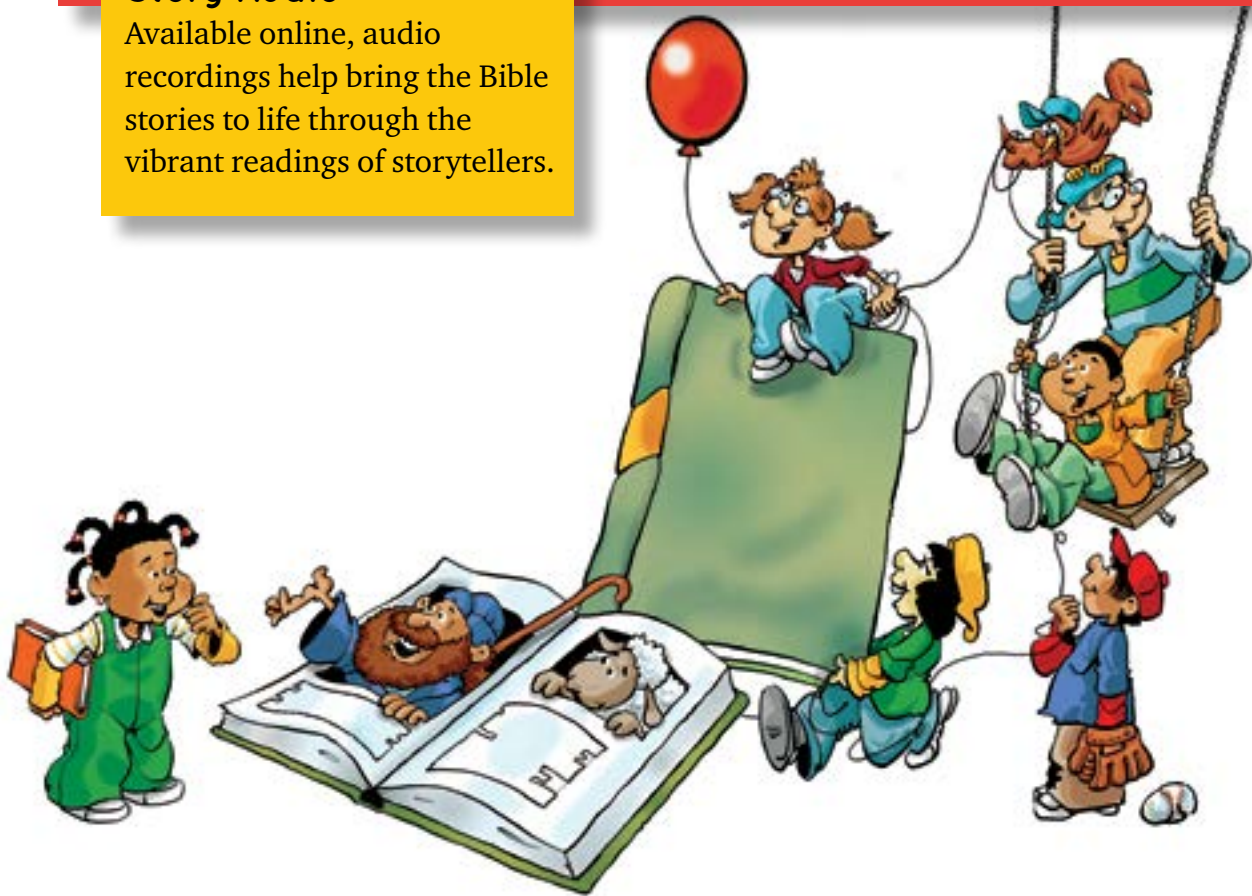
Free!

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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