



God Makes a Promise

Goal: To be thankful for God's promises.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Genesis 12:1-9, 15:2-6

Everything God created was good, but Genesis 3—11 tells us that little grace was in the world. Some people were unhappy, angry, or hungry. Brothers and sisters were fighting; people were behaving badly. What does God do in response? God initiates a fresh start with humanity.

God smiles on Abraham and Sarah; can you see it? Through them, God promises to be present to the creation forever. Abraham, Sarah, and their children often struggle to live gratefully as recipients of God's grace; however, we are assured that even through those times of struggle, God keeps the promise.

Having children, especially sons, was a family and a cultural expectation. It was both a religious duty and a sign of God's favor. And now here is Abraham, married to a woman unable to give him children. Abraham and Sarah had to live with disappointment and community disapproval.

In a time when the woman alone was blamed for childlessness, the burden must have been particularly hard for Sarah. The time of hope was over for Sarah and Abraham.

God offered a fresh promise for this defeated family. "Go from this place to a new land," God said. God spoke to the pair who were barren and made them a promise: "I will give you so many offspring, you will be the founders of a great nation." Abraham and Sarah expressed their confidence in God's promise: they erected an altar, signifying that they had met God in that holy place. It is a testament to the generations of God's grace fulfilled for all.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Scripture identifies holy places as locations where God meets people, calls people, and expects people to love one another and serve the purposes of God.

Churches and homes are seen as holy places to most children insofar as they experience a sense of belonging, acceptance, and protection. In the same way, the congregation creates a holy place where children are welcomed and feel that same sense of belonging by being recognized and called by name. When the church is holy ground and sacred space, children and adults alike experience care, affection, protection, and being part of God's family.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Help the children recognize the holy places in their lives, including religious buildings and sacred sites. Your meeting space is a holy space, in that God is present. How can you purposely create a space in which the children are welcomed, loved, and cared for? Help the children know that your meeting space is a holy place for you too. It's less about the furnishings and more about the heart.

*Lord, thank you for blessing me, my friends, and my loved ones.
Call us each day to be a blessing to others. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 2, 16

basic supplies (see p. vii)

internet-connected device

blanket or mats

candle

Guided Play

choice 1: rug, sand, stones, cookie sheets or shallow plastic bins

choice 2: green tissue paper, brown crayons

choice 3: books and pictures about travel, **SCM 2a, 2b, 2c**, pillows

Exploring

choice 1: dark blue and black construction paper, white and yellow chalk, apples, sharp knife, cutting board, clear contact paper (optional)

choice 3: **SCM 23**

choice 4: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

Book Suggestions:

- *Where the River Begins* by Thomas Locker
- *The Kiss Box* by Bonnie Verburg
- *A Ball for Daisy* by Chris Raschka
- *Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac* by Joanne Bader

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so that their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the 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 with special needs or disabilities.

Before the session, for “Welcoming and Guided Play” choice 1, place sand, rocks, or other walking surfaces on cookie sheets or in shallow plastic bins.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. **Paths**—Provide different walking surfaces (rugs, sand, rocks), and invite the children to walk on them barefoot, with only their socks, or with shoes, and to notice the different textures. Talk about the differences between walking barefoot and walking with sandals.
2. **Drawing**—Provide mural paper, tape, brown crayons, glue sticks, and green tissue paper. Tape a large sheet of mural paper to a tabletop. Invite the children to help draw a large outline of a simple tree trunk and branches. Then, invite them to color the tree trunk and branches. Help them create leaves by tearing tissue paper into small pieces and gluing them onto the branches. Display the tree in your story corner. It will be the tree of Moreh.
3. **Book corner**—Provide books and pictures of people taking trips, **SCM 2a, 2b, and 2c**, pillows, and a rocking chair, if one is available. Invite the children to look for ways people travel.

T *Transitions can be difficult for children. This may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to a child and model and encourage appropriate responses.*



Transitioning to Story Time

Call the children to the story corner, singing “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands”—SCM 16. Encourage the children to sing along, repeating words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Child of God, Child of Grace



Invite the children to stand with you as you lead them in a motion poem (adapted from the rhyme “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around”).

Repeat as often as you like. Laugh out loud and rejoice in the grace of God! Sing or say the words and do the corresponding actions.

Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch the ground. (*touch floor in front of you*)

Child of God, child of grace, reach up high. (*reach arms high above head*)

Child of God, child of grace, wink one eye. (*wink one eye*)

Child of God, child of grace, climb the stairs. (*use arms and legs to pretend to climb*)

Child of God, child of grace, say your prayers. (*fold hands in front of self*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch your nose. (*touch nose*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch your toes. (*reach down and touch toes*)

Child of God, child of grace, knock on wood. (*pretend to knock on door*)

Child of God, child of grace, we are all good! (*hug yourself*)

Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)

Child of God, child of grace, sit right down. (*sit down on floor*)

Echo Prayer



Invite the children to say an echo prayer, having them repeat each phrase you speak:

Dear God, /
You made us, /
You love us, /
And you like us. /
We love you /
And like you too. / Amen.



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

Turn on the candle, saying, "God, your Word is our light." Repeat the phrase, prompting the children to say "light" with you.

Open the Bible to Genesis 12 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible.

Show the children the picture on **SCM 2**, asking them if they know the names of anyone in the picture and asking them to repeat the names of Abraham and Sarah.

Ask children to tell you what they think the picture is showing. Allow time to discuss their observations.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Turn off the candle.

- T *Transitions can be difficult situations for children. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as a few jumping jacks, reaching for the sky and touching toes, and so forth.*

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Star Snack

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Remind the children of the promise God made to Abraham. He would have as many children as they could count stars in the sky. Let the children select blue or black construction paper and white or yellow chalk to make placemats. Encourage the children to draw stars in their papers to represent the night sky. As children work, write, "Thank you, God" on each of their placemats. Cover their placemats with clear contact paper if available.

Tell the children that God has given us a special way to remember the stars in the sky. Lay the apples horizontally on the cutting board and slice through the center (circle) of the apple. When the pieces fall to the side, a star appears. Allow time for the children to express their thoughts about the star while you cut slices for them to share. Hand out the apple slices and say the following prayer together.

Bless the fruit before us,
Bless the friends around us,
Bless the promise you give us,
Thank you, God.

While you serve the snack, listen to "Thank You, Holy God."



Thank you: Start with the fingers of one hand near your lips. Move your hand forward and slightly downward in the direction of the person you are thanking.

You're welcome: Hold one hand out flat, palm facing out, away from your body and slightly to the right. Bring that hand in toward your torso.

For visuals and more information, go to aspro.com.

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

2. Thank-You Motions

Help children learn to thank God for loving them and always being with them. Demonstrate the hand motions for "thank you" and for "you're welcome" by using the directions in the sidebar. Pair the children and have them take turns practicing the signs.

As you pray, invite the children to sign "thank you" when you speak the words. Pray: "*We thank you, God, that you are always with us, and we thank you for caring for all the people of the world. Amen.*"

Encourage the children to practice the signs with loved ones to remember that God is always with them.

3. God Gives Us a Gift

Listen together to "God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)"—**SCM 23**. Note that the song is in English and Spanish, and encourage the children to sing in both languages. Listen to the song again and encourage the children to dance or make motions while singing.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- I wonder, "Why is Abraham making an altar out of stones?"
- I wonder, "What are all the other people saying about what Abraham is doing?"
- I wonder, "What can we do to give thanks to God?"

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

Help the children sense that God is always with them and cares for them. Say: "I wonder whether something we've talked about or done today has reminded you of ways God cares for you. Can you think of one way you could thank God this week?"

Invite the children to say an echo prayer, having them repeat each phrase you speak:

Dear God, /
You made us, /
You love us, /
And you like us. /
We love you. /
Thank you, God. / Amen.

As the children leave, bless each one: "(Name), God loves you very much. The grace of God be with you."

God Makes a Promise



Abraham builds a stone altar to give thanks for God's promise.

