



Return with Thanks

Goal: To express gratitude by praising and thanking God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 17:11-19

Jesus' healing the ten persons with skin diseases ("lepers") is a dramatic demonstration of grace and gratitude. These ten persons, who would have been ostracized and kept away from society because of their disease, cried out: "Jesus, Master, show us mercy (grace)!" (v. 13, CEB). This led to Jesus healing the ten while they were on their way to show themselves to the priests.

Only one—a Samaritan, and thus one disliked by the Jews—came back, praising God with a loud voice, thanking Jesus for the healing. Jesus pronounced, "Your faith has healed you" (v. 19, CEB).

The true response to grace given to us is gratitude. The thankful person praised God for the health provided by the power of Jesus. Gratitude in praising and thanking God shows we recognize God's gift.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

In ancient times, lepers—those with a variety of skin diseases—weren't allowed to participate in the religious life of the community and were shunned even by their own families. Children may not know lepers today, but they have noticed people who are poor, sick, and homeless in your own community. Some in your group may have experienced poverty; others may know what it is like to be excluded on the basis of culture, race, gender, or simply because they are somehow "different" from others in their own peer group. Affirm that these experiences are similar to that of the ten lepers in today's story.

Some children may struggle to imagine different kinds of healing other than physical healing. Simply naming renewed friendships as a kind of healing will help prepare the children to embrace a larger view of God's grace when they are older. Affirm the mysterious aspects of God's presence and power. Acknowledge that while physical healing does not always happen, we can trust that God's grace is always present with us.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Thank you! Along with please, these are probably two of the first words that parents teach their children. By using these responses, parents are helping their children learn how to express gratitude. We also say "thank you" in our prayers to God. Prayers of thanksgiving are the first and easiest prayers we teach children. They grow in their ability to express gratitude for the many ways that God is present in their lives.

As the children gather at the end of the session, help them fashion their own prayers of thanksgiving in response to God's love in their lives: For what are you most thankful today?

Loving God, make me more aware of all that you have given me so I may express my gratitude wholly. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 11, 15

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**; 1" red hearts (craft foam or construction paper)

choice 2: copies of **GN 2**

choice 3: ten objects or **SCM 11a**

Exploring

choice 1: **GN 3**

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

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 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 who have special needs or disabilities.

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

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, "Christ is risen!" Prompt them to respond, "He is risen indeed!" Tell the children that this is the Easter season, and this Easter greeting is spoken around the world during this time (the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost).

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to the parents and caregivers that their children will hear a story about Jesus helping ten men who were sick, one of whom returned to thank Jesus.

Introduce the children to your helper or helpers. Invite them to look at the guided play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. A Thankful Heart**—Provide copies of **GN 1** for the children and invite them to color the hands. Count the number of fingers (and thumbs) on the two hands together. Tell the children that today's story is about one person who gave thanks. Have the children glue a red heart on one of the fingers (or thumbs) to show the person with the thankful heart.
- 2. Thankful for . . .**—Provide copies of **GN 2** for the children. Invite them to color the items for which they are thankful. After the children have had a chance to color the items they have chosen, encourage the children to share their choices with the group. Ask what other things they are thankful for.
- 3. Counting to Ten**—Provide a counting activity with ten objects, such as clothespins, or **SCM 11a**. Give the objects to the children to count. Help them count to ten. Tell the children that today's story is about Jesus and ten men who were sick.

T Use transition cues to give plenty of warning that a change is coming. Clear, tangible signals that are obvious help alleviate tensions. Consider using countdown numbers on a whiteboard before moving to the next activity.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Thank You, Holy God”—**SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Thank You Game



Invite children to stand in front of you with plenty of room to move. You will tell each one to do something, but they can’t do it until they say, “Thank you.”

Think up a variety of things for the children to do. For example, you could say, “(Name), clap your hands and turn around.” Prompt the child to say, “Thank you” before she or he does the action.

Thanks, God



Invite the children to repeat your words and actions.

Hands! Hands! Thanks, God, for hands! (*wave hands in the air*) /

Feet! Feet! Thanks, God, for feet! (*stomp feet or march in place*) /

Food! Food! Thanks, God, for food! (*rub tummy*) /

Friends! Friends! Thanks, God, for friends! (*shake hands with neighbors*) /

Hands (*wave hands*), feet (*stomp feet*), food (*rub tummy*), and friends (*shake hands*)! /

Thank you, God! Amen. /

Explain to the children that the story they will hear is about ten men who were sick who asked Jesus for help. Wonder what Jesus did.

Hearing the Story



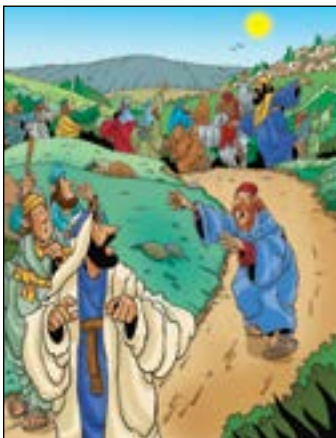
Open the Bible to Luke 17 so that the children know the story comes from the Bible

Read **SCM 11**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

After the children have heard the story, ask what the man said to Jesus. Ask why the man said “thank you” to Jesus. Comment on how important it is to say “thank you” to Jesus and God.

Play “Thank You, Holy God”—**SCM 15**—again to express gratitude to God. Invite the children to sing and move to the music.

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), pcusastore.com.





EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. One Says Thanks FM

Hand out copies of GN 3. Ask the children if they can guess what part of the story the picture shows (*when the ten were healed*). Have the children count the people who Jesus healed. Show the children how to fold the picture along the outside two dotted lines and then match the As together and likewise the Bs together in the center.

Ask the children how many said thank you to Jesus for healing them. The transformed picture reveals the answer (“One!”). Have the children color the picture and take it home to tell the story of the thankful person to their family.

2. Learn to Say Thank You L LG

Invite the children to think about the opportunities they have to say “Thank you” and express appreciation for people and services done on their behalf. Ask them to tell what they would say to express thanks and appreciation. And help them practice saying things such as:

- ▼ Thanks!
- ▼ I’m glad we’re friends.
- ▼ Thank you for taking care of me.
- ▼ Thank you for helping me.

Have them act out a scene for each situation above.

- ▼ At dinner you ask for someone to pass you something on the table. You say, “Thanks.”
- ▼ You and your friend are playing together. You say, “I’m glad we’re friends.”
- ▼ You don’t feel well and are in bed. Someone in your family brings you medicine and reads you a story. You say, “Thank you for taking care of me.”
- ▼ You are at school and you need help cutting something out. Your teacher or a friend helps you. You say, “Thank you for helping me.”

Ask the children if they can think of other times to say “thank you” or express appreciation, and have them act those out as well.

Help the children say “thank you” in several different languages:

- ▼ gracias (GRAHS-yahs; Spanish)
- ▼ xie xie (SHAY shay; Chinese)
- ▼ gamsa hapnida (ganSA HApnida; Korean)
- ▼ merci (x; French)

Invite them to share any languages in which they know how to say “thank you.” Have the children walk around the room. Tell them when you call out a language you have learned, such as “Spanish” or “Chinese,” each person should find another person and say “thank you” in that language. You may need to remind the children of the words. Encourage the children to practice saying “thank you” to people who help take care of them through the week.

3. Make a Thank You Mural LG

Create a mural that shows the things children are thankful for by having the children cut out pictures from magazines or draw their own pictures. Have the children glue their pictures and drawings onto the mural paper, but have them leave space for you to write a sentence next to their pictures. For example, “Jimmy thanks God for dogs.” Write a title for the mural: “We Give Thanks!” Post the mural in a place where people in the congregation will see it.

4. Coloring Page C FM

Hand out **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did Jesus’ friends think of what happened?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did Jesus think when he saw the man come back?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Who would the men tell about being healed?”

LG *Providing opportunities for children to welcome others, offer help, and express generosity helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*

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.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

Play “Thank You, Holy God” while you serve the snack. If you have time, lead the children in singing, encouraging them to sing along, repeating words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Say a litany and ask the children to respond with the words “Thank you, God”:

Thank you, God, for Jesus.

Thank you, God.

For the ways Jesus helps us . . .

Thank you, God.

For the ways others help us . . .

Thank you, God.

Help us to give thanks.

Thank you, God.

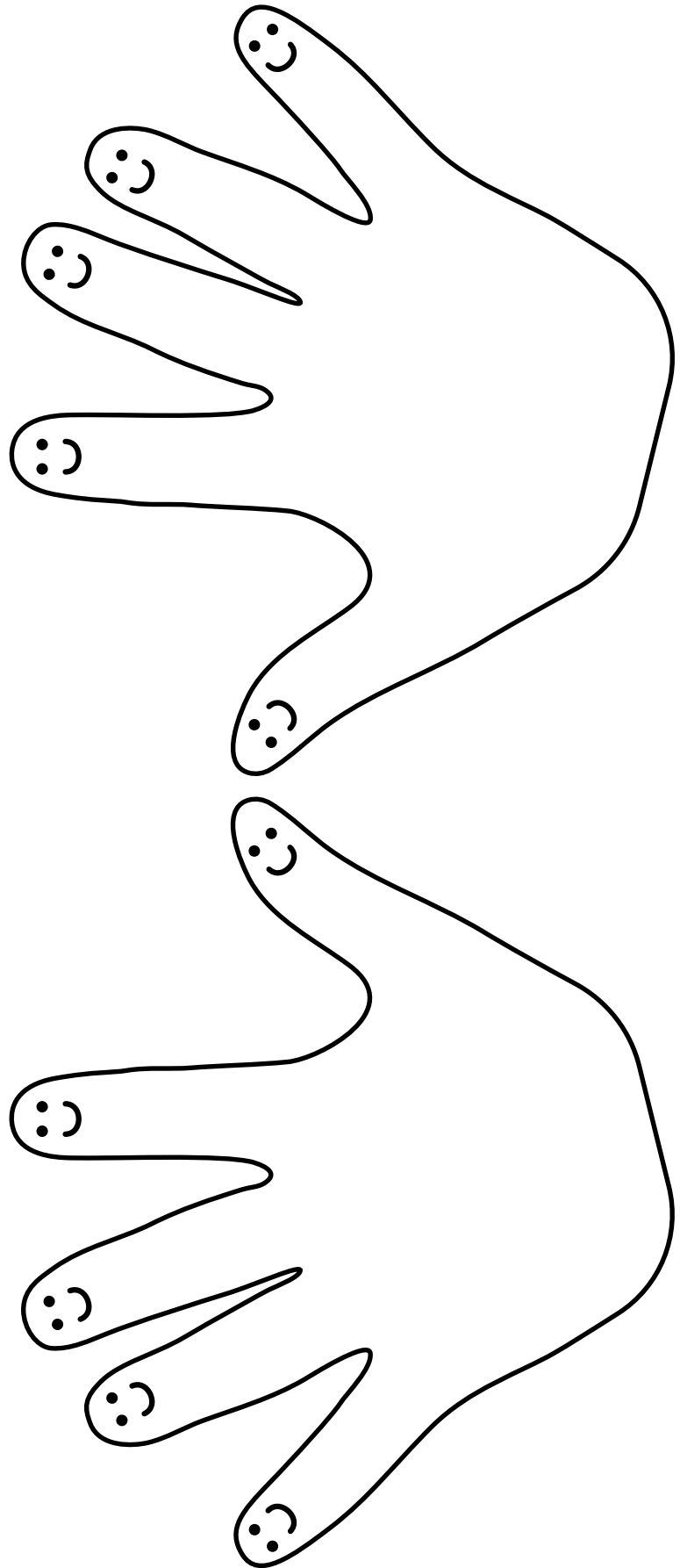
Amen.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), give thanks to God. The grace of God is with you.”



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).

One said,
“Thank you.”



I'm thankful for . . .





TEN WERE HEALED.

“OH,” THEY SAID, “OUR SORES ARE GONE!”

THEY PACKED TO GO HOME.

Return with Thanks



One returned to give thanks.

