



Little to Big

Goal: To explore how the kingdom of God can grow.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 13:18-21

In Bible times, the word “kingdom” meant many things, including the future and God’s presence with us now. In the Old Testament, it was described as a tree, and God’s power was symbolized by the nesting of birds in its branches. In Luke 13:18–19, a mustard plant is compared to God’s kingdom. In ancient times, such plants grew to heights of ten or twelve feet. The mustard plant in today’s story is even larger. It takes on the proportions of a tree, with birds nesting in its strong branches. Luke may have been using this image to suggest that even the tiny mustard seed can become a tree in the same way that the church can grow to represent God’s kingdom, gathering even Gentile people into its branches.

In Luke 13:20–21, Jesus compares God’s kingdom to yeast. In biblical times, yeast consisted of a piece of bread dough that had been reserved from a previous batch. The old piece of dough was added to fresh dough to produce fermentation. In today’s story, a woman hid some yeast in three measures of meal. The yeast and meal grew and formed the basis of three new loaves. Some scholars believe that the woman in this parable may represent a God who stirs things up and helps new life grow. For Luke, that new life came in the form of a church that was growing and that included many Gentile believers.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children often feel that their ideas and actions are ignored or minimized by those in authority. For that reason, children may find today’s Bible story especially affirming. Jesus uses two natural items (a mustard seed and yeast) to illustrate that the tiniest objects can have a huge influence on their environment. In today’s session, children will be given opportunities to explore how they, like the yeast and mustard seed, can make a difference in the lives of others.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Encourage children to share stories about how they have taken actions to support others. They also may have heard of compassionate actions undertaken by other children and young people in their community. Celebrate these important contributions to the fabric of our society. Children will especially appreciate the more tangible aspects of today’s session—the smell of the yeast, the taste of bread, and the strength of the tree branch. Help them to connect these objects with their own experiences as people whose faith is growing and strengthening each and every day.

O God, instill in me the commitment to live my life in a way that makes a difference for the children I teach. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 2, 15, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

The Marvelous Mustard Seed by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

snack (optional)

Guided Play

choice 2: sand or water in a large plastic bin, variety of measuring cups and spoons, large bowl

choice 3: **SCM 2a, 2b**; dried grasses; small twigs; hay (optional); shredded paper

Exploring

choice 1: mustard seeds

choice 2: yeast, sugar, yeast bread, crackers

choice 3: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

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!

Obtain *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com, to use as a second reading during “Hearing the Story.”

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 2 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



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

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers whom you do not know. Tell them that their children will hear a story Jesus told about how little things grow into big things by using the examples of a mustard seed and yeast to describe the kingdom of God.

Introduce the activities and invite children to participate.

1. Block Center—Invite children to use the blocks to explore the concept of little to big. Suggest sorting blocks in size from littlest to biggest. Ask the children to build towers that go from little to big. Encourage children to talk about how their towers grow.

2. Sand or Water Table—Provide small bowls, measuring cups and spoons of various sizes for the children to explore the water or sand. Show children how to level sand in a measuring cup. Encourage children to estimate how many measures of sand or water it will take to fill a bowl. Help them count the measures as they fill the bowl. Guide the children to place the cups and spoons in order from littlest to biggest.

3. Creation Center—Invite children to look at the pictures of nests on **SCM 2a** and **2b**. Encourage children to use the variety of materials gathered (dried grasses, sticks, hay, yarn, ribbons, shredded paper) to make a nest for a bird.

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 the first stanza of “Thank You, Holy God”—SCM 15. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Growing a Garden

Invite the children to gather in the story corner and follow your actions.

- ▼ Let’s pretend that we are a seed being planted in a garden.
- ▼ We are deep in the dirt.
- ▼ We begin to grow, slowly sprouting upward.
- ▼ We feel the rain on our small stem.
- ▼ We sprout one leaf and then two.
- ▼ We feel the sun on our face.
- ▼ We grow tall and strong.

Jesus Calls the Children

Invite the children to repeat each line with its motions after you.

Children short and children tall, (*squat down and then stand up tall*) /

Jesus loves them all. (*hug self and then make a big circle in front of you with both arms*) /

Children big and children small, (*put arms out wide, then curl into a ball*) /

Jesus loves them all. (*hug self and then make a big circle in front of you with both arms*) /

Babies, toddlers, big kids like me, (*rock baby, hold hand down by side of body as if holding the hand of a toddler, then put hands on hips and stand up tall*) /

Jesus loves them all. (*hug self and then make a big circle in front of you with both arms*) /

He calls us all to come, you see. (*motion with hand to come*) /

Jesus loves both you and me. (*hug self and then make a big circle in front of you with both arms*) /



The Matthew telling of 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

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Open the Bible to Luke 13 and point out that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they will hear a story Jesus told about how little things grow into big things by using the examples of a mustard seed and yeast to describe the kingdom of God.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

After reading the story, invite the children to crouch down and make themselves very small. Tell them each time they hear the word "grow" they should stretch up a little higher and reach up on tiptoes with arms outstretched when you say big.

- ▼ God's kingdom is like a tiny mustard seed. It starts out little and grows and grows and grows and grows—into something big!
- ▼ God's kingdom is like yeast in flour. It starts out little and grows and grows and grows and grows—into something big!

Ask the children if they can think of something else that starts off little and grows to something big. Fill in the blank with their answers.

- ▼ God's kingdom is like _____. It starts out little and grows and grows and grows and grows—into something big!

Read the storybook *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. A Mustard Tree

FM A

Remind the children that Jesus told a story using examples of everyday things that people would know, like a mustard seed. Show children a tiny mustard seed. Give each child a large piece of light-colored construction paper. Use the following instructions to have them make a picture of a mustard tree.

- ▼ Draw a line across the paper from side to side a couple of inches from the bottom. This is the ground.
- ▼ "Plant" one mustard seed below the line by gluing it to the paper.
- ▼ Use a crayon to draw a tree trunk and branches coming out of the mustard seed.

Show children how to crumble a piece of foil to make a tool for painting leaves on their tree. Model dipping the crumbled foil into a small amount of yellow paint on a plate and dabbing it around the tree trunk and branches on their paper. Write "God's Kingdom Grows like a Mustard Seed" on the top of each picture.



2. Yeast Demonstration

VI FA

Tell the children that yeast is something used in baking bread to help it rise and make it fluffy. Pour a package of active dry yeast into a ziplock bag. Add one teaspoon sugar. Add ¼ cup lukewarm water and tightly seal the bag. If possible, place bag in a sunny window.

Invite children to make predictions about what will happen to the bag. In 10 to 20 minutes, the bag will become puffy from the carbon dioxide being released. While waiting, show children a loaf of yeast bread and a cracker. Invite them to notice differences. Explain that the bread is made with yeast but the cracker is not.

Give each child a piece of bread and a cracker and allow them to explore how they feel and taste. Check on the bag of yeast and notice how the bag grew from something little to something big.

3. Growing Little to Big

FM

Give each child a copy of GN 1. Invite children to color the pictures. Let children cut out pictures, assisting children who need extra help. Invite children to choose a piece of colored construction paper to glue their pictures on in the order of little to big. Have them glue the words “Growing Little to Big in God’s Kingdom” at the top of the picture.

Call the children to gather in a circle with their pictures. Invite a volunteer to place their picture in the center of the circle. Have that person invite another person to add their picture, and continue with one child inviting another. Comment that this is how God’s kingdom grows, when one person invites others to be part of God’s family.

4. Color Page

FM C

Hand out copies of GN 2 and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “How big will the tree grow?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did the bread taste like?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What else could describe how the kingdom grows?”

FA *Many children have food and other allergies such as peanut, milk, egg, wheat, latex, grass, mold, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Avoidance is the best practice. Provide alternate activities or use options to keep children safe.*

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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

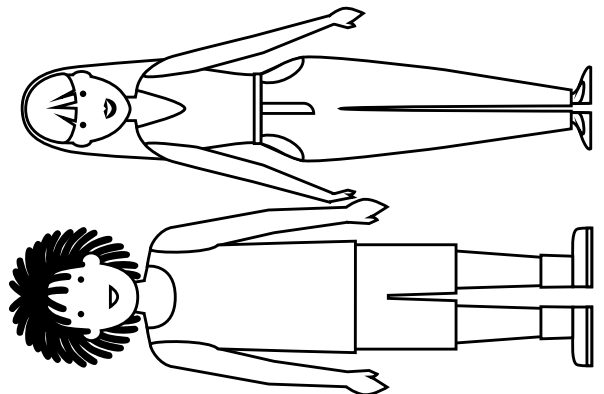
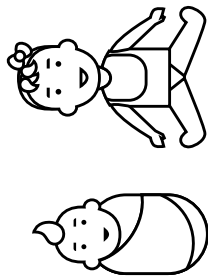
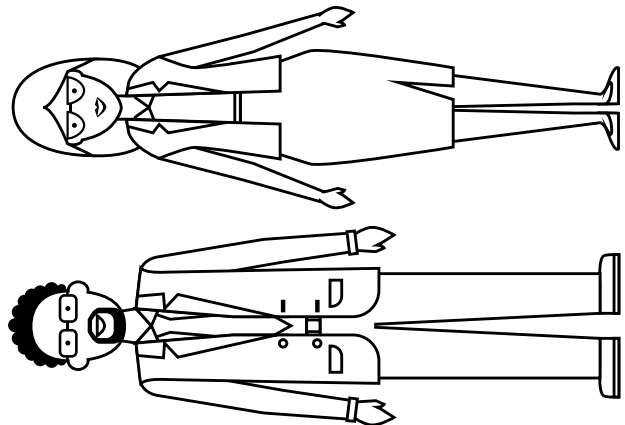
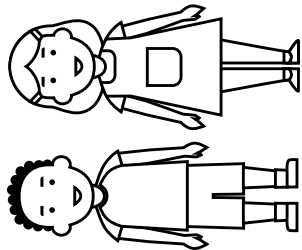
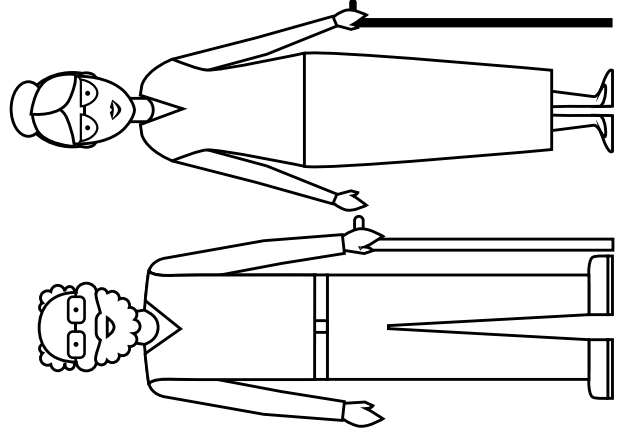
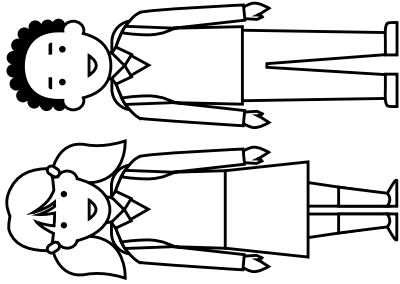
Sing together the first stanza of “Jesus Loves Me”—**SCM 18**—while you serve the snack. Remind the children that Jesus told a story about little things growing big to help people understand how God’s kingdom grows. Ask them how they can help God’s kingdom grow.

Invite the children to repeat the echo prayer.

God is great and God is good, /
and we thank God for our food. /
By God’s hand we must be fed, /
give us, Lord, our daily bread. /
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), help God’s kingdom grow. The grace of God is with you.”

Growing Little to Big in God's Kingdom



Little to Big



The kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed or yeast.

