



Our Eyes Were Opened

Goal: To recognize the gracious presence of Jesus.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 24:13-35

On Easter evening, two of Jesus' followers encountered the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus. They were suffering the despair of dashed dreams and expectations when they met Jesus, unaware of who he was. They spoke to him of their hope that Jesus of Nazareth "was the one who would redeem Israel" (v. 21, CEB). Then they told the news: Jesus is alive!

Jesus interpreted to them, "the things written about himself in all the scriptures" (v. 27, CEB). But it was when they shared a meal and Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them that "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (v. 31, CEB). The followers returned to tell the disciples.

Be prepared! We never know when our eyes will be opened and we will recognize Jesus present with us. Here it was through the breaking of the bread. Christ's grace can reach us today—in the Lord's Supper and in our common meals. We will recognize Jesus and gratefully praise the risen Christ!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The disciples didn't recognize the risen Christ walking with them until their eyes were opened as they broke bread together. Imagine the tables around which your children sit—at tables in schools, tables at home with family meals, tables shared with guests at church who are homeless, picnic tables at the park, and communion at church. All of these places offer children the opportunity to experience God's grace and love.

Jesus appears as an unrecognized stranger in the story. Most children today are more than aware of "stranger danger." Trying to recognize Jesus in the stranger might best be left for adults, especially when children could be placed in harm's way by approaching an unknown person. Err on the side of safety when helping children to recognize Jesus today; help the children recognize Jesus closer to home.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

It was not Jesus' life and ministry that gave birth to the Christian church, it was news of his resurrection. How will you interpret the astoundingly good news of the empty cross and empty tomb to the children?

You are a spiritual guide, mentor, and bearer of that which is holy and mysterious. Each time you open a Bible story with them, you invite God's presence into that space and you invite the children to recognize God's grace.

Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, you invite them to open their eyes to ways that God's grace is present in their lives. Pray for each child and the ways that God is being made known in his or her life.

*Open my eyes to the gracious presence
of Jesus in the world, O God. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 8, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: children's
Bibles, picture and
storybooks about Jesus

choice 2: **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Exploring

choice 1: invited guest,
bread or crackers, cups,
pitcher of water

choice 2: white crayons

choice 3: muslin
squares, fabric crayons
or markers, copies of

GN 2

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

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!

Gather children's Bibles as well as picture and storybooks about Jesus. Place bookmarks at the story of Jesus' resurrection and/or the story about Jesus meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection.

"Exploring God's Grace" choice 1 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



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

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to them that their children will hear a story about two disciples on their way to Emmaus who met Jesus but didn't recognize him until later.

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

1. **Reading**—Have several children's Bibles as well as picture and storybooks about Jesus. Invite the children to look at the pictures in the books or the Bibles where you have placed a bookmark. You may want to have someone available to read to the children.
2. **Mapping**—Provide copies of **GN 1** for each child. Give them markers or crayons to draw roads from their homes to the church. Do not expect these maps to be accurate in any way except to indicate that from where the children live they have to travel on streets and roads to get to the church building. Encourage them to add additional details such as trees or other homes.
3. **Singing**—Play the Easter song "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." Ask the children how the song makes them feel. Note the happy, joyful quality of the song. Sing parts of the song that are easy for the children to pick up. Gather in an open space large enough for the children to move around to music.



- T** *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Hallelujah!”—**SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Who Am I?



Gather children to play a game. The game will work better if the children all know one another. Explain the game, and ask who wants to be the first guesser. The guesser sits in a chair with his or her back to the other children, with his or her eyes closed, and with hands over their eyes. Choose another child to stand behind the guesser and tap the guesser gently on the shoulder. The child should then greet the guesser and say, “Do you know who I am?” The guesser gets three guesses. Whether the guesses are right or wrong, the second child then becomes the guesser, and the game continues.

Easter Action Poem



Lead the children in the action rhyme inviting them to repeat your words and motions. Do it a couple of times and get really excited at the end.

The sun came up on Easter. (*arms opened overhead*) /
 The sky was clear and bright. (*spread arms wider*) /
 Some women went to Jesus’ tomb, (*move arms at sides like walking*) /
 and there they saw a sight. (*hand on mouth*) /
 Someone moved the stone away; (*pushing movement with hands*) /
 Jesus was not there. (*hands over eyes as if looking*) /
 “Why are you looking here?” the two men said. (*place palms up in questioning motion*) /
 “He said he would arise.” (*lift hands to the sky*) /
 The women quickly ran away. (*move arms like running*) /
 They told all Jesus’ friends, “Jesus is alive! Hooray!” (*hands on heart, then lift them overhead*) /



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 24, so that the children know it comes from the Bible.

Read **SCM 8**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Encourage the children to express the joy and surprise of the travelers when they recognized Jesus. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Invite each child to act out the story as one of the travelers while you read it again. Encourage them to show their emotions with their bodies and faces.

After the story, wonder aloud about what the children would do if they suddenly realized that Jesus had been walking and talking with them. Explain that the two disciples returned to Jerusalem to tell others the good news. Ask the children what we can do to let others know that Jesus is alive. Discuss briefly with the children any ideas they offer.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Emmaus Journey

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Before the session, create a path from Jerusalem to Emmaus in your meeting place. Place a loaf of bread or crackers and cups with a pitcher of water in the place you have set up as Emmaus. Invite a guest who can tell some stories about Jesus to join the group on the way to Emmaus. Suggest that they begin with the news that Jesus is alive!

Invite the children to join you in the area you have labeled Jerusalem. State that you are going on a walk all the way to the village of Emmaus (point to the area you have set up as Emmaus). Then begin your journey. Greet your guest along the way. Ask if they know the news that Jesus died. Have them tell the children that Jesus is alive and any stories they would like to share about Jesus.

Stop at the place you have set up as Emmaus and sit down with the children and your guest. Share the bread or crackers and water. Thank your guest for helping you see Jesus in their stories and the snack you shared together.

Invite the children to jump up and run back to the Jerusalem spot together to tell others the good news about Jesus being alive!

Alternative: Instead of a journey within your meeting place, plan a longer walk that takes you elsewhere in the church building or outdoors. In this case, let your starting place (the meeting area) be Jerusalem. Tape paper arrows or footsteps to the floor or ground to indicate your trail. Let the road wind around the church property or building, ending at a place you have already identified as Emmaus.



2. Surprise Picture



Tell the children they are going to make a special picture. Give each child a sheet of white paper and a white crayon. Encourage the children to draw a picture of Jesus.

Ask the children if the pictures are easy to see. Point out that Jesus' friends needed help from him to see who he really was. Tell the children that they need help from paints to share their pictures.

Give the children watercolors and paintbrushes, and encourage them to paint over the entire picture. The wax from the crayons will resist the watercolors, and the images the children drew will appear on the paper. Ask the children who might enjoy receiving a picture of Jesus. Encourage them to give their pictures to someone during the week ahead.



3. Bread Cloths



Before the session, cut muslin into 15- to 18-inch squares. In one corner of each square, print "Thank you, God" with a fabric marker.

Have the children make a reminder to pray at mealtimes that they can take home.

Provide the children with fabric crayons or markers to decorate the cloth. When complete, print each child's name in the corner opposite "Thank you, God."

Explain that the cloth is placed in a bread basket or on a plate. Seeing the cloth on the table will remind them to give thanks to God for Jesus. As they work on their bread cloths, ask about the prayers they say at home. You might teach them one of the prayers for food on **GN 2**. Send home a copy of **GN 2** with each child.

4. Color Page

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, "What were they eating?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What was Jesus saying?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did the men feel when they realized their guest was Jesus?"

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty with listening while doing another activity. To help with focus and comprehension, suggest listening prompts, engage them with movement, or suggest a specific item to find in the story picture.*

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



Encourage the children to help clean up by using this simple rhyme:

Child of God, child of grace,
please clean up your place.
Child of God, child of grace,
please make a clean space!

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

Sing “Hallelujah!” together—**SCM 22**—while you serve the snack. Ask the children who they will tell a story about Jesus to this week.

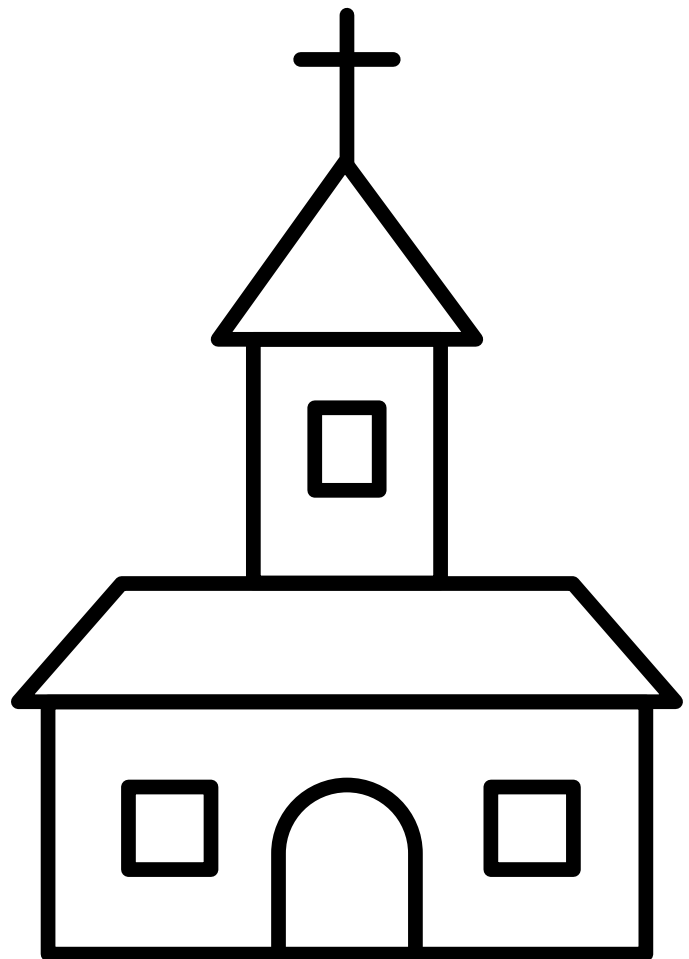
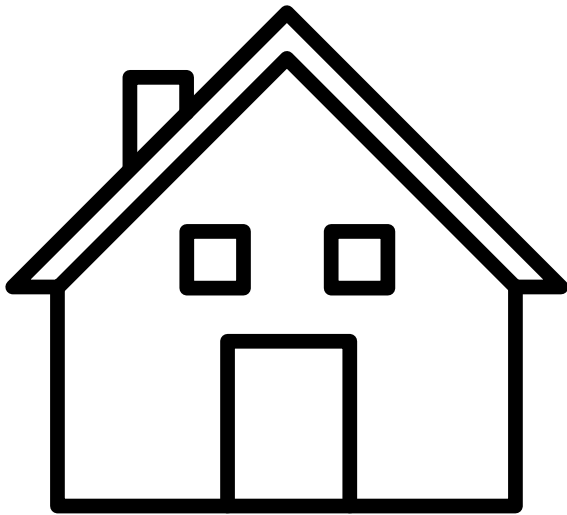
Lead an echo prayer:

Welcome Jesus! /
Alleluia! /
You are risen! /
Alleluia! /
Praise to God! /
Alleluia! /
Jesus lives! /
Alleluia! /
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), share the good news that Jesus is alive! The grace of God is with you.”

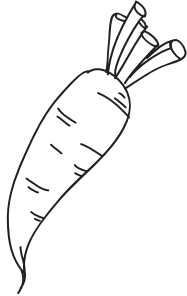


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).





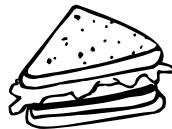
Mealtime Prayer



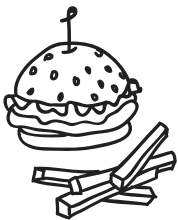
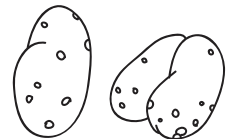
We thank you, God,
for cold, cold milk
and apples sweet.



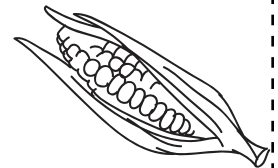
We thank you, God,
before we eat. Amen.



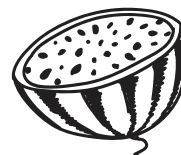
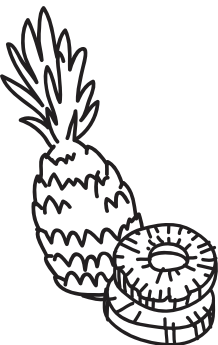
Traditional Grace



God is great.
God is good.



Let us thank God
for this food. Amen.



Our Eyes Were Opened



The disciples recognized Jesus when he shared a meal with them.

