



Follow Me

Goal: To identify ways God has called us to follow.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 5:1-11, 27-28; 8:1-3

Jesus' calling of his disciples astonishes us in its simplicity. Jesus comes by and, in the case of Levi (or Matthew), says simply: "Follow me." And Levi "got up, left everything behind, and followed him" (vv. 27-28, CEB). To Simon Peter and his fishermen brothers, Jesus simply assured them: "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people" (v. 10, CEB).

Luke 8:1-3 is the only Gospel passage that mentions women disciples. Jesus talking to and including women in his teaching were actions unheard of for teachers of the time. Religious authorities would not have approved of women taking such an active part in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus called ordinary people to be disciples, to follow him, to learn from him, and to serve others in ways that Jesus demonstrated in his own life. The call was an act of grace. Folks did not earn or even desire that invitation! They were invited to be Jesus' disciples, and they responded. They left everything and followed him.

We, too, respond to Jesus' call to us. We do our best to follow Jesus, trusting that as we follow and serve as Jesus' disciples, the Spirit will be with us. Through it all, we live in deep gratitude.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children who grow up participating in the life of a faith community appreciate being called by name. The story of Jesus inviting people by name to follow him reminds us of the importance of naming, calling, and inviting.

In your time with the children, help them name the ways God is calling them to serve in the church and in their neighborhoods and schools. Remind them that God calls each one of them to serve, and those ways may not always look the same.

Children appreciate the chance to be contributors and leaders within the church. Look for ways the children are already doing God's work in your congregation and lift those up.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The children will enjoy thinking and talking about people they know who do God's work. Avoid discussing only people in full-time ministry. Think of others who do God's work.

Some children will immediately be able to tell you something they can do in leadership or in helping someone. Others are quieter, more contemplative, perhaps less confident: they need time to think. It will be important to help children find their own gifts for ministry.

Being in community supports all the children, and we need community just as Jesus needed his disciples. Invite the children to take turns telling one another, "Jesus calls you to . . ." As they leave, bless each one's gift, calling her or him by name, as Jesus would do.

O Holy Spirit, guide my steps as I seek to follow Jesus Christ. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 11, 18, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

biblical costumes

snack (optional)

Guided Play

choice 1: example pipe
cleaner fish

choice 2: **SCM 11a, 11b**

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1 and
GN 2

Exploring

choice 1: small plain
gift bags, stickers,
gathered gift items
such as small bottles of
lotion, toothpaste and
toothbrushes, etc.

choice 2: **GN 3**, stick or
dowel rod

choice 3: copies of **GN 4**
on card stock

choice 4: copies of **GN 5**



The first Christians used an acrostic to describe what they believed about Jesus: “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior.” The first letter of each word spells the Greek word for fish, *ichthus*.

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.

Use **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual 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!

For “Guided Play” choice 1, make an example of the pipe cleaner fish (see sidebar). For choice 2, glue **SCM 11a** and **11b** to construction paper and cut out the cards to make memory cards.

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

Welcoming and Guided Play TD

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace to you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to the parents/caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about Jesus calling the first disciples to follow him and join him in his ministry.

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

1. **Making Fish Symbols**—From the early days of the church, the fish has been a symbol for followers of Jesus. Set out the example fish. Provide bright colored pipe cleaners. Invite the children to bend them in half so the two ends are even. Cross the two ends of the pipe cleaners and twist to form a fish. Invite the children to make multiple fish to give as gifts.
2. **Playing with Fish**—Cut out and mix up the “fish cards” on **SCM 11a** and **11b**. Challenge the children to match the fish by colors. Mention that today’s Bible story is about some men who went fishing and got a big surprise.
3. **Helping**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Invite the children to solve the mazes. As they are following the mazes, invite them to color the different tasks they could do to help their family or friends.

T *For some children, consistency in transitions is the key. Growing in Grace & Gratitude utilizes familiar songs and rhymes as a way to aid in the ease of routine without making it feel stale.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Come into God’s Presence”—SCM 18. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Follow Me



Sing this song for the children and encourage them to sing along to the tune of “Jingle Bells”:

“Follow me, follow me,”
Jesus told his friends.
“Help the sick. Bless the kids,
and feed the hungry too.”

Follow the Leader



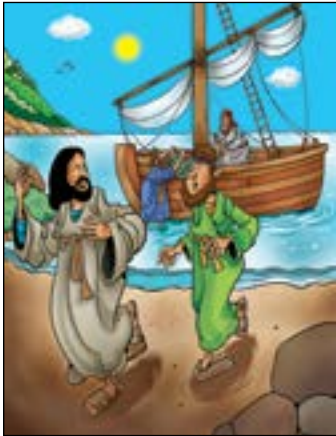
Invite the children to join you in a game of Follow the Leader. Ask them to watch and listen so they can follow what you do, such as:

- Follow me around the room, walking on your tiptoes.
- Follow me around the room, holding your hands behind your back.
- Follow me around the room, hopping on one foot.

Ask the children why they needed to watch you and listen to you. Comment that we follow God by doing what God wants us to do. Invite the children to name some things God wants them to do. Prompt if necessary, such as:

- Follow me around the room, praying to God. (*hold hands in prayer*)
- Follow me around the room, helping hungry people. (*pretend to give food to another person*)
- Follow me around the room, learning the stories of Jesus. (*pretend to read a Bible*)

Wonder what they enjoyed about following God, their leader.



Hearing the Story

L

Open the Bible to Luke 5 and point out that 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 reading the story, invite the children to act it out. Provide costumes. Ask the children to take turns dressing up like Jesus, Simon Peter, and the other disciples in the story. You can use some of the fish created in guided play and other materials found around the room to help tell the story.

As your children take turns role playing, comment: "Jesus invited Simon Peter and others to help him with his work. I wonder how we can invite others to help with Jesus' work."

You might respond: "Jesus wanted all the people to know that he loved God and about God's love. That is why he invited others to teach about God's love and to help others. Jesus was always working for God."

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Making Gift Bags

C FA

Before the session, gather items such as small bottles of lotion, toothpaste and toothbrushes, adhesive bandages, packs of sugar-free gum or mints, lip balm, socks, and so on.

Invite the children to follow Jesus and help in a way that Jesus did. Call each child by name, saying, "Come, follow Jesus." Invite them to line up and follow you to a table where you have put out the supplies.

Tell the children that Jesus helped heal people who were sick and made friends with people who were lonely. Tell the children that they can help others by making a special kit to help someone who is in the hospital or someone who is homebound.

Give each child a small gift bag to decorate. Provide markers and stickers to decorate the bag. Show the children the items you have collected. Explain that these items might give comfort to someone who has been hospitalized or someone who is homebound.

Let the children choose the items to go into their bags. Give the bags to people in your church who do visitations and ask them to deliver the bags for the children.



2. Play a Fishing Game

A B M

Before the session, cut out the fish on GN 3. Make a simple fishing pole with a stick or dowel rod, a length of string, and a spring-closure clothespin tied to the end of the string.

Make a “fish pond” behind a short partition such as a table on its side, or a large box. Put the fish in the pond. Invite one child to sit behind the partition. The other children will take turns fishing by lowering the clothespin in the pond. The child behind the partition puts one fish on the clothespin “hook.”

Tell the children that they will fish for ways to serve people as Jesus’ disciples did. When a child catches a fish, guide the child to look at the image on the fish. Ask him or her to describe the way to love and serve people that is depicted on the fish. When a child catches a blank fish, encourage the child to name another way to serve. Pray and bless each of the children as they fish and learn more about serving, saying: “Dear God, help (Name) fish for people by serving others in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

After everyone has caught a fish, let another child have a turn to serve in the pond.

3. Following God

C FM

Using copies of GN 4 on card stock, help the children make bookmarks. Suggest that the bookmarks will help people in your congregation welcome others to your church. Talk about how the bookmarks might help people fish for people.

Hand out copies of GN 4 and paint brushes. Provide diluted blue, watercolor paint. Allow the children to paint the water over the fish. While the children paint, encourage a discussion about how they can follow God by serving others. Allow time for the bookmarks to dry; then help the children cut them out.

4. Coloring Page

C FM

Hand out copies of GN 5 and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “What is Jesus saying to Peter in the picture?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How many fish did they catch?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we bring people to Jesus?”

M *Sitting quietly may be difficult for some children. Consider having them hold something, such as the Bible, that may be needed soon. This will give them something to focus on as well as provide an important role for them.*

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

Sing the first stanza of “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”—**SCM 24**—while you serve the snack.

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

Thank you, God, for Jesus. (*Thank you, God.*)

Thank you, God, for bringing us to love you. (*Thank you, God.*)

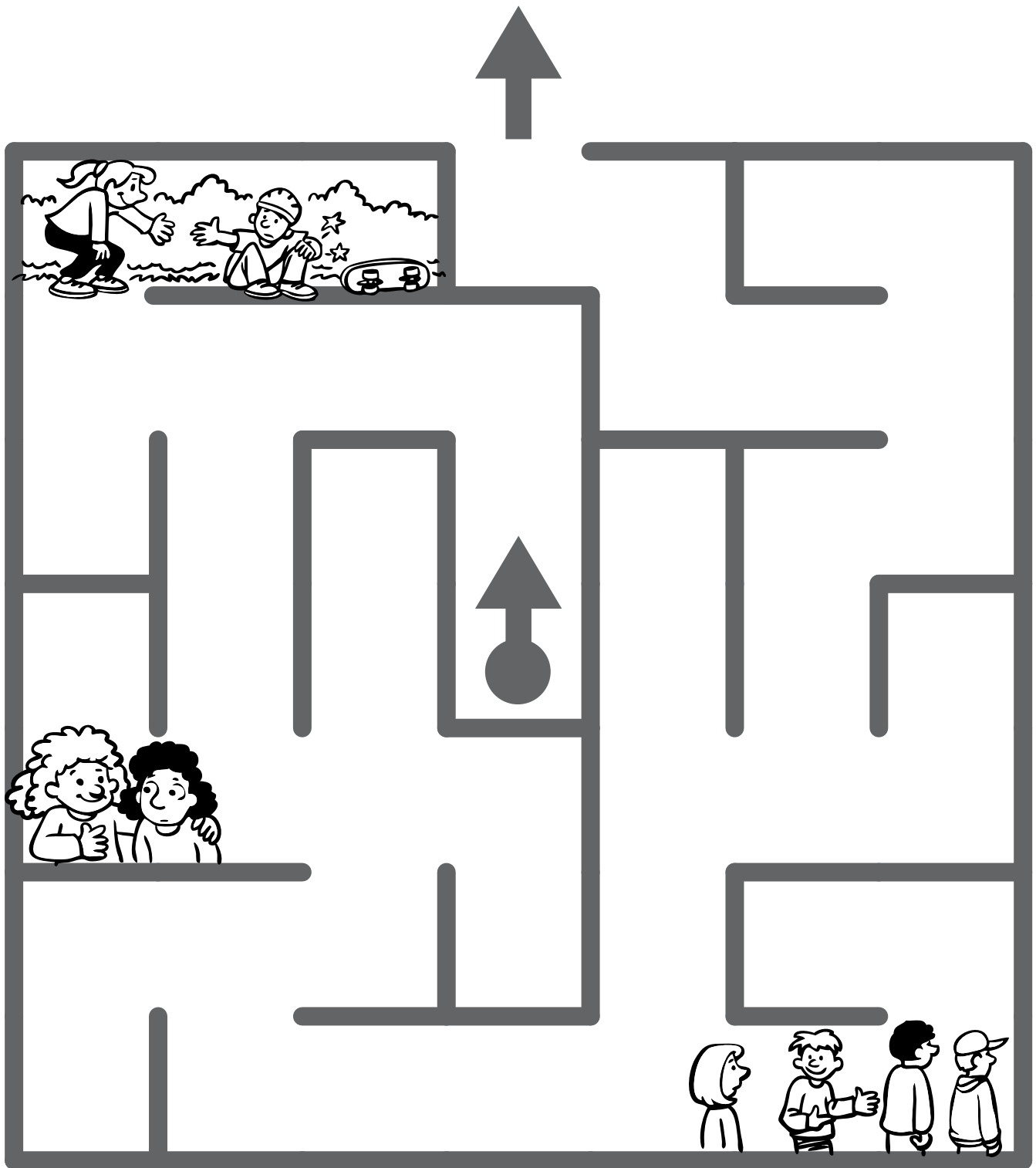
Help us to share your love with others. (*Thank you, God.*)

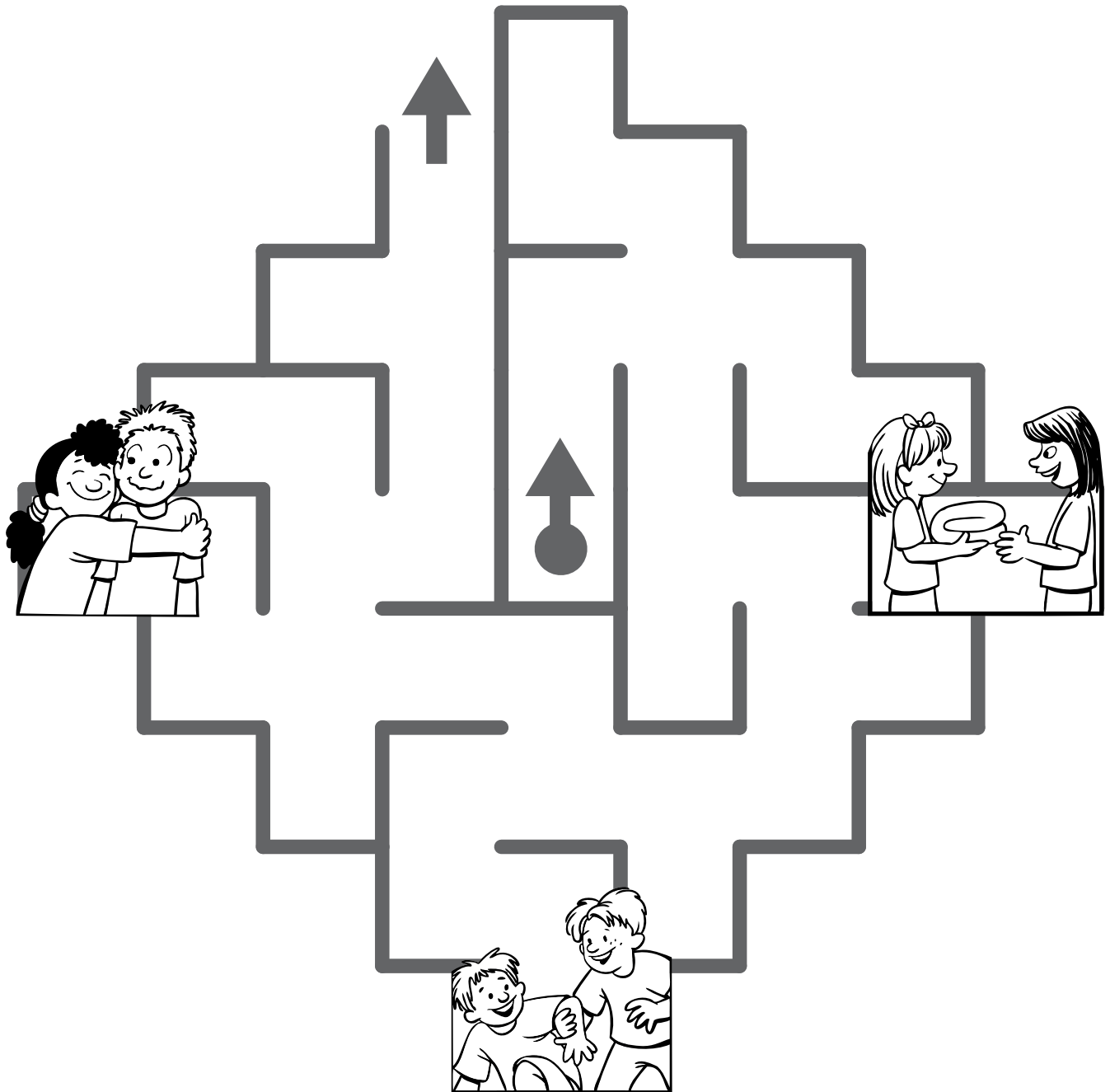
Amen.

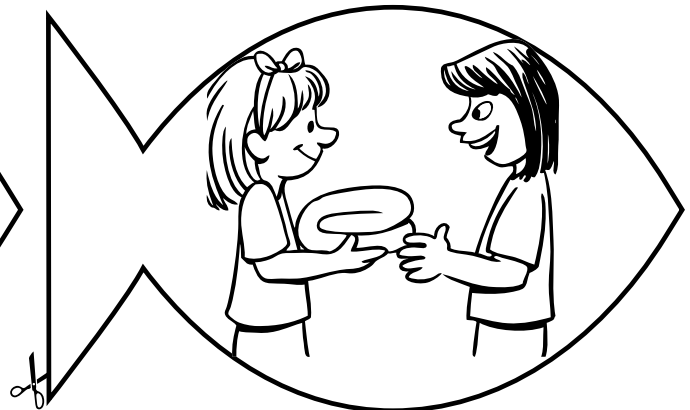
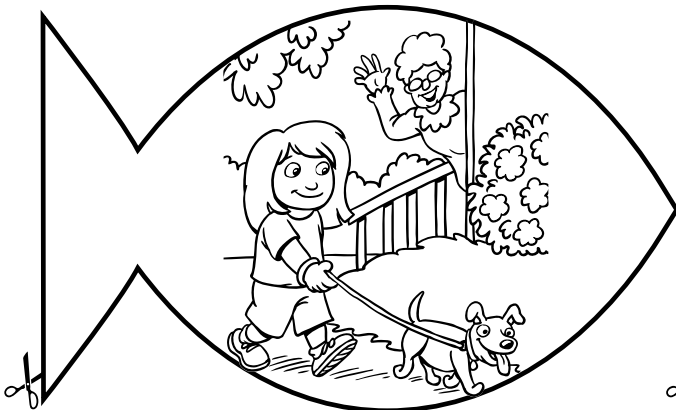
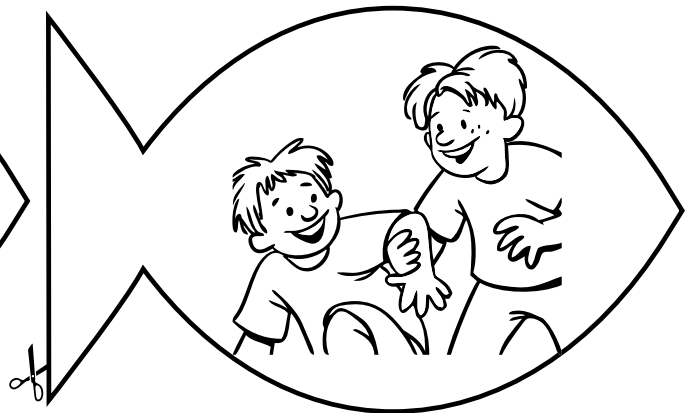
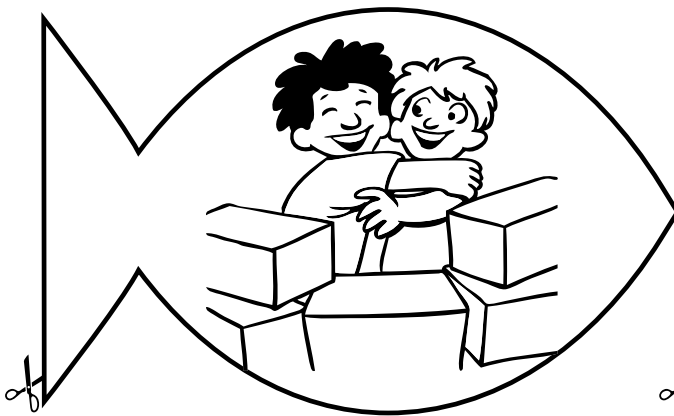
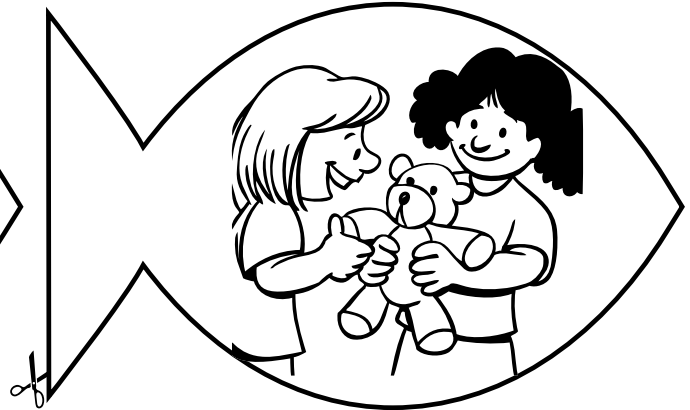
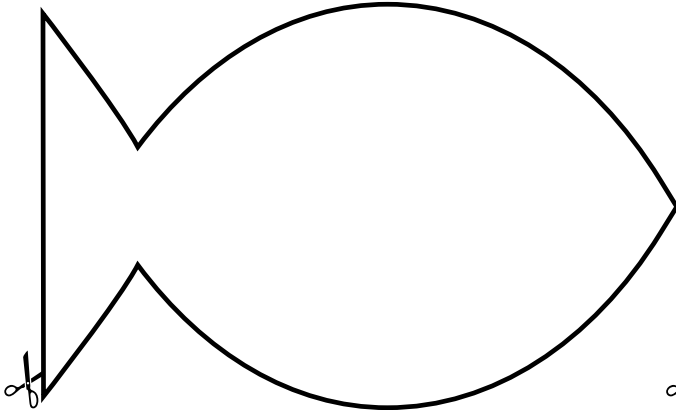
Tell the children to find ways to follow Jesus and to help others this week. As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), be Jesus’ helper. The grace of God is with you.”



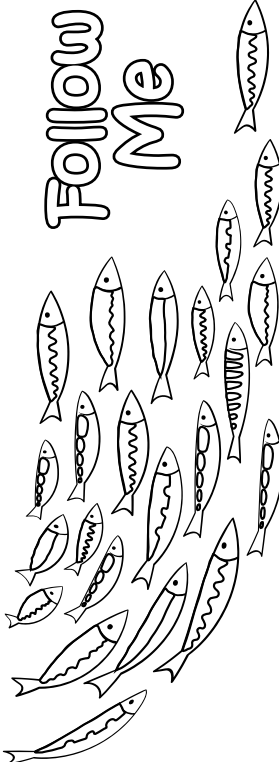
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).





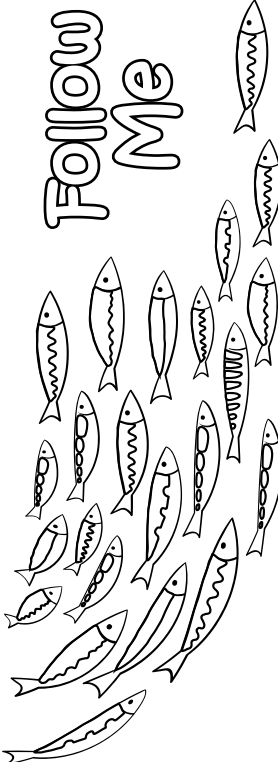


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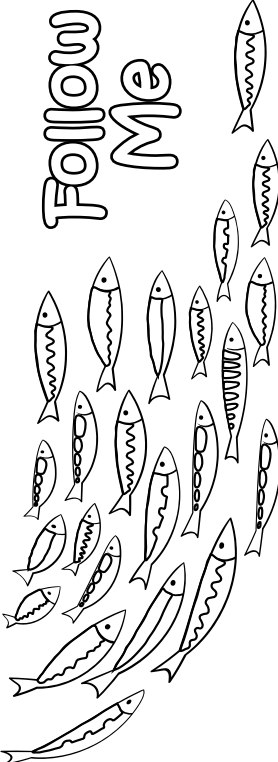
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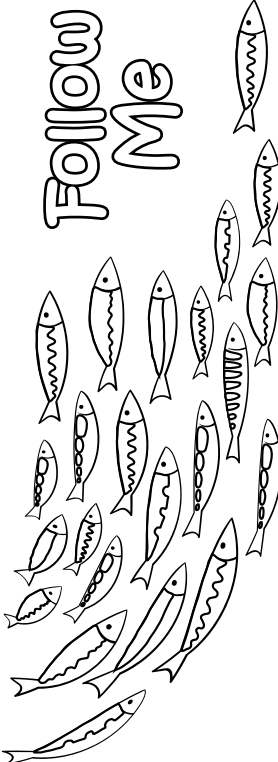
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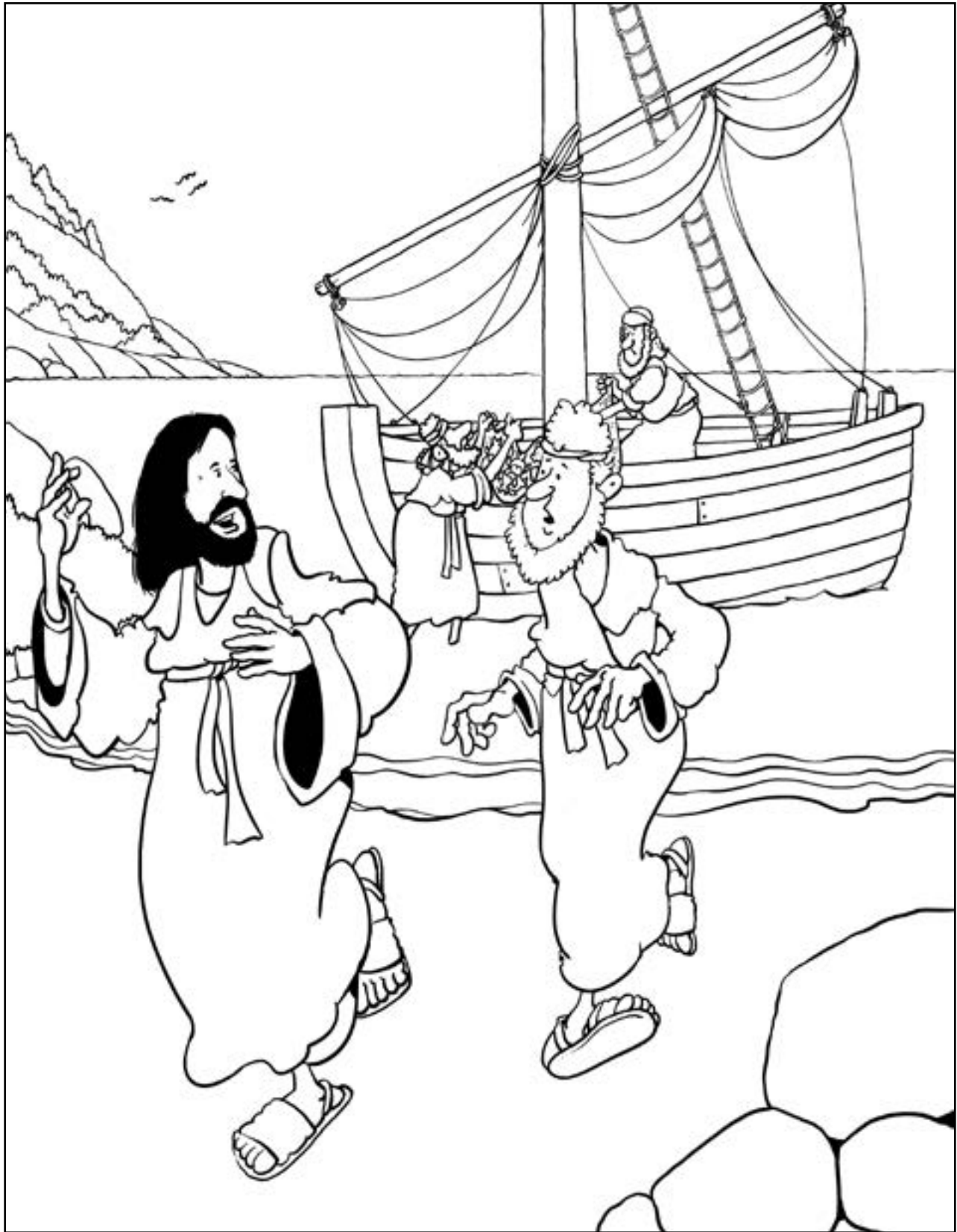
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Follow Me



Peter and the other fishermen leave their boat and follow Jesus.

