



# Lead by Serving

**Goal:** To imagine ways we can follow Jesus by serving others.

## RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Matthew 20:20–28

How many of us have said, “Lead by serving”? Though often associated with children, it is still a cry in adult hearts as well. We think others are getting something we deserve—and that isn’t fair!

The mother of James and John asked for special places for her sons in Christ’s kingdom. However, Jesus said this should not be what was of greatest concern. In some situations, we think we deserve something and, if we do not get it, we say, “Lead by serving.” Jesus says the true focus for our lives should be on serving others—not on trying to get what we want or think we deserve for ourselves.

Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave” (vv. 26–27). True greatness is discovered in serving others, giving the gift of ourselves to meet the needs of other people. This is what Jesus did. He “came not to be served but to serve” (v. 28) and gave his life for us. Jesus graciously loved us. He calls us to give ourselves in gratitude to serve others. This is true greatness!

### . . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Through observation and experience, children learn about what’s fair and what’s not, what success looks like, and what it’s like to be a leader or a follower. They see these behaviors in other children and adults, and they slowly begin to act in response to what they have learned. The story offers you the opportunity to help the children see that what Jesus promotes as success or greatness is very different from how our culture defines it. Jesus wanted everyone to understand that being great is measured by humility and care for others.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you think about sharing the story with the children, consider their ages. Younger children will think very literally about their own experiences of wanting their fair share. And asking them to share those stories provides a great way into engaging the story. Older children will be able to reflect on the complexity of the story as it moves from Jesus’ conversation with the mother to his teaching with the disciples about what a leader should care about—not being first, but rather serving others.

*Holy God, show me the true path to greatness—  
through service in Christ’s name. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More

(SCM) i–iv, 12, 12a, 20, 22

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

blanket or mats

three chairs

crown made from  
**SCM 12a**

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: poster board,  
magazines

choice 2: books and  
puzzles

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

## Exploring

choice 1: adult helpers  
(optional)

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.

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 for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, make the crown on **SCM 12a** for “Transitioning to Story Time.” Tape one of the rectangle pieces to each side of the crown, making a headband for the crown. Use a child’s head for sizing and tape the two ends together.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children and parents/caregivers by name and with the words “Jesus is alive.” Prompt the children to respond with “Jesus is alive.” This is the season of Easter, and we continue to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection.

*Option:* Use the traditional greeting, “Christ is risen,” with the response, “He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

Explain that the children will hear how much Jesus wants us to help each other.

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

1. **Making a Collage**—Invite the children to use old magazines to find pictures of people that look like they are not having a good day. Help the children to cut or tear out the pictures and glue them on the poster board. Invite the children to pick a picture of someone on the collage and to make up stories about what might be happening. Encourage the children to share the stories with each other.
2. **Books and Puzzles**—Provide books and puzzles on helping, sharing, and public servants, such as nurses, firefighters, and police officers. If possible, have an adult in this center to read to the children and interact with them.
3. **Coloring Finger Puppets**—Provide copies of **GN 1**, crayons, and scissors for the children. While the children color the finger puppets, ask them to name ways the people represented by the puppets help others. Help them cut out the puppets and tape them around their fingers. Encourage the children to use the finger puppets to discover ways that they can help others: getting a bandage for someone who is hurt, putting things away, helping comfort someone, giving a hug or smile, taking turns, and sharing.

## Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, singing “Hello, Hello! How Are You?”—**SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

### “Thanks, God!”

MS

Have children repeat your words and follow your actions to the following prayer:

Hands! Hands! Thanks, God, for hands! (*wave in the air*) /  
 Feet! Feet! Thanks, God, for feet! (*stomp feet or march*) /  
 Food! Food! Thanks, God, for food! (*rub tummy*) /  
 Friends! Friends! Thanks, God, for friends! (*shake hands*) /  
 Hands, (*wave hands*) /  
 feet, (*stomp feet*) /  
 food, (*rub tummy*) /  
 and friends! (*shake hands*) /  
 Thank you, God! (*clap hands*) /  
 Amen. /

### Left and Right

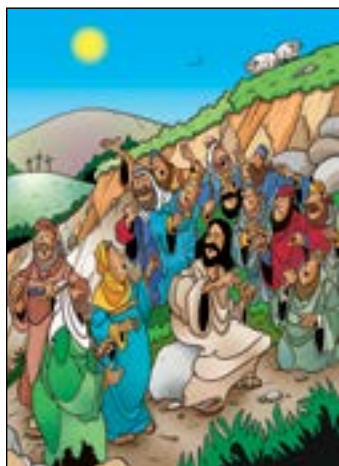
L F

Set three chairs in front of the group. Explain that, in Jesus’ time, a king would ask his two most important helpers to sit beside him, one on the left and one on the right. Practice identifying *left* and *right*. For some, this will be a new concept.

- ▼ Have the child whose birthday is next to be the king or queen.
- ▼ Invite him or her to sit on the chair in the middle. Put the crown made from **SCM 12a** on the king/queen.
- ▼ Choose two people to sit on the chairs next to the throne.
- ▼ The three seated children will determine a command to give the group, such as, “Wiggle your nose.”
- ▼ Continue so that everyone has an opportunity to be king or queen and sit in one of the chairs.

**L** *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each task.*

If children are having difficulty remembering right from left, consider putting a sticker or a small piece of masking tape on their right hand to signify right.



You may wish to have some extra adult helpers if your group is large.

## Hearing the Story

C L

Open the Bible to Matthew 20. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Tell the children that they will hear a story about Jesus and the disciples and how the disciples can help others. Read **SCM 12**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

After you have told the story, have the children look closely at the picture on **SCM 12**. Ask them to identify the characters and tell the story. You may need to prompt with questions such as: What did the mother want? What did Jesus say? Then what happened?

Comment that the mother wanted her sons to be the most important helpers of Jesus; Jesus reminded her that the good thing is helping others, not being important.

## EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

### 1. Taking a Walk

B L T

Take the children on a walk around and through your building to see how people help others. If you are a small congregation with little space, your walk might be oriented toward seeing people in the congregation who do certain tasks. Some possibilities to consider are: food pantry, clothes closet, offering plate, bulletin board with mission or service opportunities, Sunday bulletin or newsletter announcements, nursery, disability ramps, bathrooms, minister's office. Look for people to talk with, such as custodians, ushers, greeters, pastors, and the person who prints the bulletin.

### 2. Serving like Jesus

F LG B MS C

Wonder together what Jesus was like. Ask the children how Jesus wants us to act toward others. Have them consider what kinds of things people do today to follow Jesus. Brainstorm for a short time. Then play a game, taking turns pretending to be Jesus.

- ▼ Stand in a circle. Invite the children to imitate your actions as you act out something that Jesus might have done to serve.
- ▼ Pretend to give others food, wash an imaginary person's feet, care for a sick person, pray, or pet a dog.
- ▼ Then invite another person to act out something Jesus might have done, and so on.

**LG** *Communication is key to leadership and relationships. By nurturing communication skills, children are given the ability to build relationships and inspire others.*

Opt out of some of the verses if you feel the poem is too long for your group.

### 3. Spreading God's Grace

L M MS

Encourage the children to do the motions with you.

Jesus used his feet to walk (*step in place*)  
and his mouth to talk (*point to mouth*)  
and he spread God's grace throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

Jesus used his arms to hug (*pretend to hug*)  
and his heart to love (*cross hands over heart*)  
and he spread God's grace throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

Jesus used his mind to teach (*point to head*)  
and his hands to reach (*reach hands out*)  
and he spread God's grace throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

I can use my feet to walk (*step in place*)  
and my mouth to talk (*point to mouth*)  
and spread God's grace throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

I can use my arms to hug (*pretend to hug*)  
and my heart to love (*cross hands over heart*)  
and spread God's grace throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

I can use my mind to teach (*point to head*)  
and my hands to reach (*reach hands out*)  
and spread God's love throughout the world. (*reach arms up and around in a large circle*)  
(clap, clap)

**M** Children requiring more movement than others can benefit from dynamic activities. Set clear expectations about boundaries for appropriate movement to position these children for success.



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

#### 4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color **GN 2** and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why do some of the disciples look so angry?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Who are James and John?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did James and John feel about what their mother asked of Jesus?”

### 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.

Sing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 20**—together while you serve the snack.

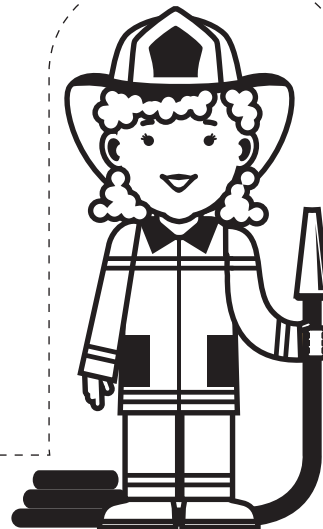
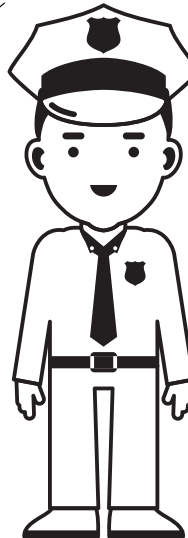
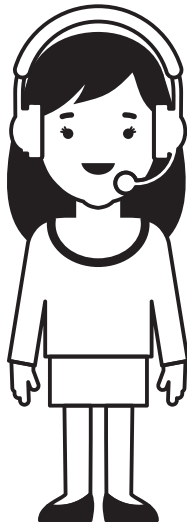
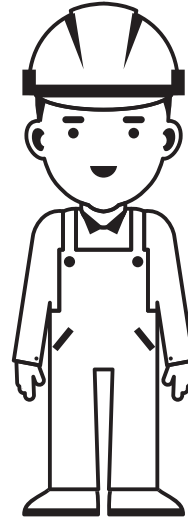
Ask the children what they want to thank God for. Say a prayer using their ideas. Ask them to repeat it after you, phrase by phrase. Say the closing prayer in the same manner:

Dear God, /  
thank you for Jesus, /  
who shows us your ways. /  
Help us to be kind and lead by serving /  
as you would have us be. /  
In Jesus’ name, we pray. /  
Amen.

As the children and parents/caregivers leave, bless them: “(Name), be kind and loving to others. 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](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).







## Lead by Serving



**Jesus says that we are good leaders when we help others.**

