



Jesus Will Always Be with Us

Goal: To trust Jesus' words, "I am with you always."

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 28:16–20

Notice the description of how the disciples received Jesus. Some of them worshiped him, but some doubted. The Greek word for doubt, *distazo*, refers to standing in two places at once—believing and doubting. Some, like Thomas, needed more time or physical proof. Perhaps all of them doubted, wondering if they would be able to do all that Jesus expected of them.

Whether they were completely sure of their abilities to do what Jesus asked of them or they still had doubts or questions, they were able to stand in the place that Jesus had opened for them when he told them not to worry, because he would be with them every day. We, too, claim that promise of Easter, that Jesus is with us every day. Jesus' gracious love sustains and comforts us, leads us, helps us, and holds us.

All we can do is say thank you. Thank you, Jesus, for being with us. In gratitude, we give our deepest thanks to our constant companion.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

It would be so interesting to act out this very brief scene with your children, asking them to take the parts of the disciples and Jesus. If you asked them to show, with their actions and their words, how they would express worship and doubt, you would have a rich basis for conversation about this story and what it might mean for their lives today. The ability to stand in the two places of worship and doubt is not a bad thing. To ask questions and express doubts is not the opposite of faith, but rather an expression of the kind of thinking required for a growing faith.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be aware of the children in your group and the variety of personalities you see each session. Some are very confident and love to talk. Others are quieter, more reserved. Some are quite sure about their answers to questions, and others hold back, thinking and wondering. Some are very positive, and others express doubts or concerns.

These depictions could describe the disciples that Jesus met on the mountain. As they listened to what Jesus wanted them to do, each one was thinking about how it could be accomplished. This also is true of the children in your group. Remind them that they can live and love like Jesus wants them to do, each in their own way.

O God, give me the assurance that Jesus is present in my life and in the world. Help me live according to his promise. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: mural paper
with drawing outlines

choice 2: books or
magazines with pictures
and stories about
mountains

choice 3: rhythm
instruments

Exploring

choice 1: smartphone

choice 3: **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1–3, mural from
“Guided Play” choice 1

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.

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, draw an outline of a mountain on mural paper. Add outlines for rocks, clouds, and grass for use in “Guided Play” choice 1.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

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!”

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know. Explain that the children will hear that Jesus met his disciples on a mountain after he was raised.

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

1. **Making a Mountain Mural**—Invite children to select different parts of the mural to color. When they finish their individual jobs, take the mural to your gathering place for story time. Set aside for “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3.
2. **Reading**—Invite children to look at books and pictures about mountains. Invite conversation about mountains. Wonder aloud who has climbed a very high hill and what it was like. Say that today’s Bible story is about a time the disciples met Jesus on a mountain.
3. **Speaking in Rhythm**—Invite the children to experiment with rhythm instruments and with clapping on various surfaces. Then show the children how to tap out the rhythm “I-am-with-you-al-ways” with rhythm instruments or the palms of their hands on various surfaces as you repeat the phrase. Do it several times and tell them you will ask them to show others how to do it when you gather for the story.



- B** *Vary your activities so that the children move about, sit, use their muscles, and rest again.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, playing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—SCM 20.

Jesus Said

L

Play a call-and-echo game. The leader calls; the children echo.

Jesus said, “Go.” /
 Jesus said, “Teach.” /
 Jesus said, “Baptize.” /
 Jesus said, “Remember.” /
 Jesus said, “Remember.” /
 Jesus said, “Remember, /
 I am with you always!” /

Have the children try clapping their hands together and clapping on various surfaces to make other sounds.

Divide the children into clappers and speakers. Try it out on the words “Jesus said, ‘Remember.’” One side speaks, and the other side claps to the rhythm.

Go on a Mountain Trip

MS

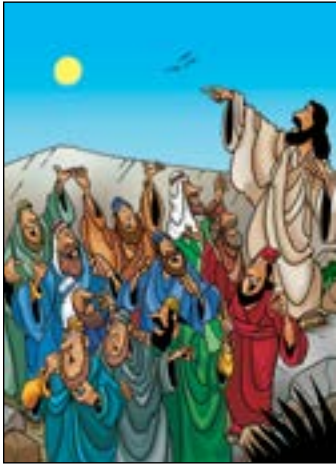
Together, talk about what to take along on a hike up a mountain. Affirm each child’s idea.

Say this poem as your group pretends to hike up a mountain. You might chant loudly and speak softly.

Come on, children, hush your talking,
 Join together, let’s go walking.
 Walk along with Jesus near,
 Walk along with Jesus here.

When you get to the top of the mountain, sit down and say that you are here to listen to Jesus.

- T** *When lining up, consider setting an order each time. For example, one time have children wearing blue line up first; another time have children whose name starts with J line up first. Engaging them while they transition lends order and draws attention away from undesired behavior.*



Hearing the Story



Open the Bible to Matthew 28. 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 a time after Jesus was raised and he met his friends on a mountain to tell them some important things.

Read **SCM 8**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Ask the children who learned to tap out the rhythm and say the words "I-am-with-you-al-ways" to teach the other children to do it.

Don't be surprised if some children are unable to tap and talk at the same time. If so, give them one job to do. If you do not have enough rhythm instruments, clap the rhythm.

Read the story again and have the children speak and tap the rhythm when you get to the line "I am with you always."

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Sending Greetings



Homebound members of your church will enjoy hearing the children's message that Jesus said, "I will be with you."

Talk with the children about the people who will hear their recording. Ask the children to introduce themselves: "Hi, my name is (Name)." Have them practice speaking as you record them on a smartphone. Play the video back a few times so the children can hear and see themselves.

After they are accustomed to being recorded, practice "Jesus Said" from "Transitioning to Story Time." A leader or a child might be the caller, with the children providing the echo.

Arrange to send the video to the people who are responsible for congregational care so that they can play it for those who are homebound. It would be a valuable experience for the children to visit with people who are homebound and deliver the video with you, if possible.

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Be patient and encourage other children to do the same.*



2. Telling the Good News



We can tell everyone the good news of Jesus and of God's love. And remember, Jesus is with us always! Read the poem and prompt the children's responses. You may want to hold up fingers, toy figures, or stuffed animals, pause, and count before prompting the response.

One person told the other, "God loves you."
When one person tells another, that makes _____. (two)

Two people get excited and tell two more;
when two tell two others, that makes _____. (four)

Four people told four others the news that couldn't wait;
told their fathers and their mothers; now there were _____.
(eight)

The news had traveled a long, long way.
People still tell about God's love today.
Who can you tell? And what will you say?
Tell someone about God's love today.

Ask the children to name people they will tell the good news that Jesus is alive. Encourage them to do so.

3. Finishing the Mural



Go to the mural that you started during "Guided Play" choice 1. Wonder aloud what the mural needs in order to tell the story about Jesus and his disciples on the mountain. Hold up **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Ask the children who these people might be (*Jesus and eleven disciples*). Cut out the figures and invite the children to color them. Have the children attach the figures to the mural, high up the mountain.

Read the words "Remember, I am with you always" from **GN 3**. Have children work together to color the sign. Attach the words at the top of the mural. As the children work, talk with them about the different parts of the story. Tell the children about your favorite part of the story and what makes you glad about Jesus' resurrection.

FM *Assist with scissor cutting only as needed. Children are building an important fine motor skill that helps lay the foundation for good pencil grip and control.*



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.



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).

4. Coloring Page

C

Hand out copies of **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What is Jesus pointing to?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Were all of the disciples excited to hear Jesus’ command to go, baptize, and tell?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What would we tell others about Jesus?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Have the children help clean up by putting away a toy or more.

Sing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 20**—together and use the rhythm instruments.

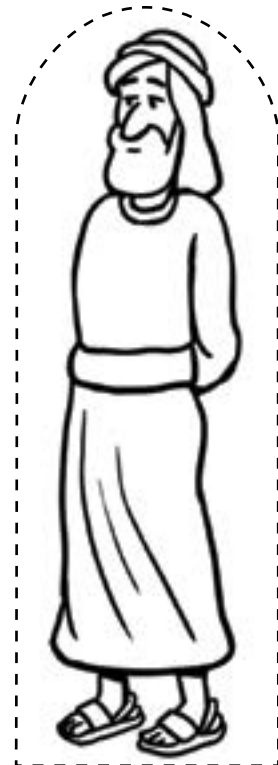
Enjoy a snack.

After the snack, wonder together what the children enjoyed best today. Listen attentively as they tell you. Then tell the children what you liked. You might say, “I liked meeting (*name of a newcomer*) for the first time,” or “I liked the mountain mural when we finished it.”

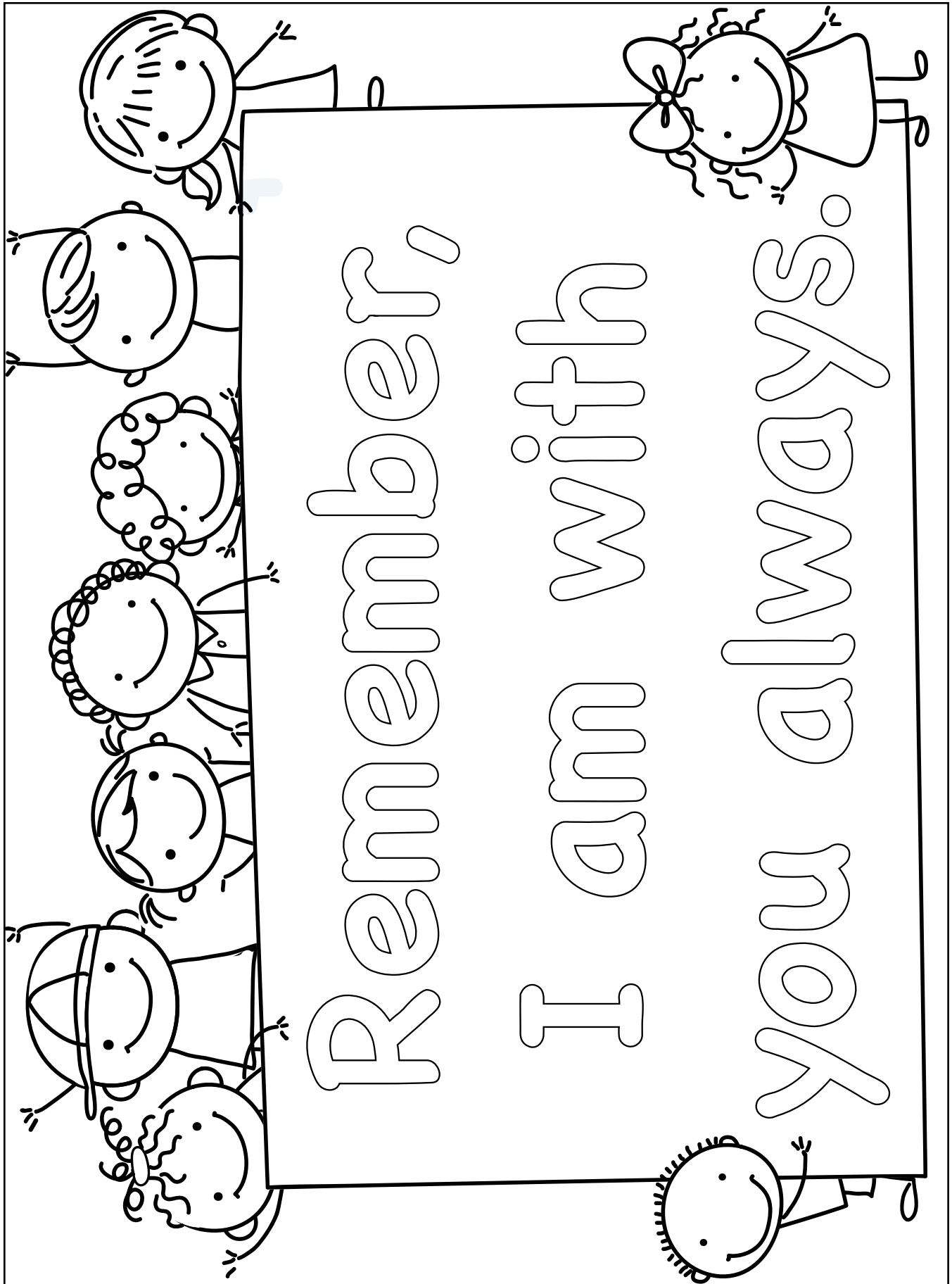
Wonder: “Who wants to be first to pray today? We can tell God anything. We can say what we like and what bothers us. God hears our prayers.”

Close the prayer with “Amen.”

As the children leave, bless each one, saying, “(*Name*), remember, Jesus is with you always! The grace of God go with you.”







Jesus Will Always Be with Us



Jesus said, "I will be with you always!"

