



Praise the Lord!

Goal: To praise God with all that we have.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Psalm 150

The final song in the book of Psalms is part of the collection known as the Hallelujah psalms, consisting of Psalms 146–150. Each of these psalms begins with the word *Hallelujah*, which can be translated “Praise Yah!” *Yah* is short for *Yahweh*, the personal name of God in much of Hebrew Scripture. *Yahweh* is usually translated “LORD.” At the heart of the psalms is the desire to praise God for being God. In fact, the Hebrew title for the book of Psalms, *Tehillim*, means “songs of praise.” Psalm 150 is an appropriate conclusion.

Psalm 150 can be divided into three parts. The first two verses praise God in both earth and heaven (sanctuary and firmament) for what happens on earth and heaven (God’s mighty deeds and surpassing greatness).

The next three verses serve as the second part. The psalm builds to a crescendo as musical instruments elevate the praise of God’s people. It is as if something needs to be said so powerfully that words simply aren’t up to the task. The movement of dance provides greater power to this wordless praise. Finally, as if to emphasize their power, the crash of cymbals is mentioned twice.

The final verse, which is the third part of the psalm, calls on all living things on the earth to praise the Lord!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

How do the children in your group participate in congregational worship? There are many simple ways to include them, such as inviting older children to read Scripture (be sensitive to those who may have literacy concerns), establishing child and youth choirs, and using songs and hymns that are appealing to young people. Children can be encouraged to play simple rhythm instruments during hymn-singing times. Many older children and youth play instruments and can be invited to accompany the choir.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Reflect on the ways in which you worship with the children during your time together. Do you set aside a corner of the room for worship time? Are children given opportunities to create their own prayers? How are the experiences of children from different cultural backgrounds reflected in your worship? Stories, art, and music often provide opportunities for discussion about who God is and how God calls us to live. Make a list of ways that you can strengthen and affirm the participation of children in worship.

*Wonderful God! May all that I have and all that I am praise you!
Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 11, 19, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: green cloth,
two battery-operated
candles, hymnals, pew
Bibles, unbreakable cup
and plate (optional),
bowl of water (optional)

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Exploring

choice 2: jingle bells

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, for “Guided Play” choice 1, arrange a worship space in your classroom, using a small table covered with a green cloth, two battery-operated candles, and a few chairs arranged as you would in a worship service.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

B M MS T SD

Greet children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with 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 parents/caregivers you do not know personally. Tell them that today’s story is about a psalm song about praising God.

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

1. **We Worship**—Provide hymnals, pew Bibles, worship bulletins, or other items your congregation uses in worship. If you wish, include a small unbreakable cup and plate for Communion and a bowl of water for a font. Invite the children to have “pretend worship” together.
2. **Joyful Noise**—Provide rhythm instruments for the children to play and handle. Invite them to make a praise band to march around the room, and sing or play as they march.
3. **Praise Hands**—Provide copies of **GN 1**. Invite the children to trace each of their hands on the paper. Assist with tracing. Encourage the children to draw two things for which they praise God, one for each hand. For more of a challenge, have them draw ten things, one for each finger.

T Consider setting up a quiet space as a great way to limit auditory, visual, and other input. It can be as simple as a pillow or comfortable chair off to one side of the room. Children can use the space to regroup and calm down.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, play and sing “Hello, Hello! How Are You?”—**SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Praise God!



Invite the children to repeat your words and do the actions indicated.

Praise, praise, praise your God! /
Praise God with your hands above you. /
Praise God with your hands behind you. /
Praise God with your hands below you. /

Praise, praise, praise your God! /
Praise God with your right leg. /
Praise God with your left leg. /
Praise God with both your legs. /

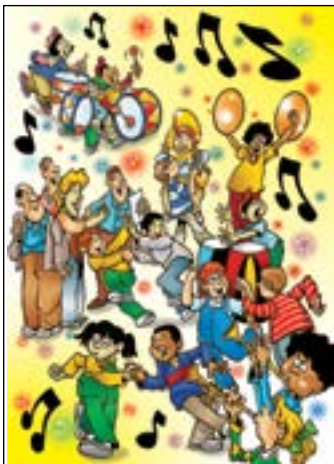
Praise, praise, praise your God! /
Praise God with your loud voice. /
Praise God with your soft voice! /
Praise God with your laughter! /

Jump and Shout



Say the following poem and do the motions indicated, inviting the children to repeat each phrase.

God made me to jump and shout, (*jump*) /
God made me to move about, (*wave arms and turn in a circle*) /
God made me to wiggle around, (*wiggle hips*) /
and God made me to sit right down. (*sit cross-legged on the ground and fold hands in lap*) /



Hearing the Story

Open the Bible to Psalm 150 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a psalm song about praising God.

Read **SCM 11**, omitting the phrases in parentheses. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.” Read the story again and invite the children to raise their arms above their head with their hands out and waving as they shout, “Hallelujah! Praise God!” where indicated in parentheses.



EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Worship Band

B **L**

Remind the children that they can praise God with all that they have, and that includes their bodies, voices, and imaginations. Make an imaginary band to praise God. Demonstrate each motion and invite them to practice that instrument.

- ✎ Trumpet blasts—put both fists together and raise them to your mouth as if holding a long trumpet. Make a fanfare sound.
- ✎ Tuba bellows—circle arms above head like the bell of a tuba, and make a low “boop-boop” sound.
- ✎ Soft strumming strings on harps—pretend to strum a harp and softly say, “lalala!”
- ✎ Bells—make fists with both hands and move forearms as if ringing bells, saying, “ding dong, ding dong!”
- ✎ Whistles—hold two fingers to mouth and “tweet!”
- ✎ Violins—bow an imaginary violin and sing, “eee, eee, eee.”
- ✎ Cellos—sit down and pretend to play, singing, “ooo-ooo-ooo.”
- ✎ Guitars—pretend to strum or pick the strings, saying, “plunka-strum, plunka-strum!”
- ✎ Flutes—hold hands to side of mouth as if playing a flute, and say, “toot, toot, toot.”
- ✎ Pipe organs, pianos—play a pretend keyboard, singing, “ta-da-ta-da-ta-da!”
- ✎ Snare drums—beat an imaginary drum, saying, “rat-a-tat-a-tat!”
- ✎ Clanging cymbals—crash imaginary cymbals together, saying, “Clang! Clang!”

After showing them all the instruments, act like a band director using your arms to direct the band, inviting the children to “play” along with the instrument they like best. Let the children take turns being the band director and changing instruments as they like. At the end of each turn, invite the children to shout, “Hallelujah! Praise God!”

- B** *Children with behavioral issues (and even some without) may struggle with a long list of complicated rules. Keep guidelines broad and simple, such as: try your best, respect others, be polite.*



2. Take-Home Tambourine

L FM

Before the session, staple together two paper plates—forming a tambourine—for each child. Put tape over the staples so they don't scratch the children. Punch four or five holes around the perimeter of the plates.

Give the children the prepared paper plates and tell them they will make a musical instrument to take home so they can praise God with their music at home.

Invite the children to decorate their tambourines with markers, crayons, and stickers. Show them how to thread ribbon or yarn through jingle bells. Help them tie the ribbon in the holes on the paper plates to make a tambourine.

If time permits, play music for the children to play along on their tambourines.

3. Circle of Praise

B M MS L

Gather all the children in a circle. Tell them that they are going to praise God together. Have the children take turns standing in the middle of the circle and using their body to move and praise God. Whatever the movement or actions the person in the center does, everyone else copies and shouts, "Hallelujah! Praise God!"

Demonstrate once or twice with different actions, or a combination of actions, such as waving arms, hopping, and clapping hands. Then let each child take a turn with everyone copying their motion and shouting, "Hallelujah! Praise God!"

4. Coloring Page

C L T

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, "What would it sound like if we were with these people?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What song are they playing and singing?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How can we praise God?"

T *Transition times can be more frustrating to children if they have to wait. Be prepared to move to the next activity and alert children of upcoming changes. If children will need to wait, provide a simple task such as a threading activity or hand clapping to occupy the time and lessen the frustration.*

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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, singing “Make a Joyful Noise”—**SCM 19**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Call the children to snack time. Invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer:

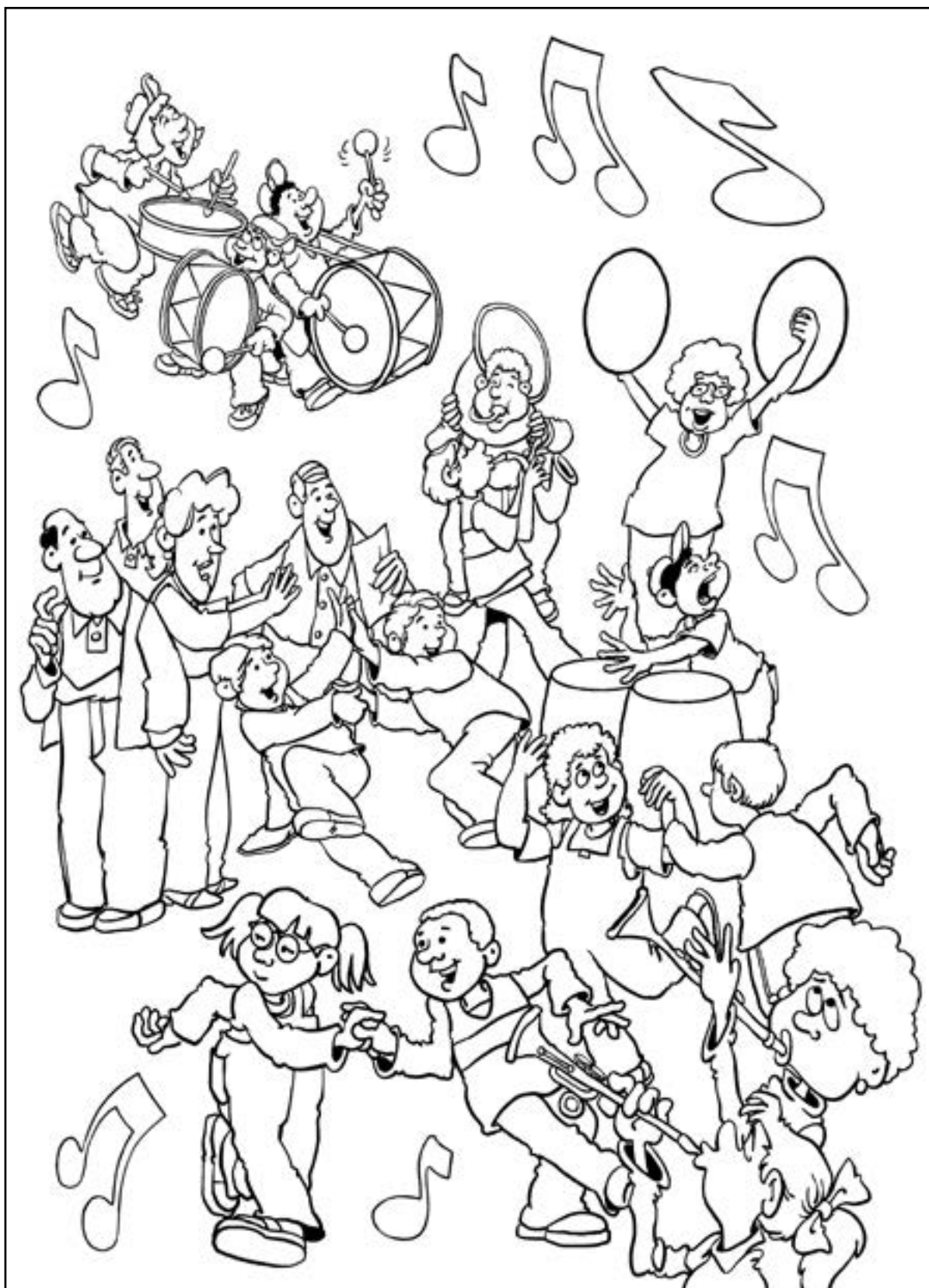
Food to eat. /
Food to share. /
Thank you, God, /
for all your care. /
Amen. /

Ask the children how they can praise God this week. After each child responds, invite the group to shout, “Hallelujah! Praise God!” As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), praise God with all that you have!”

Hallelujah! Praise God!



Praise the Lord!



All the people praise God with instrument and voice.

