



Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

Goal: To make a choice to love and serve God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Joshua 24:14-28

The people of Israel are now residents of Canaan. The conquest is complete. The land has been divided among the tribes. The people gather at Shechem, thirty miles north of Jebus, which would later be called Jerusalem. Joshua leads the people in a covenant renewal ceremony with God. The people have a free choice as to whether they worship God or the local gods. Despite Moses' teaching the people that there was only one God, the Israelites at this stage had a concept of territorial gods. That means, while they confessed that the Lord (YHWH) was the God of Israel, they also believed that the other nations had their own gods who were equally real. Influenced by these other nations around them, the Israelites were inclined to practice *syncretism*, which is the mixture of belief systems. So they worshiped the Lord, but they wanted to include the worship of other nations' gods with their worship of the Lord.

Joshua confronts this thinking directly. He tells them that the worship of the Lord and the worship of idols is an either/or proposition, not a both/and (24:14). For Joshua, this is a life-or-death decision. God's grace invites the people to choose this day whom they would serve. Joshua and his household elect to serve God (v. 15). The people choose to serve God also.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

For the younger children, choosing to love and serve God may mean simply going to church and treating others with kindness and compassion. The older children, however, may realize how difficult making important decisions can be. They may be sensitive to pressures to act in ways that would be at odds with their faith. Some may be more apt to choose the way of least resistance and will need encouragement to live according to faith values.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Think about your role in contributing to the faith of your children. How do you feel knowing that you are playing a role in encouraging them to love God and to live in God's way? Introduce Joshua as an important leader for God's people who called them to make important decisions. Brainstorm ways they can be like Joshua and show their love for God in the ways they serve God. They can offer their skills to the church. Make a list of their skills and find ways to offer them.

*Gracious God, help me choose to follow you each day and
model my commitment to love and serve you. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 3a, 5, 14, 15

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 3: Ark of the
Covenant box from
Summer 3

Exploring

choice 1: Ark of the
Covenant from “Guided
Play” choice 3, large
blue cloth or blue paper,
large stone, notebook
with blank paper

choice 2: two long
pieces of ribbon

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1,
clear contact paper

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 3, obtain the Ark of the Covenant box the children made in the Summer 3 session or make one by covering a large box with a lid, such as a copy paper box, with yellow or gold paper. Attach wrapping paper tubes or dowel rods to two opposite sides to use for carrying. Cut out the winged creatures on **SCM 3a** and attach to the top of the box.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

SD **F** **LG** **A** **B** **MS** **C**

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 that you do not know personally. Tell them today’s story is about Joshua’s choice to love and serve God and his invitation to all of God’s people to do the same. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

1. **Making Choices**—Create an area with various types of blocks and building materials. Invite the children to build either a tall tower or a wide building. Ask them why they chose to do what they did.
2. **Who’s in Your Home**—Invite the children to play in a home center. Encourage the children to discuss who might be there: parents, siblings, pets, and so forth.
3. **Carrying the Ark**—Provide an Ark of the Covenant and invite the children to take turns, in pairs, carrying it around the room. Tell them that, because it holds the rules God gave us to live by, and they are so special, it may not touch the ground. Place a few books for the children to step over or chairs for them to walk around to provide a challenge. Set aside the Ark for “Hearing the Story.”

T *Abruptness can cause problems with some children. Energize transitions with a simple activity. Marching in place, lining up by height, or clapping hands can provide needed focus.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “To the Promised Land”—**SCM 14**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Follow Me

A MS L T

Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

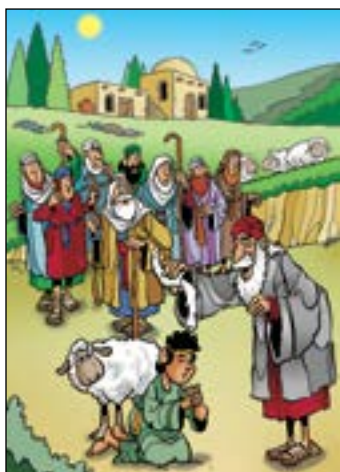
I am looking for God. (*cup hands around eyes*) /
I am following God. (*march in place*) /
I am learning to share. (*move both hands away from you with palms up*) /
I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor's shoulder or give a high five*)
I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*)

Come and Hear

MS L T

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” and do the motions indicated. Invite the children to join in with you.

Come and hear God's story. (*walk four steps to the right*)
Come and hear God's story. (*walk four steps to the left*)
Come and hear God's story. (*walk four steps to the right*)
Sit down and fold your hands. (*sit and fold hands in your lap*)



Hearing the Story

Open the Bible to Joshua 24 so the children will know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about Joshua's choice to love and serve God and his invitation to all of God's people to do the same.

Read **SCM 5**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. You Choose

L MS

Have a few children create a river through the center of your space with blue cloth or paper. Place a large stone and several stacks of books in the river to represent rocks. Gather the children, with the Ark of the Covenant box from “Guided Play” choice 3, on one side of the river.

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.

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve Year 2, Summer 5



Invite some children to carry the Ark of the Covenant box and others to be Joshua and the rest of the Hebrew people.

Lead the children around the room as you retell the story below, following the directions and inviting the children to make choices:

God had promised to care for God's people, but they didn't always trust God's promise. God decided to give them some time to think before they got to their new homeland. So they walked. And walked. And walked. For forty years. (*Walk around the room.*)

(*Ask the children, "You choose. Should we keep doing what God told us to do?"*)

After forty years, they stopped at the Jordan River. Joshua, their leader, trusted God to take care of the people. (*Stop at one side of the river.*)

(*Ask the children, "You choose. Should we keep doing what God told us to do?"*)

As Joshua led the people into the river, it parted. The people and the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant crossed safely to the other side. (*Walk through the river to the other side.*)

(*Ask the children, "You choose. Should we keep doing what God told us to do?"*)

Joshua called everyone together. Joshua reminded the people of God's faithfulness throughout the years. Now God had brought them to a new home with cities, houses, gardens, food, and animals, just as God had promised. (*Clap and cheer.*)

Joshua knew that it wouldn't be easy to live in the new land. Other people already lived there, and they worshiped other gods. Joshua knew the Hebrews would be tempted to follow the gods of the people living in the land. (*Several times, look away from the group and point, saying, "What's that?"*)

Joshua said to the people: "Hey, people! (*respond, "Hey what?"*) Love God. (*respond, "Oh yeah!"*) Worship and serve only God. (*respond, "Yes!"*) Today, and every day, you have

a choice to make. You can follow other gods or you can love and worship the God who has been faithful to you. As for my family and me, we are going to serve God.”

(Ask the children, “You choose. Should we keep doing what God told us to do?”)

The people whooped and cheered! *(Whoop and cheer, and say, “Yes! We will serve God too!”)*

Joshua said, “It may not always be easy, and God will not be happy if you turn away.” *(respond, “Uh-oh!”)*

(Ask the children, “You choose. Should we keep doing what God told us to do?”)

The people shouted, “We will serve God, who has been with us all along!” *(Start cheering, “Love God! Serve God!”)*

God’s people made a promise that day, a promise to love and serve God. Joshua wrote this promise in the book of God’s law. *(Write the children’s names, or have the children write their names, in the notebook.)*

Joshua set a large stone in place for all to see and remember their choice to love and serve God. *(Set the stone on the book of names.)*

2. Crossing the Jordan



Using two long pieces of ribbon, create a very narrow river, only a few inches wide. Gather the children on one side of the river. Remind them that, when God’s people were doing what God told them to do, God made the river dry up so they could cross on dry land. Tell the children that they are going to play a game to try and cross the Jordan River, but this time the river won’t be parting! Explain that the river will get wider and wider each time they cross it so they can see who can get across the widest river without “falling in”!

Invite the children to take a step or jump across the river while it is only a few inches wide. Then have volunteers spread the ribbons further apart. Spread the ribbons wider by several inches each time. Cheer on everyone’s efforts to cross the river *(step or jump over)*. If a child isn’t able to cross the river and steps between the ribbons, make splashing noises as children “fall in” the river. Cheer for the last person to make it across the widest river. Then place several books



or pieces of paper across the widest river and invite the child who jumped the widest river to lead the children across, holding hands and using the stepping stones.



3. Making a Place Mat

A FM

Provide copies of **GN 1** and coloring materials. Read what is written on the paper. Have the children draw a picture of their home and who is in it. Suggest they may include relatives who visit and pets who live there. Have conversation about their drawings.

Have the children cut off the top and bottom of **GN 1** along the cutting lines. Assist with cutting as needed.

Invite the children to choose a large sheet of colored construction paper and glue their paper on it to create a place mat. Cover with clear contact paper. Encourage the children to use their place mat to remind them of Joshua asking who will we love and serve, and what our answer may be: “As for me and my house, we will love and serve God!”

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

C FM

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, “How will Joshua and his family love God?”
- ✦ I wonder, “How will Joshua and his family serve God?”
- ✦ I wonder, “How can I serve God?”

C *Some children don’t verbalize quickly. Nod and show them you are listening, giving them time to formulate an answer.*



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 “God Is So Good”—**SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate. Ask the children one way they can love God this week and one way they can serve God this week.

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

Thank you, God, for the food before us. /
Thank you, God, for the friends beside us. /
Thank you, God, for the love between us. /
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), love and serve God. May the grace of God be with you.”



As for me and my house,

we will love and serve God!

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve



Joshua declares, "As for me and my house, we will love and serve God!"

