



You Are Salt and Light

Goal: To follow Jesus' call to be salt and light in the world.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 5:13–20

Christians receive new life in Jesus Christ. We are disciples of Jesus, following his word and will. As forgiven by God, we have a new quality of life. This is by God's grace. We live our gratitude for our new life through what we do as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus used two images to indicate ways the community of his followers contributes to life and proclaims God's grace with gratitude.

We are “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Salt adds distinctiveness, zest, and a deepening of flavor to food. So Christ's community, the church, has a distinctive calling in the world. It provides significance to life, reminding the world that living by God's grace brings true “flavor” to life.

We are “the light of the world” (v. 14). Jesus himself is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). But the church community reflects the light of Jesus, witnesses to Jesus, and brings the will and wisdom of Jesus Christ through living by grateful faith.

We are to let our light “shine before others” (Matthew 5:16). When they see what we do in service to Christ, they will give glory to God. Salt and light express grace and gratitude.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Play 60 is a program in schools and communities to help kids remember to be physically active at least 60 minutes a day. Children are healthier and happier when they respond to this challenge. Perhaps the church can offer the challenge of “Salt and Light 24.” Help children know that they are surrounded by friends of all ages at church who can help them find ways to be salt and light at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods, doing one salt and/or light action each day of the week.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children are probably familiar with the salt shaker that sits on tables at home and in restaurants. Though they may not use it themselves, they probably know that it adds flavor to food. They may not know about the other uses of salt described in the story—how in the ancient world salt was used in preserving food and in cleaning. You can help children see how valuable salt was and why Jesus would use it as an example. Help children name the ways they are salt, ways they can make the world a better place.

*Thank you, O God, for sending Jesus to teach me
how to be light and salt in the world. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 10, 21, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

flashlights

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: assortment of
flashlights, large blanket

choice 2: plastic
tablecloth, salt

choice 3: salted and
unsalted pretzels or
crackers

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**, glow-in-the-dark markers or crayons, flashlight, blanket

choice 2: **SCM 10a**, toilet paper tubes or paper towel tubes, 6" x 6" sheets of yellow tissue paper

choice 3: card-stock copies of **GN 2**, salt packets

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

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!

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

Welcoming and Guided Play



Welcome the children by name as they arrive, and say, “You are God’s beloved child.” Prompt the response, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.” Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time. Explain to the parents/caregivers that the children will hear a story about Jesus inviting his followers to be salt and light.

Introduce the guided-play activities, explaining that everything they will be doing has to do with salt and light:

- 1. Playing with Light**—Show the children the assortment of flashlights. Shine a flashlight onto the floor. Help the children see if they can step on the light from the flashlight. Help the children take turns shining a flashlight, without shining the light in anyone’s eyes. Invite a few children with flashlights to climb under the table covered with a blanket. Encourage the children to turn on their flashlights one at a time and notice how the light grows as each flashlight is turned on. Tell the children that Jesus says he wants us to be like light. Wonder together what that could mean.
- 2. Salty Drawing**—Cover a table with a plastic tablecloth. Provide salt, construction paper, and glue. Invite the children to draw a picture with the glue and pour salt over the glue. The salt will stick and make an interesting textured picture. Tell the children that, in today’s story, Jesus says he wants us to be like salt. Wonder together what that could mean.
- 3. Tasting**—Place the salted pretzels or crackers on a plate and the unsalted ones on a different plate. Invite the children to try one of each snack. Wonder together which one tastes better, the one with the salt or without the salt. Discuss why. Tell the children that, in today’s story, Jesus says he wants us to be like salt. Wonder together what that could mean.



- FA** Many children have food allergies such as peanut, milk, egg, wheat, or gluten. Avoidance is the best practice. Provide alternate activities or use options to keep children safe.

Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “I Am the Salt of the Earth”—**SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Make Your Light Shine

M MS A

Encourage the children to repeat the words and motions with you:

Make your light shine, (hands up and sweep around to sides) /
so that others will see (point out and then point to eyes) /
the good that you do (stand tall with hands on hips) /
and will praise (raise hands up and wiggle them) /
your God in heaven. (sweep one hand overhead) /

Jesus Loves Me

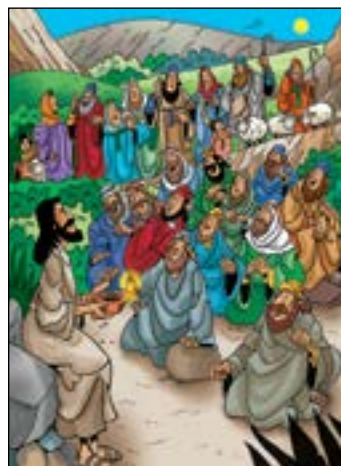
L

Sing together the first stanza, then teach the second stanza, line by line. Ask worship leaders if children might sing this song in worship at some point:

Jesus loves me! This I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
little ones to him belong,
they are weak, but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me. (repeat 2 times)
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves us! This we know,
for the Bible tells us so.
We can be both salt and light,
praising God and doing right.
Yes, Jesus loves us. (repeat 2 times)
The Bible tells us so.

- T** The session plans for Growing in Grace & Gratitude follow a common flow. This helps in planning an effective schedule with transitions to help decrease the number of behavior issues.



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.

Hearing the Story

T L C

Open a Bible to Matthew 5, so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Explain that today's story is one when Jesus is teaching his friends and followers. He tells them to be salt and light in the world.

Read **SCM 10**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Hand out flashlights to the children. If you don't have enough for each child, assure them that they will take turns with the flashlights. Read the story again, inviting the children to lick their lips and say "Yum!" when they hear the word *salt* and turn on a flashlight, pointing it away from the group, when they hear the word *light*. If the children are sharing flashlights, have them pass a flashlight to another child after each mention of the word *light*.

Invite the children to share any wondering questions they have about the story. You may want to start:

- ▼ I wonder, "What did Jesus mean when he said we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How can we let our light shine?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How can we help make the world better?"

Discuss things the children can do in Jesus' name for people in their families and in their schools.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Let Your Light Shine

A SD B

Hand out copies of **GN 1**. Invite the children to make a picture of themselves, using the figure on **GN 1**, with glow-in-the-dark markers or crayons.

Make a dark space under a table or a couple of chairs using a blanket. Invite each child to take a turn under the blanket with their picture to see how their drawing shines, even in the dark. Note: You may need to shine the light on the drawing for a few moments before the child takes it under the blanket for it to glow in the dark.

When each child comes out from beneath the blanket, shine a flashlight on him or her, making sure to avoid eyes.

Call the child by name and say, "Let your light shine with God's love; don't hide it under a blanket."

Tell the children that they shine when they love their sisters or brothers, share their toys, and care for others as Jesus did.

Encourage the children to take their "glowing" faces home to remind them to let their light shine in the world.

You may want to hold the drawings up to a window or a light bulb in a lamp to activate the glow-in-the-dark crayons or markers.



2. This Little Light

M FM L C

Before the session, cut yellow tissue paper into 6" x 6" squares.

Have the children make large candles to use while singing “This Little Light of Mine.” Give each child a toilet paper tube or paper towel tube, yellow tissue-paper squares, and construction paper. Have markers and tape available for the children to use.

Help the children cut construction paper to cover the tube. Ask the children to decorate their construction paper, wrap it around the tube, and tape it in place. Show them how to gather the center of one or two tissue-paper squares and push them into one end of the tube, leaving a bit of paper showing above the end of the tube to serve as a flame.

Use **SCM 10a** to learn and sing “This Little Light of Mine.” Ask the children to use their “lights” and move their hands around to create motions for each of the stanzas. After you have sung the song together a few times, wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did Jesus mean when he talked about hiding our lights under a bushel basket?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Jesus let his light shine?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we let our lights shine?”



3. Salty Messages

LG

Recall that Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth. We can be salty by trying to be gracious and caring for one another.

Brainstorm the names of some people who are especially salty in your congregation—people who are gracious, kind, and caring. Make a card for them.

Hand out card-stock copies of **GN 2**. Invite the children to color the cards. When the children have finished coloring, cut the cards apart, and give each child a salt packet to attach to each card.

Invite the children to give the cards to the salty people they mentioned.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Jesus teaching about salt and light. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “What was it like to hear Jesus talk?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did people think when he said they should be like salt and light?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we be salt and light?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so on.*

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.



Say a personal word to each child. It might be no more than “I’m glad you were here” or “I’m sorry you have such a bad cold,” but let each child know you paid attention to him or her today.



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 to snack time, singing “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

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

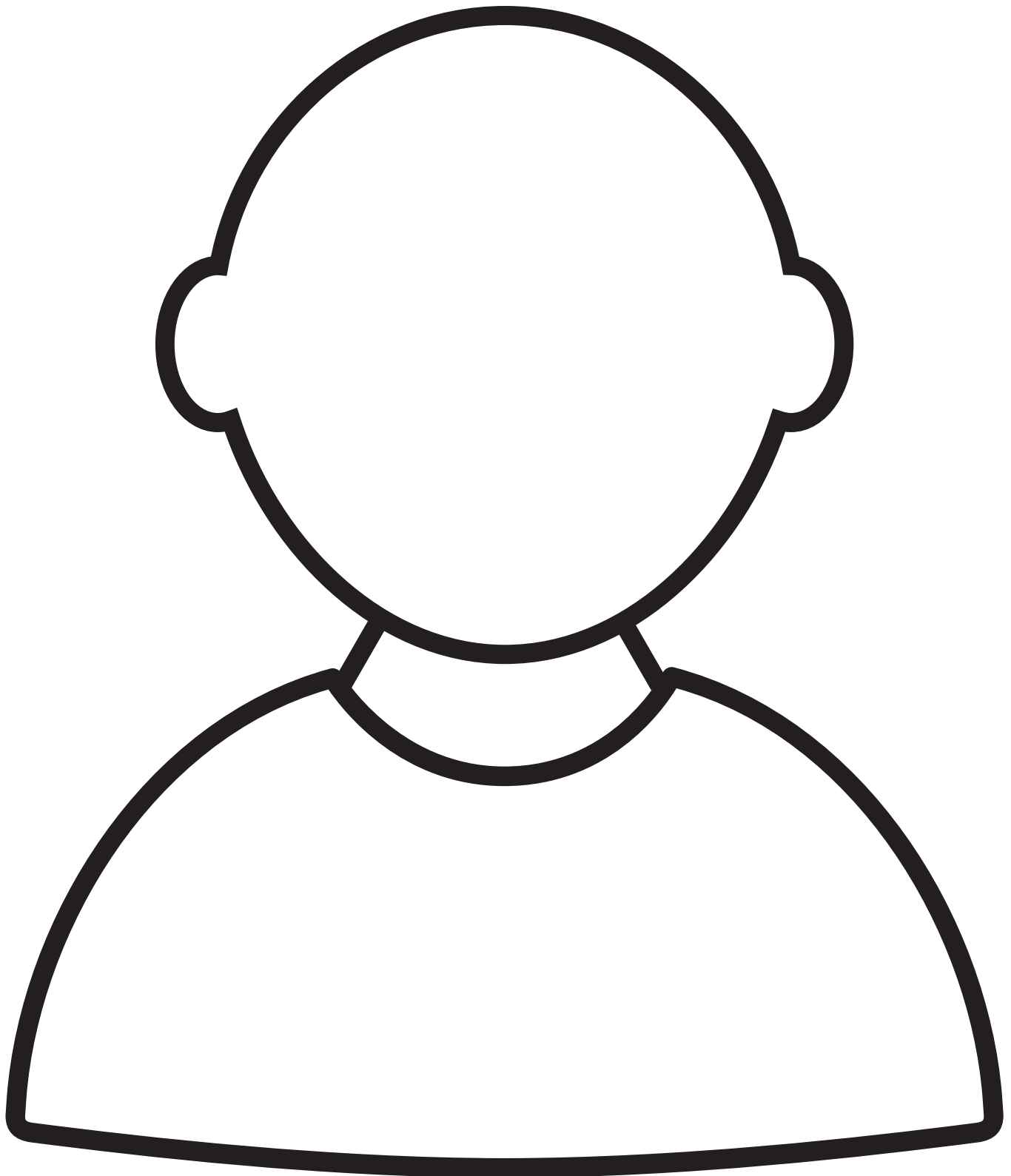
Sit in a comfortable position and tell the children to find a comfortable listening position. Breathe deeply and sit up so everyone can see every other face. Say: “When we pray, we tell God about what makes us happy and what makes us sad.”

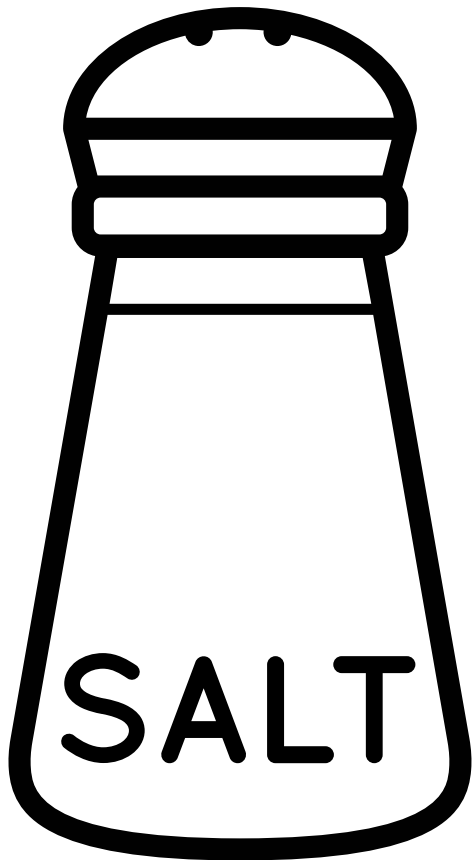
Mention something that makes you happy and something that makes you sad (perhaps a recent event in your community or the world). Ask the children what things make them happy or sad. After your conversation, pray together.

To conclude the prayer, you might say:

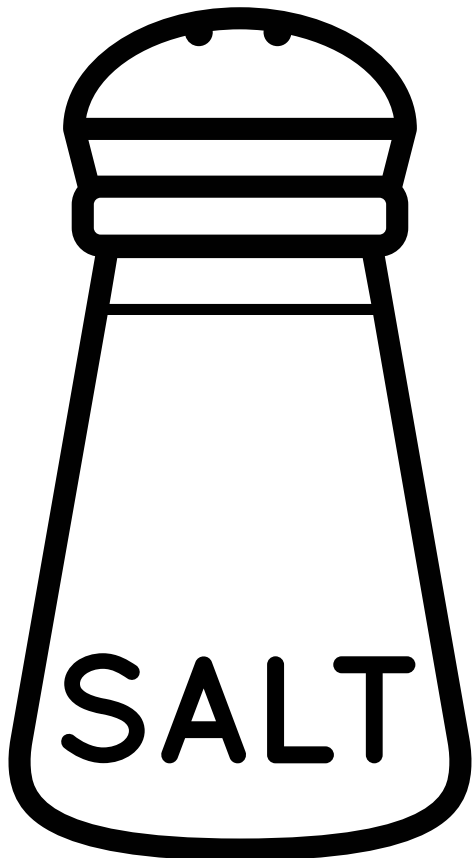
Thank you, God, for Jesus and for salt and light. Thank you for salty people who remind us of you. Thank you for people who shine their light, showing us God’s love. Amen.

Enjoy a snack. As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), you are a beloved child of God. Find ways to share God’s love with others. The grace of God is with you.”





Thank you
for being like
SALT.
You make our
lives better.



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You Are Salt and Light



Jesus tells his followers to be salt and light in the world.

