



Specks and Logs

Goal: To offer grace to others rather than judgment.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 7:1-5, 12

To enter the kingdom of heaven, a disciple should live actively with the perspective of love and seek to practice mercy, forgiveness, and justice. To live as a child of God is to imitate the behavior and attitudes of God. In today's lesson, Jesus teaches his disciples, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Matthew 7:1). Judgment can mean two things: 1) sitting in judgment over people and 2) exercising discernment. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul writes that we can discern God's will because "we have the mind of Christ" (v. 16). Spiritual discernment is the gift and the ability to listen for and recognize God's will for us, the church, and the world. It is necessary to practice discernment in all aspects of life.

Jesus warns about the danger of being critical of others or judgmental. Jesus decries self-serving, judgmental attitudes by which we make ourselves feel more worthy by criticizing others. Whenever we judge, we set ourselves up as an authority with power, a judge who passes judgment on others. But we are not judges. We are sinners, saved by God's grace in Jesus Christ. We have no standard for our lives other than Jesus Christ himself. We have no righteousness in ourselves; the only righteousness that is ours is in Christ.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." Children have differing abilities to see others' points of view, even in the same age group, but most elementary children can grasp this idea at some level. Children can learn to recognize the feelings of others and that the choices we make matter because they affect both others and ourselves. Even children can make a kingdom difference by practicing God's love by the way they live!

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

If the word *judge* seems too confusing, substitute *criticize*. Most children know how it feels to be criticized by others. Many also know the flip-side, how it feels to criticize someone else. Instead of judging others, model for the children ways to practice praise as a way of serving and loving them. This is not to be insincere flattery. That kind of praise is a way of judging in itself. Insincere praise creates anger. More biblically, *praise* means "to call forth, to encourage." This is praise that is sincere and true. It means to ascribe worth to someone.

*Loving God, may we treat others as we want to be treated.
Help me be an example of that for the children in my care. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 12, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

soft fleece fabric,
sandpaper

snack

Guided Play

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

choice 2: copies of **GN 2**,
hand-held mirrors

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **GN 3**

choice 2: **SCM 12a**

choice 3: *What in the
World Is Wrong with
Gisbert?* by Jochen
Weeber, fuzzy pom-
poms, spring-type
clothespins

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!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3 requires 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 teaching his friends and followers about judging others.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity:

1. **Way Too Big**—Provide copies of **GN 1**. Invite the children to color the pictures and then circle what might be ridiculously big for what is shown.
2. **Eyes**—Provide copies of **GN 2** and hand-held mirrors. Invite the children to look in the mirror and observe their eyes, seeing what colors they find. Encourage them to color the eyes on **GN 2** like their eyes. Ask the children if they ever get a speck of dirt in their eye and how that feels.
3. **Caring and Sharing**—Encourage children to show ways that they can care for and share with one another as they play in a center of their choice. Verbally affirm the children as you see them caring and sharing.

T Consider how much time your planned activities will take, and adjust transition times according to remaining time available.



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Follow Me

MS L

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

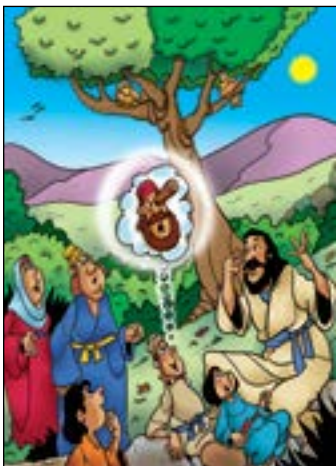
I am following Jesus. (*march in place*) /
I am listening to Jesus. (*cup hands around ears*) /
I am learning to share. (*move both hands away from you with palms up*) /
I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor’s shoulder*) /
I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*) /

Be a Friend

L

Using the tune “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” teach the children the following song, encouraging them to follow the actions suggested:

If you want to make a friend, shake a hand.
If you want to be a friend, give a high five!
If you want to have a friend, be a friend that never ends.
If you want to be a friend, give a hug.



Hearing the Story

C L

Open a Bible to Matthew 7, 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 about Jesus teaching his friends and followers about judging 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.”

Invite the children to listen to the story again as if it is a movie in their minds, seeing a picture of what is going on in the story.

- ▼ Read the story again, pausing after the second paragraph to ask the children what the scene looks like.
- ▼ Continue reading and pause after the fourth paragraph for another check-in. Ask the children what the people may be feeling and doing at this point.



- ▼ Finish the story and ask the children to act out what it would look like to have a log in their eye and to try seeing a speck in someone else's eye. Explain that Jesus is being funny and exaggerating so that people can understand just how ridiculous it is to judge someone else when we have our own problems.

After reading the story, wonder together about what it means to treat others the way you want to be treated. Give an example, such as suggesting that you like to be spoken to with respect and with kind words, so you will treat them with respect and use kind words.

Show the children a piece of sandpaper and a piece of soft fleece fabric. Allow the children to touch each of them. Invite them to describe how the items feel. Suggest that sometimes our words to others can feel like sandpaper—scratchy and hurtful—or like the fleece—soft and comforting. Ask the children how they would rather be talked to, with hurtful words or with soft and comforting words.

Say a prayer asking for God's help to treat others the way we want to be treated.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Reminder Log



Before the session, cut out the two different circles for each child from copies of GN 3. Snip the dashed lines on each circle to make notches.

Provide each child a toilet paper tube and invite them to color it to look like a log. Give them the two different circles cut from GN 3 and show them how to use a circle to cover each end of the tube, holding it in place with tape or glue.

Invite the children to look through the tube. Ask them if they can see another person clearly. They can't see, because the ends are blocked. Read each end of the tube to the children: "Do not judge others . . ." and "when you may have a log in your eye!"

Encourage the children to take their logs home and tell the story about not judging others, but treating others the way you would want to be treated.

2. Role-Playing



Before the session, cut apart the pictures from SCM 12a.

Remind the children that Jesus talked with his friends and followers about not judging, or picking on, each other. He said that we should treat others the way we would want to be treated.

Take a picture from SCM 12a and show it to the children. Ask them what is happening in the picture. Invite them to describe possible scenarios. Wonder together how the person being picked on might feel.



Invite volunteers to act out the scene, but change the action to reflect Jesus' words about treating others the way we would want to be treated. Encourage them to offer kind words and actions in the scene.

Repeat with each picture.



3. Warm Fuzzies

LG C F

Before the session, obtain *What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?* by Jochen Weeber (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Give the children several pom-poms and clothespins. Tell the children to glue a pom-pom onto each clothespin. Set aside to dry, telling the children they will use them soon.

Wonder together how it feels when someone judges or criticizes us. Suggest that sometimes it makes us feel like we are getting smaller and shrinking away. Read *What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?* by Jochen Weeber. Use the following questions for conversation:

- ▼ How did Gisbert feel during much of the story?
- ▼ What happened to him?
- ▼ What changed?
- ▼ How did Gisbert feel when his friends included him? (*a cozy warm feeling, as if the sun were shining inside of him*)

Ask the children if they have ever had this cozy warm feeling when others treated them with kindness. Tell them that sometimes people call that “warm fuzzies.” Suggest that the opposite of judging others is sharing kind actions and words with others, or sharing warm fuzzies.

Gather the children in a circle with the pom-pom clothespins in the center. Explain that the pom-poms are little warm fuzzies to share with one another. Invite children to take turns taking a clothespin and attaching it to one of the children in the circle. Tell them that, as they attach the clothespin, they should tell the person something that they like about them, such as “you are a good friend,” “you are always helpful,” “I like your smile,” “you are good at sharing,” and so forth. Be sure that every child has several clothespins. Ask the children how it feels to receive a compliment. Encourage the children to share compliments and warm fuzzies with others as they give someone a warm fuzzy clothespin.

- F *Notice and listen carefully to children's concerns about inclusion and exclusion. Discuss different aspects of fair and unfair situations, helping children to form strong ideas of fairness.*



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 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Jesus telling the story of the speck and the log. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “What did the children think about Jesus?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did people think about the story of the log in someone’s eye?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What other silly stories did Jesus tell?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children to snack time, singing “We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing”—**SCM 17**. 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.

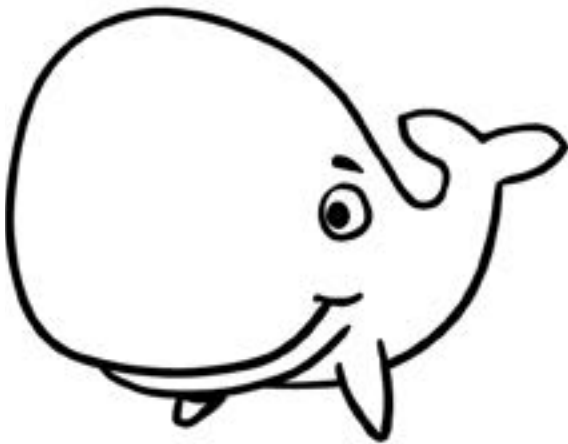
To conclude the prayer, you might say:

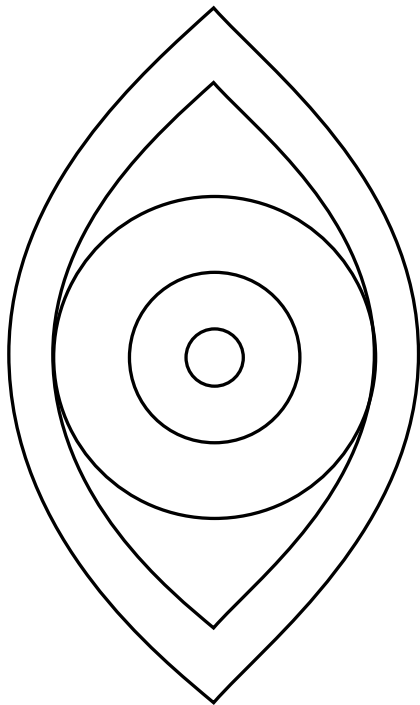
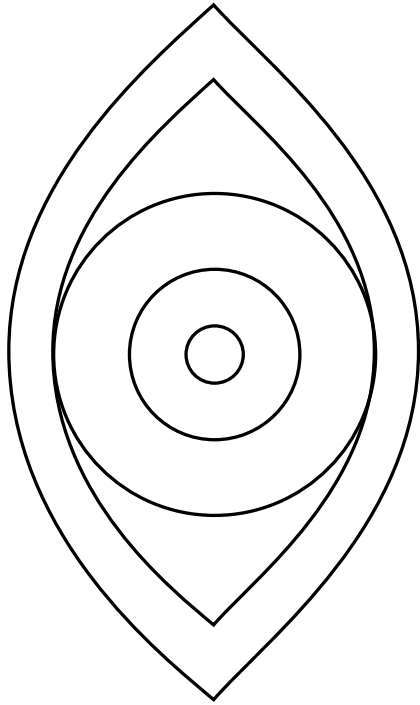
Thank you, God, for always treating us with kindness so that we feel warm and fuzzy inside. May we remember that feeling and share kind words and actions with others. Help us to not have a log in our eyes but treat others the way we would like to be treated. Amen.

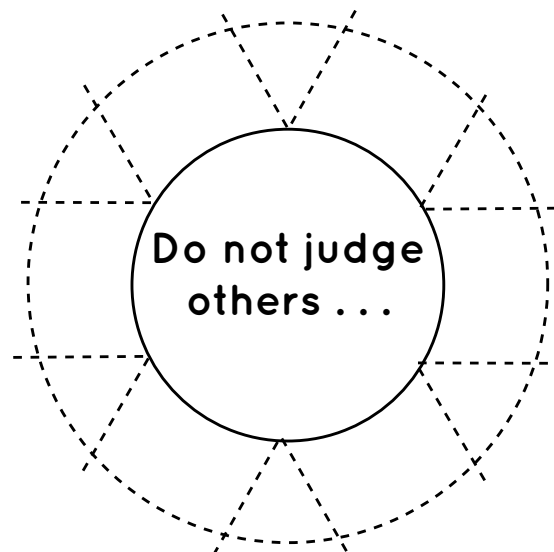
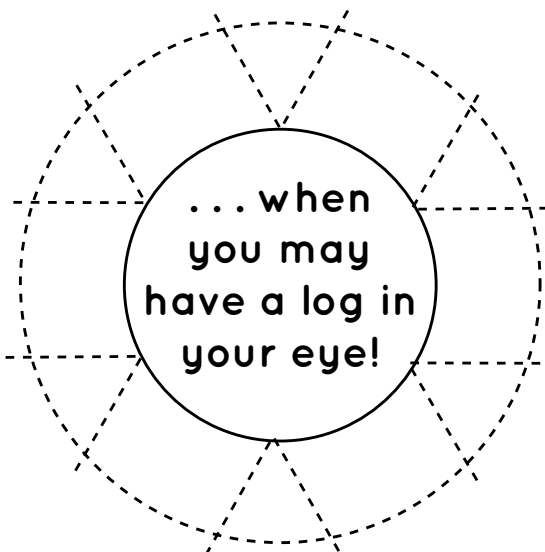
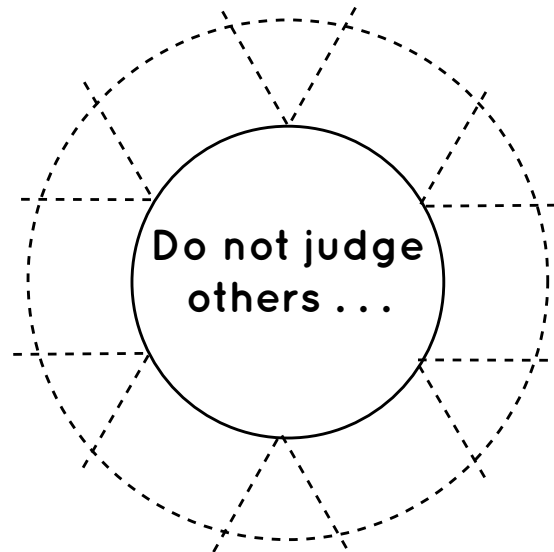
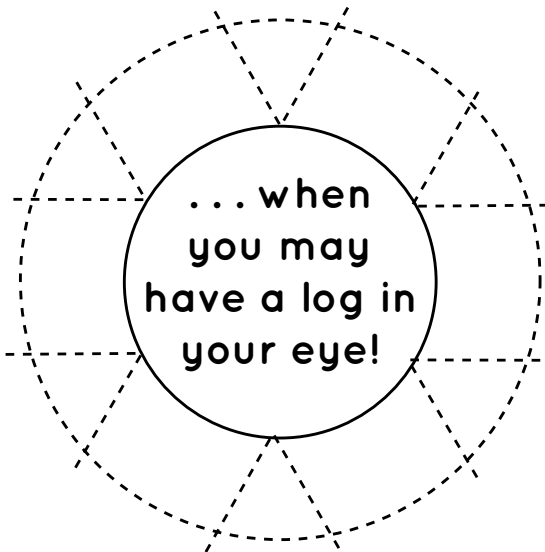
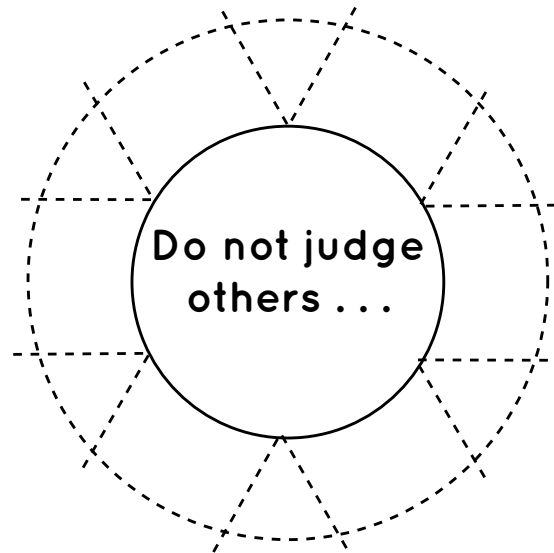
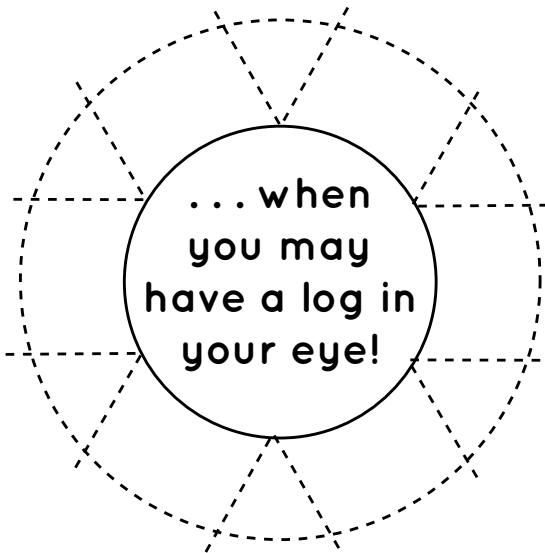
Enjoy a snack. As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), you are a beloved child of God. Find ways to share God’s love with others. The grace of God is with you.”



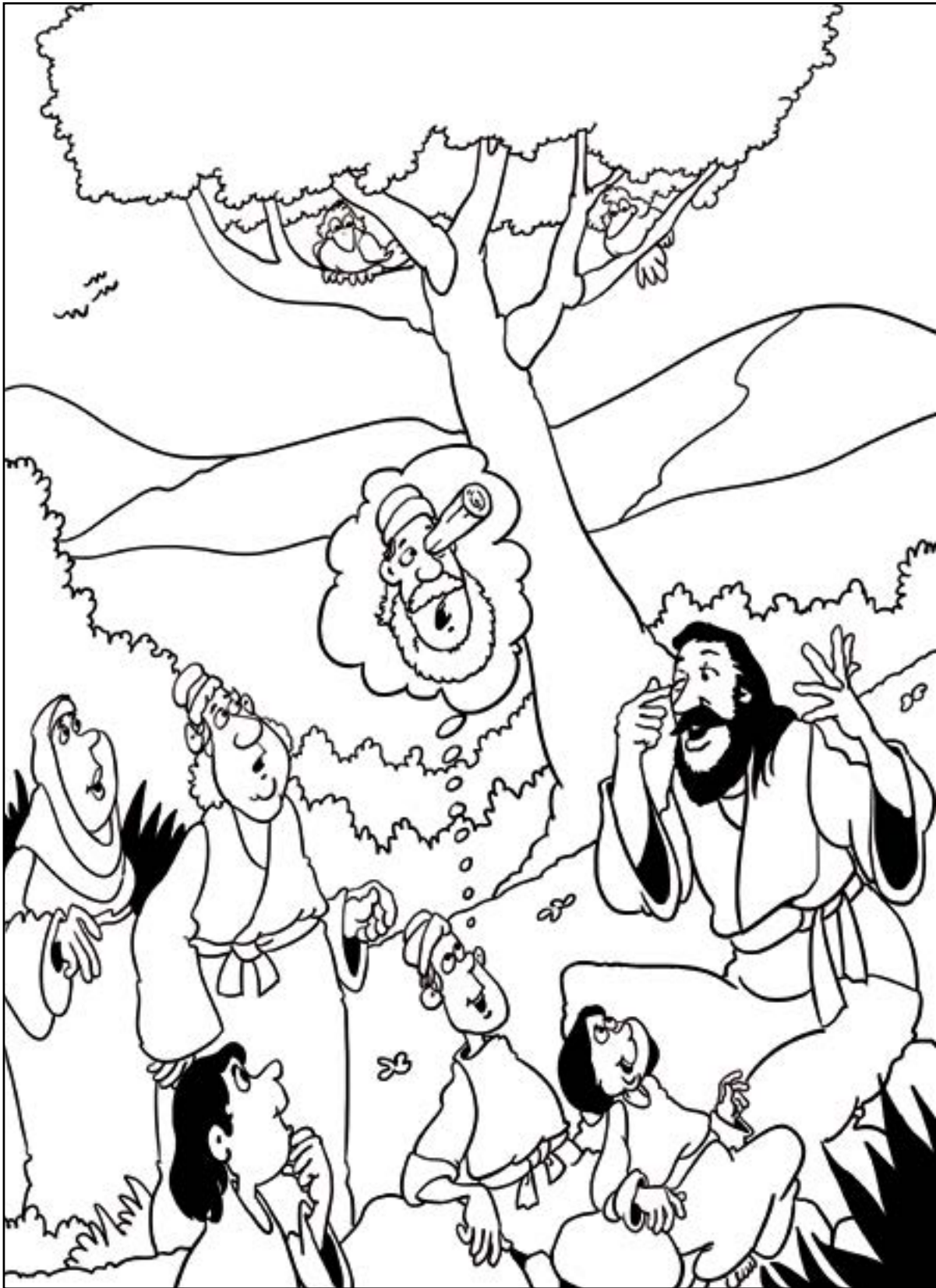
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).







Specks and Logs



Jesus said, "Do not judge others."

