



You Are Blessed

Goal: To be a blessing to others.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 4:23—5:11

Central to Jesus’ ministry was proclaiming, teaching, and healing. Jesus was concerned for the full needs of all persons. He healed “every disease and every sickness among the people” (v. 23). Then he taught his disciples, sharing with them words about what really constitutes true blessedness. We call these the “Beatitudes.”

The first four beatitudes promise blessedness to those who are “poor in spirit,” who “mourn,” who are “meek,” and who “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” These cover attitudes that, as Christ’s disciples, we seek to cultivate; and with “mourn,” a practice that comes to us when life caves in.

When we are poor in spirit, we confess our lack of resources, depending solely on God. When we mourn, we experience grief. When we are meek, we are calm and not easily provoked by wrongs. When we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we may be pursuing God’s purposes and justice in the world.

In these, God’s grace is given to us. We believe God is with us through all our circumstances and in all our attitudes. This is grace. The blessings that come with these blessed attitudes allow us to express our gratitude to God for all we are given.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

As we continue in this season after Epiphany, remind the children that, just like the disciples remembered Jesus and his teaching, we can do the same. Moreover, Jesus’ teaching at the beginning of his ministry with the Sermon on the Mount helps children know that God is with them in all of the experiences of their lives. Notice in the story how the blessings focus on our being and our actions. It is important for children to know that God’s blessing is with them whether they are sad or happy and when they stand up for what is right.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Think about the blessings the children have brought to your life. How have you been blessed because of your experience with them, or in your conversations with their parents/caregivers? Think also about what you have learned about them as you have listened to and talked with them. When have they needed comfort or support, affirmation or challenge? Each one may have given you a glimpse of one of these blessings. Spend some time in meditation on each child as you pray for God’s blessing in their lives.

Holy God, I recognize that you seek my happiness by calling me to obedience to Christ. Lead me into faithful living. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 9, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: card-stock
copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Exploring

choice 1: **SCM 17**
choice 3: coat hangers,
magazines
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, cut out a sign for each child from card-stock copies of **GN 1**.

“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 people about God’s blessings, or what is also known as the Beatitudes.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity:

1. **Blessed Signs**—Give each child a BLESSED sign (**GN 1**) and invite them to color it. Show them how to glue a large craft stick to the back of the sign with part of it sticking out like a handle. As they work, tell the children that the word says, *blessed*. Talk about what it means to be blessed. Set aside for “Hearing the Story.”
2. **Drawing Happiness**—Tell the children that they can use colors and shapes and swirls to show how happiness feels. Instead of “guessing” what a child has drawn, invite the child to tell you about the picture. Help the children make the connection between happiness and being loved by God. Encourage the children to show their pictures to someone and tell them the pictures are about happy feelings.
3. **Blessing**—Encourage the children to play with dolls or stuffed animals, pretending to be a parent or adult taking a child to church. They will play the roles of an adult, and the dolls will represent the children. When they bring their “children” to you, talk to them as though they were real persons. Give a blessing to the “children” and their “parents,” such as “(Name), God loves you,” or “(Name), God’s grace be with you.”



- B** Vary your activities so that the children move about, sit, use their muscles, and rest again. Some behavior deviations are the result of too much sedentary activity.

Transitioning to Story Time

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

March and Stretch

M MS

Play “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)” and let the children march to the music. Use the music and marching as a time for stretching and movement.

Then play “We Are Growing.” While this song plays, bring children together in a circle. Lead them in a series of movements that go from bigger and more active to smaller and less active while keeping the beat of the music. For example, start by marching in place with knees high, swinging arms wide and then making progressively smaller movements, stopping the arms and feet altogether, and gently sway to the music.

Blessing Chant

C L

Invite the children to form a seated semicircle, with you in the middle.

Begin by completing and saying the following sentence: “Blessed are . . . (for example, *blessed are puppies*).” Have the children repeat your sentence back to you. Give each child a turn in the middle, inviting them to choose something that they would like to have blessed. Clap a rhythm as you chant.

Option: Have each child build upon your sentence, so “Blessed are puppies” becomes “Blessed are puppies and brothers” and then “Blessed are puppies and brothers and people who bring us the mail” and so on.

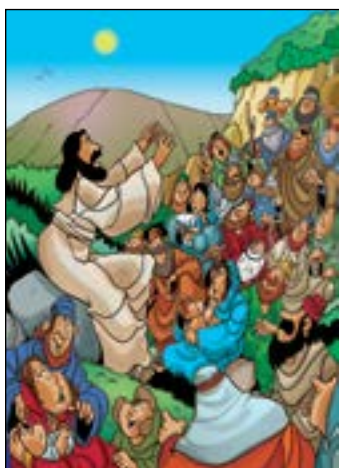
Hearing the Story

C L

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 God’s people. Today, we’ll hear a story about Jesus teaching people about God’s blessings, or what is also known as the *Beatitudes*.

Read **SCM 9**. 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 to retrieve their BLESSED sign from “Guided Play” choice 1. Read the story again, inviting the children to hold up their sign each time they hear the word *blessed*.



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.



EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Blessed to Be a Blessing

L MS

Play “We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing”—**SCM 17**. Invite the children to join you in singing the song. When they feel comfortable with the refrain, have them create motions to go with the words. Add a verse at a time, encouraging them to make up motions for each verse.

2. Blessed Be

B M MS T

Play a game like “Duck, Duck, Goose.” Have the children stand in a large circle and then take two giant steps backward before they sit down. Select one person to be “It.” Have that person walk around the outside of the circle, tapping each child gently on the shoulder and calling out the word “praise” or “blessed.” If the person who is “It” calls out “blessed,” the one who is tapped must jump up and say, “Blessed be, you and me!” Then the one who is “It” changes places with that child, who then becomes “It.” The game continues until every child has had at least one turn as “It.”

Afterward, wonder together how it felt to be blessed. Then ask the children how we can bless others.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will be sitting at the table,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



3. Making Mobiles

TD

Before the session, cut out at least five 2- to 3-inch circles from various colors of construction paper for each child.

Remind the children that, in today’s story, Jesus named some of the many people who are blessed by God. Wonder aloud who else is blessed by God. Recall the ideas from the Blessing Chant in “Transitioning to Story Time.”

Give each child a coat hanger and five construction paper circles. Have them cut out magazine pictures that show some of the people and animals who are blessed, and glue them to their circles. Punch a hole in the top of each circle. Tie a piece of string to each circle. Tie the other end to the coat hanger. Invite the children to take their mobiles home and to share with their families that each circle represents some person or animal that is blessed by God.

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.*



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



Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Jesus telling people about God’s blessings. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- I wonder, “Who in the picture is blessed by God?”
- I wonder, “How did it feel to hear about being blessed?”
- I wonder, “How am I blessed?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

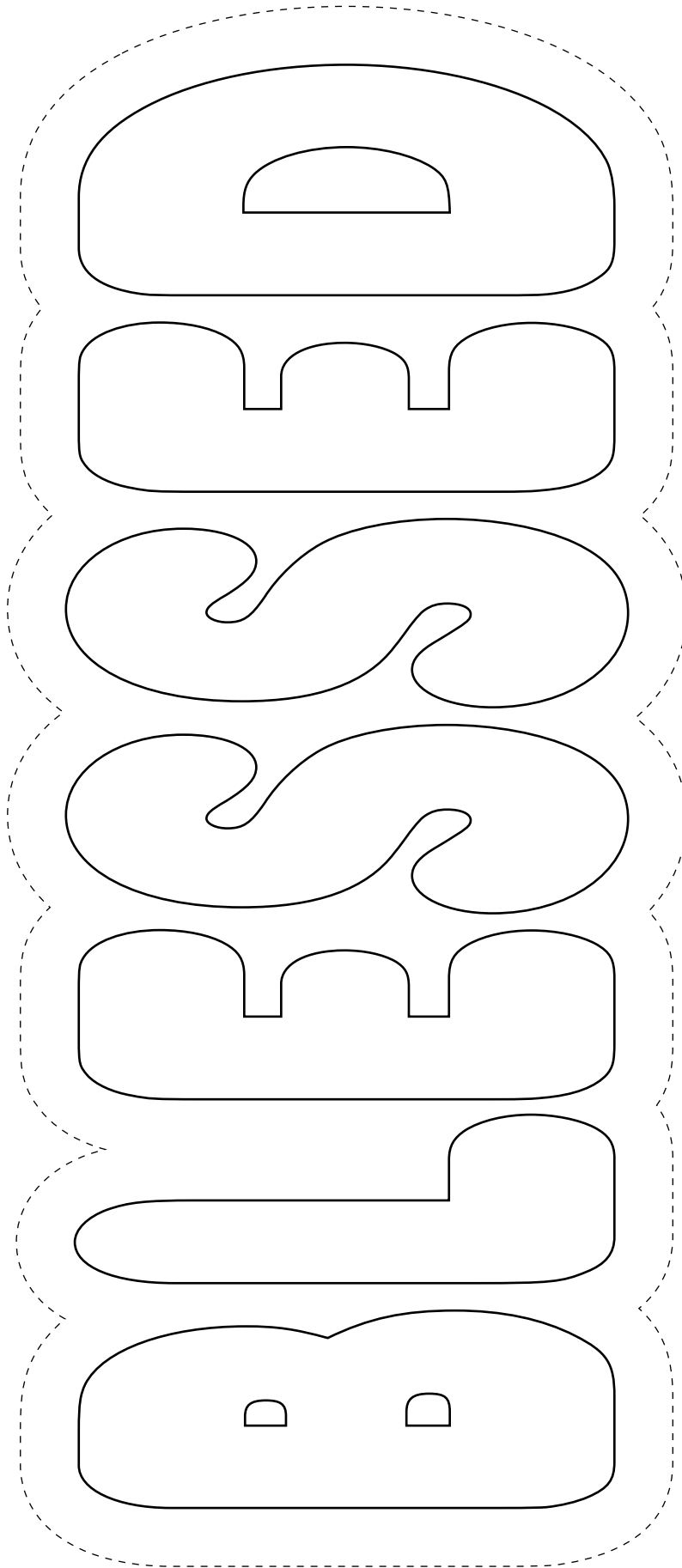


Have the children help clean while everyone sings, “Now we put our toys away, toys away, toys away,” to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

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 how everyone sang the songs today.”

Ask the children who would like to be first to pray. Tell them that they can tell God anything. Tell them that they can say what makes them happy and what makes them sad. God hears our prayers. Allow time for the children to express their prayers. Close the prayer with “Amen.”

Bless the children by saying, “Remember to find ways this week to make someone feel blessed. The grace of God go with you.”



You Are Blessed



Jesus tells the people about God's blessings.

