

Growing



in
Grace & Gratitude

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Ages 5-7
Year 1, Fall



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Note that websites and bit.lys listed throughout this curriculum may have changed or disappeared since publication.

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Introduction

In the fall quarter, verbs, or as children would say, “action words,” take center stage. Many of us remember diagramming sentences or at least learning the basics of grammar as a child. A declarative sentence, in its simplest form, has a subject (the one doing the action) and a verb (the action). To increase the complexity of a sentence, you could add a direct object (the one to whom the action is happening). So according to the core grammar of our faith, God is the subject acting, and the people in the stories of the Old Testament are the recipients, or direct objects, of God’s action. And so are we! God breathes life into Adam and Eve, and God gives life to us. God hears the prayers of Daniel, and God hears our prayers too.

These thirteen stories reveal God’s gracious acts. God made a home for God’s creation. God promised a future for people. God blessed all in the family, giving dreams of hope. God saved people from bondage and oppression, providing sustenance and nourishment. God proclaimed a time for rest and restoration. From choosing a leader to sending another person to help, from whispering in the silence to calling all ages and hearing all prayers, God’s mighty acts resound through the ages and into our hearts.

And who are the recipients of such grace? Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Ishmael, Joseph, the Israelites, Deborah, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Daniel are. From creation to our ancestors in faith, from salvation and oppression to faithful prophets, the stories of God’s action on behalf of God’s people encourage us in faith and hope. Certainly, God’s people are not perfect. They disobey, question, laugh, take matters into their own hands, brag, complain, doubt, and fear, and still they are the direct objects of God’s faithful action. God continues to be the subject and never stops acting with us—the objects of God’s grace and love.

Throughout the quarter, the children will have the opportunity to hear these stories in a variety of ways and reflect on the “grace moments” found there. They will find grace moments in knowing that God makes and keeps promises and that God calls women as leaders and youth as messengers of God’s Word. With gratitude for God’s actions, the children can claim God’s grace in their own lives and celebrate this grace with one another. They will observe times of prayer in response to God’s actions and opportunities to take actions of their own with each other, the congregation, or the community as the recipients.

God acts. And, thanks be to God, we are the recipients of such grace!

Overview of the Year 1, Fall Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence for Year 1 can be found at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

The fall quarter typically begins with the first Sunday in September but occasionally is the last Sunday in August. It ends with Christ the King Sunday, the Sunday before Advent begins.

Since the date of Easter changes every year, the number of Sundays after Epiphany and before Lent and after Easter will fluctuate from year to year. Additional sessions are provided, but check your calendar and plan accordingly. You may not use one or more sessions in one year, and you may use extra sessions in another year.

Year 1, Fall 1

God Makes a Home

Genesis 2:4b–9, 15–23

Goal: To show gratitude to God for the gracious gifts of creation.

Year 1, Fall 2

God Makes a Promise

Genesis 12:1–9; 15:2–6

Goal: To mark the holy places in our lives.

Year 1, Fall 3

God Blesses Ishmael and Isaac

Genesis 16; 21:1–7, 9–13

Goal: To celebrate the grace of God by being kind to people who are outsiders.

Year 1, Fall 4

God Gives Joseph Dreams

Genesis 37:1–11

Goal: To consider the hopes and dreams God gives each of us.

Year 1, Fall 5

God Saves the People

Exodus 12:31–42

Goal: To trust that God works for people who struggle for freedom and justice.

Year 1, Fall 6

God Provides Food and Water

Exodus 16:1–8, 13–15; 17:1–7

Goal: To experience the grace and faithfulness of God.

Year 1, Fall 7

God Proclaims Jubilee

Leviticus 25:1–12, 25–28, 35–42

Goal: To celebrate God's call to all creation for rest, renewal, and restoration.

Year 1, Fall 8

God Chooses Deborah as a Leader

Judges 4:1–10

Goal: To affirm the leadership of women in God's plan.

Year 1, Fall 9

God Sends Elijah to Help

1 Kings 17:8–16

Goal: To recognize God's provision through acts of kindness.

Year 1, Fall 10

God Speaks in Stillness

1 Kings 19:1–18

Goal: To practice attentiveness to God.

Year 1, Fall 11

God Calls Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:4–10

Goal: To wonder how God might be calling us.

Year 1, Fall 12

God Calls for Justice

Amos 1:1; 5:6–8, 10–15, 21–24

Goal: To explore simple and positive ways to challenge unfairness.

Year 1, Fall 13

God Hears Daniel's Prayers

Daniel 6:6–23

Goal: To know that trust in God is an important element of growing in faith.

Resources and Session Components

Growing in Grace & Gratitude curriculum is available for fall, winter, spring, and summer as downloadable PDFs. Each season's material for the leaders includes:

1. **Session plans for embracing children in the grace of God through engagement with the Bible**
2. **Session title, session goal, and background information**
 - *Recognizing God's Grace* helps leaders explore the Bible story with a focus on God's grace in Scripture.
 - "In Your Children's Experiences" and "In Your Relationships with the Children" provide leaders with an understanding of the children's needs, abilities, and interests.
3. **Three movements that echo Presbyterian and Reformed worship**
 - *Gathering in God's Grace*
A hospitable welcome calls children to sing and pray to God, to hear and reflect on the Bible story.
 - *Responding in Gratitude*
A choice of age-appropriate activities based on the group size and time available. Some activities (noted as "more prep") require advanced planning and/or additional supplies.
 - *Loving and Serving God*
An invitation to discipleship that inspires children and their families to practice hospitality, generosity, and love.
4. **Grace Notes (GN)**
 - Black-and-white reproducible pages that provide activities and crafts.
5. **Stories, Colors & More (SCM)**
 - Colorful resources are provided to aid in the flow of the sessions.
 - The Support Map offers practical suggestions for working with children who have difficulty communicating, transitioning, reading, or writing and children who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or in need of mobility support. The Support Map also provides tips for celebrating the strengths of children through leadership, generosity, and fairness.
 - Colorful illustrations of the Bible stories spark imagination. The stories appear on the back of the illustrations to make it easy for the leader to show the art while reading the story.
 - Other colorful resources, such as teaching pictures and maps, are now organized in session order.
 - **Music and Melodies:** Song lyrics sheets are gathered in the back of the resource.

Free Supplemental Resources

Download the following supplemental resources at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads:

- **Music & Melodies** are song tracks with familiar lyrics as well as new child-friendly tunes.
- **Grace Sightings**, an online resource to print or email home, includes a summary of the week's session and age-appropriate activities for home use.
- **Audio stories** of the weekly Bible stories are available to listen to online or download.

Basic Supplies

All materials beyond this list will be specified in the supply list for each session:

- Bibles
- CD player
- cleanup supplies
- coffee filters
- cover-ups or smocks
- craft supplies (e.g., cotton balls, craft sticks, glitter, stickers)
- crayons, large and small
- cups, napkins, plates, utensils, drinking straws
- glue and glue sticks
- hole punch
- office supplies (paper clips, rubber bands, self-adhesive notes)
- paint, paintbrushes
- paper (card stock, construction, drawing, index cards, mural paper, newsprint)
- paper bags (lunch-sized, grocery-sized)
- pencils, colored pencils, markers, pens
- pipe cleaners
- plastic bags (zip-closure, garbage)
- play dough
- rhythm instruments
- ribbon, string, yarn, scarves
- round-tip scissors (some left-handed)
- stapler, staples
- tablecloths
- tape (duct, masking, painter's, transparent)

Reusing Materials

Encourage church members to collect a variety of materials for art projects, such as:

- buttons, ribbon, yarn
- clothespins
- egg cartons
- plastic containers
- shoeboxes
- old magazines, catalogs, newspapers
- paper tubes (from gift wrap, paper towels, or toilet paper)
- used gift wrap and cards

Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by becoming familiar with the developmental terms, descriptions, and icons on the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM iii–iv**). Colorful icons (LG T) from the map and notes about specific needs are incorporated into each session to offer ways to adapt activities. (Note: While many of the activities could fit in multiple categories on the support map, for simplicity, only those that require particular attention have been identified.)

Use the Visual Schedule (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM i–ii**) to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group. By consistently using these tools, you will help your faith community discover and practice grace-filled ways to be the body of Christ with and for all children.

Support Highlight: Tactile Defensiveness



Tactile defensiveness is a sensory processing issue where children struggle with textures such as glue, clay, finger paint, cotton balls, and chalk. These other textures, and even physical touch, cause real anxiety and discomfort. A child may feel overwhelmed and react with displeasure or even fight or flight.

If a child has tactile defensiveness, talk with their parents about techniques to use so as not to cause undue stress on their child. Allow for and encourage children to explore textures without pressure or expectation. Provide opportunities to wash hands, if necessary. Find ways for children to participate in activities at their comfort level or other ways they can be involved, such as an assistant, a timekeeper, a line leader, a reader, and so forth.

A Few Notes about Children and Reading

All versions of the Bible are above second-grade reading level. *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* tries to provide a way to share the Bible stories while engaging both pre-readers and readers. Since the Holy Scriptures were written for adults, curriculum writers try to choose sections of Scripture that children can understand. Still, at times, the children in your group may seem to struggle to understand a verse or passage. When that happens, assure them that God will help them understand the Bible in new ways as they grow. Encourage a sense of wonder at God's amazing ways. Reassure the children of God's grace, a grace that does not depend on how much they know or understand.

Some of the following strategies may enhance your time with the children:

- When you write something for children to read, print the words. Many of them cannot read cursive writing.
- If an activity sheet has something to read, ask for a volunteer to read it aloud rather than calling on an individual child. Even better, have the group read it aloud in unison. If most children in your group are pre-readers, ask them to point to the words on the page as you read them aloud.
- Make a poster with church vocabulary words. Each week, add a word to learn, such as *God, Jesus, love, Bible, pray, bless, thanks, disciple, praise, and worship*.
- Give each child a few sheets of paper folded in half and stapled to make a word book to keep in the room. When an activity calls for children to write a word, name, or simple sentence, let them know you are happy to write it in their word books so they can copy it.

- Expect children of this age to occasionally reverse letters (for example, using “b” for “d”) and to make errors in spelling. It is not important to correct such errors during the session.
- If children need to know a repeating response for a litany or drama, write it on newsprint. Invite them to read it with you in unison several times before beginning the litany or drama. Adding actions to the words will help children remember them.
- Many children love learning through rhymes and songs. Try to include music in each session.
- Many children enjoy acting out stories. Invite them to act out certain parts of the story as you read it aloud. Challenge them to act out what they think happened next in a story. Some children will be able to act out responses to questions more easily than writing them.
- Be careful not to hold up children for whom reading comes easily as being somehow “better.” Resist putting them in the role of leader.
- Affirm each child by name—whatever his or her reading and writing skill level—two or three times each session.

Ideas for Working with Pre-readers

- Keep small pieces of scratch paper handy to write a word for a child to copy.
- If a child is struggling with an activity that calls for writing a word, write the word using dotted lines so he or she can trace it.
- Form pairs to solve puzzles. Encourage children to help one another—there’s no need to cover their papers so others can’t copy!
- If you observe a child struggling to work independently on an activity, offer to be his or her partner. If many are struggling, work as a group to complete the activity.
- If a child seems frustrated by writing, suggest that he or she draw a picture of the response or act it out. You also might offer to write what the child dictates to you.
- Offer old family-friendly magazines with pictures that can be cut out and used to illustrate a response or complete a project.
- When a child is trying to sound out a word, don’t be too quick to jump in and help. Whether he or she finally decodes the word or you provide it, affirm the new skill of reading and how hard the child is trying.

A Note about Candles

Growing in Grace & Gratitude suggests the use of a candle in the worship space for most sessions. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The lighting of the candle reminds us of this and signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Most churches have a policy about candles and either lighting real candles or using battery-operated candles. While we simply state “candles,” *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* recommends using battery-operated candles for safety with children.

Team of Contributors

The development team of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* is grateful to have an amazing team of educators and writers to collaborate in the production of this curriculum.

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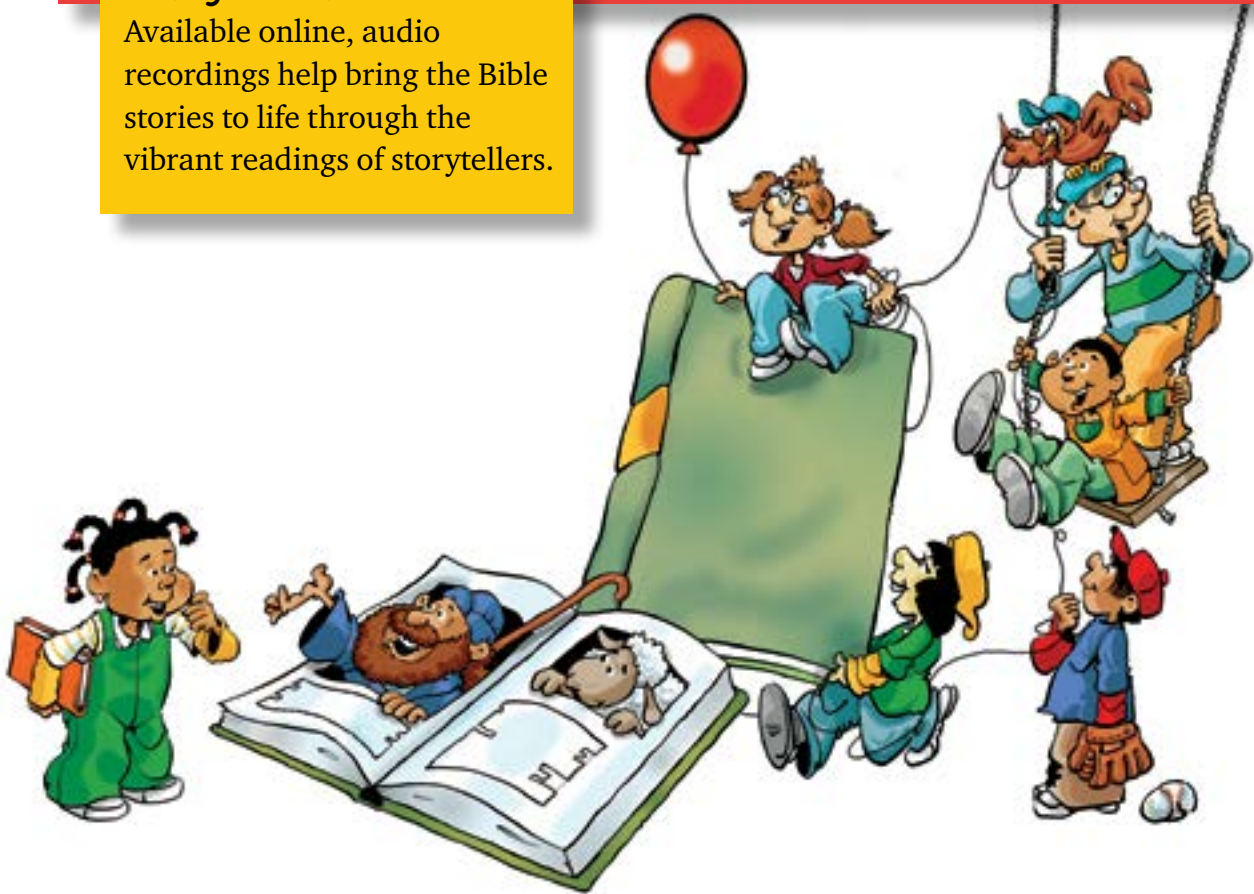
Free!

Grace Sightings

This online resource includes the story from the week's session and age-appropriate activities for children to do at home with their parents or caregivers. Each week's pdf shares the same colorful illustrations and Bible stories used in weekly sessions. With *Grace Sightings*, sessions reach beyond Sunday morning, encouraging children to live their lives as an expression of God's grace at home and at school.

Story Audio

Available online, audio recordings help bring the Bible stories to life through the vibrant readings of storytellers.



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