

Growing



in
Grace & Gratitude

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Ages 5-7
Year 1, Spring



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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

This spring quarter moves from Lent to Easter and Eastertide to Pentecost. We listen to Jesus as we explore some of the stories, the parables, he told. We learn about what is required of us: to love God and love our neighbor by practicing what it means to be a good neighbor. Through Jesus’ stories about the kingdom of God, we learn that it grows and grows and grows, and that it is going to be a party where everyone is welcome. We hear Jesus’ stories about being found and how happy the finder is for the one who is found; so much so, there is great rejoicing and celebrating! These stories tell us that God—the shepherd, the woman, the father—will not stop searching for us when we lose our way. We will be welcomed home.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus is welcomed into the city of Jerusalem with cheers and celebration—a parade! But we can’t leap past the events of Holy Week. By the end of the week, Jesus is crucified. That story must be told too.

On Easter morning, the light breaks forth. Death cannot hold Jesus in the tomb. Christ is risen! Through the eyes of Luke, we hear about the joy of Easter and then the surprising appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

Eastertide—the time when the liturgical color is still white to celebrate the glory of resurrection—is a time for expressing gratitude for God’s grace and love. We hear it in the story of forgiveness for the woman who has sinned and expresses her gratitude in pure devotion. We encounter Martha and Mary, the sisters who both demonstrate service and devotion, and learn what it means to spend time with Jesus. In the story of the ten people who were healed, we learn that praise and thanksgiving can be as simple as saying “thank you.” And, as we heard in Jesus’ story about the father who welcomed his prodigal son home, so Jesus came to Zacchaeus, called him down from the tree, and welcomed him. It is truly a time for expressing gratitude for God’s grace, love, and embrace.

Through prayer and discernment, the leadership Jesus had formed led the disciples to Matthias. Then with the rush of a mighty wind and flames igniting the spirits of the followers of Jesus, more were added to their number. The Day of Pentecost became the “birthday of the church” as the good news was heard and many believed.

Overview of the Year 1, Spring Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

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

The spring quarter begins with Lent 1 and goes through Pentecost Sunday.

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, Spring 1

Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25–37

Goal: To explore what it means to be a good neighbor.

Year 1, Spring 8

Our Eyes Were Opened

Luke 24:13–35

Goal: To recognize the gracious presence of Jesus.

Year 1, Spring 2

Little to Big

Luke 13:18–21

Goal: To explore how the kingdom of God can grow.

Year 1, Spring 9

Forgiveness

Luke 7:36–50

Goal: To express gratitude for God's love and forgiveness.

Year 1, Spring 3

Party Time!

Luke 14:15–24

Goal: To imagine God's gracious kingdom as a party.

Year 1, Spring 10

Martha and Mary

Luke 10:38–42

Goal: To express gratitude for God's love by putting God first in our lives.

Year 1, Spring 4

Lost and Found

Luke 15:1–10

Goal: To know grace in being found.

Year 1, Spring 11

Return with Thanks

Luke 17:11–19

Goal: To express gratitude for God's grace by praising and thanking God.

Year 1, Spring 5

Welcome Home

Luke 15:1–2, 11–24

Goal: To rejoice that God forgives and welcomes us.

Year 1, Spring 12

Welcoming Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1–10

Goal: To express gratitude for God's grace by welcoming others.

Year 1, Spring 6

The King of Glory Comes

Luke 19:28–40; 23:32–47

Goal: To recognize Jesus' sacrificial love.

Year 1, Spring 13

A New Disciple

Acts 1:12–14, 21–26

Goal: To imagine what it means to be a church leader.

Year 1, Spring 7

He Is Risen!

Luke 24:1–12

Goal: To find joy in the surprises of Easter and share that joy with others.

Year 1, Spring 14

The Spirit Unleashed

Acts 2:1–13

Goal: To celebrate the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church.

Resources and Session Components

Growing in Grace & Gratitude curriculum is available for fall, winter, and 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 front 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 organized in session order.
 - **Music & 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 (ziplock, 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: Listening



Children with listening comprehension issues don't necessarily have hearing problems. Their brains process the sounds they hear differently than other children and can cause them to be easily distracted. They may have trouble repeating a verse or may be struggling to follow conversations. They may respond "Huh?" or "What?" frequently, or they may ask you to repeat what was said.

Support these children by minimizing background sounds that can distract them and looking at them when you are talking. Try seating them where they can see and hear you best. Use visual cues that reinforce the words they are hearing. To help build comprehension, ask the children to summarize what you said. Encourage them to ask questions when they don't understand.

These children are not ignoring you on purpose. Be understanding. Supporting them can help develop the skills they need to listen and learn more effectively.

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 levels—two or three times each session.

Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books (www.flyawaybooks.com) is a children’s picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. These books reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world, as well as retelling familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at www.pcusastore.com.

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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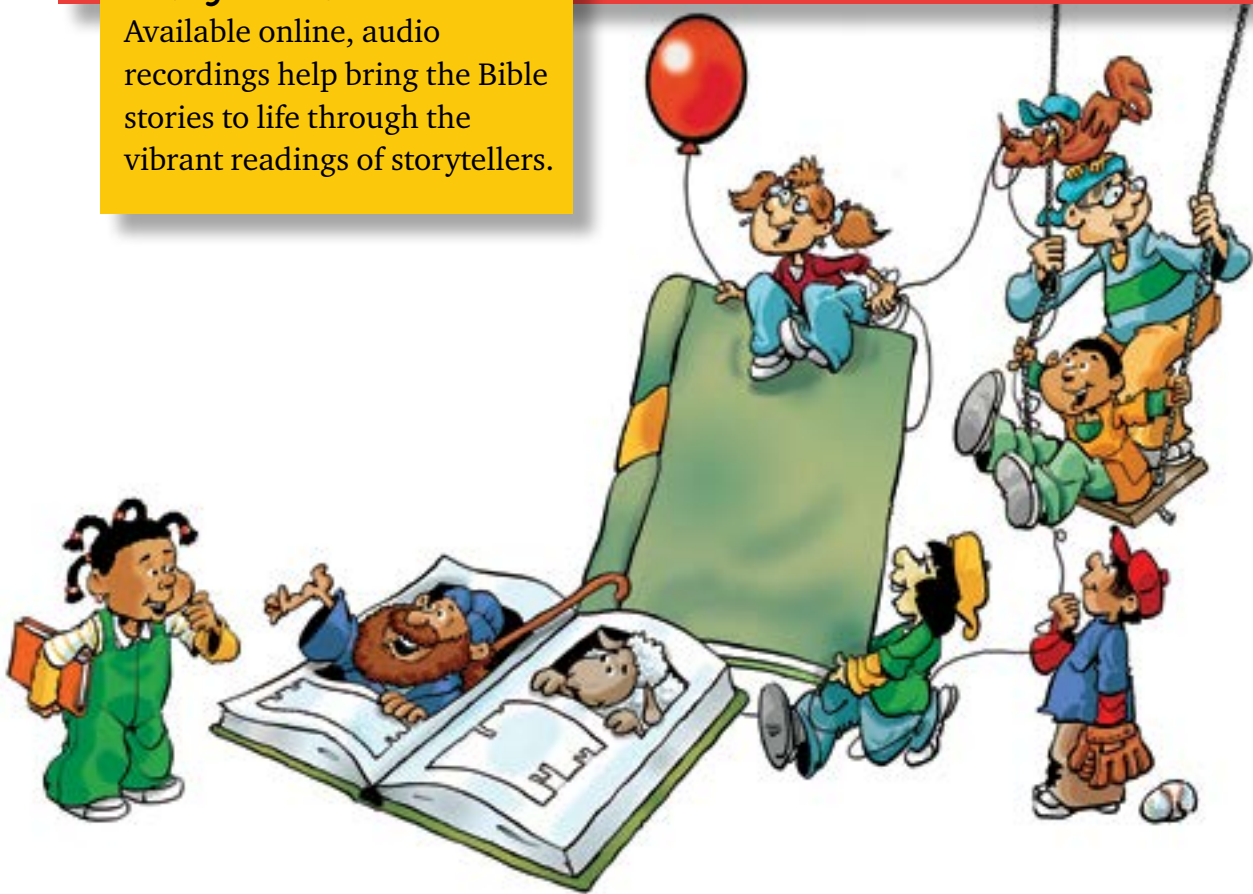
Free!

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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