

Ages 5-7

A stylized blue butterfly graphic is positioned to the right of the word 'Growing'. It has large, flowing wings and a simple body with antennae.

Growing

in
Grace & Gratitude

Year 2, Spring



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Published by Growing Faith Resources
Louisville, Kentucky

Growing in Grace & Gratitude, Year 2, was published as quarterly curriculum in fall 2022 through summer 2023. Additional sessions have been added to provide a sufficient number of sessions when needed.

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

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Printed in the United States of America

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Introduction

Year 2, Spring quarter begins with Lent. This is an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider about how Jesus wants us to live. Each week connects a practice with an aspect of worship: praying the prayer Jesus taught us, sharing God’s message, declaring who we believe Jesus is, asking for and offering forgiveness, and serving others as we see Jesus in them.

In the first session about the Lord’s Prayer, children will deconstruct it and put it back together again, helping them to understand the words they are praying. In hearing the parable of the sower and the seed, we learn that the seeds fall on us, and our hearts are like the different soils at different times in our lives. Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Messiah is the foundation, the rock, upon which our faith is built. Children will be challenged by the session on forgiveness, considering that Jesus calls for forgiveness more times than we can count! As Matthew 25 is studied, children practice seeing Jesus in others, especially those in need. Palm Sunday begins with a parade, considering what it means that Jesus is our king, and ushers in Holy Week.

Easter morn arrives with the women’s visit to the tomb and our acclamation, “Christ is risen!” and response, “He is risen indeed!” The seven Sundays of Eastertide follow as the children learn that Easter is not just one day but a season of celebration and good news as we move toward Pentecost. After Easter, Jesus assures his friends that he is always with them.

During Eastertide, we return to stories from Matthew, hearing about two examples of great faith. First is the centurion and his faith that amazed Jesus. Next is Peter’s faith as he walks on the water toward Jesus, and how he sinks when he begins to fear and falter. Two stories that turn things around follow, as we hear about God’s generous grace in the story of the workers in the vineyard and leading by serving. As two men who are blind cry out to Jesus for help, we are assured that Jesus hears our cries and responds. Finally, Pentecost arrives and we celebrate sharing the good news of Jesus as the Holy Spirit ignites our spirits!

Overview of the Year 2, Spring Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence for Year 2 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 2, Spring 1

Jesus Teaches Us to Pray

Matthew 6:9–15

Goal: To practice the prayer that Jesus taught.

Year 2, Spring 2

Sow a Seed

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

Goal: To practice spreading the message of God's love with others.

Year 2, Spring 3

You Are the Messiah!

Matthew 16:13–20

Goal: To practice declaring that Jesus is the Messiah.

Year 2, Spring 4

Jesus Calls Us to Forgive

Matthew 18:21–35

Goal: To practice forgiving another person.

Year 2, Spring 5

When Did We See You, Lord?

Matthew 25:31–46

Goal: To practice seeing Jesus in others.

Year 2, Spring 6

A Palm Sunday Parade

Matthew 21:1–11

Goal: To celebrate the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem.

Year 2, Spring 7

He Is Risen!

Matthew 28:1–10

Goal: To celebrate and give thanks for Jesus' resurrection.

Year 2, Spring 8

Jesus Will Always Be with Us

Matthew 28:16–20

Goal: To trust Jesus' words, "I am with you always."

Year 2, Spring 9

Only Say the Word

Matthew 8:5–10, 13

Goal: To marvel at an example of great faith.

Year 2, Spring 10

Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:22–33

Goal: To trust in God and step out in faith.

Year 2, Spring 11

The Generous Landowner

Matthew 20:1–16

Goal: To explore the grace in God's generosity and justice.

Year 2, Spring 12

Lead by Serving

Matthew 20:20–28

Goal: To imagine ways we can follow Jesus by serving others.

Year 2, Spring 13

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

Matthew 20:29–34

Goal: To be assured that Jesus hears our cries for help.

Year 2, Spring 14

Filled with the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1–4, 38–39

Goal: To imagine ways the Holy Spirit fills us.

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: Adapting Activities

A

Adapting the Process—Giving extra support in the completion of a task is an example of changing the process. Cutting out items ahead of time or gluing a few items on paper are ways to give access to the project for children with higher support needs.

Adapting the Project—Having children make something different is an example of changing the project. Think about a project that would be appropriate for the child and that would meet the same learning objectives. Instead of writing a faith statement, the child might create a collage that expresses his or her faith.

Adapting the Environment—Being mindful of your environment will help support all of the children. Keeping the space tidy and organized helps children feel organized. Posting children's projects, photographs, names, and other personal items can help children feel that they belong. Liturgical colors, crosses, banners, and other symbols form our faith in ways that stay with us for our whole lives. Lighting can help children focus, but overhead fluorescents may cause distraction.

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 characterize 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.

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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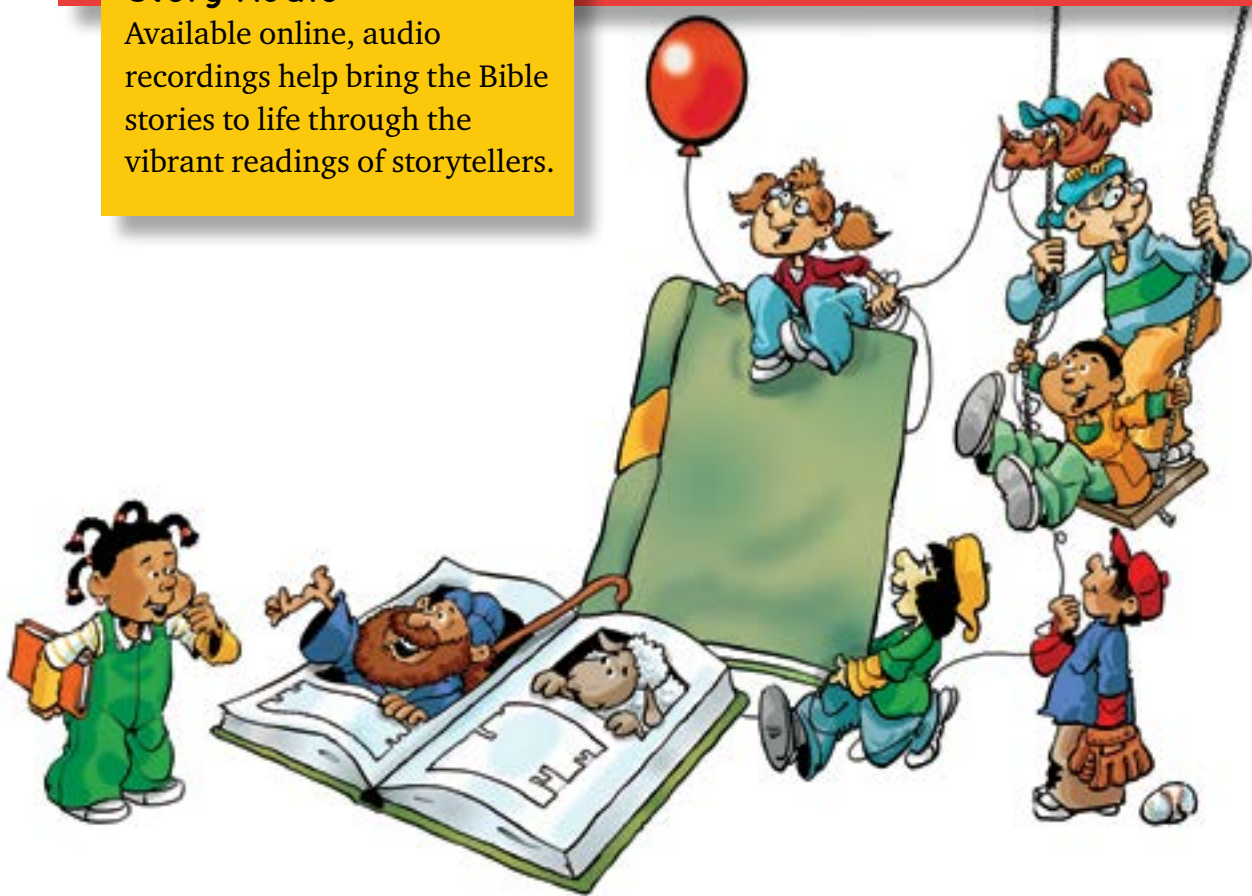
Free!

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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