



## Lead by Serving

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

### RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

#### . . . In Matthew 20:20–28

How many of us have said, “Lead by serving”? Though often associated with children, it is still a cry in adult hearts as well. We think others are getting something we deserve—and that isn’t fair!

The mother of James and John asked for special places for her sons in Christ’s kingdom. However, Jesus said this should not be what was of greatest concern. In some situations, we think we deserve something and, if we do not get it, we say, “Lead by serving.” Jesus says the true focus for our lives should be on serving others—not on trying to get what we want or think we deserve for ourselves.

Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave” (vv. 26–27). True greatness is discovered in serving others, giving the gift of ourselves to meet the needs of other people. This is what Jesus did. He “came not to be served but to serve” (v. 28) and gave his life for us. Jesus graciously loved us. He calls us to give ourselves in gratitude to serve others. This is true greatness!

#### . . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Through observation and experience, children learn about what’s fair and what’s not, what success looks like, and what it’s like to be a leader or a follower. They see these behaviors in other children and adults, and they slowly begin to act in response to what they have learned. The story offers you the opportunity to help the children see that what Jesus promotes as success or greatness is very different from how our culture defines it. Jesus wanted everyone to understand that being great is measured by humility and care for others.

#### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you think about sharing the story with the children, consider their ages. Younger children will think very literally about their own experiences of wanting their fair share. And asking them to share those stories provides a great way into engaging the story. Older children will be able to reflect on the complexity of the story as it moves from Jesus’ conversation with the mother to his teaching with the disciples about what a leader should care about—not being first, but rather serving others.

*Holy God, show me the true path to greatness—  
through service in Christ’s name. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More

(SCM) i–iv, 12, 12a, 17, 24

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected

device

white cloth

candle

large chair, two smaller

chairs

silk or velvet-like cloth

crown (optional)

gold and silver star

stickers

index cards for each

child

## Responding

### Praying

magazines

### Offering

plastic toys from

nursery or preschool,

sink or tubs of warm

soapy water, sponges,

towels

### Extra

copies of **Grace Notes**

(GN) 1–2

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**M** **MS** **A** **B**

Play “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**—as the children arrive.

Greet the children by saying, “Christ is risen!” and prompt them to respond, “He is risen indeed!” Speak a word of welcome to each one and find out something about their interests.

Invite the children to create a worship space, using a white cloth, a Bible, and a candle. Note that the white cloth means the church is in the Easter season, which lasts fifty days. Arrange three chairs—one large and two small—with the small chairs on each side of the large one. Drape the large chair with the silk or velvet-like cloth so that it resembles a throne. If you have a crown, put it on the throne.

Ask a child to attach one gold star sticker to one index card, a silver star sticker to two index cards, and leave the rest blank. Mix all the cards and place them with the stars facedown in a pile.

Ask the children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

### Singing

**B** **T** **M** **MS**

Invite the children to select an index card. Tell the child who has the gold star that they may sit on the throne chair and wear the crown. The children who have the silver stars may sit in the smaller chairs on each side of the throne. The children who have no stars may sit on the floor in front of the chairs.

Play and sing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**.

Have the children with the gold and silver stars stand to sing

“Hallelujah” and those with no stars stand to sing “Praise Ye the Lord.”

Shuffle the cards, have the children draw new cards, and sit in the designated spots. Sing the song again. Repeat several times.

**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 praying,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



### Praying

L MS

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus, the light of the world. Invite the children to close their eyes and breathe deeply. Have them open their eyes, echo your words, and follow your motions:

Dear God, (*bow heads and fold hands*) /  
thank you for loving us. (*cross arms to give yourself a hug*) /  
Help us to listen, (*cup hand to ear*) /  
to forgive, (*shake hands with a neighbor*) /  
to serve, (*hold hands in front of you*) /  
and to follow you. (*walk in place*) /  
Amen. /

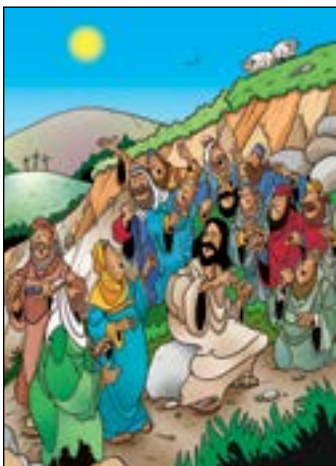
### Preparing to Hear the Story

C

Help the children to reflect about the three chairs and the floor activity by wondering:

- ▼ I wonder, "What did you like about sitting in the big chair (and wearing the crown)?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What was it like to sit in the chairs beside the throne?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What was it like to sit on the floor while others were on the chairs?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What kinds of people would sit in the big chair and the two smaller chairs, and what might their relationship be?"

Explain that, in the time of Jesus, only very important people were allowed to sit in special places. It would have been an honor to sit next to the person sitting on a throne. Introduce the Bible story by saying that a mother asked Jesus to give her sons places of honor.



### Hearing the Story

C L

Invite a child to find Matthew 20 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 12** or listen to the story audio. If reading, use your voice and emotions to convey the feelings. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite the children to count the number of times they hear the word *rule* or *ruler* (6) as you read the story again or listen to the story audio. Ask the children who wanted to be a ruler. Wonder together what Jesus said was needed to be a great leader and why he said that.

### Reflecting on God's Grace

C F

Place a long strip of masking tape on the floor. Explain that you will make some statements, and the children are to decide whether they agree or disagree with what you say. Designate one side of the line for those who agree and the other side for those who disagree. If the



children can't decide, they will stand on the line. After each statement, invite the children to tell why they chose the place they did.

- ▼ James and John's mother was right to ask Jesus to let her sons rule with him.
- ▼ Jesus should have let James and John rule with him for being good and faithful disciples.
- ▼ The other disciples shouldn't have been angry with James and John.
- ▼ Jesus didn't think that James and John deserved places of honor.
- ▼ To be a great leader you have to be a great servant.

Invite the children to add **SCM 12a** to the worship table. Talk together about what it means to follow Jesus and to become a servant. Wonder what it means to be a helper or servant and a leader at the same time. Encourage the children to name ways they can serve other people.

### Singing

Sing "Jesus Bids Us Shine"—**SCM 24**. Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

### Claiming God's Grace



Set out enough chairs for all the children. Play "Jesus Bids Us Shine"—**SCM 24**—and have the children walk around the chairs. Remove one chair and stop the music for the players to find seats. The one who doesn't have a seat is "out." Continue this traditional version of musical chairs for a few more rounds, then say that you are going to play the game a different way.

Set out enough chairs for all the players and tell them that the goal is for everyone to find a seat when the music stops. Do not remove chairs from the circle. Play this way for a while.

Lead a discussion about the different games. Make note of any differences in the children's behavior, for example, if they helped one another find seats in the second game.

Ask them if both games were fun. Ask those who were "out" which game was more fun.

Point out that, in the first game, each person was trying to find a seat for himself or herself and not thinking about other people; but in the second game, because there weren't going to be any losers, they felt free to help one another and work toward the shared goal of everyone sitting down.



- B** *Make sure to play the games with the children. They will love it when you join the fun!*

### Praying God's Grace

LG

Help the children give thanks for people who serve others. Provide magazines and mural paper. Invite the children to find pictures of people and imagine how they serve others. Have the children create a collage of the pictures they find and write a word or two by the pictures describing the service they imagine. Wonder together if there are people in your congregation who serve in similar ways. Encourage the children to mention the kinds of service they have identified and any people they know who serve as you pray:

Thank you, God, for people who lead through service.  
Thank you for the many ways people serve by . . .  
Thank you for the people we know, such as . . .  
May we, too, lead through serving others as Jesus did.  
Amen.



### Offering God's Grace

LG

*Before the session, arrange to collect washable, plastic toys from the preschool or nursery.*

Introduce children to the kinds of service that are part of being a church. Ask if children can name ways to help at church. If children have difficulty naming ways, suggest some of the following: collecting bulletins, sweeping, cleaning up after people leave the service, picking up trash around the building or in the parking lot, or providing drinks to others after a service. Teach them that they don't have to wait to "grow up" to do God's work.

Gather the children near a sink or tub(s) of warm soapy water. Explain that they can help by cleaning the plastic toys from the preschool or nursery. Provide sponges and towels. Let the children take turns washing and drying the toys.

If time allows, return the toys so the children can see how their efforts helped.

- LG** *Activities that encourage service, teamwork, and self-reliance model qualities of good leadership. Serving others helps children see firsthand that they have the power to make a difference.*



### Extra Activity

LG

Remind the children that Jesus taught us to lead by serving others. Tell the children that they are going to be “Not so Secret Service agents” today. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2** to the children. Invite the children to cut out and glue the “Not so Secret Service” circle from **GN 1** to the front of an envelope. Read the suggested activities on **GN 1**. Wonder how some of these ideas are examples of leading by serving and how someone might react when these ideas are carried out. Challenge the children to cut and glue ideas from **GN 1** to **GN 2** to plan to accomplish the mission. Encourage the children to follow through by doing what they planned today.



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

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean up the space.

Invite the children to stand in a circle for a prayer. Encourage them to think about what they can do during the coming week to serve others and to follow Jesus. Have them choose one thing they will do.

Ask them to put their right hand, left hand, or both hands, palms up, in front of them when you say those words during the prayer.

God of grace,  
instead of asking to be on your RIGHT or LEFT,  
help us to serve those on our LEFT and RIGHT  
and to use BOTH our hands to serve you too! Amen.

As they depart, give each child a blessing. Say to each one,  
“(Name), go out and share God’s grace with the world!”



Give  
water to  
someone.

Say "hello"  
to and smile  
at an adult.

Sweep the  
floor.

Clean  
someone  
else's mess.

Say a  
prayer for  
someone.

Draw a  
picture for  
someone.

Set the  
table for  
dinner.

Help pass  
out  
bulletins.

Thank  
pastor for  
service.

Read to  
someone.

Do a  
sibling's  
chore.

Feed  
a pet.

Help clean  
sanctuary  
after worship.

Open the  
door for  
someone.



## My Not so **SECRET SERVICE** Mission Plan

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will be a leader by serving others.

At church, I will



At home, I will



In my community, I will



In grace and with gratitude,

\_\_\_\_\_

