



Jesus Will Always Be with Us

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

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 28:16–20

Notice the description of how the disciples received Jesus. Some of them worshiped him, but some doubted. The Greek word for doubt, *distazo*, refers to standing in two places at once—believing and doubting. Some, like Thomas, needed more time or physical proof. Perhaps all of them doubted, wondering if they would be able to do all that Jesus expected of them.

Whether they were completely sure of their abilities to do what Jesus asked of them or they still had doubts or questions, they were able to stand in the place that Jesus had opened for them when he told them not to worry, because he would be with them every day. We, too, claim that promise of Easter, that Jesus is with us every day. Jesus' gracious love sustains and comforts us, leads us, helps us, and holds us.

All we can do is say thank you. Thank you, Jesus, for being with us. In gratitude, we give our deepest thanks to our constant companion.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

It would be so interesting to act out this very brief scene with your children, asking them to take the parts of the disciples and Jesus. If you asked them to show, with their actions and their words, how they would express worship and doubt, you would have a rich basis for conversation about this story and what it might mean for their lives today. The ability to stand in the two places of worship and doubt is not a bad thing. To ask questions and express doubts is not the opposite of faith, but rather an expression of the kind of thinking required for a growing faith.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be aware of the children in your group and the variety of personalities you see each session. Some are very confident and love to talk. Others are quieter, more reserved. Some are quite sure about their answers to questions, and others hold back, thinking and wondering. Some are very positive, and others express doubts or concerns.

These depictions could describe the disciples that Jesus met on the mountain. As they listened to what Jesus wanted them to do, each one was thinking about how it could be accomplished. This also is true of the children in your group. Remind them that they can live and love like Jesus wants them to do, each in their own way.

O God, give me the assurance that Jesus is present in my life and in the world. Help me live according to his promise. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 17, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white cloth

candle

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

magazines, mountain
mural

Praying

leather cord, purple
beads, colored beads

Extra

card-stock copies of
GN 2, hair dryer
(optional), envelopes

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.

“Praying God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **M** **MS**

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!” Welcome any newcomers.

Ask the children to place a white cloth on the worship table. Note that the white cloth means the church is in the Easter season, which lasts fifty days. Invite the children to add a Bible and a candle to the table.

Invite the children to draw a mountain scene on mural paper, including grass, clouds, and the sun. Consider adding texture by providing cotton balls for the clouds and construction paper for the sun, trees, and grass.

Ask the children to make figures of people to go on the mountain. Have children draw the people on paper, color the figures, cut them out, and glue them to the mountain.

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

Singing

MS

Gather together. Thank the children for their help in creating the worship space.

Sing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**. Form two groups. Assign one group “Hallelujah!” and the other group, “Praise ye the Lord!” The groups will stand when they sing their part and sit when the other group is singing. Turn off the recording and speed up the singing, along with the standing and sitting. Repeat as you wish.

Praying

T

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus and the light he brings into the world. Pray:

Thank you for this day, O God, that you spend with us. Thank you for Jesus, for his life and for his love. And thank you for this group, for (*say group members’ names*). Let us feel you close to us. Help us show your grace. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story

C

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the emojis. Explain that there are a lot of different emotions in the story today. Ask a volunteer to read through what the emojis depict.

While the children are coloring, ask if anyone has ever been up on a high mountain. Have them describe what it was like and what they could see. Tell the children that, after his death and resurrection, Jesus asked his friends to meet him on a mountain, perhaps the one where he had talked with them and spent time with them. He had some important things to tell his friends.

Have the children cut apart the emoji cards. Tell them they will use them when they hear the retelling of the story.

L *Listening to a story can be a challenge for children who struggle with attention and get easily distracted. Consider giving them a task such as listening for a specific word or phrase to create a focus.*



Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Matthew 28 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 8** or listen to the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more engaging. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Invite the children to hold up an emoji card when they hear an expression as you read the story again. It’s all right if children hold up different emotions. Ask them why they think the story expresses these emotions.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

L MS A M

Invite the children to remember the story using body motions as you retell it with the following:

When they came to the mountain, Jesus was there! On the mountain, Jesus gave his disciples three very important messages. *(hold up a finger for each message and invite the children to help count them)*

First, Jesus said, “I have been given all power on earth and heaven.” This means Jesus still had power from God to help the disciples and others. *(stand and raise hands to show Jesus’ power)*

Second, he told them, “Go and make disciples of every person in every nation. Teach them to obey what I have taught you.” Jesus wanted the disciples to keep spreading his words. *(kneel and hold hands palm up for teaching others)*



Jesus saved the best for last. He promised his disciples and all of us today, “I will always be with you, no matter what happens.” (*sit and hold arms across chests to show Jesus is with us always*)

Repeat the story as desired. Challenge the children to tell the story with their own words and the motions.

Singing

Invite children to 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

Ask: “Jesus was with the disciples on the mountain. Where is Jesus present today?” As the children identify different places, remind them that Jesus is always with us, wherever we are.

Invite the children to cut out pictures from magazines of places Jesus is with them. Glue the pictures on the mountain mural created earlier. Print “Jesus is with us always” on the poster. Keep the mural in your space as a reminder that Jesus is always present.

Celebrating God’s Grace



Play a fun game to help remember Jesus’ command. In this adaptation of Tag, two people are “It” and are given a command to pass along to others. Simultaneously, the two “Its” try to tag players by touching them on the shoulder lightly and giving them a task to do. Once players have been tagged, they perform the task assigned until they are tagged by another “It” and given a new task.

The object of the game is for each “It” to have the entire group performing his or her assigned task at the same time.

Clear a space. Ask two volunteers to be “It.” Here are some tasks that you can assign:

- ▼ Task: Tag a player and say, “Jesus is alive—go tell somebody.”
- ▼ Task: Tag a player and say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—go and baptize others.”
- ▼ Task: Tag a player and say, “Love God and love others—go and tell somebody.”

Tell everyone to run freely around the cleared space and respond when they are tagged. The game will erupt in chaos as players are tagged and re-tagged. Experience what can happen if we all take Jesus’ command to spread the gospel!

If you have a large group, you can have a proportionate number of children tagging others. This makes the game more challenging.



Praying God's Grace

A M C L

Before the session, cut an 18-inch length of leather cord for each child.

Help the children make a prayer bracelet to remind them of the gift of Jesus. The bracelet begins with a purple bead as a reminder that Jesus was celebrated as a king when he entered Jerusalem. Purple is also a reminder of Lent and Jesus' death.

Give each child a leather cord, have them select a purple bead, and choose where to place the bead on the bracelet. It could be on one end (leaving about 2 inches at the end), in the middle, or elsewhere on the cord. Have them tie a knot on each side of the bead to hold it in place. Assist with knots as needed. Invite the children to touch the purple bead and repeat a prayer:

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to be our king. Amen.

Ask: "What color bead would you add to remember that Jesus is not dead?"

After listening to their thoughts, have the children select another bead, and add it to the bracelet. Have the children tie knots on either side of this bead. Invite the children to touch the bead as they pray:

Thank you, God, for raising Jesus from the dead. Amen.

Complete the prayer bracelet by adding a third bead to celebrate that Jesus is always with us.

Ask: "What color would you like to add to remind you that Jesus is always with you?"

Again, listen to their thoughts, have them select a third bead, and add it to the bracelet. Have the children tie knots on either side of this bead. Tie the bracelets on the children who would like to wear them, cutting off any excess cord. Others may wish to hold their bracelets. Invite them to touch the third bead and pray:

Thank you, God, for being with me all the time.

Invite the children to touch the beads at home when they pray and to remember that Jesus is with them.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide a specific instructions and time for children to complete each step.*



Extra Activity

Remind the children that Jesus said he would be with us always as we went out into the world to tell others about him and God's love. Hand out card-stock copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to draw a face in each of the five outer circles. Then have the children paint the puzzle pieces with blue and green watercolor paints. Each piece may have both blues and greens. Suggest that the children do not use a lot of water so that the paper will dry quickly. Consider using a hair dryer to speed up the drying process.

Once the papers are dry, help the children cut apart the puzzle pieces. Invite the children to put together the five pieces into a puzzle so that Jesus' words are able to be read. Give the children envelopes to keep their puzzle pieces together. Encourage them to take their puzzles home to share Jesus' message with their families.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

MS TD

Invite the children to help clean up the space.

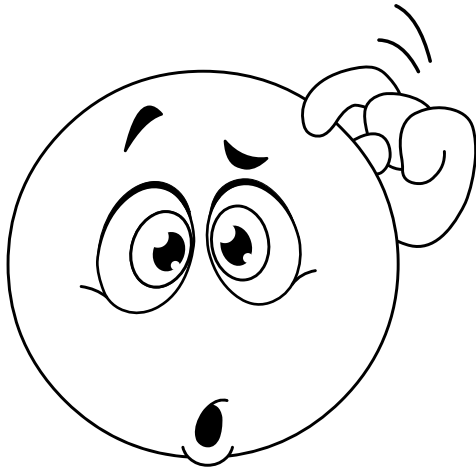
Join hands in a circle, with arms crossed right over left. If everyone has their arms crossed in the same direction, the group will remain intact when each student turns outward when the prayer ends. Pray the following prayer, and let the group know when you will be turning outward:

God, you call each of us to be true disciples. Help us this week to keep our commitment to you. Give us the strength to follow in the way of Jesus. As we go into the world (*turn*), we remember that you are always with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

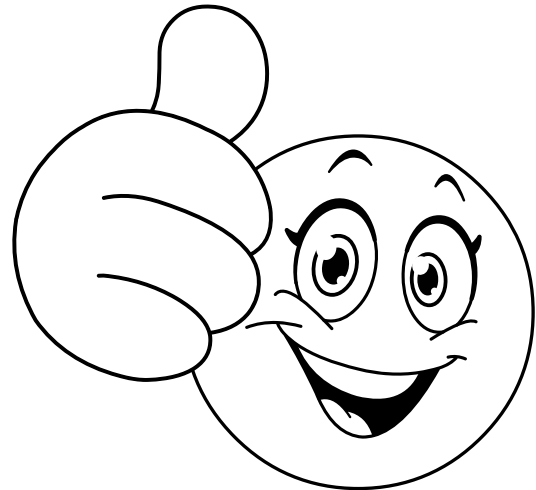
End by saying to each child, "(Name), go in gratitude, and share the good news that Christ is risen!"



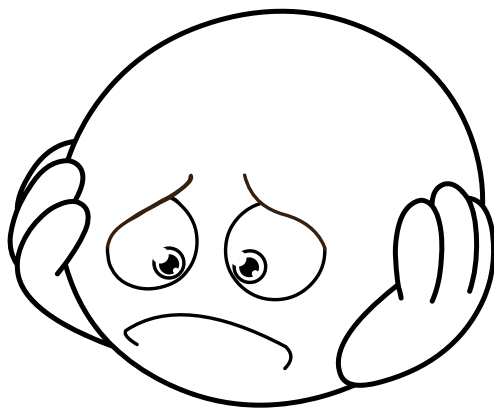
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



confused



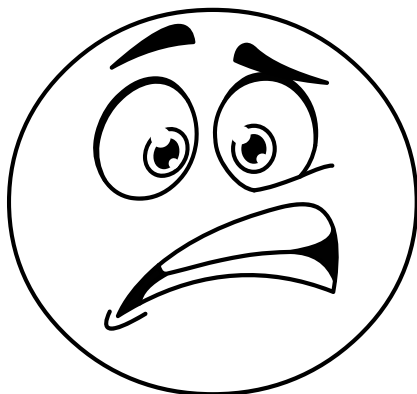
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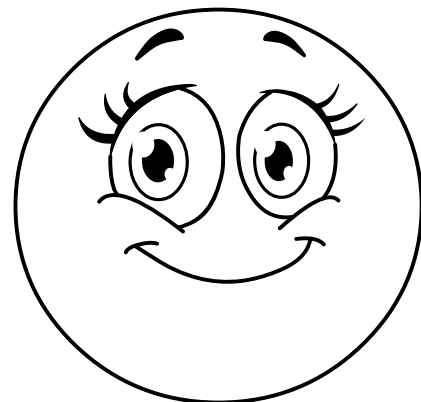
sad



excited



worried



happy

