



God's Way to Live

Goal: To practice God's way to live: loving, giving, and forgiving.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 6:27-38

Enemies and war were a part of day-to-day life in Judah, the country where Jesus was born and grew up. The Romans had ruled Judah since 63 BC. The Jewish people frequently rioted, sometimes led by those who claimed they were the long-awaited messiah. First-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote of a powerful revolt in Galilee that took place sometime in Jesus' lifetime. According to his report, the Romans crushed the revolt and then crucified two thousand Galileans. It is against this confrontational and violent backdrop that Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

Jesus' words may have shocked some members of his audience. Some may have wondered how he could preach love toward those who had treated their people so badly. Among Jesus' listeners may have been people plotting armed rebellion. How dismayed and disappointed they would have been if they were hoping to finally overthrow the Romans under Jesus' leadership! They may have believed that he was a frightened coward or a Roman agent hired to quell a riot.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many of your children will have heard parents or teachers say to children, "I like you, but I don't like what you are doing." This familiar phrase may help all ages to understand how Jesus could, on the one hand, teach about changing injustices and caring for victims of oppression and, on the other hand, teach about loving and praying for our enemies.

Children are often exposed to violent television programs that portray conflicts between powerful creatures and super heroes. In these dramas, enemies are often those who are somehow different and "evil." Reflect on how you can help children explore their understanding of who an enemy is while encouraging them to think critically about why some people are labeled as enemies while others are not.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Create a safe environment where everyone's input is taken seriously and anxious feelings are acknowledged and accepted. Some children may be aware of people who are a threat to world peace or a particular group that has oppressed another group. Some children also may have been harmed or treated unfairly by someone they care about. When discussing such situations, underline that loving that person or group does not mean accepting their actions. In fact, loving them means holding them accountable for their actions. Your children may want to know what to do when faced with a bully or other difficult member of their own peer group. What does loving your enemy mean in a situation like this?

Together brainstorm positive ways to mediate conflict.

O God, show me how to love my enemies that I might be a credible witness to your amazing grace. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 13, 23, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

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

copies of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV) and *The Message*

green cloth
candle

Responding

Claiming

figures made in
“Welcoming and Preparing”

Celebrating

The Sneetches by
Dr. Seuss, internet-
connected device
(optional)

Offering

self-hardening clay,
toothpicks and/or
pencils, thin cording

Extra

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

Write each of the six prompts in “Reflecting on the Story” on sheets of newsprint and post them around the room.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **C** **LG**

As the children arrive, greet them warmly. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to arrange the green cloth, candle, and Bible to create a worship space. Encourage some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage from two versions of the Bible: the New Revised Standard Version and *The Message*.

Talk together about who Jesus thinks we should love. Give each child a lump of play dough and invite them to make a figure out of the play dough. Then give the children pipe cleaners. Instruct them to make a second figure using the pipe cleaners. Put the figures on the worship table.

Singing **L** **MS**

Gather the group around the candle. Play “We Are Dancing in the Love of God (Danzaremos en amor de Dios)”—**SCM 24**. This song is bilingual. Review the words and have the children dance and sing along.

Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence with us. Invite a volunteer to pray or pray aloud:

God of all nations, you brought light into the world in Jesus Christ. Help us to see love in the new way as Jesus intends. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

T *The best way to cope with transitions is to be prepared and know what is coming. Help the children know the plan for the session and identify times of transition in advance.*



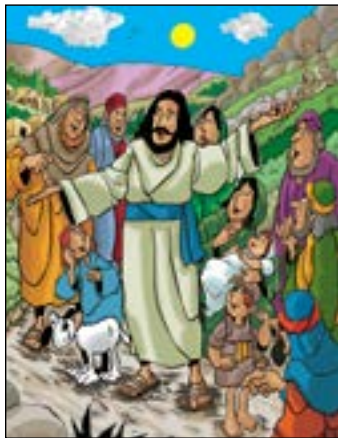
Preparing to Hear the Story

T B M MS

Tell the children that you will name some things and that they should stand up whenever you name something they love. They should be seated if they don't love what is named.

- ▼ Stand up if you love pizza.
- ▼ Stand up if you love playing games.
- ▼ Stand up if you love kittens.
- ▼ Stand up if you love your cousin.
- ▼ (Continue adding categories until all children are standing.)
- ▼ Stand up if you love a bully.

Then ask the group why it might be difficult to love someone like a bully who is mean or hurts people. Say that in today's story, Jesus tells us that it is God's way to love others, give to others, and forgive others, and that sometimes means people we may not like.



Hearing the Story

LG C

Invite a child to find Luke 6 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 13** using your voice, your expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story lively. Encourage the children to participate in the story by responding with a word or phrase each time you pause at a question in the story. It's all right if their responses differ from the words provided. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Tell the children they will hear Jesus' words again from two versions of the Bible: the one usually read aloud and a more modern version, called *The Message*. Encourage the children to listen for differences between the two readings. Invite the two volunteers to read Luke 6:27–38 verse by verse, alternating between the New Revised Standard Version and then *The Message*. Have the readers pause after verse 31 and ask the children what they have heard so far. What is Jesus asking his followers to do? Repeat the question after verses 32–35 and 36–38.

Reflecting on the Story

LD C

Ask the children to think about today's story and read the phrases on the sheets of newsprint:

- I like Jesus' instruction to love my enemies because . . .
- I like Jesus' instruction to forgive because . . .
- I like Jesus' instruction to give because . . .
- I think Jesus' teaching is hard because . . .
- Jesus' teaching makes me feel . . .
- I feel this is an important story because . . .



Hand out markers. Invite the children to respond to the prompts by writing on any of the sheets. Review the responses together. Discuss the reactions to Jesus' teaching about loving our enemies, forgiving, and giving.

Singing



Gather the group around the candle. Play “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 23**—inviting the group to sing along.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Through role play, help the children explore ways that they can be loving and forgiving when they may have differences with others.

Collect the play dough and pipe-cleaner figures from the worship table. Place the play dough figures to one side of a table and the pipe cleaner figures to the other side. Gather the children in a circle around the figures. Guide the children to identify opposite characteristics that are present in the two groups of figures: short/tall, soft/hard, and so forth. Explain that the two groups aren't getting along because of these differences. Ask the children what can be done. Invite the children to share ideas about how the two groups of figures can become friends. Have the children role-play these ideas, using the figures and inventing their own dialogue.

If more time is available, have them describe times when they didn't like someone but later became friends with him or her.



Celebrating God's Grace



*Before the session, check out the book *The Sneetches* from your library or do a YouTube search to watch a reading of the book.*

The Sneetches, by Dr. Seuss, tells the story of a conflict between the Star-Belly Sneetches and the Plain-Belly Sneetches. They want nothing to do with each other because of the difference in how they look. The Star-Belly Sneetches are mean to the Plain-Belly Sneetches. But in the end, they learn that they are not so different.

Read *The Sneetches*. Ask the children to share their reactions. You may want to use these questions:

- ▼ How did the Star-Belly Sneetches and the Plain-Belly Sneetches feel about each other at the start? Why?
- ▼ What did they realize at the end of the book?
- ▼ How is this story like or unlike today's Bible story?



Offering God's Grace

TD B T

Use self-hardening clay to make a “forgiving” or a “giving” symbol in response to today’s story (*for example: a cross, rainbow, heart, and dove*). Use toothpicks or pencils to etch designs and letters on the clay symbols and poke holes in the symbols if the children want to make them into necklaces. Thread through thin cording and tie.

Encourage the children to present their symbol to someone they want to extend forgiveness to or give to someone as a sign of friendship, remembering Jesus’ words about forgiving others and giving.

T *Transition times vary, so plan accordingly. Clean up may only require a short warning while hand washing may require more warning and time.*

Extra Activity

F LG

Before the session cut a set of hearts from GN 2 for each child.

Ask the children who is easy to show love to. Ask, “How do they show love to you and others?” Remind the children that in today’s story, Jesus said, “It is easy to love people who show love to us. But what about people who are mean to us? God wants us to love them too. God wants us to love everyone.”

Tell the children that they are going to make a chart to help them practice showing love even when it is hard to love. Give each child a copy of GN 1, a set of hearts, an envelope, and crayons or markers. Invite them to create a color key on their chart, one color for each of the following actions: (1) easy to show love; (2) not easy, but not too hard to show love; and (3) hard to show love. Then instruct them to color one row of hearts with each of the colors they have chosen.

After they have colored the hearts, have them cut the squares apart and place them in an envelope. Tell the children to use the adhesive (gummed or peel and stick) on the flap of their envelope to stick it to the back side of the chart. Explain that this will hold their hearts for use at home.

Invite the children to take their chart home and post it where they will see it as a reminder to do loving actions. Tell them to glue or tape the appropriate colored heart on their chart whenever they show an act of love and write down the action in the space provided.

If children are having a hard time with ideas, suggest that hugging a parent or caregiver may be easy to do; picking up something a brother or sister left on the floor may not be too hard but not easy; and holding the door open for someone that is mean to them might be hard. Suggest that they pay attention to the colors of hearts that appear on their charts. Encourage them to try showing love when it is hard to do so.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

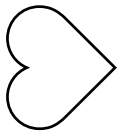
Invite everyone to sit in a circle around the table prepared earlier. Ask them to set the symbols they made in “Offering God’s Grace” on the table. Ask each person to say how their symbol reminds them of forgiving and giving.

Remind the children about how a minister may raise his or her hands at the end of the worship service when giving the benediction or blessing. This is a way of placing a blessing on everyone’s head. Invite the children to raise their hands and speak to each other as they repeat your words, saying the following:

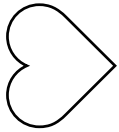
God loves you all the time, /
even when you may not be lovable. /
God forgives you all the time /
and asks you to forgive others. /
God gives you grace upon grace. /
Let us love, forgive, and give to others /
as God has done for us. /
Amen. /



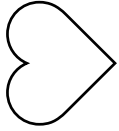
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



Easy to show love.



Not easy, but not too hard to show love.

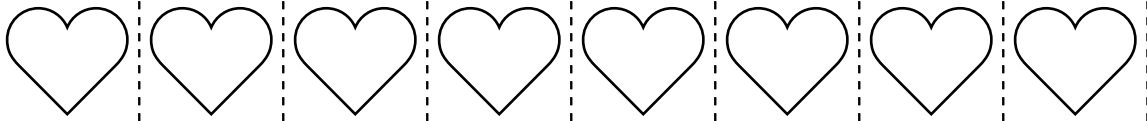


Hard to show love.

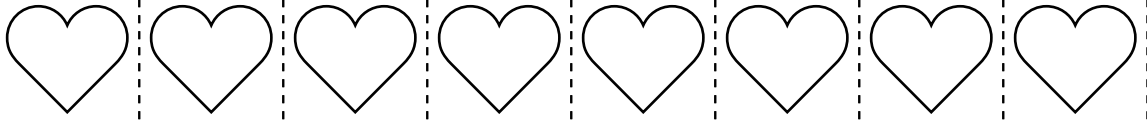
Heart	Date	Loving Action

Heart	Date	Loving Action

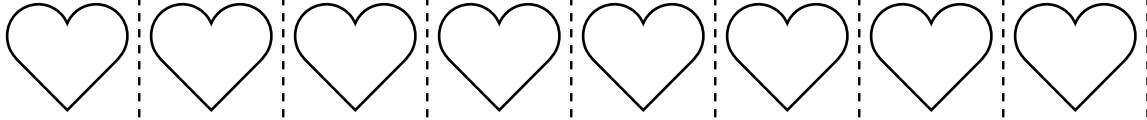
Easy to show love.



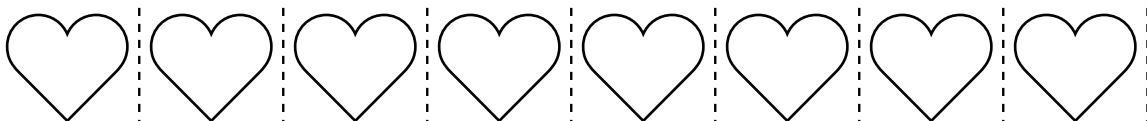
Not easy, but not too hard to show love.



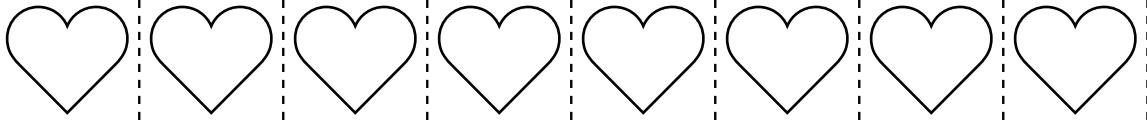
Hard to show love.



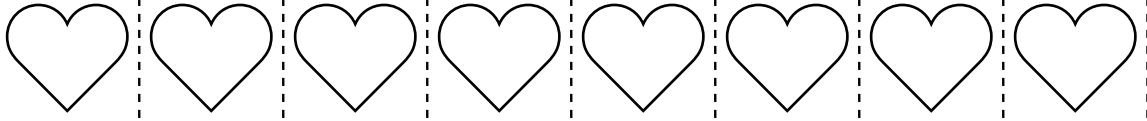
Easy to show love.



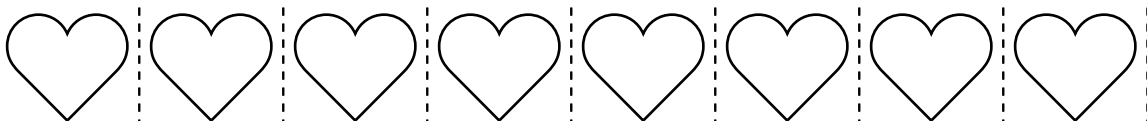
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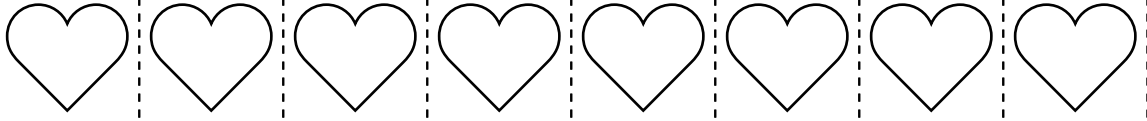
Hard to show love.



Easy to show love.



Not easy, but not too hard to show love.



Hard to show love.

