



Jesus Walks on Water

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

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 14:22–33

The loving care Jesus gave to his disciples was comprehensive. When they were hungry, Jesus fed them (Matthew 14:13–21). When they were in danger, Jesus came to their aid.

The story of Jesus walking on the water displays Jesus’ watchful care while his disciples were in a boat being “battered by the waves” and which was “far from the land” (v. 24). Jesus had retreated to the mountain to pray after feeding the 5,000. Now he came to his disciples, “walking toward them on the sea” (v. 25). To their terror that “it is a ghost!” (v. 26), Jesus spoke words of greatest reassurance: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid” (v. 27). He calmed their fears. When Peter attempted to come to Jesus, but fright overtook him and he was in danger of sinking, Jesus reached out to save him. All along, Jesus protects and saves.

Jesus’ actions were pure grace. To those he loved, he offered his protective, loving care. By his grace, Jesus did for the disciples what they could not do for themselves. He saved them in many ways.

This comprehensive care could prompt only the deepest gratitude from the disciples. “Thank you” doesn’t say enough. What a friend we have in Jesus!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

This story of the disciples caught in a storm on the lake has a lot of different actions taking place. Children can identify with the disciples’ fear. “When was a time you were frightened?” would be a great question to begin with, followed by, “What helped you to not be afraid anymore?” Jesus both calmed the fears of the disciples and saved Peter from drowning. Telling this story with children and engaging their questions and responses will help them remember that, when they are afraid, they can be assured that there are loving family members and friends who will love them and remind them that they are safe, just like Jesus did for his disciples.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

With so many families living away from extended family, children grow up experiencing the love of neighbors and church members who are invited into a circle of love and support. Be aware of all those involved in the loving care of the children you teach. Inviting children to name those people who love them and care for them will help them connect with this story of Jesus caring for his disciples. When they wondered if they would make it, Jesus was there to help them feel safe and loved. As their teacher, you are one of those in their circle of love and support who cares for them and loves them. Thanks be to God!

*Thank you, God, for calling me to step out
in faith by teaching your children. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 10, 20, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white cloth

candle

blindfolds

Responding

Claiming

SCM 10a

Celebrating

SCM 10, one (or more)
buckets, small balls or
plastic eggs

Extra

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

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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

A M L

Play “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 21**—as 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.

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

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for a volunteer to practice today’s Scripture passage.

Invite the children to create a boat using furniture in the room.

Singing

Play and sing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 21**.

Praying

MS C M

Gather with the children in the boat they have made.

Check in with the children. Ask how their week went and what they are looking forward to in the week ahead.

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus, light of the world. Invite the children to sit in silence for a few moments, then pray:

Loving God, thank you for Jesus. We know he is always with us . . . when we are happy, when we are sad, when we are excited, and when we are scared. Help us to trust his presence and step out in faith. Amen.

M *Sitting quietly for a prayer may be difficult for some children. Consider having them hold something, such as the Bible, that may be needed soon. This will give them something to focus on as well as provide an important role for them.*



Preparing to Hear the Story

SD MS

Have the children get out of the boat and line up on one side of the room. In pairs, one child puts on a blindfold and is carefully led across the learning area by their partner. When they get to the other side, the children switch places and cross the learning area again.

Wonder together about times that you have been afraid and what helped you not to be afraid anymore.



Hearing the Story

L M

Invite a child to find Matthew 14 in the Bible. Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 14:22–33. Conclude the reading 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 center.

Invite volunteers to mime the parts of Jesus and Peter. The rest of the group will be the disciples and the other elements of the story, such as the rain, wind, thunder, waves, and so forth. Prompt the children to act out the motion of the rocking boat. Read a retelling of the story using **SCM 10** or listen to the story audio. Pause to let the children mime each scene.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C

After the pantomime, wonder why Jesus called Peter to step out onto the water and why Peter stepped out of the boat.

Recall that the disciples could not see Jesus clearly at first, so they were not sure who was walking toward them on the water. Wonder aloud what helped the disciples know that Jesus was the Son of God.

Comment that Peter wanted to follow Jesus by stepping out in faith. Wonder together what we can do to follow Jesus and how we can help each other step out in faith together.

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Be patient and encourage other children to do the same.*

Singing

L

Listen to “Why Should I Feel Discouraged?”—**SCM 20**.

After hearing the song once, give the children the following instructions to do as they hear the song again:

- ▼ Pretend to be Peter, stepping out onto the water.
- ▼ As the music plays, move, feeling the waves swell. Look down and begin to sink, feeling discouraged.
- ▼ When you hear the refrain, “I sing because I’m happy,” stand tall as if looking at Jesus and walk forward.

Play the song again.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

M

Gather around mural paper. Provide markers for the children to draw lines to create waves on the bottom half of the paper.

Together brainstorm ways they might step out to follow Jesus in the coming week. Print or draw the suggestions along the wavy lines.

Cut the figure of Jesus from **SCM 10a** and glue it on top of the water. Provide paper and pencils or markers for each child. Invite the children to draw pictures of themselves to glue around Jesus. Display the mural in the room or in a hallway of the church building.



Celebrating God's Grace

A B MS

Tape the **SCM 10** picture to a wall. Place a bucket underneath the picture and have the children line up about 15' away from the bucket. Give a child a spoon and a ball (a ping pong ball or a plastic egg). Invite the child to walk to the bucket without dropping the ball, keeping her or his eyes on **SCM 10**. When the child gets to the bucket, she or he can drop the ball inside. Then the child returns to the line and gives the spoon to the next child. If you have a large group, you could have two or more groups.

After the game, wonder why Peter began to sink when he looked down and stopped looking at Jesus. Ask the children what Jesus did and what the reaction of the other disciples was. Wonder what it means to trust Jesus in our lives.

B *Providing opportunities for boys and girls to play games can be fun. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or excluding children. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite. Show gratitude to children modeling positive behavior.*

Offering God's Grace

TD

Challenge the children to remember Jesus' words "Take heart . . . do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27), and to trust and step out in faith.

Talk together about the ways in which Jesus offered support and encouragement in the story (*reassuring the disciples, encouraging Peter, reaching out to Peter when he lost confidence*).

Wonder how many Christian symbols the children can name (*cross, dove, fish, and so on*). If not named, offer that a boat is a very old symbol for the church. Wonder together why a boat would be a symbol for the church.



Invite children to make symbols using pipe cleaners to serve as reminders of Jesus' words and actions. Suggest they make one for themselves and one for a friend.

As the children create, wonder aloud how the symbols might help them have courage to step out in faith. Encourage them to find a place to keep their symbol where it will be a visible reminder of their faith.

GN 1 Solution:

arm, birds, black hair,
extra person, fish,
headband, mustache,
rope, sandals, wave

Extra Activity

Provide copies of **GN 1** and pencils. Allow time for the children to find the ten differences in the two pictures. If time allows, provide markers or colored pencils for the children to color the pictures.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Wonder aloud what one thing helped the children grow in their understanding of how to follow Jesus. Ask them how they can help each other as they step out in faith together.

Lead the children in the following blessing, inviting them to repeat your words and actions:



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).

As we step out into the world— (*move one step forward*)
moving through fear, (*make a pushing movement to the left with one hand*)

moving through doubt, (*make a pushing movement to the right with the other hand*)

facing the challenges that come our way— (*take a step backward*)

we know Jesus is there to lift us up. (*raise both hands up*)

We know that God is always with us, (*take two steps forward*)

so let us step out in bold faith! (*clench fist and raise up above head, saying, "Yes!"*)

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.



