



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

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 card for each
child

Responding

Praying

magazines

Claiming

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

Extra

copies of **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.

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. Ask several volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

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 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?”

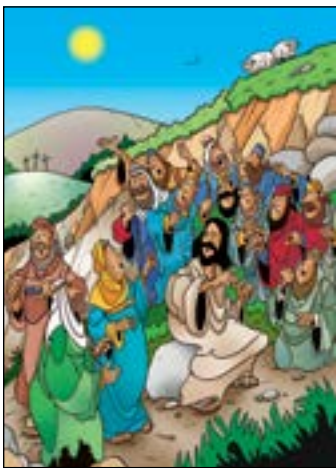
Explain that, in the time of Jesus, only very important people were allowed to sit in special places. It would have been an honor to sit next to the person sitting on a throne. Introduce the Bible story by saying that a mother asked Jesus to give her sons places of honor.

Hearing the Story

C L

Invite a child to find Matthew 20 in the Bible. Ask for several volunteers to read Matthew 20:20–28. 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 the children to count the number of times they hear the word *rule* or *ruler* as you read the story again using **SCM 12** or listen to the story audio. Ask the children who wanted to be rulers. Wonder together what Jesus said was needed to be a great leader and why he said that.





Reflecting on God's Grace



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 go 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



Wonder together, "Who are leaders in our community (or church)?" Welcome all answers. Wonder what makes these people good leaders. If the group does not come around to it, add that the people serve others. Wonder how each of us can be leaders by serving others.

Hand out copies of **GN 1**, scissors, and markers. Brainstorm times when people may need leaders (for example, when you are . . . sad, mad, in need of a smile, frustrated, tired, upset). Invite the children to fill in the front of their envelopes with some of the suggestions and then cut the envelopes out. On the back sides, have the children imagine ways they can help (such as, I will . . . cheer you up, help you with chores, listen to you, give you a hug). Allow for time to decorate the envelopes.

Wonder together how these simple acts of kindness can serve others and be an example of how to live like Jesus.



Show the children how to fold in each of the sides as shown on GN 1, tucking the last fold under the first one to secure the envelope.

Encourage the children to keep the envelopes with them and to look for opportunities to give them away this week, showing how they can be leaders by helping others.

Celebrating God's Grace



Play a game to reinforce that those on Jesus' left and right are servants.

Sit in a circle. Explain that "John" refers to the person sitting on your left, "James" is the person on your right, and "Jesus" means everybody. Use the following directions to play the game:

- ▼ A volunteer stands in the center, points to a player, and says, "John wants to be great." The player responds with the name of the person on the left, and says, "(Name) is a servant of God."
- ▼ Or the volunteer points and says, "James wants to be great." The player responds with the name of the person on the right, and says, "(Name) is a servant of God."
- ▼ If the volunteer calls out, "Jesus wants all to serve," the whole group stands and shouts, "We are servants of God."
- ▼ If the player who is pointed to mixes up the person on their right for James or left for John, they change places with the person in the center.

Hint: A good way to remember which name is left and which name is right—*John* has four letters, as does "left," and *James* has five letters, as does "right."

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

Praying God's Grace



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.



Extra Activity



Hand out copies of **GN 2** to the children and read aloud the stories of some of the disciples. Read or ask a volunteer to read the paragraph at the bottom while the children follow along. Discuss together some ways it is hard to follow Jesus. Give the children time to write down some of their responses. Allow anyone who wants to share their responses to do so.



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

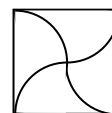
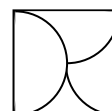
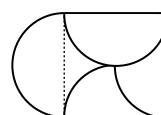
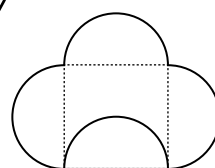
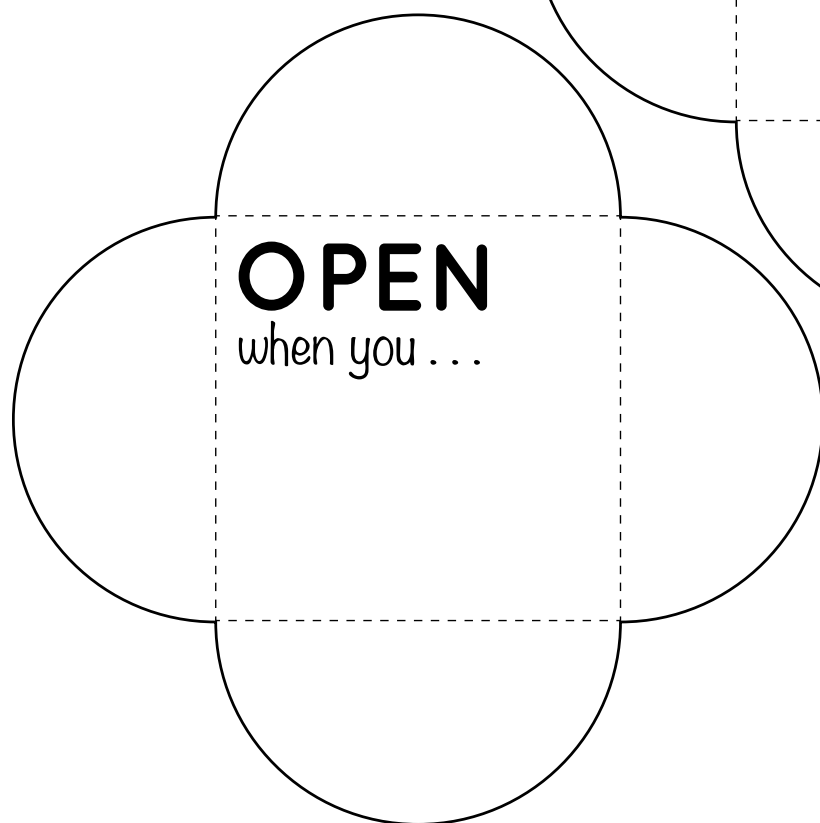
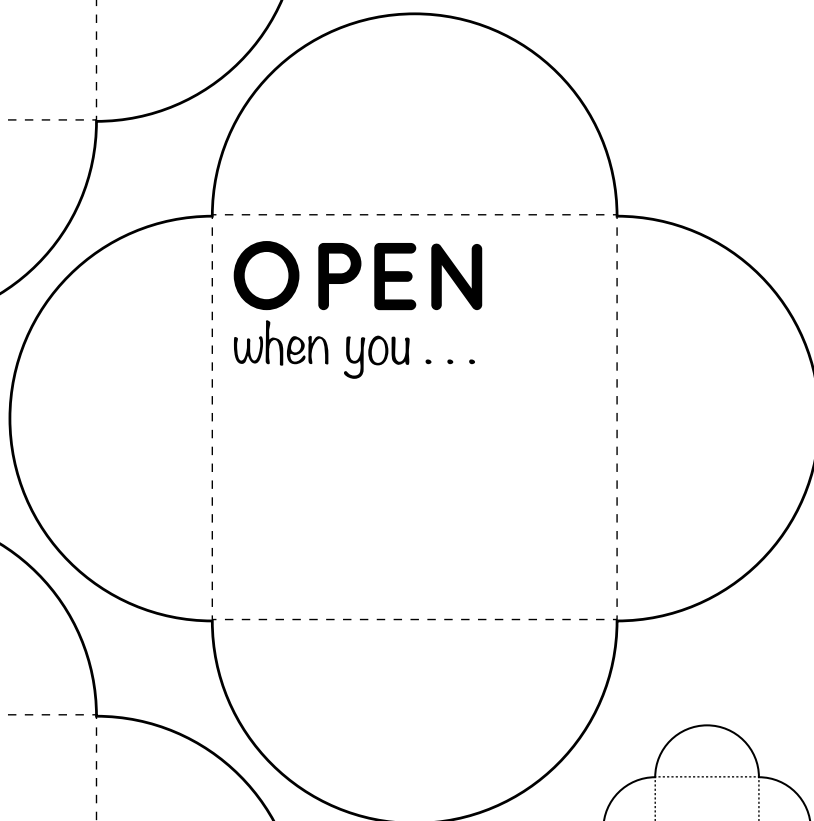
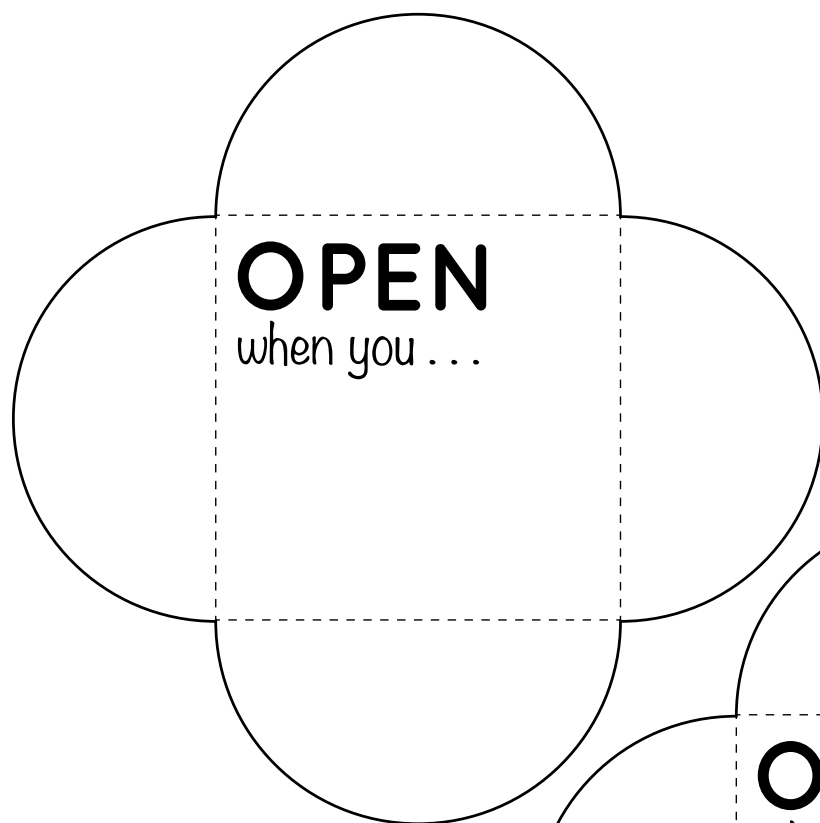
Ask the children to help clean up the space.

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!”



They Drank the Cup

We do not know what happened to all of Jesus' disciples, but history and legend tell us about some of them. Here are the stories of what happened to some of the disciples after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

James the son of Zebedee is believed to have been the first Christian missionary to Spain. He became the first martyr among the apostles when King Herod Agrippa ordered his execution in A.D. 43 (Acts 12:2).



Andrew preached the gospel in Greece, Turkey, and Asia Minor. Many Christians in Russia say that Andrew was the first to bring the gospel there. It is believed that he was martyred in Greece.



Thomas preached the gospel in India and other nations. He was martyred in India and legend says he is buried near Madras, India.



Philip may have carried the gospel to North Africa. Legend says that, when he preached, the wife of an important government official heard him and became a Christian. Her husband was so angry that he had Philip arrested and executed.



Peter preached the gospel and served as a leader of the church in Jerusalem. He was crucified as Jesus was, but legend says that he asked to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die as Jesus died.



Bartholomew preached in India, Armenia, and Ethiopia. He was arrested many times and was eventually killed in Armenia for teaching the gospel.



The first followers of Jesus lived in a time when it was dangerous to be a Christian. Many of them were arrested and many were killed simply because they chose to follow Jesus. Because they were brave and believed in Jesus, they made sure that the stories of Jesus would be carried down through history to us. We are lucky to live in a time and place where it is not against the law to be a Christian. We won't go to jail for preaching about Jesus and we are free to worship God the way we want. Even so, sometimes it is hard to be a Christian. List below some ways you find it hard to be a Christian.

Sometimes it's hard to be a Christian when . . .
