

Growing

in
Grace & Gratitude

Multiage (Ages 5-10)

Summer 2024



© 2024 Growing Faith Resources

Published by Growing Faith Resources
Louisville, Kentucky

All rights reserved. Except where permission to photocopy is expressly granted on the material, no part of these materials may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, address Growing Faith Resources, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and used by permission. In some instances, adaptations have been made to make the language inclusive.

Every effort has been made to determine whether texts are under copyright. If through an oversight any copyrighted material has been used without permission, and the publisher is notified of this, acknowledgment will be made in future printings.

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Introduction	iii
Overview of the Summer 2024 Quarter	v
Resources and Session Components	vi
Supplemental Resources	vii
Basic Supplies	vii
Reusing Materials	vii
Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs	viii
Support Highlight: Supporting Children with Mobility Supports	viii
A Few Notes about Children and Reading	viii
Flyaway Books	ix
Ideas for Working with Pre-readers	ix
Guidelines for Multiage Service Projects	ix
A Note about Candles	x
Team of Contributors	x

Introduction

After Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit enlivened and emboldened the followers of Jesus to go out and tell his story, that’s just what they did. Beginning with those closest to him—those who had walked and talked with him on a daily basis—they took their call to spread the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ to whomever they met. Peter and John healed a man, proclaimed the power of Jesus, and were arrested, but it did not stop them. The small Christian community grew and more were added to be servant leaders, deacons, helping care for one another. Philip shared the story of Jesus with a man from a different country, and the gospel began to spread out into the world. Then Peter met with Cornelius, a Gentile, and the good news of Jesus broke down the barriers of separation, with Peter proclaiming that God shows no partiality. The disciples met as a council in Jerusalem and proclaimed that the gospel was open to all people. Following Jesus was for the whole world.

The second half of the summer explores a number of the teachings of this new church. Through Paul, we are introduced to Timothy, a younger man, and learn about those who nurtured him in his faith. This gives us the opportunity to acknowledge those who have taught us. In Paul’s letters, we learn about prayer, generosity, and the great mystery of God, who is beyond understanding yet always present and with us.

Remembering Jesus’ words and actions, we look at something he said and did the last time he was with his disciples before his death. He talked about being connected to him and to God like a vine is to the branches, and he washed his disciples’ feet, urging them to follow this example of love for one another. Later, a follower of Jesus known as John the Elder wrote a community of believers, echoing words of Jesus. He wrote about light and darkness, recognizing that Jesus is the light; in him is no darkness. For us to walk in the light, we must be faithful and honest, confessing those things that draw us away from God. John the Elder wrote about God’s great love for us made known in Jesus Christ. In the last session of the summer, we hear from James as he encourages us to put our faith into action.

Overview of the Summer 2024 Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence can be found at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

June 2, 2024

Keep Calm and Speak Boldly

Acts 4:1–31

Goal: To tell others about Jesus' grace and love.

June 9, 2024

Grace in Action

Acts 6:1–7

Goal: To show God's grace by serving others.

June 16, 2024

The Spirit in Action

Acts 8:26–40

Goal: To follow God's Spirit as we welcome and include others.

June 23, 2024

All One Family

Acts 10:1–48

Goal: To explore God's welcome and inclusion of all people.

June 30, 2024

All One Church

Acts 15:1–18

Goal: To practice ways to welcome and include all people.

July 7, 2024

Honoring God

2 Timothy 1:1–14

Goal: To give thanks for people who help us grow in faith.

July 14, 2024

All in Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1–7

Goal: To practice prayer.

July 21, 2024

A Generous Sharing

2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Goal: To practice generosity.

July 28, 2024

Searching for God

Acts 17:22–31

Goal: To ponder the mystery of God—more than we can understand and always with us.

August 4, 2024

Vine and Branches

John 15:1–8

Goal: To explore how we are connected to Jesus, the Vine.

August 11, 2024

Light and Darkness

1 John 1:5–10

Goal: To live in the light!

August 18, 2024

Love One Another

John 13:34–35; 1 John 4:7–11, 20–21

Goal: To practice loving one another.

August 25, 2024

Hear It and Do It!

James 1:19–27; 2:1–7

Goal: To put our faith into action.

Resources and Session Components

Growing in Grace & Gratitude curriculum is available for fall, winter, spring, and summer in two formats: 1) print and ship, and 2) downloadable PDF. Each season's material for the leaders includes:

- 1. Session plans for embracing children in the grace of God through engagement with the Bible**
- 2. Session title, session goal, and background information**
 - ▼ *Recognizing God's Grace* helps leaders explore the Bible story with a focus on God's grace in Scripture.
 - ▼ "In Your Children's Experiences" and "In Your Relationships with the Children" provide leaders with an understanding of the children's needs, abilities, and interests.
- 3. Three movements that echo Presbyterian and Reformed worship**
 - ▼ *Gathering in God's Grace*
A hospitable welcome calls children to sing and pray to God, to hear and reflect on the Bible story.
 - ▼ *Responding in Gratitude*
A choice of age-appropriate activities based on the group size and time available. Some activities (noted as "more prep") require advanced planning and/or additional supplies.
 - ▼ *Loving and Serving God*
An invitation to discipleship that inspires children and their families to practice hospitality, generosity, and love.
- 4. Grace Notes (GN)**
 - ▼ Black-and-white reproducible pages that provide activities and crafts.
- 5. Stories, Colors & More (SCM)**
 - ▼ Colorful resources are provided to aid in the flow of the sessions.
 - ▼ The Support Map offers practical suggestions for working with children who have difficulty communicating, transitioning, reading, or writing; and children who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or in need of mobility support. The Support Map also provides tips for celebrating the strengths of children through leadership, generosity, and fairness.
 - ▼ Colorful illustrations of the Bible stories spark imagination. The stories appear on the front of the illustrations to make it easy for the leader to show the art while reading the story.
 - ▼ Other colorful resources, such as teaching pictures and maps, are organized in session order.
 - ▼ **Music & Melodies:** Song lyrics sheets are gathered in the back of the resource.

Supplemental Resources

- ♥ **Music & Melodies (MM)** includes tracks with familiar lyrics as well as new child-friendly tunes. *Music & Melodies* is available as a separate purchase. Purchase one CD per age level.
- ♥ Free **Grace Sightings**, an online resource to print or email home, includes a summary of the week's session and age-appropriate activities for home use.
- ♥ Free **story audio** of the weekly Bible stories.
- ♥ The *Grace Sightings* and story audio recordings are available at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

Basic Supplies

All materials beyond this list will be specified in the supply list for each session:

- ♥ Bibles
- ♥ CD player
- ♥ cleanup supplies
- ♥ coffee filters
- ♥ cover-ups or smocks
- ♥ craft supplies (e.g., cotton balls, craft sticks, glitter, stickers)
- ♥ crayons, large and small
- ♥ cups, napkins, plates, utensils, drinking straws
- ♥ glue and glue sticks
- ♥ hole punch
- ♥ office supplies (paper clips, rubber bands, self-adhesive notes)
- ♥ paint, paintbrushes
- ♥ paper (card stock, construction, drawing, index cards, mural paper, newsprint)
- ♥ paper bags (lunch-sized, grocery-sized)
- ♥ pencils, colored pencils, markers, pens
- ♥ pipe cleaners
- ♥ plastic bags (ziplock, garbage)
- ♥ play dough
- ♥ rhythm instruments
- ♥ ribbon, string, yarn, scarves
- ♥ round-tip scissors (some left-handed)
- ♥ stapler, staples
- ♥ tablecloths
- ♥ tape (duct, masking, painter's, transparent)

Reusing Materials

Encourage church members to collect a variety of materials for art projects, such as:

- ♥ buttons, ribbon, yarn
- ♥ clothespins
- ♥ egg cartons
- ♥ plastic containers
- ♥ shoeboxes
- ♥ old magazines, catalogs, newspapers
- ♥ paper tubes (from gift wrap, paper towels, or toilet paper)
- ♥ used gift wrap and cards

Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by becoming familiar with the developmental terms, descriptions, and icons on the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM iii–iv**). Colorful icons (LG T) from the map and notes about specific needs are incorporated into each session to offer ways to adapt activities. (Note: While many of the activities could fit in multiple categories on the support map, for simplicity, only those that require particular attention have been identified.)

Use the Visual Schedule (in *Stories, Colors & More*, **SCM i–ii**) to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group. By consistently using these tools, you will help your faith community discover and practice grace-filled ways to be the body of Christ with and for all children.

Support Highlight: Supporting Children with Mobility Supports

MS

Many children use wheelchairs and walkers to assist with mobility. One important way to support children using assistive devices is to think about access to your church and in your classroom. As you set up your room, think about ample space between furniture to maneuver a wheelchair or walker. Think about materials and how they are positioned. Doing a roll-through in a wheelchair or walker can be a helpful way to check to make sure that your room setup is accessible.

In addition to access, when you are planning activities, think about including children who use assistive devices. For example, seating all children on chairs or placing materials for a game on a table, instead of on the floor, are easy ways to create a more welcoming community.

A Few Notes about Children and Reading

All versions of the Bible are above second-grade reading level. *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* tries to provide a way to share the Bible stories while engaging both pre-readers and readers. Since the Holy Scriptures were written for adults, curriculum writers try to choose sections of Scripture that children can understand. Still, at times, the children in your group may seem to struggle to understand a verse or passage. When that happens, assure them that God will help them understand the Bible in new ways as they grow. Encourage a sense of wonder at God's amazing ways. Reassure the children of God's grace, a grace that does not depend on how much they know or understand.

Some of the following strategies may enhance your time with the children:

- When you write something for children to read, print the words. Many of them cannot read cursive writing.
- If an activity sheet has something to read, ask for a volunteer to read it aloud rather than calling on an individual child. Even better, have the group read it aloud in unison. If most children in your group are pre-readers, ask them to point to the words on the page as you read them aloud.
- Make a poster with church vocabulary words. Each week, add a word to learn, such as *God, Jesus, love, Bible, pray, bless, thanks, disciple, praise, and worship*. Give each child a few sheets of paper folded in half and stapled to make a word book to keep in the room. When an activity calls for children to write a word, name, or simple sentence, let them know you are happy to write it in their word books so they can copy it.

- Expect younger children to occasionally reverse letters (for example, using “b” for “d”) and to make errors in spelling. It is not important to correct such errors during the session.
- If children need to know a repeating response for a litany or drama, write it on newsprint. Invite them to read it with you in unison several times before beginning the litany or drama. Adding actions to the words will help children remember them.
- Many children love learning through rhymes and songs. Try to include music in each session.
- Many children enjoy acting out stories. Invite them to act out certain parts of the story as you read it aloud. Challenge them to act out what they think happened next in a story. Some children will be able to act out responses to questions more easily than writing them.
- Be careful not to characterize children for whom reading comes easily as being somehow “better.” Resist putting them in the role of leader.
- Affirm each child by name—whatever his or her reading and writing skill level—two or three times each session.

Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books (flyawaybooks.com) is a children’s picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. These books reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world, as well as retelling familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at www.pcusastore.com.

Ideas for Working with Pre-readers

- Keep small pieces of scratch paper handy to write a word for a child to copy.
- If a child is struggling with an activity that calls for writing a word, write the word using dotted lines so he or she can trace it.
- Form pairs to solve puzzles. Encourage children to help one another—there’s no need to cover their papers so others can’t copy!
- If you observe a child struggling to work independently on an activity, offer to be his or her partner. If many are struggling, work as a group to complete the activity.
- If a child seems frustrated by writing, suggest that he or she draw a picture of the response or act it out. You also might offer to write what the child dictates to you.
- Offer old family-friendly magazines with pictures that can be cut out and used to illustrate a response or complete a project.
- When a child is trying to sound out a word, don’t be too quick to jump in and help. Whether he or she finally decodes the word or you provide it, affirm the new skill of reading and how hard the child is trying.

Guidelines for Multiage Service Projects

- Each child has an important role or task.
- Encourage work in pairs or small groups.
- Set up pairs or small groups so each one has a combination of ages, when possible.
- Separate age-group peers some of the time. However, don’t cut them off from each other.
- Look for skills in the children rather than ages.
- What is unique to your multiage group?

A Note about Candles

Growing in Grace & Gratitude suggests the use of a candle in the worship space for most sessions. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The lighting of the candle reminds us of this and signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Most churches have a policy about candles and either lighting real candles or using battery-operated candles. While we simply state “candles,” *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* recommends using battery-operated candles for safety with children.

Team of Contributors

The development team of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* is grateful to have an amazing team of educators and writers to collaborate in the production of this curriculum.

ELIZABETH CALDWELL wrote the “. . . In Your Children’s Experiences” and “. . . In Your Relationships with the Children” sections. She is visiting professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School and served on the faculty of McCormick Theological Seminary for more than thirty years. Lib previously served as an educational consultant for three Presbyterian churches in northwest Alabama. She is a member of the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education and the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators and was selected as APCE’s 2004 Educator of the Year. She serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Childhood and Religion* and was a member of the editorial board of the Common English Bible. Lib is the coeditor of *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible* and coauthor of *God’s Big Plan*, both from the children’s book imprint Flyaway Books. She is the author of *The Ministry of Teaching: Christian Formation Today*, part of the Being Reformed Workbook series from Growing Faith Resources.

SHARON J. HARDING contributed to our stories. She is a Christian educator and writer of a variety of curriculum materials for children, including *Feasting on the Word Curriculum*, *Whole People of God*, and children’s sermons for pastors. She has worked in ministries for children and youth at churches in Quebec and Alberta in Canada.

SAMANTHA HASSELL has served as a Christian educator since 2001. She loves imagining ways for children to experience Scripture and deepen their faith.

DEBORAH HUGGINS is our consultant for children with disabilities and special needs. She is the writer of the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map. She is a Presbyterian teaching elder and church educator with an MDiv from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Deborah was a special-education teacher. She is working on a PhD in special education, researching access and inclusion for people with disabilities in communities of faith. Deborah is married to Jeff Huggins; they have three children.

DON MCKIM wrote the biblical background in “Recognizing God’s Grace.” He is an honorably retired Presbyterian minister who has been an editor for Congregational Ministries Publishing and Westminster John Knox Press, a seminary theology professor, and an academic dean. He is the author and editor of a number of books on Reformed theology, including *Introducing the Reformed Faith*; *Presbyterian Beliefs: A Brief Introduction*; *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; *More Presbyterian Questions, More Presbyterian Answers*; and the *Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*. He lives with his wife, LindaJo McKim, in Germantown, Tennessee. They have two married children and enjoy time with their grandchildren.