



All Things in Common

Goal: To learn ways we can follow the examples of the early church community.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 2:43-47

The earliest church shared. The Christian community shared possessions to the point that they “shared everything” (v. 44, CEB). Lands and houses were sold, and Christians would “distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them” (v. 45, CEB). Generosity reigned!

Christians were responding in gratitude to God’s grace given in Jesus Christ. This gratitude was made real as they shared their possessions, fully and completely. They realized all they had belonged to God and to all God’s people. So sharing and holding all things in common was a natural expression of this belief.

The lives of the early Christians were enriched by sharing and receiving God’s good gifts of food and faith “with gladness and simplicity” (v. 46, CEB). They “praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone” (v. 47, CEB). Their lives and actions of gratitude were expressions of God’s wonderful grace given in Jesus Christ.

This open, gracious sharing is what God intends for the church. All of us can find ways to share with others and help meet their needs. This is what God desires. Generosity and gratitude for the grace given to us are marks of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

We share. It’s something we have to learn to do. It’s not something children do naturally. Children first learn about sharing toys with another or sharing time with parents. In school, children learn about taking turns to talk and to listen. It’s one of the most basic human responses, one that is taught both in the culture and in all religions.

The story of the first Christians sharing meals and prayers, property and possessions is certainly a model for all of us today. Children can easily make the connections between the teachings of Jesus and how they can share and care for others.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

In the story for this week, there is a wonderful summary of the Pentecost event: “Everyone knew they belonged. They knew God loved them and they wanted to love God back.” We over-complicate the task of being a disciple of Jesus. It really is that simple.

Help children to make connections between life in the early Christian community and the activities that take place in your church. For instance, in today’s Bible story, members of the early church sold what they had and distributed the money to those who were poor. Your church may take up a collection that will later be used to help others in your town or area.

If you do nothing more than help the children know they belong and they are loved, nothing more than help them name the ways they can share God’s love with others, then you have been one of God’s faithful witnesses. It is enough!

O God, help me show your grace to the children with gratitude. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 2, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 16, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

red cloth

Responding

Celebrating

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Offering

copies of **GN 2** on card
stock

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

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

A MS

Greet the children by name and with the words, “Grace be with you.” Tell them how glad you are to see them.

Invite the children to help you decorate the room for worship. Say that the story today takes place on the same day that the last two stories happened. Wonder what day that was, and remind them that it was Pentecost. Ask the children to recall what they know about Pentecost and to decorate the worship area for worship. Have the children include a Bible and a red (the color for Pentecost) cloth. Place a candle on the table.

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 one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage.

Play this adaptation of musical chairs. Ask the children to place their chairs in a circle facing out. Explain that when the music stops, everyone is to find a chair and sit down. Play lively music such as “Sanna, Sannanina,” stopping it midsong. After the first round, remove one chair. Explain that anyone without a chair when the music stops must find someone willing to share a chair. Remove chairs each round until everyone must share the same chair (touching it in some way). Tell the group that today’s Bible story is about sharing what we have.

Singing

Sing “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase).”
Remark how all over the world, no matter the language, people praise God. Exclaim about how wonderful it is that God made us all so different and yet brought us all together as one church. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 16** so the children can sing along.

Praying

Turn on the candle, reminding the children that fire is a sign of the Holy Spirit. Ask the group to join in an echo prayer:

Dear God, /
Fill us with your Spirit. /
Amen. /



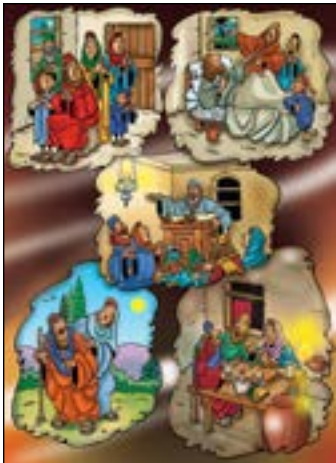
Preparing to Hear the Story

T L

Review the sequence of events on Pentecost, the day when the Spirit was given to the church. Ask the children to work together to put **SCM 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, and 2e** in the order they occurred in the story. If the children need help sequencing the pictures, read each statement below one at a time and ask a follow-up question:

- ▼ A group of people gathered in a house. Who were they?
- ▼ Suddenly they heard the sound of a rushing wind. What was it?
- ▼ Flames of fire appeared over their heads. Why were there flames?
- ▼ Peter spoke to the crowd gathered outside. What did he say?
- ▼ Many people were baptized. Why were they baptized?

Explain that today's story describes the early church as a Spirit-filled community. Invite the children to listen for ways the church expressed its trust in God's grace.



Hearing the Story

L LD

Invite a child to open the Bible to Acts 2. Have one or two volunteers read Acts 2:43–47. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the Bible on the worship table.

Read the story again using **SCM 2** or the story audio. Before you read, challenge the children to listen for the verbs (action words) in the story. Ask them to call out the action words when they hear them, and invite a volunteer to list the words on newsprint.

- *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty during story time. To help with focus and comprehension, suggest listening prompts, engage them with movement, or provide a specific item within the story picture to find.*

Reflecting on God's Grace

Review the list of action words. Wonder together what a day in the life of the early church might have been like. Ask: “What were mealtimes like? Who cleaned? Who cooked? How did the adults teach the children?”

Discuss: “What would be the best thing about living in the early church? What would be the hardest thing?” Wonder how sharing possessions can be a sign of God's grace and our gratitude.

Singing

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 20**—and celebrate how Jesus' love teaches us to share with one another.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Help the children claim God's grace to go into the world to love and serve others by helping the children identify the places and people around them with a community map.

Provide a large sheet of mural paper. Invite the children to decide what to draw in the center of the map—a church, school, courthouse, community center, or another building. Invite one child to draw and color the center feature on the map, and invite others to draw lines for roads in every direction from the map's center. If the children do not want to begin with a structure, let the children draw lines to represent roads that crisscross their town.

After the children have a building or roads in every direction, invite them to think about and add other structures or places where people live, work, play, and gather. The children may draw their own homes, playgrounds, schools, fire stations, homeless shelters, or shopping centers.

As the children work, invite them to think about the people they meet in these locations, people who may need the good news and the love of Jesus. Challenge the children to name ways they can love people in their community.

When the map is complete, invite the children to cut paper hearts and write or draw their ideas for sharing God's love. Let the children glue the hearts with their ideas for loving people in their community onto the map. Display the map in a common area, inviting the faith community to pray for the children who are called to love one another and to share God's love.

VI *Consistently name each child as they speak and describe actions so that children with visual impairment will know who is called on and how that person is involved in an activity.*

Celebrating God's Grace



Before the session, cut apart the charade ideas on GN 1 and place them in a container.

Play a game of charades to celebrate how the early Christians lived as a community. Invite a volunteer to draw a slip of paper from the container and act out the action without speaking. Help children read the activity as needed. Encourage the children to guess what the action is. Continue to play until all who wish have had the opportunity to act out an activity.



Praying God's Grace

Invite children to join as prayer partners. Just as people in the first church prayed for one another, so the children can pray for one another.

Ask the children to find partners. Explain that they will be prayer partners for a week. They are to tell each other about what they want their partners to pray for. Allow a quiet time for everyone to pray. Remind the group that the early church prayed together and for each other. Suggest that they write their names and prayer requests on slips of paper and exchange them. They could keep the slips of paper by their beds as a reminder to pray.

Offering God's Grace



Help the children encourage the congregation to share as the early Christians did. Distribute card stock copies of **GN 2** and colored pencils. Explain that they will decorate cards and offer them to the congregation. Read the ideas on the page for how early Christians shared. Suggest children add two ideas by writing on the empty spaces. Invite the children to decorate the back of the cards. Place finished cards in a basket and put it in a prominent place, or place the cards in the pew racks.

Ask that an announcement be made inviting people to pick a card, take it home, and follow the suggestion.

Have each child take a card as well and follow through on the suggestion with their family.

Extra Activity



Tell the children that people in the early church showed kindness and generosity to one another. Have children make a "Kindness Catcher" to practice ways to be generous to others. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and scissors. Give the following instructions:

- ▼ Cut out the square.
- ▼ Fold the square in half horizontally from side to side; open and fold in half vertically in the other direction and then open.
- ▼ Fold each of the corners into the center.
- ▼ Turn it over, so the folded points face down.
- ▼ Fold each of the corners to the center.
- ▼ Fold it in half, forming a rectangle; open and fold in half in the opposite direction.
- ▼ Flip it back over and put thumbs and forefingers into the four flaps.
- ▼ Slip your fingers all the way up to the corners and then bring your fingers together.



Form pairs of children to play. The players in turn:

- Choose one of the numbers in the top four squares.
- Open and close while counting the number chosen.
- Select one of the four visible ways to show kindness. Spell the word(s) while opening and closing the catcher once for each letter in the word(s).
- Choose again. Do the action and then open the panel under the word(s) and have the player commit to doing the action.
- Switch partners and play again.

Challenge the children to take the catchers home and use them each day.



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



Lead the children in cleaning up the worship space.

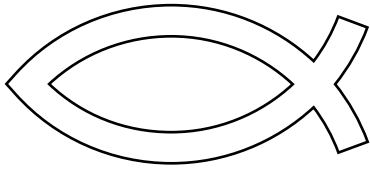
Remind the children that the first Christians shared their belongings and resources to help those in need, worshiped together, ate meals together, and had lives that were connected.

Encourage the children to look for opportunities this week to help their families, church family, and friends. Encourage them to remember that the Holy Spirit lives and works in them at all times. Close with a prayer:

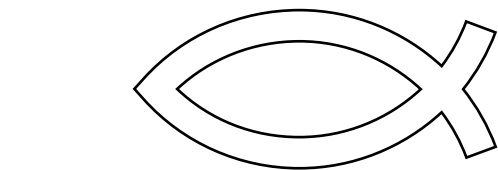
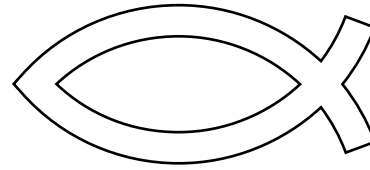
Holy God, thank you for all the people who share their faith with us. Help us to share God's love with the whole world. Bless us as we share our faith with others. Amen.

Thank the children for coming, and encourage them to return next week. To each child, say: “(Name), God’s gift of grace is for you.”

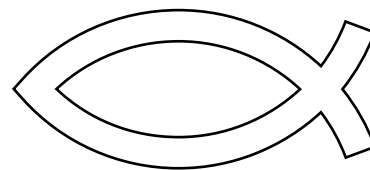
celebrating a baptism	singing a hymn
passing the peace	sharing the bread and the cup
collecting the offering	serving food in a soup kitchen
inviting someone to come to church with you	writing a note to someone
building a house	teaching Sunday school
playing a musical instrument	picking up trash



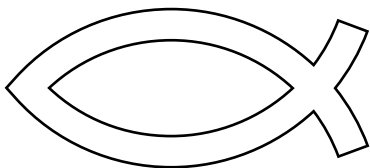
Sort through your things and put aside something nice you don't use anymore. Give it to someone who can use it.



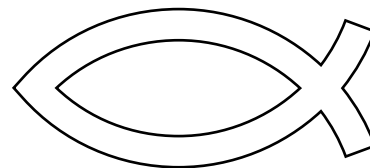
Bake cookies or treats and give them to someone who would enjoy something sweet.



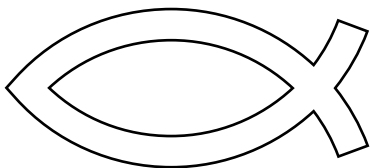
Buy extra groceries this week and put them in the collection box for the food pantry.



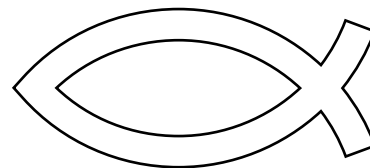
Send a card, make a call, or go with a friend to visit a person who doesn't get out often.







Find a way to help with a local community caring project. Can you give your time or talent? Can you give money or useful items?



Invite someone who lives alone to eat a meal with your family.



 1	HUG Invite a new friend to play with you.	FIST BUMP Tell someone something you like about them.	 2
ELBOW BUMP Thank an adult for helping you.	Help with a chore at home without being asked.	HIGH-FIVE	
WINK Pick up trash.	Thank a teacher or your pastor for helping you learn.	HANDSHAKE	
 3	Call a grandparent or other adult just to say hi.	Smile at everyone you see today.	 4
	SMILE	CLAP	

