



# God's Grace Poured Out

**Goal: To imagine how God's grace changes people and uses them for good.**

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Acts 9:1-22; 1 Timothy 1:12-14

The story of the conversion of Saul (who would be known as Paul), who hated the followers of Jesus, is dramatic. Saul had a life-changing experience of Jesus on the road to Damascus and heard a voice saying, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). Blind, he was led to the house of Ananias (v. 17). When his sight was restored, Paul began to proclaim Jesus, saying, "He is the Son of God" (v. 20). He became a believer.

Paul became the greatest apostle for Jesus Christ in the earliest church period. God's grace was poured out upon him. Paul responded. He traveled, proclaiming the gospel and working with communities of new believers. Paul writes, "I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord . . . because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer . . . the grace of our Lord overflowed for me" (1 Timothy 1:12-14).

In the most unexpected ways, Paul's life was turned around and he became a servant of Christ. In his experience of being called by the very person whose followers he had been persecuting lie the seeds of Paul's theology. Paul's writings emphasize righteousness based on God's grace and mercy rather than on what one does to earn salvation.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

The story about Paul's conversion tells a simple fact: Saul did not like Christians or what they were saying about Jesus. He disagreed with them and so tried to stop them. Children will be helped to learn that not all conversions will be as dramatic as Saul's. What is important is that God's grace surrounds us as we try to figure out how to live together.

God asked Ananias to do something he didn't want to do, something he was afraid to do, and yet he worked up enough courage to do it. Children are frequently asked to do things they don't want to do. They also know what it's like to simply not like someone. Learning how to live together with all our differences is something we work on together all of our lives. The church is a great place to try to figure that out together.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you consider this dramatic story of Saul's conversion to Paul, think about your own experiences of differences and disagreements. How were or are they being resolved?

Young children have disagreements about sharing toys, space, or the attention of adults. Older children experience differences of opinion with siblings or situations at school or in the neighborhood. All can be helped to remember that even when we disagree with someone, we can work to listen to each other, to resolve conflicts, to come to a better place. We, like Paul, can remember and tell stories of Jesus, who wanted people to live together with love.

*God of hope, open my eyes to the ways you change people and use them for good, even me. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 4, 20, 21

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

green cloth

sticky notes

robes, sandals, blindfold

## Responding

### Claiming

invited guests

### Celebrating

**SCM 4a**, internet-  
connected device

### 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.

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

### Welcoming and Preparing

**M** **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Smile and acknowledge your pleasure in seeing them.

Invite the children to decorate a table for worship. Ask the children to include a Bible, a candle, and a green cloth. Ask if anyone remembers why you are using the color green. Remind them, if necessary, that this is a season in the church year called Ordinary Time when the color green signifies growth and learning.

Ask some of the children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite two volunteers to practice today’s Scripture reading from Acts and one volunteer to practice the reading from 1 Timothy.

Distribute two or three sticky notes to each child. Ask them to write the name or draw a picture of someone they trust (or feel safe with) on each note. Divide a sheet of newsprint into two columns. In the left column, have children post the sticky notes with the person on it. Have them tell the group about the people they posted. Then in the right column, brainstorm together some reasons for trusting other people. Ask:

- ▼ What do they do that lets us know we can trust them?
- ▼ Can you imagine a person you don’t trust being changed into someone you do trust? What would that feel like?

### Singing

Gather around the worship table. Play “Amazing Grace.” Suggest that the children follow along silently and listen while you play the song. Replay the song and use **SCM 21** to encourage the children to sing the first two stanzas of the hymn.

**LD** *Don’t assume what children can or cannot do with regard to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*



### Praying

Turn on the candle, telling the children that it reminds us of Jesus' presence with us and in the world. Say an echo prayer:

Be with us today, God. /  
 Quiet our minds so we can hear your voice. /  
 Open our hearts so we can receive your love. /  
 Create in us grateful hearts that care for your world. /  
 In Jesus' name. /  
 Amen. /

### Preparing to Hear the Story

Tell the children in today's story they will hear about a man named Paul who was changed by Jesus. He did not like the followers of Jesus, and he changed into one of the greatest followers of Jesus.

Clarify that Paul was known by both Saul (his Jewish name) and Paul (his Roman name). He went on to become an important figure in the early church.



### Hearing the Story



Invite a child to find Acts 9 in the Bible. Ask two volunteers to read Acts 9:1–22. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Tell the children they will hear the story again using a retelling of the story. Invite children to act it out. Have them use costumes and props if you have them. Comment that the story is full of action and emotion so they should portray that in their scenes.

Read **SCM 4** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, your expressions, your own feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Afterward, have a volunteer read 1 Timothy 1:12–14.

### Reflecting on God's Grace

Invite children to share their questions about the story. You may wish to start discussion with the following questions:

- Why do you think Saul was upset with Jesus' followers?
- Why might Ananias have been afraid to go see Saul? Why do you think he wasn't afraid?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- Does God change people today? How? What examples can you think of?



### Singing

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 20**—and celebrate how Jesus’ love changes us as it changed Paul.

Turn off the candle.

**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 listening to a guest,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



### Claiming God's Grace

**M**

*Before the session, identify, or ask your pastor to help you choose, a woman and a man who can inspire children by sharing their faith stories. Invite them to share their stories by providing them with the questions below.*

Tell the children that people have many different kinds of experiences of faith, some quite dramatic like Paul and some very uneventful, but all involve the recognition of God’s presence in their lives. Introduce your guests and tell the children that your guests are going to share some of their faith journey with the class.

Invite your guests to speak about their faith experiences by responding to the following questions or telling their stories as they wish.

- What was your earliest experience of God’s grace?
- Did you ever have a “moment” like Paul (maybe not so dramatic, but a definite moment or time of understanding God or Jesus differently than you had before)? If so, what was that like?
- When have you felt God’s guidance in your life?
- What do you do to connect with God?
- How are you different because of your relationship with God?
- How is the world different because of your relationship with God?

Provide an opportunity for children to ask questions or to share their experiences, but do not pressure anyone into sharing. Thank your guests for sharing their faith stories with you.



### Celebrating God's Grace

Show the children the picture of John Newton on **SCM 4a** and read, or invite a volunteer to read, the brief biography of him. Talk together about how for some people, like John Newton, change doesn't come immediately; it comes gradually as we open our eyes to God's grace.

Show a YouTube video, "A Story of Amazing Grace—Chris Tomlin" found at [bit.ly/2KEjNAw](https://bit.ly/2KEjNAw). Play the video at a low volume and read aloud the words on the clip. After the video, ask the children what times they have sung or heard this song. Sing together "Amazing Grace"—**SCM 21**.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.

### Praying God's Grace

**B**

Remind the children of Paul's dramatic change of heart and mind, from wanting to hurt Christians to becoming a Christian who shared the good news of Jesus around the world.

Ask the children to show with their faces and bodies how Paul may have looked and acted before God changed his heart and mind, and then ask the children to show with their faces and bodies how Paul may have looked and acted after God changed his heart and mind.

Use the following directions to lead the children in a time of prayer:

- ▼ All face one direction and think of a recent time when you thought or did something unkind or hurt someone's feelings.
- ▼ Pray silently, but use your face and body to show God your feelings.
- ▼ Now turn and face in the opposite direction. Changing one's ways, or repentance, means turning away from sin or wrongdoing and turning toward God.
- ▼ Think of how you can be kind and loving in the situation.
- ▼ Pray with your face and body, asking God for forgiveness and help to love and heal any brokenness in relationships. Use your face and body to show God your feelings.
- ▼ When you are ready say, "Amen," and sit down.

### Offering God's Grace

**LG A**

Celebrate that Paul's life was turned around. He welcomed Ananias when Ananias came to pray with Paul. Have a conversation with the children about how the church can be a welcoming place to experience God's grace. One way the children can help is by creating signs that let new people know where they are and where certain rooms are located. Ask the children to name different spaces in the church and list them on newsprint. Prompt them with questions such as: Does our church have rooms for teaching? A gathering space? Child care? Kitchen? What other rooms does the church have, and what are they used for?



Create directional signs to identify all these places. Give the signs to the pastor or appropriate committee so that they can use them around the church.

### Extra Activity



Help children experience the joy of giving messages of good news to others by creating a secret message. Work together on different possibilities for messages of good news they can share with others. Write them on a sheet of newsprint. Provide a few easy suggestions, such as “Jesus loves you!” or “Let Christ’s light shine!” for children to choose from. Hand out copies of **GN 1**. Look at the example with the children. Explain that they will draw lines for each letter in a word and leave spaces between words. Have them use the numbers from the code to write a message in the space provided. When they have completed the messages, have them deliver the messages to a congregation member, friend, or family member. Have additional copies of **GN 1** available if children would like to make more than one message.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have the children join together in a circle. Ask the children to think of the people who have told them the story of Jesus and offer a personal word of thanks for those people.

Play “Harp Music” as they pray silently. After a few moments, close the prayer time with a simple prayer:

Thank you, God, for Paul and all the first friends of Jesus who told his story. Thank you for all the people who told us about Jesus so we could believe in him. Amen.

Have children cross their right arms over their left so their right hands hold the left hands of the people beside them. Say a blessing together:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.  
Amen.

Then all raise their right arms over their heads and turn clockwise to their right.

Announce that everyone in the circle is facing outward, ready to go out and serve Jesus in the world.



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



