



Paul Meets Lydia

Goal: To learn that we thank God by being kind to one another in Jesus' name.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 16:9-15

Paul's vision of a "man of Macedonia" who was "pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (v. 9) opened new areas for spreading the Christian gospel. God's Spirit was at work, leading and directing Paul where to go and proclaim Jesus Christ. The Spirit led Paul to new people whose lives were affected by hearing and believing the gospel message.

The first convert was Lydia, "a dealer in purple cloth" (v. 14). When she listened to Paul speak, "the Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul" (v. 14). Lydia was baptized and invited Paul and his colleagues to "come and stay at my home" (v. 15).

We never know the ways God's Spirit will direct us or to whom we may be led. God's Spirit brings people together. Paul was led to Lydia, and the Spirit of God opened Lydia's heart to Paul's message. She responded by being baptized and providing for the needs of Paul and his companions. God's grace led to Lydia's baptism, and she responded in gratitude by serving the messengers who proclaimed Christ to her. The Spirit can lead us into mission and service.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many children are innately hospitable. They like to give gifts, especially gifts they have made. They enjoy the pleasure others take in receiving their gifts. They sense that the pleasure of the recipient reflects an acceptance of the child. They can be deeply touched by small gestures of kindness: a cupcake, a surprise note of encouragement from a teacher, an unexpected invitation to sleep over with a friend. Children understand that such gestures often carry a deeper message of personal regard and acceptance.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children will be helped to remember that the story of Paul and Silas being welcomed into Lydia's home represents an important aspect of the culture. Welcoming strangers and offering hospitality to them was important. Today, because of so many dangers, we caution children about speaking with adults they don't know.

Here we have a remarkable story about how the early church grew. And here they have a chance to see how a woman, Lydia, became a leader of the church.

Participation in a faith community can offer the experience of fellowship, creating a sense of community through shared rituals and activities. Within the learning area, you can help foster a feeling of both belonging and responsibility for each other. Today's story offers the children an opportunity to practice hospitality, sharing, and living with God's love. They learn about being welcomed and invited to share by the ways you greet them each week.

*Spirit of God, give me the courage
to speak of your grace in Christ. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 5, 13, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

green cloth

purple cloth

bowl of water

simple biblical costumes

ball of purple yarn

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Offering

red, blue, and purple
permanent markers
(inexpensive ones work
best); muslin fabric;
rubbing alcohol; cotton
swabs

Extra

copies of GN 2 on card
stock

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” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **M**

Greet the children by name and with the words, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Smile and let them know how happy you are that they are here.

As children arrive, invite them to decorate a table for worship. Ask them to include a Bible, a candle, a green cloth, and a bowl of water.

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. Add the purple cloth to the table. Ask the children when they might see purple used in worship (*usually Lent and Advent*). Tell the children that today the color purple does not represent the season of the church year but represents the story they will hear about a woman who sold purple cloth.

Invite 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 one or two volunteers to practice today’s Scripture reading.

Suggest that the children draw a large stone arch on mural paper. Explain that this would have been called the city “gate,” an entrance through a wall to a city. Tape this to a wall near the worship table.

Encourage the children’s creativity in making a river. Invite them to tell what they might see and hear if this were a real river. Wonder what happens at a river in today’s story.

Singing

Gather around the worship table. Invite the children to name people, places, and things for which they thank and praise God. Invite them to sing a song of praise and thanks.

Play “Thank You, Holy God”—**SCM 13**. Encourage the children to sing in praise and thanks.

T *For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take.*



Praying

Turn on the candle. Pray the following echo prayer, or ask a volunteer to lead the prayer:

Dear God, /
thank you for being with us today. /
Tell us something new about you. /
We are ready to listen. /
Amen. /

Preparing to Hear the Story

Explain that the arch the children created is an entrance to the ancient city of Philippi, where today's story takes place. Wonder aloud if anyone knows what *Philippi* means (*like Philadelphia, it has its meaning from the Greek word philia, which means affection, friendship, or "brotherly" love*). Comment that today's story features people who show brotherly and sisterly love for each other. Wonder how the children will recognize this kind of love.

Tell the children that today's story is about a woman named Lydia who sold purple cloth in Bible times. Wonder what just that information tells us about Lydia (*she was a businesswoman in a time when women weren't usually involved in the marketplace, and purple was the color that Roman nobility wore, so she was a dealer in an expensive item*).



If a child asks about baptism for himself or herself or a family member, inform the parents or caregivers and offer to connect them to the pastor to discuss baptism.

Hearing the Story



Invite a child to find Acts 16 in the Bible. Ask one or two volunteers to read Acts 16:9-15. 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."

Invite children to dress in simple biblical costumes. Gather near the river the children have made. Invite volunteers to play Lydia, the women, Paul, Timothy, and Silas. For larger groups, the remaining children can play the role of the people gathered along the river. Read a retelling of the story on **SCM 5** or use the story audio as the children act out the play. 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.

Consider presenting your play to your congregation during worship.

Reflecting on God's Grace



Focus your attention on the bowl of water, drawing the children's attention to the water. Dip your hands gently and slowly in the water as you comment that your church uses water to baptize people. Talk about how Lydia was baptized and what happens in your church when someone is baptized.



Explain that baptism shows us God’s grace and that we belong to God’s family. Ask the children to gently dip their hands in the water one at a time and imagine what Lydia felt like when she was baptized. Ask children to share any memories they have about baptisms.

Singing

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 20**—and celebrate how Jesus’ grace calls 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



Ask the children to imagine that Paul has asked them to tell the good news of God’s grace to everyone and to create a church. Ask the children to imagine what that church would be like. Print or sketch their responses on newsprint. Brainstorm:

- ▼ Who would be welcome in the church?
- ▼ What kind of music would there be?
- ▼ What would the people pray about?
- ▼ What would other people in the community say about this church?
- ▼ What would the children do in this church? The adults?

Use **GN 1** as a guide to complete a poem that incorporates the children’s ideas about what the new church would be like. Display the poem where it will inspire your congregation to be a welcoming church.



Celebrating God’s Grace



Before the session, create the following shapes using painter’s tape at random places on the floor: rectangle, cross, triangle, square, zigzag, and diamond. Make a corresponding shape on an index card as well.

Play a game to celebrate Lydia opening her heart to Jesus. Tell the children that you will read the story one more time, but this time they need to run to the shape you are holding up and do the action you are doing. Read the story on **SCM 5**, pausing after the following sentences for the children to run to the correct shape.

- ▼ Lydia bought and sold expensive purple cloth. (*Hold up the rectangle and wave hands in the air.*)
- ▼ The three men had been searching for a place to worship. (*Hold up the cross and make prayer hands while marching in place.*)
- ▼ Lydia and her friends invited the men to sit down and talk with them. (*Hold up the triangle while sitting down and standing up.*)



- ▼ “Will you baptize me?” (*Hold up the square and do jumping jacks.*)
- ▼ Everyone was baptized in the river that afternoon. (*Hold up the zigzag and pretend to swim.*)
- ▼ Lydia opened her home to Paul and his friends and invited them to stay for as long as they wanted. (*Hold up the diamond and bend down and touch your toes.*)

Hold up the cross once more. Have everyone conclude the story with prayer hands and the word “Amen.”

Praying God’s Grace

M

Remind the children that Lydia opened her heart to the good news about Jesus. Wonder with the children about what that means. Share with them that when people open their hearts to the good news, they feel grateful and want, like Lydia, to tell others about Jesus.

Invite the children to join you in a movement prayer. Pray the following prayer, having them repeat your words and actions:

O God, thank you for opening our hearts. (*put hands on heart and then extend arms*) /

Thank you for the good news about Jesus. (*put hands on lips and then extend arms again*) /

Open the hearts of others (*repeat first movement*) /

And help me to tell others about Jesus like Lydia did. (*repeat second movement*) /

We pray in Jesus’ name. /

Amen. /

Offering God’s Grace

F LG B M L

Before the session, cut a 6" x 6" piece of muslin fabric for each child. Pour rubbing alcohol into a cup. Cover a table with a plastic tablecloth.

Ask the children to recall what was Lydia’s business (*seller of purple cloth*). Tell them that they are going to make purple designs on cloth to remind them of Lydia and her decision to follow Jesus. Explain that they will make a square of fabric that they will cut into bookmarks, one to keep and the others to give away.

Use the following directions to make the purple cloths:

- ▼ Demonstrate making dot and line designs on the fabric using red, blue, and purple permanent markers. See the sidebar for examples. Hold the marker down, dab the marker several times, or go over lines a couple times to make sure you are getting enough ink on the fabric.





- ▼ After you have designed your fabric, dip a cotton swab in rubbing alcohol and dab it on the center of each design several times. Watch the rubbing alcohol spread the ink into a circular design. Add more rubbing alcohol if needed to spread the ink.
- ▼ Allow the fabric to dry. This should take about ten minutes or so.
- ▼ After the fabric is dry, invite the children to cut the fabric into three 2-inch strips to use as bookmarks.
- ▼ Use a black permanent marker to write “I am a Christian” or “I am a follower of Jesus” on each bookmark.

Encourage the children to give away two of the bookmarks to friends or family members to remind them that they are like Lydia, a follower of Jesus.

Extra Activity



Help the children tell the good news to people beyond the congregation by inviting them to worship. Provide multiple card stock copies of **GN 2**, markers, and scissors for the children to create the door hanger invitations. On newsprint, print the information—name of the church, address, date, and time of service—for the children to copy. Allow time for the children to decorate the door hangers. Have them make several door hangers. Help the children cut out the door hangers as needed. Encourage the children to take their door hangers home and go with a parent or caregiver to place door hangers on their neighbors’ front doors.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Work together to clean up the space.

Gather in a circle. Hold the end of a ball of purple yarn and toss it across the circle while you say: “[Name], go with joy and tell someone about Jesus!” Have the child who catches it hold the yarn and toss the ball to someone else while saying the words. Continue until everyone is holding the yarn, creating a web across the circle. Pray aloud:

God, help us remember Lydia and her faith in you. Help us remember Paul and his joy in telling the story of Jesus. Help us tell this good news, too, and in doing so create a wider community of Jesus’ followers. Amen.

Send the children with these words: “Go out to share the love and grace of Jesus with everyone you meet.”



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).



This is the _____ that _____ built.



These are the _____, some _____ and some



_____, who go to the _____ that _____ built.



These are the _____, some _____ and some

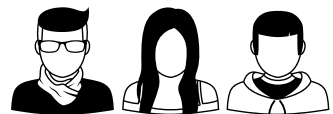
_____, some _____ and some _____, who go



to the _____ that _____ built.



At the _____ that _____ built, the _____, _____, _____, do



_____ and _____, and _____ and even

_____.

**Come Worship
with Us!**

Where: _____
(name of church)

(address)

When: _____
(date)

(time of service)

(name)

