



# God's House

**Goal:** To celebrate that we are part of God's house.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Ephesians 2:17-22

The temple was the great symbol for Israel of the presence of God with them. Paul pushes his audience to an abstract, new understanding of the concept of the temple, which represents the new order of life in Christ. The physical temple building in Jerusalem had a wall dividing the court of Israel from the court of the Gentiles. In verse 14, Paul refers to this wall as a source of division and hostility that no longer exists. The new temple is not a physical building but the living community of believers. The "dwelling place for God" (v. 22) is not a place to go, but a way of living in the world.

Scholars cannot determine whether Paul wrote Ephesians or when it was written. It may have been written in the last years of Paul's life, approximately 62-67 A.D., or in later years by another author. Either way, this passage must have become poignant for the early church after 70 A.D., when the Romans destroyed the second temple building. Readers of Ephesians could find comfort in this text from that devastating event, which claims that God's presence is not limited to a building or any human endeavor. God is present in Christ, and we can be joined to this new temple.

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

Children associate feelings with their homes. Hopefully, these are feelings of belonging and safety. If they are, connect those feelings associated with their homes to their families, encouraging them to see their people as their protectors and trusted "homes." Similarly, feelings of safety and belonging can be linked to the church building and associated with the people of the church. Abstract thought is a little ways off for the children, so it's important to reassure them of their connections to the church. If these feelings are not present for the children, what can you do to advocate for them in their families and their church?

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

Children whose brains operate in concrete-operational ways (ages 7-11) are not apt to negotiate Paul's abstractions. Encourage the children's logical thought by affirming the good things about physical structures and then asking how families can be like a house or church. If your church building has a visible cornerstone, take a class field trip outside to see it. Invite a person who is knowledgeable about construction and can explain the role that the cornerstone plays. Then wonder together how Jesus is like the cornerstone.

*Holy God, I am glad my home is with you and that you are my home.  
May I help the children I teach know that sense of belonging.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

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

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 9, 16, 23

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

green cloth

photographs of your  
church family and  
events

poster board

ink pads in a variety of  
colors

## Responding

### Claiming

poster from “Welcoming  
and Preparing,” ink pads  
in a variety of colors

### Celebrating

Grace Notes (GN) 1;  
SCM 9a, 9b; blindfolds

### Praying

SCM 9c

### Offering

invited guest(s)

### Extra

half-sheets of card  
stock, 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.

Gather photographs of your church family and church events, old and/or recent. These may have been gathered last session.

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

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG** **A** **TD**

Play “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)” as the children arrive. Welcome each child with, “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a candle, green cloth, and pictures of your church/church family to decorate the worship table. As the pictures are placed, lead the group in recalling the people or events depicted. Spend time reminiscing, if the children know any of the people or were at any of the events.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice today’s Scripture reading.

Provide a sheet of poster board, and invite a child to write across the center in large letters: We Are the Church. Invite children to press their thumbs onto an ink pad and then press their thumbprints on the poster. Wipe off thumbs with a cleansing wipe. Have them use a black permanent fine-tipped marker to draw faces (and arms and legs, if they wish) on their thumbprints and sign their names under them. Place the poster by the worship table.

### Singing

**MS** **L**

Sing, clap, and dance to “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)” — **SCM 16**. The second verse is sung in Twi, a language from Ghana. Review the pronunciation with the children.

### Praying

**MS** **C** **L** **D**

Gather children and turn on the candle, reminding us of Christ’s light in the world. Lead them in praying with their bodies. Invite them to repeat your motions after you pray each line.

Thank you, God, for the grace of your Spirit. (*hook thumbs so hands make a “bird” and “fly” it in front of you*)

Thank you, God, for the gift of Scripture. (*hold hands in front of you as a book*)

It is our foundation. (*plant feet firmly, hands on hips*)



Thank you, God, for those in our church family. (*pat the backs of those next to you*)

They show us your protection and love. (*cross arms over chest*)

Thank you, God, for the chance to serve others. (*spread arms wide*)

We learn more about you when we love and help others.

(*point to your head and then your heart*)

Amen.

- D** *Make sure children who are deaf or hard of hearing can see you speaking and see any related actions.*

### Preparing to Hear the Story

**C L**

Distribute paper and crayons or markers to the children, and invite them to draw a house. When they have finished drawing, ask them to comment on the similarities of their houses, such as a “base” or foundation, walls, roof, and doors. Ask them to imagine the problems in a house without these elements.

Invite them to listen carefully to the story for ways the people of the church are like a house, God's house.



### Hearing the Story

**LG LD L**

Invite a child to find Ephesians 2 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read Ephesians 2:17–22. 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 table.

As you read the story again using **SCM 9**, emphasize the portion of the story that describes the ways the people of the church are like the parts of a house. Pause and encourage children to jot those ways on the houses they have drawn. For example, they might write “Bible” at the base of their house, “Welcome” on the door, and “Love & Protect” on the roof or walls.

After you read that Jesus is the cornerstone, go to the poster at the worship table and draw a cornerstone, a rectangle in a bottom corner of the poster, and write “Jesus” in it. Encourage the children to do the same somewhere on their pictures of their houses.

### Reflecting on God's Grace

**LG LD C**

Invite children to look at their houses and to spend time thinking about the ways they learn Bible stories with their church family (such as Sunday school, worship, midweek programs, vacation Bible school, and so forth) and ways their church shows love and welcome to them and to others. Encourage them to write these ideas in the space on the paper around the house. Assist with writing as needed.

Use the following questions to guide a discussion with the children:

- ▼ Why do you think Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Ephesus?
- ▼ What differences can be present among God's people?



- ▾ What gifts do you think they gave thanks for?
- ▾ What do you think this story tell us about God?

### Singing

Sing “God Loves You, and I Love You”—**SCM 23**. Encourage the children to come up with movements for the song.

Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



### Claiming God's Grace

LG A LD TD

Tell the children that they are going to add a house to their fingerprint poster and then invite others to add their fingerprints to the poster. Invite volunteers to add walls, a roof, windows, a foundation (floor or base), and doors to the poster. These may be drawn in or taped on as construction-paper elements. Encourage your group's creativity in creating your house church.

Determine the best way to display the poster and invite others to add their fingerprints. It may be a display in your gathering space after worship. It may be at the back of your sanctuary as worship concludes. It may include traveling from class to class to add people.

Have several volunteers write a brief description of the story on a sheet of paper and ask other volunteers to instruct people what to do (*add their fingerprints, draw faces, and write their names*).

Take the poster, ink pads, cleansing wipes, story description, and instructions to your designated place(s) and see how your church house is filled with your church family.

### Celebrating God's Grace

LG SD A

*Before the session, cut apart the figures on copies of GN 1. Tape SCM 9a and SCM 9b together to form a poster of a welcoming area of a church.*

Tell the children they are going to play a game like “Pin the Tail on the Donkey” to welcome all to God's house. Comment that in this version of the game, you will work together to welcome everyone inside the church. Give each child a figure cut from **GN 1**. Invite the children to color their child figures as they look today and then cut out the figures.

As the children are coloring and cutting, roll pieces of painter's tape to have ready to place on the back of each paper child. Tape the welcoming area poster to a wall.

Have the children get in a line. Place a blindfold on the first child. Tell the next child in line to turn the blindfolded person three times then direct them to the picture by using words. Once the blindfolded



child has placed their person in the “church house,” they may remove their blindfold, high-five their partner, and move to the end of the line. Take turns so that each child gets to be blindfolded and to lead. Comment how well the children use teamwork to help one another. Wonder together about all the ways your church welcomes people and how they use teamwork.

### Praying God's Grace C

*Before the session, place red, blue, purple, orange, and green crayons in a paper lunch bag.*

Gather in a circle and consider why the church in Ephesus prayed prayers of thanksgiving. Re-read the following paragraph from the story:

The people began to talk about the beautiful things God had done for them. Before long, they were saying thank you to God for all the good things in their lives.

Wonder together why it is important to offer thanks to God. Show the children the lunch bag with the colored crayons in it and the **SCM 9c** poster. Explain that each person will have a turn to take a crayon out of the bag, without looking, and then find that color on the poster. They will offer a prayer, “God, thank you for . . .,” following the instructions for that color. The person puts the crayon back in the bag and passes the bag to the person on the left. Depending on the size of your group, you may choose to go around the circle only once or several times. When the bag has made it back to you and it is time to end, say, “God, for all these things, and so much more, we give thanks. Amen.”

**M** *For children who need to move more than others, set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*



### Offering God's Grace B M L

*Before the session, invite a guest, or two, from a helping ministry your church is involved in or supports, such as a soup kitchen, food pantry, clothes closet, or after-school program. Ask that they share about the ministry, what your church does to support it, and if there are any ways that children may be involved or contribute to the ministry.*

Learn about helping ministries in your church or community. Introduce your guest(s) and encourage them to share about the ministry they represent and the people that ministry serves. Suggest that they share ways that children may be involved in the ministry, if possible, or how they can support it. Invite the children to ask questions.



Refer back to the pictures of the houses the children drew, and call attention to the way the people of the church are like the doors that welcome all people and the walls and roof that offer protection. Identify how the ministry they've heard about offers welcome and protection. Thank your guest(s).

Encourage the children to follow through on a way they can be involved in or support one of the ministries they learned about by sharing the information with their parents or caregivers.

### Extra Activity



Remind the children that, as followers of Jesus, we all make up God's house. Tell them that they are going to make a church building to share with their families. Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Before cutting and folding, invite the children to draw a picture of themselves on one of the walls of the church, celebrating that they are a part of God's house. Have them add a cross to their churches as well. Use the following directions to make the church:

- ▼ Fold along the wide dashed lines at the bottom of the church.
- ▼ Cut along the bold solid lines, including the door but not the window.
- ▼ Fold along all dotted lines (except doors) toward the back side of the paper. Fold doors to open out.
- ▼ Form the church into a box. Where the side meets tab A, tape the tab to the inside.
- ▼ Form the roof by taping tab B where the two sides of the roof meet.
- ▼ Form the foundation by taping the bottom tabs to a half-sheet of card stock.



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).

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Lead children in cleaning up the space.

Encourage children to show what they have made to their families and others, sharing the ways we are all part of God's house.

Gather in a circle and invite the children to hold their palms out as you offer this blessing over them:

Leave now to be God's people.

Let the stories in the Bible guide you.

Offer protection and care to others.

And let your hearts be wide open with love for all of God's creation.









