



The People Care for God's Word

Goal: To treasure God's Word and share it with others.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 25:10-22; 37:1-9

God's people in the wilderness received God's law in the Ten Commandments. On their journey, they needed to carry with them the two stone tablets with the commandments written on them. An Ark of the Covenant was constructed. It was a wooden box into which the commandments were placed.

The Ark of the Covenant was always in the midst of the people as they moved along. It meant that God's word to the people was there in the community of faith, as a reminder of God's presence and God's will for the people.

Today, God's word is still present in the community of the church. We have God's Word in the Scriptures. The Bible conveys God's will for our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures show us the way God wants us to live in relation to God and to other people. The Scriptures tell the whole story of God's love for humankind, beginning with the Old Testament and the story of creation in Genesis, continuing in the New Testament with the stories of Jesus and the beginnings of the church.

The psalmist said, "I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). We, too, can treasure God's Word and share it with others.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Perhaps you remember having something very special as a child, a box where you put treasures you collected or a comforting object like a bear or blanket that was always there. Children will be able to tell you about special things they have and why they are important. Many children also have the experience of traveling and deciding what one or two special things they want to take with them. A visit to the sanctuary will provide children with the opportunity to name the special things there that help everyone remember God and God's love for them. These experiences provide a bridge for the children to understand this story of how God wanted the Israelites to remember the Ten Commandments wherever they traveled on their journeys.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Have Bibles with you so the children can locate the Ten Commandments. Children who read will be able to locate the passage themselves. As you talk about how reading the Bible helps us learn about how God wants us to live, you could talk with them about their favorite Bible stories or Bible storybooks. It would be interesting to see how many have access to Bibles and reading at home. It would also be interesting to ask them to share their answers to this: We care for God's Word when . . .

*O God, help me treasure your Word in my heart
that the children may come to treasure it too. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2022–2023

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c,
14, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

large cardboard box
with lift-off lid

two long cardboard
tubes or dowel rods

Responding

Celebrating
SCM 15

Praying

shoe box for each child

Offering

6" squares of drawing
paper, gold wrapping
paper

Extra

SCM 3d, two 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.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

A **B** **MS**

Play “To the Promised Land”—**MM 2**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship area with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Tell the children that they will hear a story about God asking the people to make a special box, called the Ark of the Covenant. Post **SCM 3a**, commenting that the picture is how one artist imagines the Ark of the Covenant might have looked.

Give the children a box with a lift-off lid and two long cardboard tubes or dowel rods to make a model of the Ark. Say that the Ark was built to hold stone tablets. Wonder with the children what was special about the stone tablets. Some children may wonder about Noah’s ark as they work. Wonder how a boat and a box can both be called an *ark*. Wonder how these two arks could be alike. Place the Ark in the worship space.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s Scripture passage is lengthy. Decide if you will have volunteers read it or use **SCM 3**. Ask for several volunteers to practice the reading.

Mix with the group and encourage conversation about the various items and pictures. Talk about where you put special things.

Singing

SD

Play the song “To the Promised Land”—**MM 2**; **SCM 14**—as the children listen. Play the song again and, together with the children, clap out the rhythm. Then join in singing.

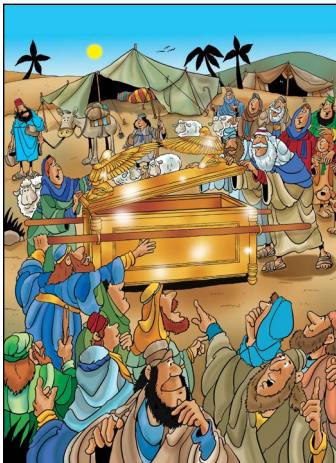
Praying

Gather around the Ark. Turn on the candle.

Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond to each share with “Hear our prayer, gracious God.” Affirm each child’s response. Respect those who do not wish to share.



Looking up Bible passages is a good opportunity to teach children how to navigate their Bibles. Show them how to use the table of contents and index (if there is one) and explain how to find chapter and verse.



SD *For some children, common sounds may be painful or overwhelming. Help by providing warning, allowing them time to process the stimuli.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

L M

Distribute Bibles and have the children find Exodus 20:1–17. Explain that these verses are the commandments God gave Moses. Show **SCM 3b** and **SCM 3c**, a summary of the Ten Commandments. Cut out the tablets and have volunteers read the commandments. Wonder aloud what it would be like if everybody lived by the commandments.

God first spoke the commandments; they were later written down on stone tablets. In today's story, the people of God make a special ark, or container, to hold the gift—the Ten Commandments—they have received from God with grace. Set aside the tablets. Use them as a reference, if necessary.

Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Exodus 25 in the Bible. Ask for several volunteers to read Exodus 25:10–22; 37:1–9 or **SCM 3**. 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 in the worship area.

Place two sheets of newsprint on a wall. Have an older child label one sheet “Love God” and the other sheet “Love Others.” As they listen to the story again, invite the children to write or draw as many of the Ten Commandments as they can remember on the newsprint.

Read **SCM 3**. Use your voice, your expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Reflecting on God's Grace

B M

When the children have finished the newsprint drawings, post the sheets side by side as a large mural of the commandments.

Ask the children to tell you if they have ever made a promise to someone. Encourage them to give examples and point out some yourself, such as marriage, baptism, or employment. Explain that a promise is always between two or more people. God made a promise to the Israelites that they would become God's people and that God would lead them and take care of them. God's promise is also called a *covenant*. The Ark of the Covenant is a box that holds a sign and symbol of the people's relationship with God.

Gather the children around the Ark. Invite two children to lift the cover of the Ark. Roll up the newsprint sheets with the Ten Commandments, tie them, and invite volunteers to place them in the Ark. Then have two children replace the cover on the Ark.



Singing

Give an offering of music to God. Listen to “Let Us Give Praise to God (Alabad al Señor)”—**MM 21; SCM 23**. Explain that this song is sung in both English and Spanish. Play the song again and invite the children to clap and sing along. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

MS B

Lead the children to the church sanctuary. Have them take turns carrying the Ark. Remind them that the Ark of the Covenant was a way for the people to remember God was with them as they traveled.

Invite the children to look around the sanctuary and identify things that remind them of God's presence. They may mention symbols such as Bibles, stained-glass windows, banners, or crosses. Wonder together how these things help us remember that God is with us and graciously cares for us.

When you return the Ark to your meeting space, challenge the children to find objects or draw pictures of items and add them to the Ark of the Covenant to remind them of God and God's presence with them.

Celebrating God's Grace

A B M MS

Play “Bim Bam”—**MM 3; SCM 15**. Comment that this song is a traditional Hebrew tune.

Stand in a circle around the Ark. Teach the following dance steps without music:

Take one side step right with right foot.
Cross left foot behind right foot.
Take one side step right with right foot.
Bring feet together and bend knees in a small dip.

Reverse the direction!

Take one side step left with left foot.
Cross right foot behind left foot.
Take one side step left with left foot.
Bring feet together and bend knees in a small dip.

Play the song and have the children add rhythm instruments as they dance. Continue dancing into the halls of the church building and invite others to join the celebration. Don't forget to carry the Ark with you!

Are there children who are not able to get up and dance or do not want to dance? How might you involve them in this activity? If you are using a CD player, they could start and stop it. They could use the tambourine or keep rhythm by clapping.



Praying God's Grace

A

Invite the children to make personal arks. Give each child a shoe box. Have them cover their boxes and decorate them. Explain to the children that they are creating a personal ark, not necessarily a replica of the Ark of the Covenant. Provide colored papers, tape, and markers and crayons. Assist with covering the top and bottom of boxes as needed.

Explain that they are praying with their hands as they decorate their boxes (arks); their thoughts are turned toward God and God's presence with them. Invite them to draw things on their arks that remind them of God, such as a Bible, Communion bread, cross, fish, and so on. Encourage them to make a reminder of the Ten Commandments to place in the boxes. Suggest that they may want to keep a special stone or object in the ark that reminds them of God.

Invite the children to share something about their arks. After everyone has had a chance to speak, offer a prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Ten Commandments and asking God to be with us as we seek to live God's way.

A *Adapt activities to the needs of the children in your group, supplies you may have on hand, or space available. Be sure that adaptations are made to include all children.*



Offering God's Grace

A

Remind the children that the Hebrew people treasured God's Word to them and passed it on to others throughout the years. Invite the children to draw a picture of a favorite Bible story to share with others in your congregation, reminding them of God's Word.

Hand out 6" squares of drawing paper and have the children draw their favorite Bible story. Encourage them to give it a title and sign their work with their name.

While the children are drawing, prepare a banner background with gold wrapping paper to display the treasures of God's Word. Standard wrapping paper is 24" in width. Leave about a 3" border at the top for a title. Draw 6" square outlines on the wrapping paper for the children to place and glue their artwork, leaving about an inch between each square. Create a title for the banner: "We Treasure God's Word!"

As the children finish their drawings, have them glue them to the spaces you have provided. Display the banner in a common area in your church.

Think of ways to share the children's work and insights with others in the congregation by displaying artwork on a bulletin board or in the newsletter, leading a prayer, sharing a skit, or teaching a song in worship.



Extra Activity



*Before the session, cut the coins from **SCM 3d** and hide them around the room.*

Remind the children that the people of Israel treasured God's Word in the form of the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant. They also treasured the presence of God with them. Tell the children that they will fill a treasure chest with coins that have pictures that represent ways God is present with us.

Form two teams. Give each team a copy of **GN 1**. Tell the children that there are sixteen golden coins hidden around the room, eight different coins for each team. If a team finds a coin that they already have, they should leave it in place for the other team to find. Once a team has found all eight coins, they may glue them to the paper with the treasure chest. Invite each team to discuss what the eight coins represent and how they are ways that God is present with us.

Gather the children together and have them share their thoughts about the coins and God's presence.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather the children in a circle. Hold the end piece of a ball of yarn and throw the ball to one child. Ask the child to name one way she or he can show love for God or for another person. After naming a way, ask the child to hold the yarn and throw the ball to another child. When every child has had a turn, a web of yarn will connect the children to one another. Notice how everyone is connected together in God's family. Close with a prayer:

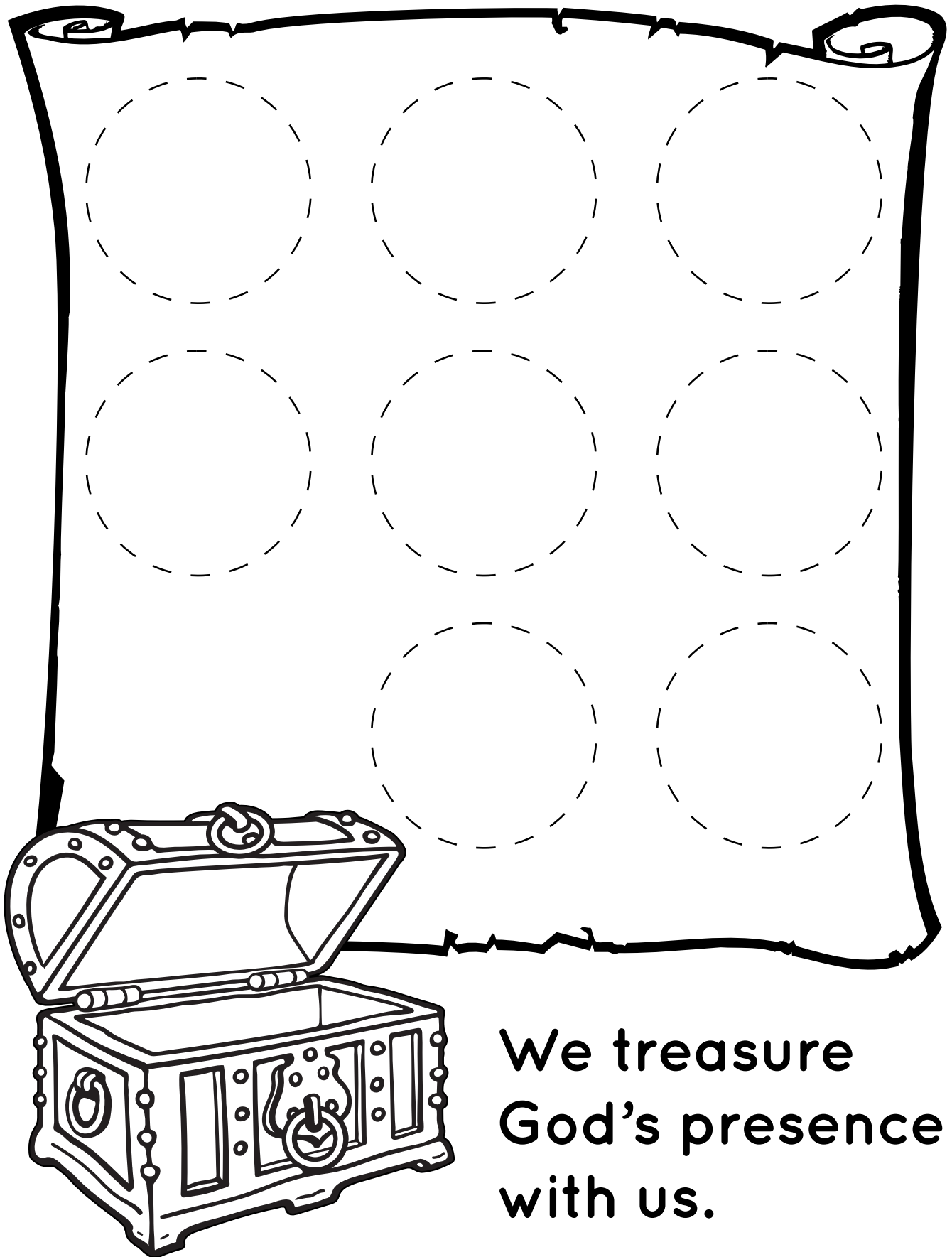
Gracious God, you give us what we need every day. Thank you for giving us (*invite children to share*). Thank you for the Ten Commandments and for guiding us in the way we should go. Help us treasure your Word in our hearts. Watch over (*name each child*) this week and gather us together again in your name. Amen.

Send each child with a blessing, saying, "(Name), rejoice! God is always with you. Go in grace to love and serve the Lord!"

Challenge the children to read the story during the week.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



**We treasure
God's presence
with us.**

