

Growing

in
Grace & Gratitude

Multiage (Ages 5-10)

Summer 2023



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Introduction

This summer you have the opportunity to explore some of the stories of the Old Testament. The theme of God’s faithfulness runs throughout the Bible, in these stories and many others.

The great story of the exodus begins with God’s protection of the baby boy Moses. Through the brave and loving acts of midwives, his mother and sister, and even an Egyptian princess, Moses eventually will lead God’s people to freedom. Later, as Moses and the Hebrews flee Egypt and find themselves facing a sea, with the army pursuing them, God is faithful and makes a way for their salvation. With the Ten Commandments safely ensconced in the Ark of the Covenant, the people of God know that God is with them.

When the people are poised to enter the promised land, they falter, afraid. They let fear overtake God’s faithfulness. At that time, and then again years later after entering the promised land, Joshua stood firm as he chose to serve and love God.

God continues to call people to lead God’s people; surprisingly, many are young: Samuel, David, and Jeremiah. Through each of them children hear stories of God’s faithful voice, sometimes calling quietly in the night as with Samuel, understanding it is what is within a person that counts—even with all one’s human faults and frailties—like David, and giving the words that the people need to hear when one’s own words feel insufficient like Jeremiah. The message, however, is always the same: God is faithful and will continue to be faithful to God’s people.

Through David’s songs and prayers, God’s faithfulness is on display. In Psalm 23, David paints a picture of God as a loving and faithful shepherd caring for the flock. There is never a time the Shepherd is not with us. In Psalm 62, David recognizes God as a rock and a fortress, a safe haven in times of trouble. In Psalm 150, we get to give praise for all God’s faithfulness. With all creation, with instrument and voice, we all sing, “Hallelujah!” to God, praising God with our whole being.

Jeremiah is called by God to share God’s message. Jeremiah wonders what he can do, but God assures him, as God assures all of us, that God is with us.

Overview of the Summer 2023 Quarter

Session Dates, Titles, Scriptures, and Goals

The complete scope and sequence can be found at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

June 4, 2023

Moses and the Basket

Exodus 1:8–2:10

Goal: To explore how it feels to be loved and safe with people who care for us.

June 11, 2023

God Makes a Way

Exodus 13:17–22; 14:1–22

Goal: To trust that God is faithful and will always guide and lead us.

June 18, 2023

The People Care for God’s Word

Exodus 25:10–22; 37:1–9

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

June 25, 2023

Spying on the Promised Land

Numbers 13:1–14:9

Goal: To trust in God’s faithfulness.

July 2, 2023

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

Joshua 24:14–28

Goal: To make a choice to love and serve God.

July 9, 2023

Here I Am, God

1 Samuel 3:1–4:1a

Goal: To recognize God’s call to faith in quiet moments.

July 16, 2023

God Calls a Shepherd Boy

1 Samuel 16:1–13

Goal: To celebrate that God knows us inside and out.

July 23, 2023

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psalm 23

Goal: To recognize how God cares for us as a good shepherd.

July 30, 2023

A Shepherd Boy Grows Up to Be King

2 Samuel 5:1–5; 7:18–29

Goal: To recognize gifts of leadership.

August 6, 2023

God Is My Rock

Psalm 62:1–2, 5–7

Goal: To trust God’s presence in times of trouble.

August 13, 2023

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

Goal: To praise God with all that we have.

August 20, 2023

God Calls Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:4–9

Goal: To wonder how God might be calling us.

August 27, 2023

The Potter Shapes the Clay

Jeremiah 18:1–6

Goal: To imagine ways God is shaping grateful lives.

Resources and Session Components

Growing in Grace & Gratitude curriculum is available for fall, winter, spring, and summer in two formats: 1) print and ship, and 2) downloadable PDF. Each season's material for the leaders includes:

- 1. Session plans for embracing children in the grace of God through engagement with the Bible**
- 2. Session title, session goal, and background information**
 - ▼ *Recognizing God's Grace* helps leaders explore the Bible story with a focus on God's grace in Scripture.
 - ▼ "In Your Children's Experiences" and "In Your Relationships with the Children" provide leaders with an understanding of the children's needs, abilities, and interests.
- 3. Three movements that echo Presbyterian and Reformed worship**
 - ▼ *Gathering in God's Grace*
A hospitable welcome calls children to sing and pray to God, to hear and reflect on the Bible story.
 - ▼ *Responding in Gratitude*
A choice of age-appropriate activities based on the group size and time available. Some activities (noted as "more prep") require advanced planning and/or additional supplies.
 - ▼ *Loving and Serving God*
An invitation to discipleship that inspires children and their families to practice hospitality, generosity, and love.
- 4. Grace Notes (GN)**
 - ▼ Black-and-white reproducible pages that provide activities and crafts.
- 5. Stories, Colors & More (SCM)**
 - ▼ Colorful resources are provided to aid in the flow of the sessions.
 - ▼ The Support Map offers practical suggestions for working with children who have difficulty communicating, transitioning, reading, or writing, and children who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or in need of mobility support. The Support Map also provides tips for celebrating the strengths of children through leadership, generosity, and fairness.
 - ▼ Colorful illustrations of the Bible stories spark imagination. The stories appear on the back of the illustrations to make it easy for the leader to show the art while reading the story.
 - ▼ Other colorful resources, such as teaching pictures and maps, are organized in session order.
 - ▼ **Music & Melodies:** Song lyrics sheets are gathered in the back of the resource.

Supplemental Resources

- ♥ **Music & Melodies (MM)** includes tracks with familiar lyrics as well as new child-friendly tunes. *Music & Melodies* is available as a separate purchase. Purchase one CD per age level.
- ♥ Free **Grace Sightings**, an online resource to print or email home, includes a summary of the week's session and age-appropriate activities for home use.
- ♥ Free **story audio** of the weekly Bible stories.
- ♥ The *Grace Sightings* and story audio recordings are available at www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads.

Basic Supplies

All materials beyond this list will be specified in the supply list for each session:

- ♥ Bibles
- ♥ CD player
- ♥ cleanup supplies
- ♥ coffee filters
- ♥ cover-ups or smocks
- ♥ craft supplies (e.g., cotton balls, craft sticks, glitter, stickers)
- ♥ crayons, large and small
- ♥ cups, napkins, plates, utensils, drinking straws
- ♥ glue and glue sticks
- ♥ hole punch
- ♥ office supplies (paper clips, rubber bands, self-adhesive notes)
- ♥ paint, paintbrushes
- ♥ paper (card stock, construction, drawing, index cards, mural paper, newsprint)
- ♥ paper bags (lunch-sized, grocery-sized)
- ♥ pencils, colored pencils, markers, pens
- ♥ pipe cleaners
- ♥ plastic bags (ziplock, garbage)
- ♥ play dough
- ♥ rhythm instruments
- ♥ ribbon, string, yarn, scarves
- ♥ round-tip scissors (some left-handed)
- ♥ stapler, staples
- ♥ tablecloths
- ♥ tape (duct, masking, painter's, transparent)

Reusing Materials

Encourage church members to collect a variety of materials for art projects, such as:

- ♥ buttons, ribbon, yarn
- ♥ clothespins
- ♥ egg cartons
- ♥ plastic containers
- ♥ shoe boxes
- ♥ old magazines, catalogs, newspapers
- ♥ paper tubes (from gift wrap, paper towels, or toilet paper)
- ♥ used gift wrap and cards

Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by becoming familiar with the developmental terms, descriptions, and icons on the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map (in *Stories, Colors & More, SCM iii–iv*). Colorful icons (LG T) from the map and notes about specific needs are incorporated into each session to offer ways to adapt activities. (Note: While many of the activities could fit in multiple categories on the support map, for simplicity only those that require particular attention have been identified.)

Use the Visual Schedule (in *Stories, Colors & More, SCM i–ii*) to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group. By consistently using these tools, you will help your faith community discover and practice grace-filled ways to be the body of Christ with and for all children.

Support Highlight: Leadership and Generosity



Including children with disabilities in your church may be brand new, or something that you have been doing for a long time. The following suggestions may help you create an environment in which all children feel welcomed and included.

As you learn to meet the challenges posed by learning to accommodate children with disabilities, we also encourage you to see them as gifted members of your community, of your church, and of God's household.

Research shows that, although people with disabilities are participating in the life of faith communities at higher rates than before, they still have limited opportunities to share their gifts for leadership and to give back through service to others. As you learn to support children, look for opportunities for them to express generosity and demonstrate leadership, both in your weekly sessions and in the larger life of the church. Leadership tasks—such as passing things out, holding visual aids, helping other students, or serving as the example in games and activities—can be important opportunities for leadership.

A Few Notes about Children and Reading

All versions of the Bible are above second-grade reading level. *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* tries to provide a way to share the Bible stories while engaging both pre-readers and readers. Since the Holy Scriptures were written for adults, curriculum writers try to choose sections of Scripture that children can understand. Still, at times, the children in your group may seem to struggle to understand a verse or passage. When that happens, assure them that God will help them understand the Bible in new ways as they grow. Encourage a sense of wonder at God's amazing ways. Reassure the children of God's grace, a grace that does not depend on how much they know or understand.

Some of the following strategies may enhance your time with the children:

- When you write something for children to read, print the words. Many of them cannot read cursive writing.
- If an activity sheet has something to read, ask for a volunteer to read it aloud rather than calling on an individual child. Even better, have the group read it aloud in unison. If most children in your group are pre-readers, ask them to point to the words on the page as you read them aloud.
- Make a poster with church vocabulary words. Each week, add a word to learn, such as *God, Jesus, love, Bible, pray, bless, thanks, disciple, praise, and worship*. Give each child a few sheets of paper folded in half and stapled to make a word book to keep in the room. When an activity calls for children to write a word, name, or simple sentence, let them know you are happy to write it in their word books so they can copy it.

- Expect children of this age to occasionally reverse letters (for example, using “b” for “d”) and to make errors in spelling. It is not important to correct such errors during the session.
- If children need to know a repeating response for a litany or drama, write it on newsprint. Invite them to read it with you in unison several times before beginning the litany or drama. Adding actions to the words will help children remember them.
- Many children love learning through rhymes and songs. Try to include music in each session.
- Many children enjoy acting out stories. Invite them to act out certain parts of the story as you read it aloud. Challenge them to act out what they think happened next in a story. Some children will be able to act out responses to questions more easily than writing them.
- Be careful not to characterize children for whom reading comes easily as being somehow “better.” Resist putting them in the role of leader.
- Affirm each child by name—whatever his or her reading and writing skill level—two or three times each session.

Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books (flyawaybooks.com) is a children’s picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. These books reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world, as well as retelling familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at www.pcusastore.com.

Ideas for Working with Pre-readers

- Keep small pieces of scratch paper handy to write a word for a child to copy.
- If a child is struggling with an activity that calls for writing a word, write the word using dotted lines so he or she can trace it.
- Form pairs to solve puzzles. Encourage children to help one another—there’s no need to cover their papers so others can’t copy!
- If you observe a child struggling to work independently on an activity, offer to be his or her partner. If many are struggling, work as a group to complete the activity.
- If a child seems frustrated by writing, suggest that he or she draw a picture of the response or act it out. You also might offer to write what the child dictates to you.
- Offer old family-friendly magazines with pictures that can be cut out and used to illustrate a response or complete a project.
- When a child is trying to sound out a word, don’t be too quick to jump in and help. Whether he or she finally decodes the word or you provide it, affirm the new skill of reading and how hard the child is trying.

Guidelines for Multiage Service Projects

- Each child has an important role or task.
- Encourage work in pairs or small groups.
- Set up pairs or small groups so each one has a combination of ages, when possible.
- Separate age-group peers some of the time. However, don’t cut them off from each other.
- Look for skills in the children rather than ages.
- What is unique to your multiage group?

A Note about Candles

Growing in Grace & Gratitude suggests the use of a candle in the worship space for most sessions. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The lighting of the candle reminds us of this and signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Most churches have a policy about candles and either lighting real candles or using battery-operated candles. While we simply state “candles,” *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* recommends using battery-operated candles for safety with children.

Team of Contributors

The development team of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* is grateful to have an amazing team of educators and writers to collaborate in the production of this curriculum.

ELIZABETH CALDWELL wrote the “. . . In Your Children’s Experiences” and “. . . In Your Relationships with the Children” sections. She is visiting professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School and served on the faculty of McCormick Theological Seminary for more than thirty years. Lib previously served as an educational consultant for three Presbyterian churches in northwest Alabama. She is a member of the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education and the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators and was selected as APCE’s 2004 Educator of the Year. She serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Childhood and Religion* and was a member of the editorial board of the Common English Bible. Lib is the coeditor of *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible* and coauthor of *God’s Big Plan*, both from the children’s book imprint Flyaway Books. She is the author of *The Ministry of Teaching: Christian Formation Today*, part of the Being Reformed Workbook series from Geneva Press.

SHARON J. HARDING contributed to our stories. She is a Christian educator and writer of a variety of curriculum materials for children, including *Feasting on the Word Curriculum*, *Whole People of God*, and children’s sermons for pastors. She has worked in ministries for children and youth at churches in Quebec and Alberta in Canada.

SAMANTHA HASSELL has served as a Christian educator since 2001. She loves imagining ways for children to experience Scripture and deepen their faith.

DEBORAH HUGGINS is our consultant for children with disabilities and special needs. She is the writer of the Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Support Map. She is a Presbyterian teaching elder and church educator with an MDiv from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Deborah was a special-education teacher. She is working on a PhD in special education, researching access and inclusion for people with disabilities in communities of faith. Deborah is married to Jeff Huggins; they have three children.

DON MCKIM wrote many of the biblical background pieces in “Recognizing God’s Grace.” He is an honorably retired Presbyterian minister who has been an editor for Congregational Ministries Publishing and Westminster John Knox Press, a seminary theology professor, and an academic dean. He is the author and editor of a number of books on Reformed theology, including *Introducing the Reformed Faith*; *Presbyterian Beliefs: A Brief Introduction*; *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; *More Presbyterian Questions, More Presbyterian Answers*; and the *Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*. He lives with his wife, LindaJo McKim, in Germantown, Tennessee. They have two married children and three grandchildren.