



# Praising God

**Goal:** To praise God for the gifts of creation and practice caring for the earth.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Psalm 8

All around us, we see nature and its beauty. As Christians, our hearts break out in praise to God, our creator. We proclaim with the psalmist: "O LORD, our Sovereign, / how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (v. 1).

We praise our creator and we praise God for caring about us. As humans, we are "crowned" with "glory and honor" (v. 5). So God has blessed us. God has graced us with the wonderful gifts of creation and with the wonderful gifts of God's loving care for us throughout our lives.

Humans have been given a position of responsibility within God's creation. We have powers over the created order around us, given by God. But along with our power also comes responsibility. While we may be "over nature," we are also "under God." We have responsibilities to care for the earth, to be good stewards of the earth and its creatures, using the gifts we have been given to carry out God's purposes and to care for the earth, our home.

God's grace leads to our gratitude. God's care for us leads us to care for the earth and for its people.

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

Many children today have few opportunities to be outside in God's created world. That's why this psalm is an important one to hear and remember. Praising God is one of the simplest and first ways that children learn to pray. And seeing God's presence in nature is one of the easiest ways to begin to learn how to praise God. Taking time to be outside, to walk, to listen, and to watch for signs of God's creation is an important way for children to connect with the work of God as creator. This psalm reminds us of our connection to God's creation and the ways we can be responsible for our part in taking care of it, the world, the creatures, and the people.

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

Children are able to learn about praising God when it is modeled for them. Sometimes a spontaneous simple prayer of praise is the best: Thank you, God, for this amazing sunset! The story for this session invites the children's participation in a response of praise to God. It gives them a rubric for their own prayer of praise to God.

Children are also able to learn from this psalm about the importance of their role in God's creation. As they praise God's creation, they will also be able to name ways they can help be God's helpers in caring for God's world.

*O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

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

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 2, 2a, 14, 17

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

green cloth

hair conditioner;  
cornstarch; black,  
blue, and purple food  
coloring; glitter; latex or  
plastic gloves; confetti  
stars; ziplock bags

approximately 1"  
wooden balls or beads,  
blue and green acrylic  
paint

## Responding

### Celebrating

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1–2, small items for  
game markers

### Praying

small items from nature

### Offering

adult helpers, heavy-  
duty garbage bags,  
work gloves

### Extra

card stock copies of  
GN 4

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the 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

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

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.

Play “God Created the Earth” as the children arrive. Invite them to decorate a table for worship. Ask the children to include a Bible, a candle, and a green cloth.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to make galaxies using soft dough. Have a volunteer put 1 cup of conditioner and 2 cups of cornstarch in a large bowl and mix with a large spoon. For larger groups, double the recipe. Divide the dough into three bowls. Have volunteers add food coloring to each bowl: black, blue, and purple.

Have the children wear plastic gloves and take a small piece of each of the three colored doughs. Encourage the children add glitter and star confetti as they knead the colors together forming a galaxy.

Have each child place their play dough galaxy in a ziplock bag and put them in the worship space, creating your group galaxy.

**FA** *Many children have food and other allergies such as peanut, milk, egg, wheat, latex, grass, mold, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Avoidance is the best practice. Provide alternate activities or use options to keep children safe.*

### Singing

Gather around the worship table. Play, listen to, and sing “God Created the Earth”—**SCM 14**—to celebrate sharing God’s love with the world. Follow the movement prompts in the song.

### Praying

**A** **C**

Turn on the candle reminding us of God’s light in the world through Jesus.

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for creation. Invite the children to suggest items to give thanks for, alternating between very



big things in creation (such as galaxies, stars, mountains, whales, and so forth) and very little things in creation (such as ladybugs, minnows, blades of grass, each hair on our heads, and so forth). Go around the circle several times.

Dear God, thank you for all of creation. Thank you for . . .  
For large and small, we thank you for all. Amen.

### Preparing to Hear the Story

C

Pass around **SCM 2a**. Wonder together what it depicts. Wonder what the children imagine when they look at the night sky and see all the stars.

Explain that the Bible story for today is about someone who looked at the vast expanse of the night sky with all its stars, gave thanks to God, and wondered about humanity's place in creation.



### Hearing the Story

LG C L

Invite a child to find Psalm 8 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 2** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Tell the children that psalms are poems, songs, and hymns written by the Hebrew people long ago. They still are used today by Christians and Jewish people in worship and prayer.

Invite the children to participate in the prayer that is in the story by saying “Amazing!” and coming up with a new action each time you indicate it as you read the story again. Encourage them to use their whole bodies and say the word with gusto and joy.

### Reflecting on God's Grace

VI

Remind the children that God made the earth and gave us the job to care for it. We take care of the earth because we depend on it and because it belongs to God.

Give each child a wooden ball or bead and a small paper plate with a squirt of green and blue acrylic paint. Have the children roll the ball in the paint and set aside to dry. Ask the children what the ball looks like.

Wonder how we can be careful while caring for God's creation; wonder about an example of not caring for the world.

Encourage the children to put their wooden earth on their galaxy. Discuss ways you and the children can show you understand your place in creation.

### Singing

B T

Sing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Encourage the children to sing loudly and with passion. Turn off the candle.



- T** *For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups, squeezing hands together, and stretching.*

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

### Celebrating God’s Grace



*Before the session, cut apart GN 2 and place the pieces in a paper lunch bag.*

Play a game of Earth Bingo to remember God’s amazing creation. Provide a copy of **GN 1** and **GN 2** for each child. Have the children color and cut apart the game pieces on **GN 2**, and then glue them as they wish to the squares on their gameboard, **GN 1**. There will be six unused pieces. Give each child some game markers, such as small squares of paper, or other small items.

To play the game, draw a picture from the bag. If a child has that item on his or her board, he or she will cover it with a game marker. Continue until a child has five pieces in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. When he or she does, he or she will shout “Amazing!” Play several games as time allows.



### Praying God’s Grace



*If it is not possible to go outside to gather items during your session, then collect small items from nature such as leaves, flowers or petals, twigs, rocks, or bark before the session. Place them around your space for an indoors nature walk.*

Help the children express praise to God through prayers of thanksgiving. To encourage creativity, it may help for the children to work in pairs. Tell the children that they will take a nature prayer walk, either outdoors or inside with items you have collected. Have the children move around outdoors, within a designated area, or throughout your indoor space, stopping at different items from nature. When they pause, encourage them to say a prayer of thanksgiving aloud for that item, perhaps for its use or beauty.

After children have had a chance to walk and pray, gather the children. Wonder together what the children give thanks to God for in creation.

- B** *Children can be distracted by objects—ordinary items and items that are not usually present. Giving children the choice of putting items away first helps gain buy-in to better behavior. Removal of distracting items becomes necessary if children fail to willingly put them away.*



### Offering God's Grace

*Before the session, invite adults to assist and supervise children in your clean-up project, perhaps one adult for every four or five children, especially if you may form small groups and be in different areas.*

Help children grow in gratitude for God's good creation by caring for it. Go for a walk together and clean up a part of the church grounds, the parking lot, or the neighborhood. Provide heavy-duty garbage bags and work gloves or disposable rubber gloves for the children. Discuss unsafe objects that children should not pick up.

As you work together, talk about how cleaning up is one way to care for God's creation. You might discuss recycling and paying attention to packaging when making purchases.

### Extra Activity

Invite the children to work a puzzle to see creation that we can care for. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Tell the children to color all the things that God created. Tell them to find the sun, the moon, stars, planets, trees, plants, animals, birds, fish, a man, a woman, flowers, trees, and water. Ask the children to look at the things that they didn't color. Wonder what these things do to God's creation. Ask what we can do to care for creation.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to help clean the space.

Ask the children to repeat after you, saying Psalm 8:1.

O LORD, /our Sovereign, /  
how majestic is your name /  
in all the earth! /

Then invite children to take turns saying one thing they love in God's creation and one thing they plan to do to care for God's creation.

After each person speaks, repeat Psalm 8:1 together. Close by praying the following prayer aloud:

Creator God, we praise you for this good creation. Help us to be faithful stewards of it. Amen.

Send the children with these words: "Go out to care for creation and 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](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



**E A R T H**

		FREE		











