



Loving God

Goal: To name ways to love God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 20:1-11

God calls the people of Israel into a new covenant, foundational to their self-understanding as God's chosen people. God speaks clearly of the intention to distinguish the Israelites from other nations. We may never resolve the question of God "preferring" Israel. The prevailing understanding is that *chosen* has to do with a uniquely designated purpose rather than receiving greater love from God.

The laws that God puts before the people we often call the Ten Commandments, literally "ten words." The rules are very simple, with no conditions or qualifiers. Their simplicity suggests that the community probably recited them. The number ten, one for each finger, may have served as an additional memory aid. The first four commandments concerned the people's relationship with God. The commandments help people show love for God. They are free to serve God in every way and know what to avoid.

The Ten Commandments are a guide for living as God's people in the ways God desires. God's law is a good gift of God's grace. It instructs us in God's will. Our response to the law is to live in obedience. We obey, not to try to gain God's favor, but to express gratitude to our gracious God.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

This will be a most interesting session to teach with the children. Some will be familiar with the Ten Commandments and will be able to name them. For others, the instructions for living, following God, and living with others, may be new. The story for this session has been rewritten in language accessible to children. Children are familiar with rules, since they are always being reminded about them. They will all be able to tell you instructions that they have been told. They can also tell you which instructions are most important, ones their parents want them most to remember.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The children (and some adults) may be more attuned to the "thou shalt nots" rather than to any positive interpretation of the commandments. Although some of the language may seem fairly advanced, the children need to read the Ten Commandments directly from Scripture. Honest answers to questions are helpful, but going into too much detail may give more information than the child is seeking. Using positive language will help. Rules can be a gracious thing, because they remind us of the gracious ways we are to live in the world with one another. Help the children with this tension between rules as restraint and rules as necessary for living as God's children in this world.

*O God, by your grace you call us to your side. By my gratitude,
let me live in your ways and offer glory to your holy name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More

(SCM) i–iv, 4, 4a, 17, 20

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected

device

candle

tan or brown sheets or

blankets

strips of cloth or dish

towels

Responding

Praying

various colors of air-dry

clay

Offering

two coat hangers, card-

stock copies of **Grace**

Notes (GN) 1

Extra

card-stock copies of

GN 2

Keep the tablet for use in future sessions.

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.

This session, “Loving God,” is inherently connected to the next session, “Loving Others.” Together they form sessions about the Ten Commandments. The two sessions have been formed so that the children may focus more intently on the overlying concepts of commandments 1–4 and 5–10. All “Responding in Gratitude” activities are repeated in the two sessions with their particular focus.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **B** **MS**

Play “God Is So Good” as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite them to help create a setting for today’s story. Place two chairs back-to-back on a table. Drape a sheet or blanket over the chairs and table to resemble a mountain peak. Have children cut out trees, bushes, and clouds from construction paper to add to the mountain.

Have a volunteer glue **SCM 4a** to a piece of cardboard; cut the top corners to look like a tablet.

Ask one of the children to help you spread a sheet or blanket on the floor in front of the mountain, allowing space for children to sit around it. Create a worship center in the space with the tablet, a candle, and a Bible.

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

Help the children secure strips of cloth or dish towels over their heads and shoulders. Then ask them to sit at the base of the mountain.

Singing

Suggest that the children sway and clap as they listen to “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Play the song again and invite them to join in singing.

C Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.



Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Pray the following prayer.

Dear God, thank you for loving us.

May our actions show our love and care for you. Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story

L

Tell the children that they are pretending to be the Hebrews traveling from Egypt to the land God has promised them. Remind them that Moses led them across the Red Sea and they are now camped at the base of Mount Sinai.

Explain that today’s Bible story tells about God’s gift of laws to the Hebrew people and how the people took the laws with them on their journey to the land God had promised. Ask the children what these laws are called (*Ten Commandments*).

Hearing the Story

L VI

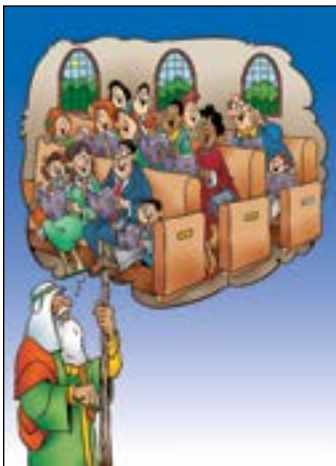
Invite a child to find Exodus 20 in the Bible so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible in the worship space. Read **SCM 4** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Collect the tablet from the worship center. Teach the children a hand motion to remember each commandment.

1. Hold up **one** index finger and say, “There is only one God.”
2. Hold up both index fingers (**two** fingers). Bow one to the other, and say, “Worship only God.”
3. Hold up **three** fingers to form a “W,” which stands for *words*. Place the “W” over your lips, and say, “When you say my name, speak with love and respect.”
4. Hold your hand up, with fingers together and thumb folded in, with palm facing out (**four** fingers). Say, “Stop.” Lay hand down, and say, “Rest and remember the Sabbath.”

Tell the children to listen for these commandments. Invite them to do the hand motions when they hear each rule as you read the story again.

VI *Children with visual impairments include those with any impaired vision, not just those who are blind. If you choose to do motions for an activity, describe each action with as much detail as possible.*



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Reflecting on God’s Grace

L C

Invite the children to recall the first four commandments using the hand motions. Ask the children what the four commandments have in common. Suggest that they are all about loving God. Ask the children, “What does this rule have to do with loving God?” as you do each hand motion.

Singing

Play, listen to, and dance along with “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)” —SCM 20. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Celebrating God’s Grace

MS F B

Play a game with the children to reinforce the first four commandments about loving God. Tape a large open square on the floor. Invite the children to stand around the outside of the square. Tell them you will name a rule and they need to decide if the rule follows one of the first four commandments and is “IN” those commandments or does not follow them and is “OUT.” If the rule is “IN,” they should jump IN the square. If the rule is “OUT,” they should jump OUT of the square. If they are inside the square and the rule is “IN,” they can jump to another spot in the square, and likewise with being outside the square and the rule is “OUT.” Use the following list of rules:

- ✎ Feed your pet. (OUT)
- ✎ Do not ride your bike without a helmet. (OUT)
- ✎ Do not worship anyone except me. (IN)
- ✎ Brush your teeth after every meal. (OUT)
- ✎ Do not make idols. (IN)
- ✎ Do not take drugs. (OUT)
- ✎ Honor God’s name with your words. (IN)
- ✎ Remember the Sabbath Day. (IN)
- ✎ Always eat your vegetables. (OUT)
- ✎ Always say “please” and “thank you.” (OUT)
- ✎ Remember to fasten your seatbelt. (OUT)
- ✎ Make God more important than school, sports, or TV. (IN)
- ✎ Read the Bible every day. (OUT)
- ✎ Do not use God’s name to hurt others. (IN)
- ✎ Remember to exercise every day. (OUT)
- ✎ There is only one God. (IN)
- ✎ Saying, “God bless you” is a nice thing to say. (IN)
- ✎ Do not be mean to other people. (OUT)



- ✎ Always wear clean socks. (OUT)
- ✎ Make Sunday a special day for God. (IN)
- ✎ Do not cut in line. (OUT)
- ✎ If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all. (OUT)
- ✎ Worship God only. (IN)

F Notice and listen carefully to children's concerns about inclusion and exclusion. Discuss different aspects of fair and unfair situations, helping children to form strong ideas of fairness.



Praying God's Grace

TD

Offer an activity to encourage meditation on the commandments. Play meditative music. Help the children to remember the commandments that focus on loving God. Provide various colors of air-dry clay. Invite each child to make a clay heart. Children may use a pencil or other tool to make impressions in the clay to spell out the word *God*. Or they may form letters out of thinly rolled colorful pieces of clay, and create inlaid words on the heart.

Tell the children that, as they work quietly, they are focusing on a commandment and offering it as a prayer to God.

Encourage the children to display their hearts in their homes as reminders to love God.

TD Some children who have tactile sensitivities find working with clay or play dough unpleasant. Consider providing an option such as drawing.



Offering God's Grace

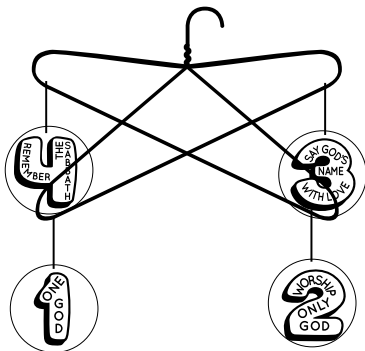
F LG A

Before the session, form an "X" using two hangers. Secure at the top and bottom intersections.

Explain to the children that, as an offering to the church, they will work together to create a Ten Commandments mobile. Cut apart two copies of **GN 1**. Encourage the children to work together to decorate the numbers using available craft supplies. Encourage the children to keep the words readable.

When they have finished decorating the circles, glue the like numbers back-to-back and punch a hole in the top and bottom of each shape. Have the children thread a 12" length of yarn through the top hole and tie it off. Help them tie the other end to one of the four corners of the hangers.

Set the mobile aside to complete in the next session.



Option: To make a large version of the mobile, use a hula hoop or dowel rods to make the hanging structure. Make enlarged copies of each number on card stock.



Extra Activity

LD B F

Provide card-stock copies of **GN 2**, scissors, and tape. Have the children cut along the solid lines, fold along the dotted lines, and tape the tabs to the inside of the die. Help as necessary.

This activity may be done individually or as a group. Invite the children to roll the die. Help them read the side that lands face up and do the corresponding hand motion. If the die lands on the heart or hand, the child calls out “Love God” and rolls again. If you are playing as a group, take turns rolling the die. Continue playing until all have had at least two turns.

Keep the children’s dice or make additional card stock copies of **GN 2** to have for use in the next session (optional).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

C B

Gather the children sitting in a circle. Hold the end piece of a ball of yarn and roll the ball of yarn to one child. Ask the child to name one way she or he can show love for God. After naming a way, ask the child to hold the strand of yarn and roll the ball of yarn to another child. Tell the children not to let go of the piece of yarn once they are holding it. 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, thank you for the Ten Commandments. Today we thank you for the first four commandments, which guide us in ways to show our love for you. Help us to remember that you alone are God, to put you first in our lives, to speak your name with love and respect, and to rest and worship you. Amen.

Bless each child, saying, “(Name), go in grace to love and serve the Lord!”



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).

