



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

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

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

green cloth

shallow disposable
plastic containers,
inexpensive nail polish
(suggestions: purple,
blue, dark glitter, gold,
silver), black paper
rectangles, nail polish
remover, cotton balls

Responding

Celebrating

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

Offering

adult helpers, heavy-
duty garbage bags,
work gloves

Extra

card-stock copies of
GN 3

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.

Before the session, gather supplies for nail polish paper marbling. Gather several shallow disposable plastic containers (such as lunch meat containers). Cut black paper into rectangles that will fit inside the plastic containers. Obtain a variety of inexpensive nail polish in colors to make a galaxy and stars.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG A SD 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. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice today’s Scripture reading.

Invite the children to make pictures of the stars and galaxies using a paper marbling technique. Set out two or three plastic containers of water, nail polish, and black paper rectangles. Show the children how to drip droplets of nail polish on the surface of the water in various colors of polish (eight to ten droplets should be enough). Placing a droplet on top of another will form a ring pattern. Once nail polish has dissipated on the water, demonstrate how to take a piece of black paper and lay it on the water, gently pushing the edges under the water. The nail polish will adhere to the paper. Lift the paper out and set it aside to dry. Have each child make one or two galaxy pictures. Be sure to have some nail polish remover and cotton balls on hand for any necessary cleanup.

Place the pictures together in the worship space, creating your own galaxy.

LG *Focus on the children as gifted members of your community. Look for opportunities for them to express generosity, such as passing things out, holding visual aids, helping other children, or serving as the example in games and activities.*



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 as a reminder 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

Show **SCM 2a**. Wonder together what the picture depicts. The image is of the Milky Way. Wonder how old the Milky Way is. (Some scientists believe it is twelve billion years old.) Our universe is one small part of the Milky Way.

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. Have one or two volunteers read Psalm 8. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

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.

Read a retelling of the psalm using **SCM 2** or listen to the audio story. Use your voice, expressions, your own feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

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

Show **SCM 2b**. Explain that the mosaic is from a church in Ravenna, Italy. It shows Christ sitting on the earth. It suggests that the earth belongs to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—not to humankind. God gives us responsibility to care for the earth as stewards. We take care of the earth because we depend on it and because it belongs to God. Wonder how we can be careful while caring for God's creation; wonder about an example of foolishness in taking care of creation.

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.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

LG LD C

Help the children thank God for the amazing gift of creation. Explain that psalms are poems used to praise God for keeping God's promises. Ask children to work in pairs to create modern psalms that express the relationship between God and all people.

Suggest that the psalm begin and end with the same sentence that says something about human beings' relationship with God. Encourage the children to open Bibles to see Psalm 8 as an example.

Several sentences in between could tell what God does. For example, the children could use broad statements such as “You love us no matter what” or “The whole world is your gift to us” or more specific acts such as “You give us the sun to warm us” or “Puppies remind us of your love, never ending!”

Ask the children to write their psalms on sheets of paper and share them with the group. You could also give the psalms to the pastor to use in worship (with the children's permission).

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



Celebrating God's Grace

F B L VI

Before the session, cut apart one copy of 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.

- B** *Providing opportunities for children to play games can be fun. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or excluding children. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*



Offering God's Grace

MS

Before the session, invite adults to assist and supervise children in your cleanup 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.

GN 3 Solution:

8 seahorses, 7 flowers,
2 geckos, 10 squid, 3
monkeys

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 or colored pencils. Tell the children to color the water drops, waves, circles, sea stars, and other sea creatures shades of blue. Color the leaves, flowers, and the things that are found on land shades of green and/or brown. Ask what they see (the world). While they work, invite conversation about the things they are coloring that are part of creation and how they can help care for them.

If time allows, have them count the objects at the bottom of the page.



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."

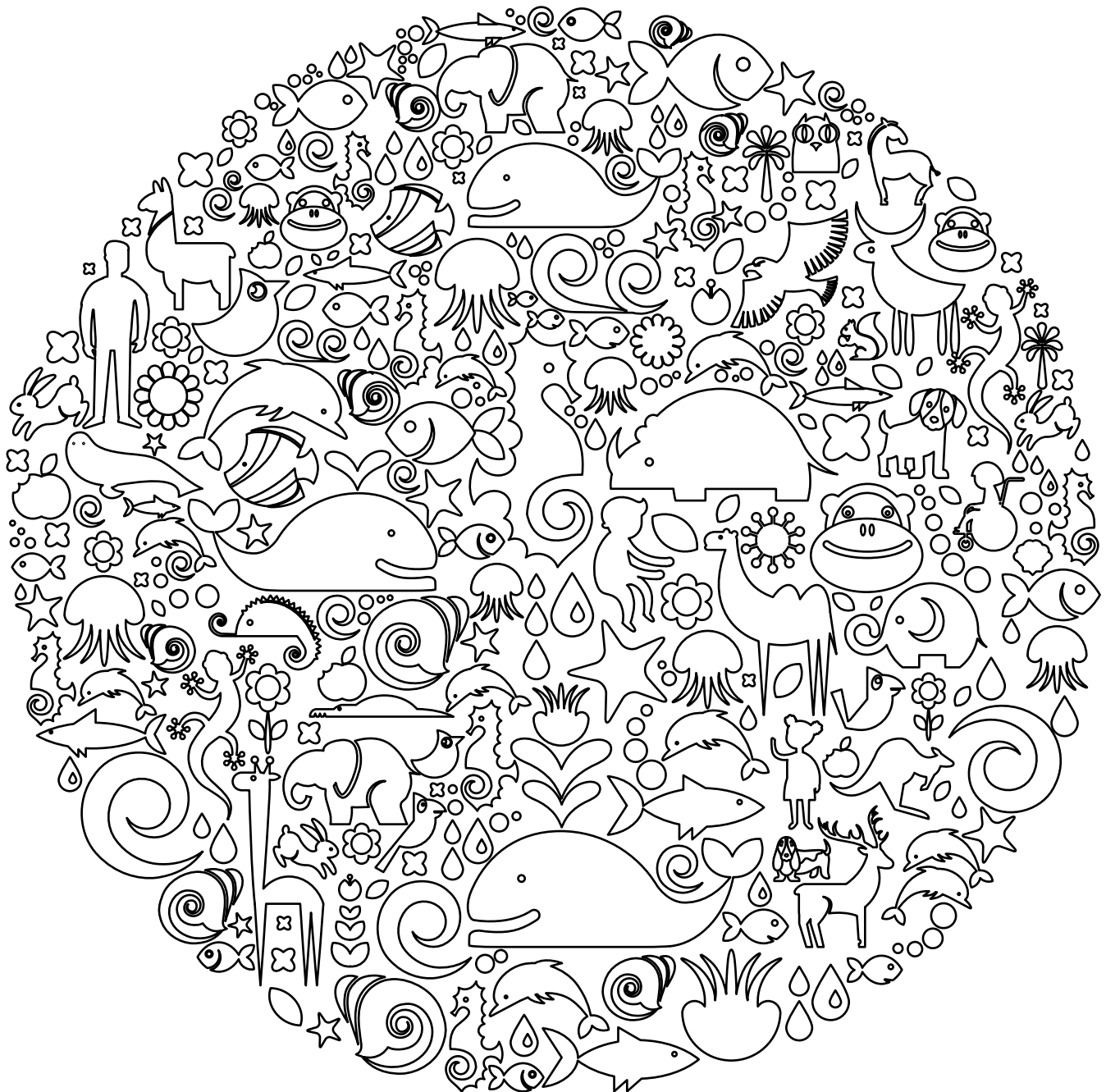


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

E A R T H

		FREE		





How many do you see?