



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 not" 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
(MM) 2022–2023

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 4, 4a, 17, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

e-book or story audio
(see p. vii)

candle

tan or brown sheets or
blankets

strips of cloth or dish
towels

Responding

Celebrating

card-stock copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1–2;
SCM 4b, 4c

Praying

various colors of air-dry
clay

Extra

card-stock copies of
GN 3

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” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing



Play “God Is So Good”—**MM 5**—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 at 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 at the base of the mountain. 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. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice today’s Scripture reading.

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”—**MM 5; 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.



Remember: another word for *gift* is “grace.” Wonder how God’s law is a gift of grace.

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. Have one or two volunteers read Exodus 20:1–11. 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.

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.”

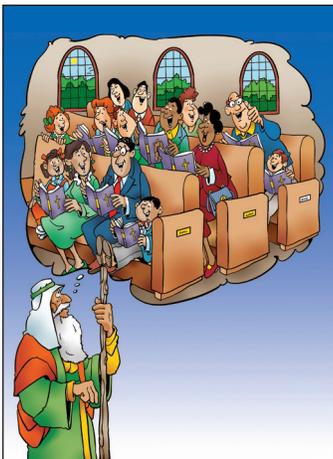
Tell the children to listen for these commandments. Invite them to do the hand motions when they hear each rule as you read **SCM 4**.

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.*

Reflecting on God’s Grace

L C

Invite the children to recall the first four commandments using the hand motions.



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), pcusastore.com.



Ask the children what the four commandments have in common. Suggest that they are all about loving God. Ask the children, “What does this 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)”—**MM 21**; **SCM 22**. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace

F LG A B MS C

Tell the children that God gave the Hebrews, and us, the Ten Commandments as a gift. They are rules to follow to keep us focused on God and able to live together in community. Ask the children what the first four commandments focus on (*God*). Wonder together how each of the four commandments helps us to show our love for God.

Form groups or work together to create a scenario for each of the first four commandments. The scenario can depict either following or breaking the commandment. Have the children act out their scenes. If the scenario breaks the commandment, ask the children what could be done differently to follow the commandment.

Celebrating God’s Grace

LD VI MS F B

*Before the session, make a set of letters for each team by cutting apart card-stock copies of **GN 1–2**. Fold **SCM 4b** and **SCM 4c** in half.*

Tell the children that they will play a game to help remember the four, loving-God commandments. Help the children form two teams. Have one volunteer from each team place all their letter tiles face up at one end of the room. (For a challenge, place the letters face down.) Ask the teams to stand at the other end of the room near you. Tell the children that you will show them a commandment with a word missing. They need to form the missing word using the scrambled letter tiles from the other end of the room.

Begin by holding up one of the four commandments from **SCM 4b** or **SCM 4c**. The teams determine the missing word, then send one child at a time to the other end of the room to collect the letters to form the missing word. Play again until the missing words from all four commandments have been spelled out.

F *Sometimes children protest that they’re being treated unfairly when actually it may only be that they’re not getting what they want. When self-interest overrides actually trying to be fair, ask them to flip the situation and look at it from the other person’s perspective.*



Praying God's Grace



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 and to select a word from one of the commandments to inscribe on the heart, or they may choose the word *God*. Children may use a pencil or other tool to make impressions in the clay to spell out the word. 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.

If you have time, invite the children to make more than one heart with another word from one of the commandments. Encourage the children to display their hearts in their homes as reminders to love God.

Extra Activity



Provide card-stock copies of **GN 3**, 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 take turns rolling the die. Have 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. Continue playing until all have had at least two turns.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Gather the children in a circle. Hold the end piece of a ball of yarn and throw 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 throw 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!"

Keep the dice for use on October 2.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).

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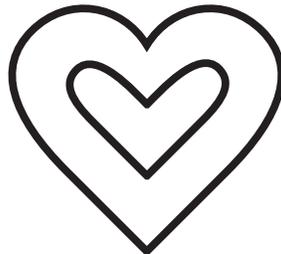
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Only one
God.

Speak
God's
name with
love.



Love

Worship
only God.

Remember
the
Sabbath.



God

