



Peter's Commission

Goal: To affirm our call to serve God's people.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In John 21:15-17

Jesus has just fed his disciples breakfast on the beach. He has called them back to their true purpose, just as he called them to follow him. In the first chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus had called Peter, saying, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas." Cephas is from the word for rock in Aramaic (*kepha*) and is translated Peter, from the Greek word (*petra*) meaning rock. Thereafter, Simon, son of John, became known as Simon Peter, or simply Peter. Jesus' call had already begun to change him. It cannot have escaped Peter's notice that Jesus' three questions are a reflection of Peter's three denials when Jesus was under arrest. Still, the way in which Jesus questions Peter, and the instruction Jesus gives, makes it clear that Peter is restored to full relationship with Jesus. The call Jesus puts on Peter's life, to tend and feed his sheep, is the same call that Jesus extends to each one of us.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

If the children in your group were present for the story of Peter's denial in this unit, they will likely be able to make the connection between the three questions Jesus asks and the three times Peter denied him. While children may not seem to have many opportunities for mission and ministry, their lives are filled with opportunities to care for others as Jesus has instructed Peter and all of us. Help them to recall and affirm the times when they have extended kindness, shared food, given to others or to the church offering, and shared the love of Jesus.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

One of the ways we learn is through repetition. Jesus doesn't upbraid Peter for denying him three times; he simply redirects him, with repetition, to the call that Jesus has given him. If adults are consistently critical and unforgiving of mistakes, children will learn to shy away from trying, lest they fail. When adults are consistently forgiving and affirming, children will learn confidence and be willing to make an effort to try new things. This does not mean, of course, that children need to be affirmed for wrongdoing; it does mean that extending forgiveness and encouragement will help them to make better choices, and to be more confident in their ability to do so.

Loving God, thank you for the call to tend and feed your lambs. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 7, 17, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white cloth

stuffed or toy sheep, or
pictures of sheep

fish-shaped crackers
bread

Responding

Claiming

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!”

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Eastertide, the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost), and sheep (stuffed, toy, or pictures).

Provide magazines and invite the children to cut out pictures of people of all ages, shapes, colors, and abilities, and place them in the worship space.

As the group prepares, offer instructions about where things should go and what needs to be done. Give instructions three times. See how long it takes for them to wonder why you keep repeating yourself.

Lead a discussion about how many times they usually have to hear instructions before they “get it.” Wonder together if most people need to be told more than once, or if we are ready to act after only one time. Share a story from your experience about a time you just “didn’t get it” and had to be told more than once. Invite their stories too.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, and suggest that one or two children prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

Singing

Play and sing “It Is Easter”—**MM 18**; **SCM 22**.

Praying **MS**

Gather around the worship space. Turn on the candle. Invite the children to take a moment of silence to still and quiet their hearts and minds. Ask them to breathe in and out three times slowly.

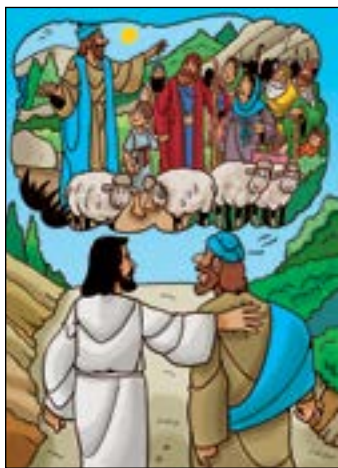
Invite them to echo the following prayer after you:

God of grace, /
you know our hearts /
and you love us deeply. /
Fill us with your love /
for everyone we meet. /
We are grateful for your love. /
Amen. /



Preparing to Hear the Story T FA

Again, like last week, offer children a small portion of fish-shaped crackers and bread as a snack. Invite children who may have been present at the last session to recall the story, as they are able. Encourage their storytelling and fill in any gaps they may leave. Offer that today's story is part of the same Scripture text and takes place right after the breakfast picnic of fish and bread. Encourage them to continue to enjoy their snack as they hear the story.



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.

Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find John 21 in the Bible. Have volunteers read John 21:15–17. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story again using **SCM 7** or listen to the story audio. Invite the children to hold up a finger each time Jesus asks Peter his question. Have them cross their other hand over their heart each time Peter gives his response.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty during story time. To help with focus and comprehension, suggest listening prompts, engage them with movement, or provide a specific item within the story picture to find.*

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Use the following questions for discussion:

- ▼ What did you notice from our story today?
- ▼ How do you imagine Jesus' voice sounded each time he asked the question? What about Peter's?
- ▼ Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the same question three times?
- ▼ Do you think Jesus was talking about actual sheep? What was he talking about?
- ▼ What do you think Peter did to follow Jesus' command to feed and tend his sheep?

Singing SD

Give God an offering of music. Hand out rhythm instruments. Play and sing together “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13**; **SCM 17**—using the instruments. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Acknowledge how Jesus cares for you, and how you care for others. Provide copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Remind the children that Jesus cared for his disciples in this story by providing a large catch of fish and by cooking and serving them breakfast on the beach. Jesus then asked Peter to love him by caring for his people.

Invite the children to draw a picture or write a sentence under each heading on **GN 1**. After they are done, encourage them to share what they wrote or drew charades-style, by acting it out with no words while others try to guess. Affirm their ideas for the ways they will care for others as a way of loving Jesus and encourage them to look for ways to put those ideas into practice.

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. As you select and plan activities, think about space children need to maneuver a wheelchair, a walker, leg casts, or crutches. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate.*

Praying God's Grace



Love others by praying for them. Provide mural paper and crayons and have children gather around it. Suggest that one of the best ways we can love others is by praying for them. Explain that you will offer a series of prayer prompts followed by a few moments of silence so that children can pray. As they pray silently, tell them they may write the initials of those they are praying for on the mural paper along with any doodles or images they want to surround the initials with. Pray:

God of grace, we pray for:
People who are sick . . .
People who are sad . . .
Friends whose families are struggling . . .
Friends we know who don't have enough to eat . . .
People especially on our hearts today . . .
Lord, hear our prayers. Amen.

Marvel at the prayer "collage" they created all together as they prayed.



Offering God's Grace

F LG C L LD

Remind the children that Peter realized that Jesus wasn't talking about feeding real sheep. Ask what Jesus meant. Tell them that we can all love Jesus by loving others. Explain that everyone will imagine one thing everyone can do to show love for Jesus by loving others. Allow each child to share their idea, then decide as a group if it is something anyone could do. If someone has trouble coming up with something, be prepared to offer suggestions, such as to be helpful to family, pray for someone, write an encouraging note, show special kindness to a child at school, and so forth. After hearing each child's idea, invite them to write it on a craft stick and place it in a cup.

Invite each child to draw one stick, read it out loud, and exclaim, "Challenge accepted!" as a way of agreeing to do whatever is on it this week. Be sure and have the children take home their sticks as a way to show their love for Jesus by loving others.

GN 2 Solution:

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| breakfast | Tend |
| Simon | hurt |
| love | know |
| Lord | everything |
| Feed | Feed |
| second | my |
| know | sheep |

Extra Activity

LD LG C

Hand out copies of GN 2, NRSV Bibles, and pencils. Invite the children to use the Bible passage, John 21:15-17, to fill in the blanks. Encourage the children to take the passage home and share the story with their family. Then suggest that they hang the story where all can see it and challenge their family members to decide a way they can care for others each time they see the story.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite children to gather, and lead in cleaning up the worship space.

Remind them that what Jesus asked Peter to do, we are called to do too. Peter wasn't the only follower of Jesus called to love others in Jesus' name. Suggest that a call like that changes us and how we see others. If you used the activity in "Claiming God's Grace" and/or "Offering God's Grace," remind participants to look for ways to live out their ideas this week.

Offer this blessing over the group before they leave:

Like Peter, you are called to love Jesus by loving others. Go in grace and do as Jesus asks. And when you have the chance to share Jesus' love with others, be grateful!

Invite children to join you again next week.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

How I Will Care for Others

How Jesus Cares for Me

Jesus and Peter

When they had finished _____, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “_____ son of John, do you _____ me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, _____; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “_____ my lambs.” A _____ time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you _____ that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “_____ my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt _____ because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you _____ _____; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “_____ _____ _____.”

John 21:15-17

