



Grain on the Sabbath

Goal: To practice ways of keeping the Sabbath to honor God and care for people.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 2:23-28

Jesus sometimes got in trouble with the religious leaders of his day. When his disciples began to pick some wheat on the Sabbath, leaders accused them of breaking the Sabbath law, which was that no work should be done on the Sabbath and “picking the heads of wheat” (v. 23; CEB) would be work.

Jesus appealed to an incident in the life of David when he gave his hungry friends bread that, according to the law, was reserved only for priests. This led Jesus to pronounce that “the Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath” (v. 27; CEB) and that the “Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath” (v. 28).

Jesus believed these rules or laws were hindering those in need—his hungry disciples. Even David showed that, sometimes, laws may be broken if there is a greater purpose involved. Jesus said he was “lord even of the sabbath” (v. 28). This means the example Jesus gives us—of loving and serving others, as he taught—is more important than the kinds of laws or rules that, otherwise, are good in themselves. We should always look for God’s grace and find ways of being grateful.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children will have no problem naming rules that they have been taught are important. They have experience with rules at school, rules at home, and rules with sports or scouts. Inviting them to talk about a time when they broke a rule and knew why they were doing it offers a good introduction to this story about Jesus’ breaking the Sabbath rule and feeding hungry people. Older children will be able to understand the significance of breaking a rule for a good reason. Younger children will need help in understanding that, when you break a rule, you need to know why you did it.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Sabbath rest is a concept that may need to be explained to the children. A way to begin would be to talk with them about what Sunday (Sabbath) is like in their home. What makes this day special or different from the other six days? In preparation for reading the story, you can help them understand how the people in Jesus’ day rested on the Sabbath, which meant they did no work. Invite the children to talk about things they could do on the Sabbath that would help them rest and would require no work.

Dear God, Jesus taught us that we can break the rules when we see someone in need. Open my eyes, O Lord. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 14, 23,
26

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white cloth

Responding

Extra

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

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 **L** **FA** **LD**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!” These words are spoken during Eastertide, the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, and a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Eastertide).

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, such as printing “always,” “sometimes,” and “never” on sheets of construction paper. Tape these three signs a good distance apart on a wall. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

Ask volunteers to post a large sheet of paper with questions such as:

- ▼ What are some important rules in your house?
- ▼ What are some important rules at school?
- ▼ What are some important rules in friendships?
- ▼ What are some important rules in our country?

Singing

LD

Play and sing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2**; **SCM 14**.

Give a marker to each person, and invite them to answer the posted questions (any or all). After a brief period, as a group try to identify one important rule under each question. Talk together about why rules are important and why rules are necessary.

Praying

Turn on the candle. Tell the children that resting on the Sabbath day was a rule in Jesus’ time. This was interpreted to mean that people could not do a number of activities, one of which was picking grain, which has to do with today’s story. Pray the following prayer or one of your own, thanking God for this day of rest.

Gracious God, thank you for this day of rest when we come to church to praise and learn of you. Make our hearts, minds, and souls ready. Amen.



- L *When telling a story, slow down and speak clearly. Above all, have fun! If you enjoy the story, the children will too.*

Preparing to Hear the Story C L

There are two important aspects to this story for children to understand before they hear it. First is the practice of *gleaning*. Children may have heard this word in the story of Ruth. It was when farmers left grain or crops in their fields for people in need to take (this still happens today). When Jesus and his disciples walk through a grain field and take grain, they are breaking off the heads of grain and chewing on the hard raw wheat berries (show **SCM 8a**).

The second thing to know about this story is that Jesus talks about an event in the life of David. Let the children recall what they may know about David. Remind them that David was the shepherd who became king. The story to which Jesus refers is in 1 Samuel 21:1–6.

Briefly, tell 1 Samuel 21:1–6 in your own words. Explain that the bread of the Presence was twelve loaves that were placed on a special table in the temple (Exodus 25:30). The loaves were to be eaten only by the priest. On the Sabbath, the priest was to replace them with fresh loaves.

- L Define *Sabbath*. What day of the week is Sabbath for Christians and for Jews?
- L What did David do that he was not supposed to do? Why was it wrong?

Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find Mark 2 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read Mark 2:23–28. 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 a second time using **SCM 8** or the story audio, encouraging the children to act out the story. Use simple costumes if they are available. If your group is small, work together to act it out. With a larger group, form smaller groups.

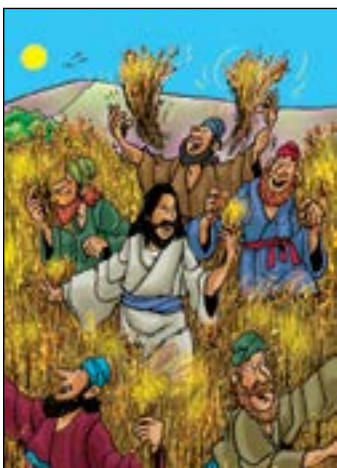
Reflecting on God’s Grace B M C

Reflect on why Jesus thought it was OK to break the rule concerning the Sabbath.

Form two groups. Explain that the two groups will be part of a debate. One group believes it is sometimes OK, in some situations, to break a rule (for the greater good). The other side believes it is never OK to break a rule. Let them call out a rule to discuss. The debate might flow like this:

- L Each side states its position.
- L Both sides can respond to each other’s statements.

Sabbath is a special day of rest when people do not work. Jewish people celebrate it from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night. Most Christians celebrate the Lord’s Day on Sunday.



If time permits, encourage the children to swap sides to argue the other perspective.



- ▼ Each side presents supportive examples alternately.
- ▼ Each side presents concluding arguments.

At the end, affirm the efforts of both sides and everyone’s part in the debate.

Singing

Play and sing “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**.
Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Explain the spiritual practice of keeping the Sabbath; use the following information in your own words:

One way we observe the Sabbath is to set aside Sunday (or another day or part of a day each week) as a time to worship God and as a time of rest. It gives us a chance to put aside the things we normally do so that we can think more about what it means to be God’s children. It helps us to grow as followers of Jesus.

Explain that, in Bible times, and until recently, people always celebrated the Sabbath on a set day of the week. For Christians, that day was Sunday. Stores were closed and most people spent the day going to church (usually morning and night), resting, and doing things with their families.

Encourage the children to tell how people’s lives may be different now. Some people’s jobs require them to work on Sunday. Some family schedules work better if at least a few household chores are done on Sunday. Some children’s activities are scheduled on Sundays. Church activities may take up the whole day on Sunday.

Help the children think about keeping the Sabbath by asking some of the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why is it important to have a regular time to keep the Sabbath?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How and when do you celebrate the Sabbath?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What things are important to do if you are to honor the Sabbath? What is important to stop doing to honor the Sabbath?”
- ▼ I wonder, “In what ways could you celebrate the Sabbath?”



When the children have given several ideas, distribute paper and markers. Invite the children to think quietly for a moment and then draw a way that they would like to keep Sabbath time. Encourage them to talk about the picture with their families or caregivers and plan ways to keep the Sabbath together.

Celebrating God's Grace



Explain that the group is going to look at some rules. Together you will be considering why some rules exist and whether or not those rules need to be followed.

Move to the signs posted earlier by volunteers: “always,” “sometimes,” and “never.” Each time you say one of the following “rules,” ask children to stand under the sign that best describes whether they should follow the rule always, sometimes, or never:

- ▼ Wash your hands before eating.
- ▼ Cover your mouth when you cough.
- ▼ Go to church on Sunday.
- ▼ Do not chew gum in class.
- ▼ Do not talk to strangers.
- ▼ Share what you have with others.
- ▼ Tell a secret that was told to you.
- ▼ Spend all your money on yourself.

Each time, ask volunteers why they chose to stand where they did. Afterward, engage children in a general discussion, perhaps addressing the following questions:

- ▼ Are there good reasons not to follow a rule?
- ▼ I wonder, “What were Jesus’ reasons not to follow the Sabbath rules?”
- ▼ Jesus changed rules. When should we do the same?
- ▼ How can we know which rules to keep, change, or throw away?

Offering God's Grace



Ask each child to cut out seven colored paper strips (about 1" x 6"). Give each child a pencil. Ask them to write one way that people can celebrate or honor the Sabbath. Collect the strips and mix them up.

Invite the children to choose, at random, seven strips and use them to make a paper chain. You can participate as well.

Suggest to the children that each day of the week they can draw a check mark on one of the paper rings from the chain and try to do what it says with their families. They might find that the ring suggests that they pray or that they read their Bible. Since the strips were chosen at random, they might be asked to pray two days in a row.

LG *Providing opportunities for children to welcome others, offer help, and express generosity helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*

GN 1 Solution:

The Sabbath is a gift for us.

Extra Activity

Reread the first paragraph of the story. Provide copies of **GN 1**. Allow time for the children to complete the puzzle. Discuss what the solution means.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

Joyfully play, sing, and dance to “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23; SCM 26**.

Remind the children that one of the things we do to feel God’s presence in happy, sad, peaceful, and frightful times is to take time to communicate with and listen to God in prayer. Prayer reminds us that God is with us. Lead children in this echo prayer:

God, sometimes we are afraid /
and we need you with us. /
Thank you for your presence /
that never ever leaves us. /
Call us to presence /
so that others can see you in us. /
We can trust you /
and we are grateful. /
Amen. /

Following the prayer, turn to the person to your left and say, “(Name), God is with you, go in peace,” and ask that person to turn to the person to their left and speak the same words until it has been spoken to each person in the circle.

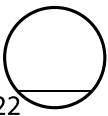
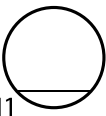
Remind children as they leave to share the “Offering God’s Grace” activity with their families.

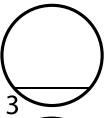
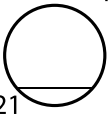


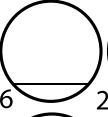
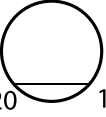
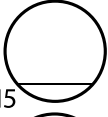
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

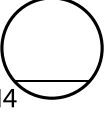
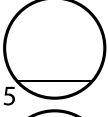
Grain on the Sabbath Word Scramble

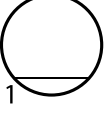
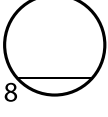
Based on Mark 2:23-28.

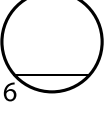
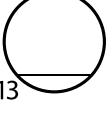
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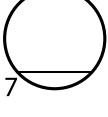

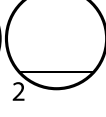
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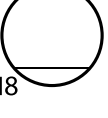
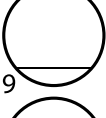
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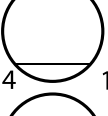
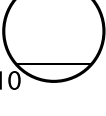
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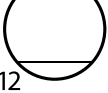
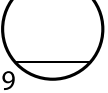
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