



Peter's Commission

Goal: To be Jesus' helpers in taking care of 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, 15, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: card-stock
copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Exploring

choice 2: large
marshmallows,
miniature
marshmallows,
powdered sugar
doughnut holes,
pretzel sticks, black
or blue food coloring,
toothpicks

choice 3: card-stock
copies of **GN 2**, three
12" pieces of string or
ribbon for each child

choice 4: copies of
GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

"Exploring God's Grace" choice 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet children as they arrive and say, "Grace and peace be with you." Prompt them to respond, "And also with you." Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers you do not know. Tell the parents/caregivers that today's story is about a time when Jesus was alive again and he saw Peter and gave him a very important job. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Cotton Ball Sheep**—Provide card-stock copies of **GN 1**, cotton balls, glue sticks, and crayons. Invite the children to glue cotton balls on the sheep to make their fluffy wool. Encourage them to color the picture around the sheep.
- 2. Play Dough Hearts**—Set out various colors of play dough. Let the children select a color of play dough and form a heart. They can make a heart by forming two small balls and pinching them together at one end or by making a disc and pinching one end while forming a dent in the other. Discuss what a heart makes them think of (*love*).
- 3. Playtime x 3**—Invite children to play a game together. Have a volunteer perform an action, such as clapping, jumping, or making a silly sound. Tell the other players to respond by performing the same action, all together, three times. Encourage the children to respond ALL together, three times each time. Keep playing until everyone has a turn being a leader.

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



Transitioning to Story Time T

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, playing and singing “A Child of God”—**MM 21**; **SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

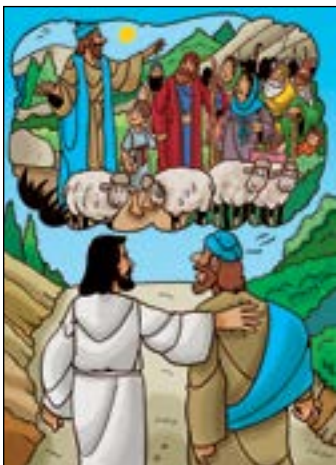
Call and Response L MS

Write the children’s names on a sheet of paper in a column. Tell the children that you will call their name and, when they hear their name, they should respond “I’m here!” Then invite each child in turn to come put a sticker by their name and say “I’m here!” again.

Be a Friend L

Using the song “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” teach the children the following song, inviting them to do the actions suggested in the song:

If you want to make a friend, shake a hand.
If you want to be a friend, give a high five!
If you want to have a friend, be a friend who never ends.
If you want to be a friend, give a hug.



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

Open the Bible to John 21 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a time when Jesus was alive again and he saw Peter and gave him a very important job.

Read **SCM 7**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again, inviting the children to put their hands over their heart every time they hear the word *love*, *loves*, or *loved*.

T *Transition times can be more frustrating to children if they have to wait. Be prepared to move to the next activity and alert children of upcoming changes. If children will need to wait, provide a simple task, such as a threading activity or hand clapping, to occupy the time and lessen the frustration.*



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Three Ways to Share the Love of Jesus

LG B MS C

Remind the children that Jesus asked Peter three times to take care of the sheep and lambs, which was Jesus' way of asking Peter to love and take care of others.

Form two or more teams, or work together as one group. Have each team think of three ways that they can act out that show how to love or care for others. Some suggestions may be helping clean up, praying, singing, reading Bible stories, sharing a toy, and so forth. Invite each group to take turns acting out one of their three ways of showing love or care for others while the other children guess what they are doing. It's all right if a group has the same idea as another group. Reinforce that action.

T *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.*



2. Sheep Treats

FA A B

Make sheep treats to remind the children of Jesus' instructions to Peter to take care of the sheep, which was Jesus' way of telling Peter to love and take care of others like Jesus did.

Give each child a paper plate with a large marshmallow, a miniature marshmallow, a powdered sugar doughnut hole, six pretzel sticks, and a toothpick. Use the following instructions to demonstrate how to make the sheep treat:

- ▼ Cut a snip in each side of the large marshmallow to make the sheep's ears. Assist with cutting as needed.
- ▼ Dip a tiny bit of the end of the toothpick in the food coloring and poke a small hole for an eye. Repeat for the other eye.
- ▼ Gently push one end of a pretzel stick into the doughnut hole and the other end into the sheep's head.
- ▼ Gently push one end of a pretzel stick into the other side of the doughnut hole and the other end into the miniature marshmallow to form the sheep's tail.
- ▼ Push the remaining four pretzel sticks into the doughnut hole to form the sheep's legs.

Invite the children to respond with the words "Jesus, we love you!" or "We will," as the appropriate response, as you lead them in the following litany:

Children, Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"
Jesus, we love you!





Children, Jesus says, "Take care of each other."
We will!

Children, Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"
Jesus, we love you!
Children, Jesus says, "Help others."
We will!

Children, Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"
Jesus, we love you!
Children, Jesus says, "Love everyone!"
We will!

Enjoy the sheep treats together!

3. Heart Mobiles



Make heart mobiles to remember Jesus' request to Peter, and to all of us, to love and care for others. Provide card-stock copies of **GN 2**, and invite the children to color the hearts. As they are coloring, read aloud what is written in each heart. Encourage conversation about ways we can take care of each other, help others, and love everyone.

After the children are finished coloring, have them fold the page in half along the solid lines, then cut out the three hearts. Assist with cutting and folding as needed. Punch holes in the hearts where indicated.

Provide three pieces of string or ribbon and have the children thread one string or ribbon through the top hole and knot it; thread another piece connecting the bottom of the first heart with the top of the second heart, knotting each end; and thread the third piece connecting the bottom of the second heart with the top of the third heart, knotting it as well. Assist with knotting as needed. Help the children make a loop in the end of the first string or ribbon to hang the mobile.

Encourage the children to take home their heart mobile and tell the story to their families.

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- I wonder, "How did Peter feel hearing Jesus' questions?"
- I wonder, "How did Peter feel when he heard the job Jesus wanted him to do?"
- I wonder, "What will Peter do?"

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



- T** *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as shaking legs, waving arms, wiggling fingers, and so forth.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Call the children together, playing and singing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13; SCM 15**. Encourage the children to join in singing. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate. Ask the children how they will be loving and caring for others this week.

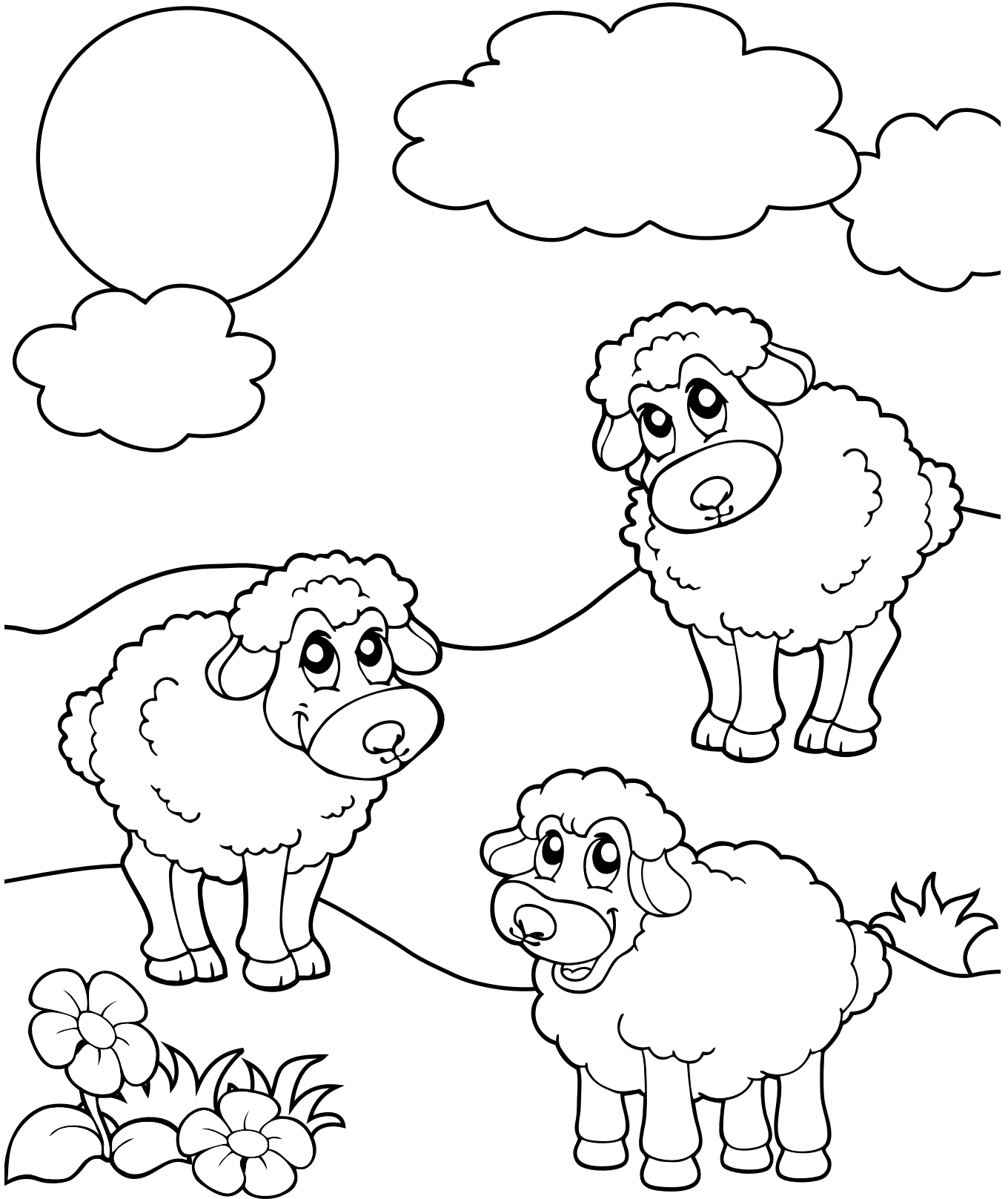
If you did not share a snack in “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2, now would be a good time. Pray, inviting the children to repeat after you:



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).

Thank you, God, /
for the food we eat. /
Thank you, God, /
for family and friends. /
Thank you, God, /
for all the good things you give us. /
Thank you, God, /
for loving us. /
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless each one by saying, “(Name), Jesus is alive and loves you.”



Feed my lambs.

Take care of
each other.

Tend my sheep.

Help others.

Feed my sheep.

Love everyone!

Peter's Commission



Jesus gave Peter a very important job to do.

