



Share Everything

Goal: To explore ways the early Christians worked together and identify ways we can do the same.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 2:37-47

The dramatic event of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the church led to important actions by Christians in Jerusalem. Believers in the church focused on the apostles' teaching. They dedicated themselves to the community and the rich fellowship of being together. They shared meals together—including the Lord's Supper. They became a community of prayer as they prayed together. This brought "a sense of awe" to everyone as they saw the "many wonders and signs" God was doing through the apostles (v. 43, CEB).

The Holy Spirit brought unity to believers so they "shared everything" (v. 44, CEB). This included selling property and possessions. Believers would then "distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them" (v. 45, CEB). There was a sharing in "gladness and simplicity" and praise for "God's goodness to everyone" (vv. 46-47, CEB).

The Spirit led to the sharing of all things and supporting the needs of the community. Being a disciple of Jesus affected the way a person lived amid the community of the Spirit, the church. The grace given to Christian believers stirred up a strong sense of gratitude to God and the desire to serve God by serving others.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Sharing is one of the first things we teach our children. We want them to understand that learning how to live with others with kindness, love, and compassion is a good thing. So we help them learn how to share a toy or share a hug. And we teach them this by our actions. Then we help them connect the act of sharing with God's love for them and how one of the most important things God wants is for us to love and care for other people. This story from the early church is a good one to help them learn that the very earliest Christians began their life together by sharing.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children of all ages have experienced both the act of sharing with someone and the act of receiving from someone. And this is a great time to invite them to share those stories. When the earliest Christian community lived together, they shared what they had. This story offers a great opportunity to help children look beneath the act of sharing to see what happens. Use questions like, "How does it feel when you share?" or "How did you feel when someone gave you something that you needed?" In this way, children can begin to see how acts of sharing help us grow together in love.

Dear God, help me to know the beauty of being part of a faith community. In Christ's name. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 13, 17, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green tablecloth

loaf of bread

cup of juice

bowl of water

simple biblical costumes
(optional)

Responding

Claiming

SCM 13a, glued to card
stock and cut out

Extra

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1 on card stock,
pebbles or beads, cups,
dice

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.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A**

Welcome each child with “God’s promises are for you, (Name),” and prompt them to reply, “And also for you!”

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two children prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a couple of volunteers to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

If you choose to do the “Extra Activity,” invite the children to cut apart the cards from card-stock copies of **GN 1**.

Invite the children to set the scene for today’s story, by imagining they are part of the early church. Early Christians often worshiped together in homes. Wonder together what a house church might look like. What might be needed for worship in a house church?

Suggest that you will be using some items that were not available in Bible times. On a table have the children place a tablecloth, a Bible, and a candle, as well as a loaf of bread, a cup of juice, and a bowl of water. Wonder together why these things are on your table.

Singing

SD **TD**

Gather in the worship space, dressed in costumes. Play “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13**; **SCM 17**—as the children listen. Play the song again and invite the children to sing and clap along.

TD *If a child does not want to wear a costume, be aware that children who have tactile sensitivities are bothered by everyday items that most people don’t notice. The feeling of a scratchy or felted blanket, tags in clothing, and other items can cause a reaction that may be interpreted as bad behavior. Allow them to opt out or provide alternatives.*

Praying

C

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to share their favorite thing about church (worship, fellowship, mission times—anything about their experience as church). After all have had a chance to answer, ask them to close their eyes and breathe deeply. Then pray:

Loving God, we thank you for church. Thank you for the many ways we have experienced your love through this church and through others who believe in you. Help us to share your love with others. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story SD

Recall the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to the early Christians as a gift from God. Wonder together about what might have happened after that first day when the Holy Spirit inspired Peter, the other disciples, and all of Jesus' other followers. Their job was to let others know that Jesus was alive, and that God loved the world.

Hearing the Story LG L

Invite a child to find Acts 2 in the Bible. Have volunteers read Acts 2:37–47. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Ask the children to listen especially for action words and make up motions for the action words as you read the story again using **SCM 13** or listen to the story audio. If reading, express the emotions with your voice, facial expressions, and gestures.

Reflecting on God's Grace FA

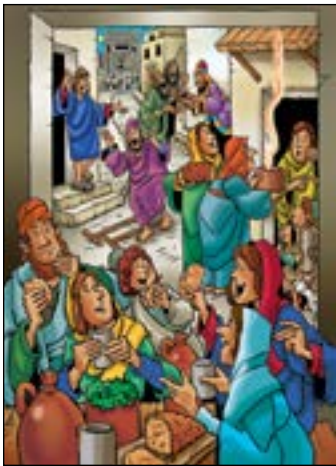
Show the bowl of water. Wonder together about how and why the early church baptized new Christians. Point out the bread and cup of juice and remind the children that the early church ate meals together.

Pretend to be the early church as you let them touch the water, and eat the bread together. Pour juice in cups and pass them around. Reflect together on ways that the church still carries on these actions today.

Point out that the early Christians also shared their money and took care of those who had needs. Wonder together about the ways that happens through the church today. Invite the children to share any examples they have of how Christians share and care for those who have needs.

Singing T

The early church gathered to worship God. When we sing and pray together, we are also worshiping God! Play “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20**; **SCM 23**—and invite the children to worship God by singing together. Turn off the candle.



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.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



Claiming God's Grace

C A LG

*Before the session, glue **SCM 13a** onto card stock. Cut it into enough pieces for everyone in your group, plus extra for guests. (If your class is large, it might be better to make several puzzles of larger pieces and form smaller work groups—one group per puzzle. You might also use the story art from previous sessions.)*

Practice the art of sharing while solving a puzzle. Pass out the puzzle pieces. Invite each child to hold their piece behind their back while one group member places their piece on the table. Ask:

- ▾ I wonder, “If each person takes a turn doing this, will you ever be able to solve the puzzle?”

Invite all the children to place their puzzle pieces on the table and work to solve the puzzle. Ask:

- ▾ I wonder, “How did sharing help you to solve the puzzle?”
- ▾ I wonder, “What are some other problems that sharing might help solve?”

Invite the children to tell about a time when they helped someone by sharing or when someone helped them by sharing. Look together at the picture on the solved puzzle. Talk about ways that people in the puzzle are sharing. Invite the group to think of ways the church shares with others.

Celebrating God's Grace

MS C

Play a game to learn about working together. Start with pairs of children sitting back-to-back on the floor. Each pair must work together to stand up. Then join pairs together to make groups of four to do the same task. Continue to add people until the entire group has their arms linked and they stand together.

Experiment with different ways to accomplish the task. Children can form a tight or loose circle, they can change from a circle to a double-sided line, all lean to one side, or all start on one foot. Try the task until the group has found a way to work together quickly.

Discuss the following:

- ▾ What made the task fun?
- ▾ What made standing up difficult?
- ▾ Was it easier to work in small or large groups?
- ▾ When is it better to work together or work alone?



Offering God's Grace

LG A

On a large sheet of newsprint, work together to compile a list of ideas about how the children can offer help during the summer. Some suggestions to get the conversation rolling might be: welcome another child at summer camp, help pass out bulletins at church, or pick up trash on a nature walk. See how many ideas the children can come up with. Affirm all ideas.

Review the list and have the children decide for themselves one thing they can commit to doing. Invite each child to come to the newsprint and cut a “puzzle” piece from it.

Encourage them to turn their piece of the puzzle over and write or draw what they are committing to do. Then ask them to take the puzzle piece home and hang it in a place where they will see it as a reminder of their commitment.

LG *Teamwork happens when we support others, cooperate, and problem solve as a group. Children become better leaders when they model this behavior. Serving others helps kids see firsthand that they have the power to make a difference.*

Extra Activity

Children will practice giving what they have as they play a game. Provide scissors, one cup, and a die.

- ▼ If children did not previously cut apart the cards on **GN 1**, have them do so now and place them facedown in a pile.
- ▼ Place an empty cup next to the pile of cards.
- ▼ Give each child a piece of paper and have them tear off ten small pieces to crumple into small pebbles. Or distribute ten small pebbles or beads to each child.
- ▼ Tell the children that the first player to give away all of his or her pebbles wins.
- ▼ Have the children take turns rolling the die and following the instructions below:

If you roll: Do this:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1 or 3 | Draw a card. Read it aloud and follow the directions. Afterward, place the card at the bottom of the pile. |
| 2, 4, or 5 | Take that number of pebbles from your pile and add them to another player's pile. |
| 6 | Either divide six pebbles between two players or give all six pebbles to one player. |

Allow time for groups to play the game multiple times if possible. Afterward, discuss what it feels like to give away what one has.

If your group is larger than four, form smaller groups to play the game.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean up the space.

Gather around the worship center. Invite the children to recall some ways that the early Christians tried to live like Jesus. Ask them to recall the action words from the story, and to think of one way that they will love and serve God this week.

Hold hands in a circle and pray together. The leader will use words such as the following:

Holy God, we thank you for loving us, and for inviting us to share that message with the world. Help us to serve you by . . .
(Allow the children to name the ways they have chosen to love and serve.) . . . Amen.

Close by singing together “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**. Ask the children to create some movements for the song.



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).

<p>You share your lunch with a hungry friend. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You give a friendly welcome to a new student at school. Put 2 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You donate money to a program that helps people who are homeless find homes. Put 4 pebbles in the cup.</p>
<p>You give a favorite book or toy to a sibling. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>Each week, you tutor a younger child in something you're good at. Put 5 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You volunteer to help paint a room at a community center. Put 4 pebbles in the cup.</p>
<p>You visit an older person in your congregation. Put 2 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You collect a bag of food for your local food pantry. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You donate money to a disaster-relief fund. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>
<p>You volunteer time at an animal clinic each week. Put 4 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You assemble care packages for victims of a disaster. Put 4 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You sign up to welcome visitors to your church. Put 2 pebbles in the cup.</p>
<p>You volunteer to rake your neighbor's lawn. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You offer to help your parent prepare dinner for some guests. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>	<p>You pay for a friend's after-school snack without asking to be paid back. Put 3 pebbles in the cup.</p>

