



Love God, Love Others

Goal: To show God's love in our everyday actions.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

The book of Deuteronomy ("second law") features what came to be regarded as the greatest commandment: "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might" (vv. 4-5). This forms the beginning of the Jewish daily prayer, the Shema. It was quoted by Jesus when he was asked, "Which commandment is the first of all?" (Mark 12:28).

We believe the same thing. God is our only Lord. We know God in Jesus Christ and we follow him out of love. We show our love by worshiping and serving God, as the Scriptures teach. In what we say and do, we express our love for God's grace and we live in gratitude.

The book of Leviticus records the familiar command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18). This command comes in the midst of other commands about relating to neighbors: Don't take vengeance; don't hold a grudge against your neighbor—in short, "love your neighbor as yourself." The command to love your neighbor is the umbrella way of relating to other people. Jesus recognized this when he cited this as the second great commandment (Mark 12:31).

We thank God for loving us and we express our gratitude to God by sharing God's love with other people.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children will be able to respond with what they think it means to love God. They will be able to come up with many ways to show their love for God when they are at home or when they are "out and about" (Deuteronomy 6:7, CEB).

Children learn about loving neighbors with words and actions. When they help take a meal to a neighbor or church member who is sick or when they assist in preparing and serving a meal, they experience ways to love a neighbor. There are so many opportunities for children of all ages to find their own ways to express love to others.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Encourage all children to tell stories of how they can show love to others in daily acts. Invite the children to imagine with you the ways that they have seen people love God with their whole heart. Then invite them to say the ways they can love God that way. Use these words as a blessing, calling each by name as she or he leaves today.

*Gracious God, I give you my heart, my soul,
and my might. Use me as you will. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023-2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 6, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: items for a
home-living center

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1,

choice 3: copies of **GN 2**,
30" length of string for
each child, art supplies

Exploring

choice 1: memory
pockets from "Guided
Play" choice 3

choice 2: **SCM 6a**

choice 4: **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.

Before the session, cut out the pocket template and strips from **GN 2**, one for each child.

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

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. Explain that the children will hear a story about loving God and loving each other. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

1. Home Center—Invite the children to play in the home center.

Engage them in conversation, wondering what they are doing and how they might be a family that loves God very much.

2. The Ten Commandments—Hand out copies of **GN 1** and tell the children that God gave Moses ten rules for God's people to live by. Explain that rules 1-4 are about loving God and rules 5-10 are about loving others. Invite the children to trace the numbers and color the tablets.

3. Memory Pockets—Help the children fold the pockets like the diagram on **GN 2**. Secure the back with tape, then punch a hole where indicated. The children can thread their string through the hole. Help them tie the ends in a knot to make a necklace. Provide crayons and other art supplies for the children to decorate their pockets. Tell the children what the strip of paper says and have them repeat it. Have them fold their paper strips and put them in the pockets. Write the child's name on the back of the pocket. Set aside for "Exploring God's Grace" choice 1.

T Give the children a signal when it's time for something new. Giving young children a gentle warning that you will be shifting focus soon helps them mentally prepare for the change. Alerting them calmly makes changes feel like less of an emergency.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Love”—**MM 24; SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Following the Leader

MS L

Stand in a circle, allowing enough room between persons for easy movement. Ask the children to repeat what you do or say. Begin slowly. For example, clap your hands, then wait for the children to copy your movement. Do other easy-to-imitate movements.

Occasionally insert a short sentence or phrase for the children to repeat: “God is love,” “Love one another,” or “God loves me.” If the group follows your directions easily, try a few more complicated movements or phrases.

Loving God

L

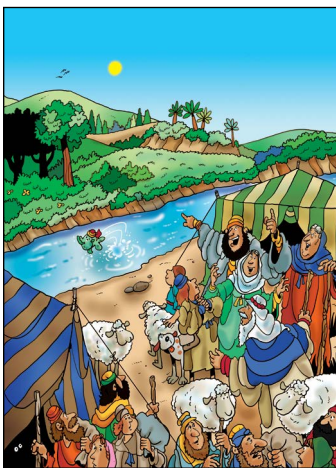
Invite the children to repeat your words and actions.

Love God (*fold arms over chest, then open arms to make a circle*) /

with all your heart, (*make one hand a fist and hold it in palm of other hand; put clasped hands to chest like a heart*) /

with all your soul, (*put arms over head, reaching for the ceiling*) /

and with all your strength. (*clap hands twice, stomp feet twice, then put arms up as if showing off biceps*) /



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 C

Open the Bible to Deuteronomy 6 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that today's story is about loving God and loving each other. Read **SCM 6**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story a second time so the children can repeat the motions above in “Loving God” when you read, “Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Invite the children to make up motions to do after you read, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

After the second reading, ask them:

- ▼ What does it mean to love God with all your heart?
- ▼ What does it mean to love God with all your strength?
- ▼ Who else are we to love? How can we do that?



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Love God with All Your Heart

B MS C T

Have the children put on their memory pockets made in “Guided Play” choice 3.

Stand in a circle. To start, choose a child who is outgoing and is likely to respond well. Say, “(Name), what’s in that pocket?” The child says, “A paper that reminds us about God.” Then ask, “What does the paper say?” The child answers, “Love God. Love neighbors.” If he or she can’t remember, help supply the answer.

Once the answer is given, the child runs around the outside of the circle and stops behind another child. The first child says, “(Name), what’s in that pocket?” After the second child responds, the first child takes the second child’s place in the circle and the second child runs around the outside of the circle and stops behind someone else.

B *Children with behavioral issues (and even some without) may struggle with a long list of complicated rules. Keep guidelines broad and simple, such as: try your best, respect others, be polite.*

2. Love Your Neighbor

A C

SCM 6a shows neighbors in a suburban setting. You and your group may live in a different kind of place. Wonder with the children about who their neighbors (friends) are and help them make the connections.

Give each child a different color of construction paper. Ask the children to think of a neighbor and tear a strip of paper for that neighbor. Then think of another neighbor and tear another strip, and so on until that piece of paper is used up. Have them pile the construction-paper strips in the center of the table. Invite the children to choose another sheet of construction paper on which they will make their picture. Children choose construction-paper strips from the pile and glue them to their paper.

Invite the children to name neighbors for whom they want to thank God. Some children may include family members and others. That’s OK; accept their ideas of what a neighbor is. Pray a prayer thanking God for neighbors and include the names the children gave you. You might make this into a litany, asking the children to say, “Thank you, God, for neighbors,” after each name.



3. Come and Be Our Neighbor

B MS C T

Play a game similar to Red Rover. Form the children into two groups and line them up on opposite sides of the room, standing side by side. One group picks someone from the other group and calls, “(Name), come and be our neighbor!” The child runs to the other group, which catches them with their arms when they arrives. The child joins the line. Then the other group chooses someone to call and the game continues.

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.

4. Coloring Page

C FM

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

- ▼ I wonder, “Why is the woman pointing up?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Why is the man pointing over the river?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How do we show our love for God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How do we show our love for others?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so on.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LD

Call the children to snack time, singing “Love”—**MM 24; SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor.

Serve the snack that you have planned, and invite the children to repeat the blessing after you.

Food to eat, /
 food to share. /
 We thank you, God, /
 for all your care. /
 Amen. /

Enjoy the snack.

As the children feel comfortable, invite them to share God’s love with one another through hugs, high fives, or handshakes. Invite them to find ways of sharing that love with others during the week.

Send each children with a blessing, such as: “(Name), may the grace of God go with you.”



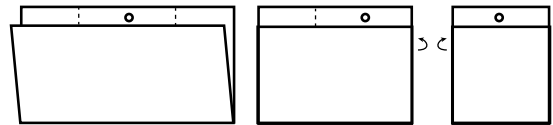
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

Love
others

6 8 10
5 7 9

Love
Good

2 4
1 3



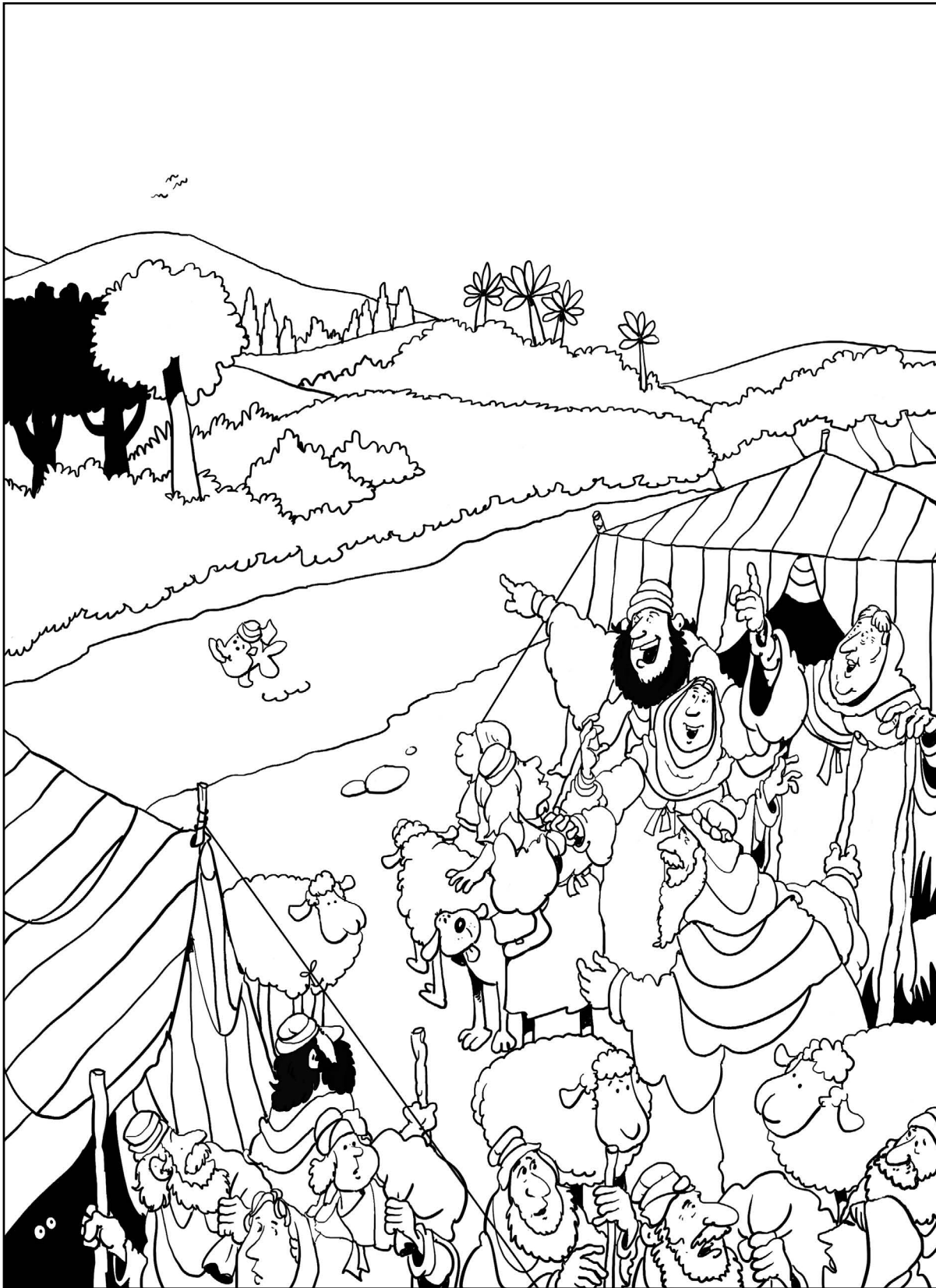
	○	



Love God. Love neighbors.



Love God, Love Others



God's people learn that loving God and loving others are the most important things they can do.

