



Return with Thanks

(based on Luke 17:11-19)

One day ten men were sitting on the side of the road on the border between Samaria and Galilee. They had a skin disease. They were not allowed to go into the towns or villages. They couldn't go near other people. The ten men were sad. They wanted to be with their families. How they wished they did not have this terrible skin disease.

As they were gathered outside the village, they saw Jesus and his friends coming down the road. Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem. The men had heard about Jesus. They knew that Jesus helped people. They knew he had the power to heal. They wondered if Jesus would help them.

The men were not allowed to go near Jesus, so they all cried out together: "Jesus, please help us. Jesus, have mercy on us."

When Jesus saw them, he stopped walking. The disciples also stopped and wondered what Jesus would do. No one was allowed to go near anyone with a skin disease.

Jesus smiled at the men, "Go and show yourselves to the priests," he instructed. "They must see that you do not have a skin disease any longer."

The ten men followed Jesus' instructions. As they went, they realized that something had happened. Their skin was clear. They were healed. They could go home. The men ran to show the priest so they could go back to their families.

All but one of them, that is. One man, a Samaritan, ran back as fast as he could. He knelt down in front of Jesus.

"Thank you, Jesus," he cried. "Thank you for making me better. You have made me clean."

"Weren't ten men healed?" Jesus asked. "Where are the other nine?"

Then Jesus reached down and helped the man stand up. "Go in peace," Jesus said to him. "Your faith has made you well."



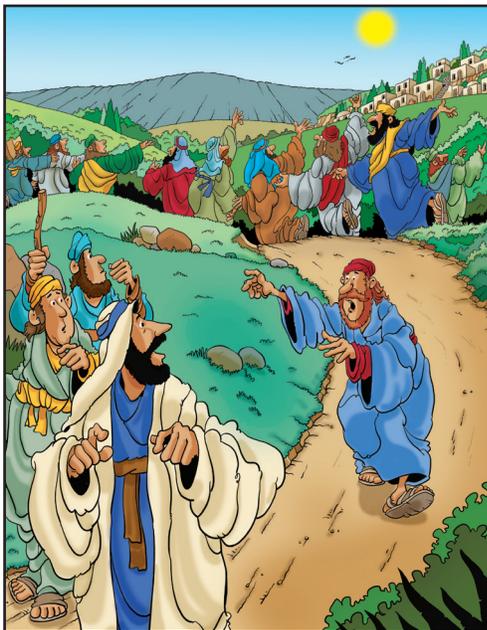
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Imagine how you would feel if you were one of the ten men, before and after the healing. Use your bodies or your voices to show your feelings.
- Do an image search for “Ten Lepers” and see art from this story. Look at the different pictures. How are they similar or different? Does one stand out to you or do you like a particular one? Why? Where do you see God's grace in a picture?



Responding to God's Grace

- Help your children make binoculars by decorating and taping two cardboard tubes together. Invite your children to look through the tubes and to notice the people and the things around them. Encourage your children to take turns naming and saying, “Thank you, God,” for the things they see.
- Wrap and decorate a box with a lid, labeling the box “Our Gifts.” Place a stack of paper, pencils, markers, or crayons near the box. Invite each person to write or draw a “gift-of-the-day” and place his or her creation in the box. At the end of the week, take each item out of the box, invite the creator to tell about the item, and together say or sing, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”
- In gratitude for God's grace and blessings, invite your children to make a gift box for a neighbor or friend. Fill the box with colorful drawings, poems, and small nonperishable treats. Write a note saying why you give thanks for that person.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Shout a gratitude cheer using letters of the word *praise*: “P-R-A-I-S-E. What does it spell? Praise. Whom do we praise? God!” Create other cheers by thanking God for things that begin with each letter of the word *praise*. For example, “Thank you, God, for people, roses, ants, ice, sunshine, elephants.”
- Use your hands and bodies to say thank you to God. Adopt some of your favorite body prayers as your family's unique sign language.
- Pray this prayer this week.

*Thank you, God. Thank you, God.
Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Amen.*