



God Is Always with Us

(based on Revelation 21:1-7)

Long ago, just after the time of Jesus, there lived a man called John.

John was a leader in the early church and visited many Christians. John lived at a time when the followers of Jesus were afraid and scared. The rulers of the land threw many Christians into jail and mistreated them. They ordered followers of Jesus beaten or even killed. John ended up as a prisoner on a lonely island. He was sent there because he told others about Jesus.

God wanted to give the people hope, so God gave a special message to John while he was a prisoner. God gave John a dream. It was an amazing dream. It was a dream of the world as God wanted it to be.

Even though John was a prisoner on the island, he wanted to share God's vision with everyone. He wrote down his dream in a long letter and sent it to the followers of Jesus. The letter went from one church to another. Part of the letter said,

I saw a new heaven and a new earth. I watched as God came from heaven to be with us.

Then I heard a loud shout from God's throne.

"God's home is now with the people," the voice cried. "God is with you."

"Come if you are thirsty and God will give you life-giving water.

"Come if you are sad and let God wipe away your tears.

"Come if you are hurting and watch God take your pain away.

"There will be no more crying, or sickness, or death.

"Everything will be different, and the whole world will change"

Then I heard God's voice.

"Write down what you have seen and heard me say," God commanded. "Tell the people my words are real and they can trust what I say. I will be their God, and they will be my people. My love was there in the beginning. My love will be there at the end. My love never ends."

"Come and be part of my dream for the world."

Many followers of Jesus heard the words of John's letter. His message gave them hope during a difficult time. They kept John's letter and passed it down through the ages until it became part of our Bible. The first followers of Jesus wanted everyone to read John's amazing words of hope.



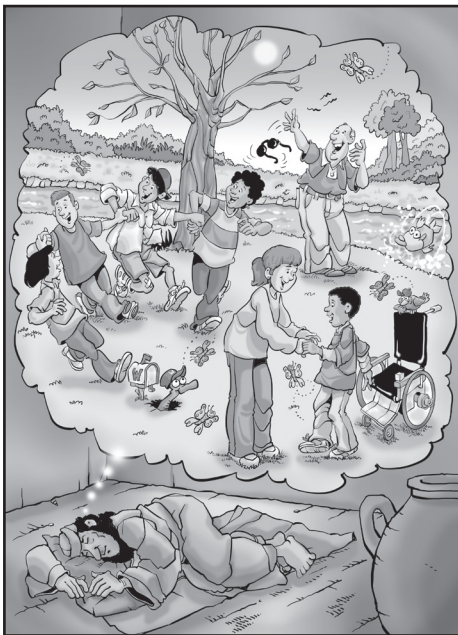
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Talk with your children about a time when you felt alone, and share the story of how someone from the church was with you during your struggle, bringing help or words of hope.
- Ask your children where they sense God's love in their lives.



Responding to God's Grace

- We often take for granted the availability of clean water, but this is not true in every place in the world. Visit livingwaterfortheworld.org to learn about the church's efforts to help others have clean water.
- The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are the alpha and omega. Search for examples of these Greek letters in lower case, and learn how to write those letters. Doodle with the letters, to remind yourselves that God is with us in the beginning and the end.
- Today's story is about a letter John wrote. With your family, write a short letter about when you have experienced God's promised love. Take the letter to church, and share the letter with another person or family.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Green is a symbol of hope. Add green powdered drink mix to water. Enjoy the drink, and reflect on your gratitude for clean and plentiful water.
- Ask your children to use their imagination to paint a picture of the "new heaven and new earth." Let each person describe what their painting says.
- Pray:

God, help us to remember that you are with us in good times, and in bad. We thank you that your love never ends. Amen.