



God Saw How Good It Was

Goal: To celebrate the grace, beauty, and joy in God's good creation.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Genesis 1:1–2:3

As you read the story of creation, you will discover a glimpse of God's grace on the first page, hidden in one little word, spoken repeatedly: *good*. God names creation, including you, "good"; the Hebrew word *tov* means "beautiful, bountiful, cheerful, fine, good, grace-filled." God blesses the creation by pronouncing it good.

God created humans in God's own image. The use of the word *image* may be a response to other religions in which fixed images (idols) were common. In contrast, says Genesis, God can be imaged only in human beings. This passage tells us that God made all human beings in the image of God, all genders, all shades of skin, all shapes and sizes, from all places.

Celebrate the grace in creation: a gift from God, not based on anything you have done. Allow creation—as winsome and playful as hummingbirds and elephants, the amoeba and the cosmos—to evoke your wonder, awe, and delight. Seek God's grace in the rhythm of creation: six days, then rest. Experience God's grace as a human being, created in God's image, called to be a partner with God and with others in fulfilling the purpose of creation: to glorify God.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

All creation is inherently good and valuable to God. That includes your children. They are beautiful creations of God, made in God's image. The word *image* will not be part of the everyday vocabulary for many of the children. Children will be better able to understand that we are like God. In their play, in their curiosity, and in their own ways, they reflect God's creativity and delight in the natural world.

The end of the story (Genesis 2:1–3) uses the word *work* three times to describe God's creative activity. God's work is grace-filled. Imagine God's work filled with playfulness, delight, and wonder—grace! Does God play? Does God take delight? Of course! Ask any child. What a wonderful way to envision God at work—as a child at play.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Help your group understand that each of us is created in the image of God, created to reflect that image to others. Invite the children to experience *good* as a grace-filled word. Avoid using *good* as the opposite of *bad*, especially when describing the children's behavior; instead, describe children's behavior as *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. By doing so, you reserve the word *good* for God's intended use: as a blessing and promise for all God's children. Offering affirmation and the open, respectful tone of your voice will set a grace-filled tone for the group.

Creator, open my heart to enjoy your gracious creation. Help me cheerfully affirm your goodness and love to all of your creatures. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 1d, 17

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

battery-operated candle

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: mirror

choice 2: **SCM 1a, 1b, 1c**;
items of curiosity or
wonder; magnifying
glass

choice 3: picture books
of the creation story,
picture books of babies
and children, floor
pillows

Exploring

choice 2: **SCM 14**

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

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.

Some SCMs are used throughout the quarter. It is a good idea to keep them in an envelope or folder for further use.

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.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the 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!

Welcoming and Guided Play

MS M L C B

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace to you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers. Be sure that they know who will be caring for their children. Tell them that today's story is about God creating the world and all that's in it—including us!

Invite children to look at the guided-play activities, and encourage them to participate.

1. Drawing—Provide an easel or a table with paper, crayons, and markers. Invite the children to draw pictures of themselves.

Encourage them to look at themselves in a mirror before they make their self-portraits. Tell them that God made them and loves them. Set the pictures aside for use in “Transitioning to Story Time.”

2. Wondering—Provide **SCM 1a, 1b, and 1c**, and/or objects of curiosity or wonder from the created world. Include items such as leaves, shells, rocks, flowers, a bird's nest, tree bark, and so forth. Invite the children to look at the objects with a magnifying glass.

3. Reading—Provide picture books of the creation story, picture books of babies and children, and floor pillows. Invite the children to look at what God has created.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will be praying,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Encourage the children to sing along and do the movements that the song provides.

Child of God



Invite the children to stand with you and follow your motions as you lead them in an action poem adapted from the rhyme “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around.”

Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch the ground. (*touch the floor in front of you*)

Child of God, child of grace, reach up high. (*reach arms high above your head*)

Child of God, child of grace, wink one eye. (*wink one eye*)

Child of God, child of grace, climb the stairs. (*use arms and legs to pretend to climb*)

Child of God, child of grace, say your prayers. (*fold hands in front of you*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch your nose. (*touch your nose*)

Child of God, child of grace, touch your toes. (*reach down and touch your toes*)

Child of God, child of grace, knock on wood. (*pretend to knock on a door*)

Child of God, child of grace, we are all good! (*hug yourself*)

Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)

Child of God, child of grace, sit right down. (*sit down on floor*)

Echo Prayer



Invite the children to say an echo prayer, having them repeat each phrase you speak:

Dear God, /
you made us, /
you love us, /
and you like us. /
We love you /
and like you too. /
Amen. /



You can model the idea of grace through your gracious and generous demeanor, by creating an environment that encourages creativity, shows patience, and demonstrates hospitality.



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.

Prompt the children to say the word *grace*. Tell them that it is a happy word. Grace is another way of saying God loves us and all people. Invite the children to say how much God loves them and their families and friends.

If the children drew self-portraits during “Guided Play” choice 1, show them one by one, calling the children’s names: “God made Daniel,” or “God made Maria.” When you call a child’s name, mention a characteristic, such as hair color or eye color. Repeat this, child by child, name by name. End each child’s recognition by saying, “And God saw that (*child’s name*) was good.” Be sure to include yourself.

If the children did not draw self-portraits during “Guided Play,” call the children’s names, mentioning a characteristic, and recognizing each by name in the same manner as above.

Hearing the Story

VI D

Turn on the candle, saying, “God said, ‘Let there be light.’” Repeat the phrase, prompting the children to say, “Let there be light,” when you say, “God said.”

Open the Bible to Genesis 1 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell them they are going to hear a story about God creating the world and all that’s in it—including us! Place the open Bible in front of you.

Have a volunteer hold up **SCM 1d** as you read **SCM 1**. Point to each number as you read the description of the day. Express the emotions of the story with your voice. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Ask the children what God thought when God created everything. Invite the children to clap every time they hear the word *good* in the story as you read it again.

Turn off the candle.

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Making Creation Motions

MS A

Help the children to use their bodies to recall the story of God creating all things. Pause after each part of creation, and have the children mime the actions. Ask the children to suggest motions, or use the following ideas:

Earth (*curl up into a ball or twirl around like the earth spinning in space*)

Seas (*rock back and forth, pretend to row a boat, or make a swimming motion with arms*)

Trees (*raise arms above head like branches swaying in the breeze*)



Plants (*crouch down, then slowly stand up straight like a plant growing*)

Day and night (*pretend to wake up and stretch; curl up and pretend to sleep*)

Animals (*pretend to be an animal of your choosing*)

People (*have children lie down and be very still, then tap each child on the shoulder, slowly come “to life,” and skip around in a circle*)

Take care of the fish, birds, and animals (*pretend to pet a puppy; pretend to scatter seed for birds or fish*)

Use the plants for food (*pretend to pick apples and eat them; pretend to eat grass as a cow does*)

God saw everything and liked it (*walk around in a small area; every time you meet another child, say, “I like you”*)

Invite the children to add other elements of creation and motions for the group to follow.

Wonder with the children how to thank God for everything God made. Encourage their responses.

2. Singing a Creation Song

MS A

Sing together “God Created the Earth”—**SCM 14**. Encourage the children to do the motions suggested in the song. Play the song again, and challenge the children to add the motions they learned in “Exploring God’s Grace,” choice 1.

3. Playing a Game

L MS F B

Play a variation of “Duck, Duck, Goose.” Invite everyone to sit on the floor, facing the center of the circle. Ask one person to be the “tapper” and walk around the outside of the circle, saying, “Good,” and tapping a child on the head after the child names a part of creation, such as “I am a cat,” “I am a waterfall,” and “I am a planet.” Explain that when the “tapper” touches a child’s head and says, “Very good,” both children race around the circle to reach the open space. The person who sits in the empty spot says, “Thank you, God, for . . . (*naming something in creation*).” The other person becomes the “tapper” and continues the game. Play until everyone has been tapped as “very good.”

B *Providing opportunities for children to play games can be fun. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or excluding children. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*



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.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What is your favorite animal?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What part of creation do you find beautiful?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What part of creation makes you happy?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to help you clean up the space. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

While you serve the snack, invite the children to listen to “God Created the Earth.”

Remind the children that God created everything, and it is all good. Talk about what you have done today that has reminded you of what God created and called *good*. Ask, “What is one way you could thank God this week?”

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), God made you and loves you very much. The grace of God is with you.”

God Saw How Good It Was



God created a very good world.

