



Who Is My Neighbor?

Goal: To explore what it means to be a good neighbor.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a familiar story in Scripture that engages us on many levels. Have we been like those who have “crossed over to the other side” (vv. 31-32, CEB)? Would we have stopped to help a person who was our enemy? Have we experienced someone who is our enemy helping us in a meaningful way? The questions abound.

Jesus told this parable in response to a lawyer’s question: “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29, CEB). Jesus’ parable breaks outside the traditional view that a neighbor is only one who is near to us. Jesus expands the net to include even our enemies as our neighbors. The world and all its peoples are our neighbors. Our neighbor is anyone who is in need.

Jesus’ ministry demonstrated that way of living. He extended the grace of his love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace to all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. He calls us to do the same. We convey the love of God in Christ to all people, regardless of who they are or even what they may have done against us. The forgiving love we receive in Christ leads us, in gratitude, to serve all people.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

The beloved Mr. Rogers always asked children, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” Jesus knew that people needed to understand in a new way what it meant to be a good neighbor. He wanted them to realize that God’s love is very big and that we need to love and help others, anyone, no matter how different they are from us. When children have a chance to learn ways they can serve God by loving others who are different from themselves—with different colors of skin, ages, languages, and abilities—then they are able to live with God’s grace in this world.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be aware of the differences represented in the children in your care and in your congregation as you prepare to lead this session. This familiar parable provides a great opportunity for children to share their own stories of relating to someone different from themselves, helping someone else, or being helped by someone. Those perspectives are important and will contribute to the children’s growth in confidence in their abilities to love God by serving their neighbors. A good way to end the session would be by inviting the children to respond, “I am a good neighbor when . . .”

God, thank you for the neighbors who have helped me. Help me recognize the neighbors near and far who may need my help. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2021-2022

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 1, 20, 26

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

e-book or story audio
(see p. vii)

purple cloth

six votive candles
(purple if possible)

Who Is My Neighbor?
by Amy-Jill Levine and
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso,
pcusastore.com

crayons in a variety of
blues and yellows

Responding

Claiming

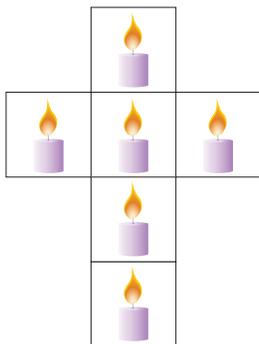
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Offering

copies of GN 2

Extra

copies of GN 3



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, post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

Obtain a copy of *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com.

Welcoming and Preparing

B M L T

Play “You Are My Own Dear Son”—**MM 22**—as children arrive. Greet each child by name and with the words “Grace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to say the same words to you.

Comment that today marks the first Sunday in Lent. Ask if anyone knows what the word Lent means. Explain that it comes from an old word that means to “lengthen” referring to the lengthening of the days, or springtime. In the church, we observe Lent as a season of preparing for Easter and the promise of new life.

Invite the children to prepare the space for Lenten worship. Ask the children to include a Bible and a purple cloth, the color for Lent. Have them place six votive candles in the shape of a cross in the space. See the sidebar for placement of the candles.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing

Invite the children to gather around the worship table. Admire their efforts to work together.

Explain that during Lent, we hear about stories that Jesus told to his friends and to the people that gathered to hear him. Ask, “How can we listen to Jesus?” Suggest that we too, can listen to Jesus through the stories he tells that have been written in the Bible. Sing “You Are My Own Dear Son”—**MM 22; SCM 20**.

A *Long transition times can cause children act out. Giving children something that they enjoy doing provides a way to deal with these times.*

Praying

M L T C

Turn on all the votive candles. Invite the children to repeat after you or ask a volunteer to lead the following echo prayer.

Dear God, /
we thank you for your light in the world: /
the light of day, /



the light in our homes, /
the light of these candles. /
Be with us when there is darkness /
and help us bring your light to others. /
Amen. /

Point out the votive candles. Comment that today marks the first Sunday in Lent. Explain that there is a tradition to extinguish, or put out, a candle each week throughout the six Sundays of Lent. This is to remind us that even though Jesus was teaching and healing and serving people, some people were not happy with his actions. They wanted to put out the light that Jesus brought to the world. Have a volunteer turn off one of the candles.

Preparing to Hear the Story

Show the children the picture on **SCM 1**. Comment that last session God's words told us to listen to Jesus. Wonder together what words Jesus might have for us in this story.

Tell the children that they will hear a story that Jesus tells in response to a question from a lawyer or teacher of the Law. Explain that this person, a man in Biblical times, knew the Jewish laws, which were the Ten Commandments and all the laws that were added to them. He knows that the laws tell us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but he wants to know who is our neighbor.

Jesus tells a story about some travelers on a road. One of them is a Samaritan. Explain that a Samaritan would have been a surprising character because some people didn't like Samaritans. Invite them to listen to what the Samaritan does in the story.

Hearing the Story

D

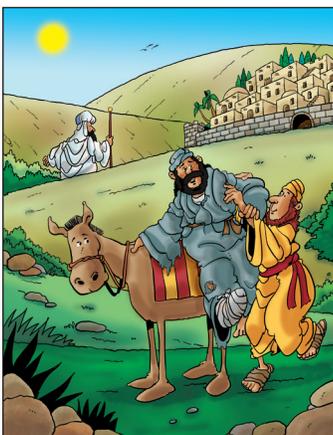
Invite a child to find Luke 10 in the Bible and then place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 1** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Tell the children you are going to read an imaginative retelling of the Bible story using blue and yellow figures to depict the different characters in the story. Encourage them to listen for how the blue and yellow figures feel about the colors that are like them and the colors that are different from them at the beginning and then the end of the story.

Read *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. After reading, hand out paper and crayons in a variety of blues and yellows. Invite the children to fold the paper in half. On the left side of the paper, have them use the crayons to show how the figures felt about each other at the beginning of the story. On the right side

Seeing where the story is found in the Bible reinforces the importance of this book for the church.

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), pcusastore.com.





of the paper, have them use the crayons to show how the figures felt about each other at the end of the story. Invite anyone who would like to share their pictures to do so.

Reflecting on God’s Grace C

Reflect on God’s grace together. Ask the children where they saw God’s grace, something that happened that was a gift or undeserved, in this story. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What do you think Jesus wanted to teach the man who asked, “Who is my neighbor?”
- Comment that in this story Jesus wanted people to know the “greatest commandment”—to love God and to love neighbor. Who do you think acts this out in either story, the one about the hurt man and the Samaritan or the blue and yellow crayons?
- How is loving God and loving neighbor shown?
- How would you answer Jesus if he asked you about being a neighbor? How can you be a good neighbor, according to Jesus’ story?

Singing

Listen to “God Loves You, and I Love You (Dios te ama y yo te amo)”—**MM 31; SCM 26**—and practice the song. Encourage the children to sing the song in English and in Spanish.

Turn off the candles.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to one or more children to model and encourage appropriate responses.*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace C

Help the children imagine how Jesus’ words, “go and do the same,” might guide their actions.

Form pairs of children. Give each pair a card from **GN 1**. Read scenes to the children as necessary. Invite them to act out a way to respond. After each group acts out their scene, ask the children who the neighbor was in the scene.

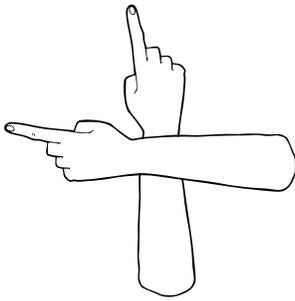
As a group, reflect on how each pair expressed love for God and love for neighbor, as well as other choices they might have made.



Praying God's Grace

M L

Draw a cross on newsprint, and point out how it can remind us of the two parts of what Jesus called the “greatest commandment,” to love God and love neighbor. Show how to cross arms at the wrists, with one hand pointing to a neighbor and the other one pointing to God. Invite children to hold this pose as you lead them in guided prayer. Instruct them to respond, “Hear our prayers,” when you prompt with the word, “Lord.”



Tell God how you can love God with all your heart this week.

(pause)

... with all your soul this week. (pause)

... with all your strength this week. (pause)

Lord, **hear our prayers.**

Think about who your neighbor is.

Ask God to help you show love to that person this week.

(pause)

Lord, **hear our prayers.**

Amen.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each step.*

Offering God's Grace

LG

Talk about ways the children can be like the Samaritan and help their neighbors by doing simple acts of kindness. Invite them to think about who and how they can help in the coming week. Distribute copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to color the icons. As a group, look at the ideas on **GN 2**. Invite the children to add an idea of their own in the blank space. Cut along the dotted lines to create tear-away strips. Invite the children to tear off one or two strips each day during the week and do the simple acts of kindness.

Extra Activity

Distribute copies of **GN 3** and crayons for children to share as they make drawings of their neighbors inside the frames. Talk together about who are our neighbors. Encourage the children to think beyond those who live next door.

Create a neighbor display in a gathering area of your church. Make extra copies of **GN 3** and invite others to add to the display.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

B

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Listen to and sing “God Loves You, and I Love You (Dios te ama y yo te amo)”—**MM 31; SCM 26**—to celebrate that God’s love and grace are for all people. Encourage the children to clap their hands and move to the music.

Invite children to tell what they will remember about today’s story. Wonder what they will tell their families and friends about the Good Samaritan or the blue and yellow crayons. Ask them to look for ways they can be good Samaritans to their neighbors.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own choosing.

Dear God,
you call us to follow Jesus.
Help us to do as Jesus taught:
to love you with all our heart,
soul,
and strength.
Help us to love others as you have loved us,
especially those who need help
and whom we may not pay attention to.
In Jesus’ name, we pray.
Amen.

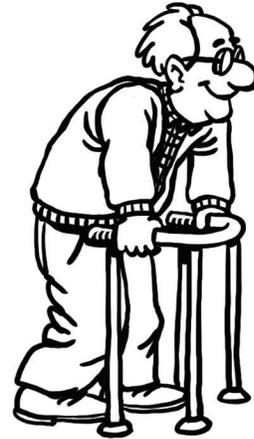
Send the children with a blessing, “(Name,) love God and love your neighbor. God’s love is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).



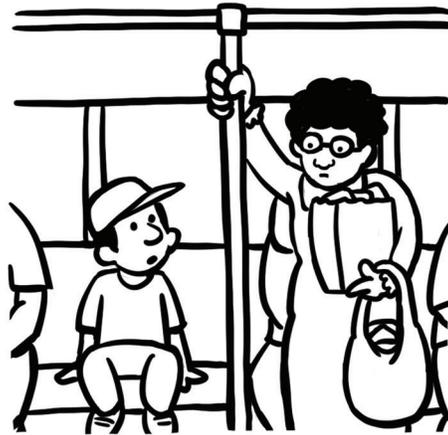
Your friends have come to your house, and your little brother wants to play with them too.



Grandpa wants to go with your family to the amusement park, but he isn't able to walk very well.



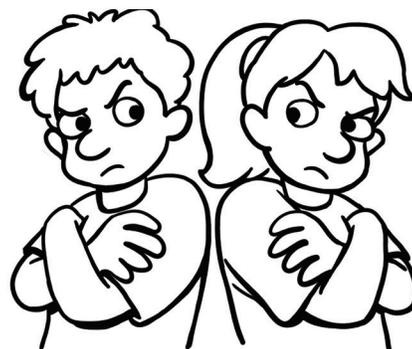
On the school field trip, you get paired up with a new kid who doesn't speak much English and has brought strange food for a snack.



Mom has had a terrible day at work and is too tired to cook. This is the third night this week.



Mrs. Bitterly is an elderly member of your church who lives on the other side of town. At church, she always looks like she is frowning, and you don't like how she smells. Your dad is going to drive you to a friend's house but first he has to drop off a meal for Mrs. Bitterly.



There is a boy at school who isn't very nice to you. On the way to school, you see him drop his lunch bag in a huge puddle. It is soaked through. You have a hot lunch today.

My Simple Acts of Kindness

Smile at someone who looks sad.



Open the door for someone.



Do a chore without being asked.



Invite someone to sit with you at lunch.



Say hello to a classmate you don't know very well.



Give someone a compliment.



Thank someone for what he or she has done to help you.





