



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, 14, 17

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected device

candle

green cloth

shoebox

small mirror

Responding

Claiming

white round coffee filters, squirt bottle filled with water, chalk, black construction paper

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

Label a shoebox “Image of God” and put a small mirror inside.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

T **LG**

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

Invite the children to prepare the space. Explain that today’s story is about God creating the world and everything in it. Give the children paper and crayons or markers. Invite them to draw one or more pictures of items of God’s creation.

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

Ask the children to help you arrange the green cloth, a candle, and a Bible in the worship space. Add the shoebox labeled “Image of God” with a small mirror inside. Invite the children to place their pictures of creation in the worship space.

T *Transition times vary, so plan accordingly. Clean-up may require only a short warning, while hand-washing may require more warning and time. Use a song or short activity to signal the change.*

Singing

Gather around the table. Sing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Encourage the children to sing with you. Add simple movements as they sing.

Praying

C

Look at the different pictures in the worship space. Pray a popcorn prayer. In the prayer, prompt the children to say the names of the items of creation they drew.

Creator God, thank you for the world around us.

Thank you for . . .

May we see all that you created as good, including us. Amen.

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



Preparing to Hear the Story

C VI

Turn on the candle, saying, “God said, ‘Let there be light.’”

Ask children to guess what is in the shoebox. Have each person peek in the box without telling others what he or she sees.

Talk about what the children saw and why they think the box is labeled “Image of God.” Invite everyone to think of one way they are made in God’s image and to share that with the group if they wish.



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 LD A

Invite a child to find Genesis 1 in the Bible so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Tell the children that the story in Genesis 1 paints a picture. Hand out paper and crayons. Instruct the children to fold the paper in half, in half again, and once again, creating eight spaces when it is opened. Have them number the spaces 1–7, with small numbers in the corners of each space, leaving the eighth one blank. Encourage the children to draw something they hear as you read the story again from **SCM 1**.

Pause after each “day” so the children may draw. Numbers are provided in the story to help you designate the days. In the eighth space, help the children write one word or phrase they heard to describe creation or God’s feelings about creation.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C VI

Ask the children to share their drawings and tell what they imagined as they heard the story of creation.

Explain that today’s story tells us that God is gracious. Whenever we talk about God’s grace, we are talking about God’s good gifts to us. Wonder what some of God’s gifts to us are.

In the story of creation, every time God said that something was “good,” it was an expression of grace, beauty, and joy. Share with the children ways that you see God’s grace, beauty, and joy in the world. Ask the children to name ways that they see God’s grace (or gifts), beauty, and joy in the world. Suggest that by taking care of the gifts God has given to us, we express our gratitude to God.

Singing

Sing “God Created the Earth”—**SCM 14**. Invite the children to follow the simple movements as they sing. Turn off the candle.

A Adapt any activity to suit your children’s needs. Ask yourself, “How can I change this activity so that this child can do it?”



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



Claiming God's Grace

TD

Remind the children that creation is a gift of God's grace. Provide coffee filters, blue and green washable markers, and a squirt bottle filled with water. Have them flatten a coffee filter on a paper plate and color on the filter with blue and green washable markers. Then have them squirt water on the middle of the filter and watch what happens. The water wicks the colors over their filters. Set aside filters to dry.

Give the children chalk and a large sheet of black construction paper to draw some things they find beautiful in creation, leaving space in the center of the paper for their coffee filter. As they draw, engage the children in conversation. Wonder together how we can show God how thankful we are for creation.

Glue the coffee filters to the sheets of black construction paper. Have the children get their drawings from the worship space and cut out their picture(s). Suggest they add their picture of something from creation to the black construction paper or the coffee filter. Together, consider ways to thank God for the specific items the children have added to their papers.

Celebrating God's Grace

MS

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 that child's head after they have named a part of creation, such as "I am a cat," "I am a waterfall," or "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."

Variation: Play a round for each day of creation.

- ▼ Day 1—name kinds or sources of light
- ▼ Day 2—name things that can be found in the sky or weather
- ▼ Day 3—name things having to do with land, seas, and plants
- ▼ Day 4—name things having to do with the sun, moon, planets, and space
- ▼ Day 5—name fish and birds
- ▼ Day 6—name animals and things having to do with humans
- ▼ Day 7—rest. Sit and rest for a moment, breathing in and breathing out, thanking God for all the good things in creation.



Offering God's Grace

D

*Before the session, make at least two copies of **GN 1** and cut apart the cards.*

Wonder what is gracious about the way God made the world. Remind the children that *grace* can mean “good gift”; all of creation, including animals, are God’s good gifts. We thank God by taking care of creation.

Distribute the animal cards, making sure at least two children receive the same animal card. Invite the children to gather in groups with others who have the same animal by making the noise associated with that animal. For a quieter game, they can form groups and move like their animals.

Help children grow in gratitude for God’s good creation. We thank God and offer our time and service by taking care of animals, either animals in our own care or knowledge of good care for other animals. Wonder together how the children can take care of the animals they pretended to be.

LD *Don’t assume what children can or cannot do with regards to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*

Extra Activity

C LD

Tell the children that God’s creation is an expression of grace, beauty, and joy. Remind them that each one of them is part of God’s grace (a gift to the world), beauty, and joy. Hand out copies of **GN 2** and read aloud the prompts. Invite the children to draw or write their responses to the prompts on the sheet, telling about themselves. Assist with writing as needed. Encourage the children to share their sheets with the group. After each child has shared their sheet, invite the group to respond, “(Name), God created you VERY good!”

Display the pages in a space where people will see the wonderful creations God has made in these children. Create a sign for the display saying, “God created us VERY good!”



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



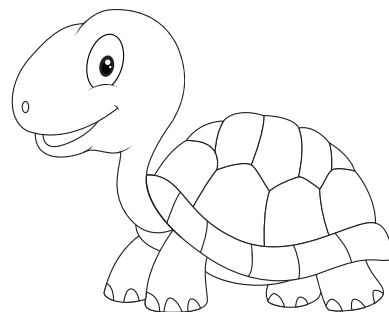
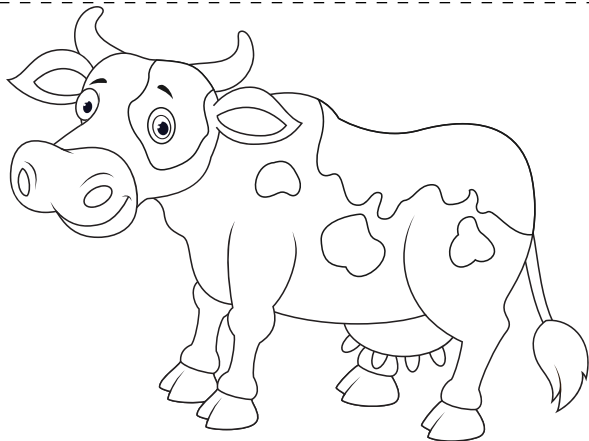
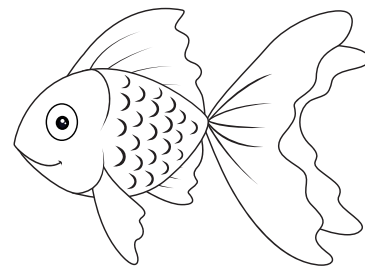
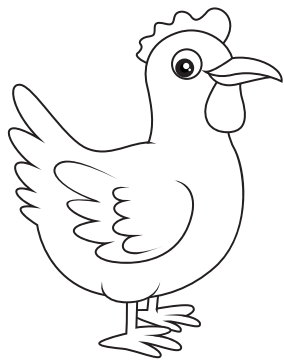
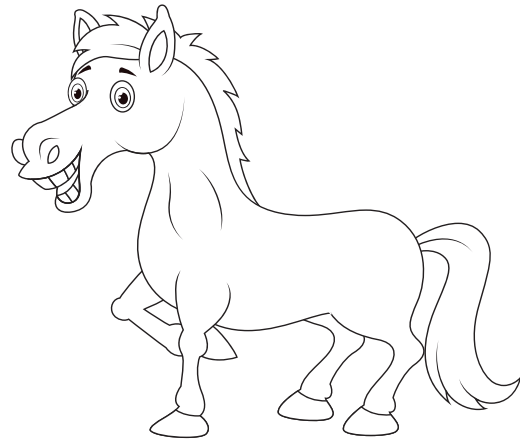
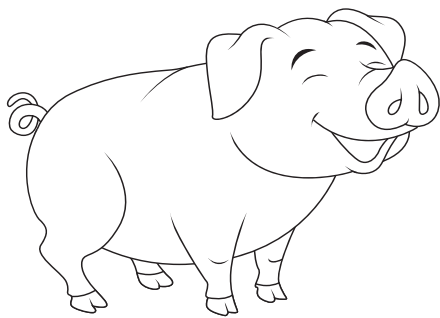
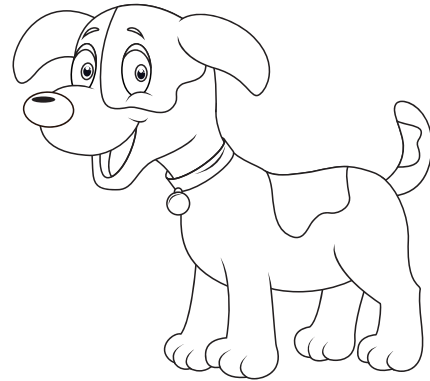
Invite the children to clean up the space together.

Sing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**.

Invite the children to share ways they will celebrate God’s grace, beauty, and joy in creation. Encourage them to name these suggestions in the following prayer.

Creator God, we thank you for giving us this marvelous creation, the world and all that’s in it, and that includes us! It is a gift for us to enjoy and care for. May we celebrate your grace, beauty, and joy by (*invite children’s suggestions*). For all these things, we say, thank you and amen.

As the children leave, say to each one: “(*Name*), God created you and God is very pleased. The grace of God is with you.”



My Name

I AM GOOD!

Self-Portrait

My Family

My Favorites

Food: _____

Color: _____

Place: _____

Prayer: _____

I'm really good at ...

