



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

shoe box

small mirror

Responding

Claiming

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

Praying

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

Offering

digital cameras or
smartphones, computer
(optional)

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

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

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

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. Today’s Scripture reading is lengthy. Decide if you would like children to read from the Bible or the adapted story on **SCM 1**. Ask for several volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage or **SCM 1**.

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

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.*

Singing

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

Praying

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.



Preparing to Hear the Story

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

Ask children to guess what is in the shoe box. 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

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Invite a child to find Genesis 1 in the Bible. Have several volunteers read Genesis 1:1–2:3 or **SCM 1**. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

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, ask the children to write one word or phrase they heard to describe creation or God’s feelings about creation.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

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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 they can show God’s grace, beauty, and joy in the world. One important way we thank God is by taking care of the gifts God has given to us. Wonder together how we can take care of the earth.

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

Remind the children that creation is a gift of God's grace. Show them how to flatten a coffee filter on a paper plate and scribble the filter with blue and green washable markers. Squirt water once on the middle of the filter, and wait a couple minutes. Invite the children to watch the water wick the colors over their filters. You may have to squirt more water if the edges of the filters remain dry.

While the filters are drying, invite the children to use yellow chalk to draw on sheets of black construction paper some things they find beautiful in creation. As they draw, engage the children in conversation. Encourage them to tell you about their pictures. 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(s) of something from creation to the black construction paper. Together consider ways to thank God for the specific items the children have added to their papers.

Celebrating God's Grace



Play a variation of "Duck, Duck, Goose." Invite everyone to sit on the floor, facing the center of the circle. Ask each child to think of a part of creation, such as "I am a cat," "I am a waterfall," and "I am a planet."

Ask one person to walk around the outside of the circle, saying, "Good, good, good," while tapping the other children's heads as they name their part of creation. When that child taps one head and says "very good," both children race around the circle to reach the open space. The person who sits in the empty spot names a way God's good creation is very good. 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.



Praying God's Grace

Invite children to create creation-motion prayers. Pair younger and older children for creating prayers together. Give a copy of **GN 1** to each pair. Invite them to use it as a guide for forming their prayer by making a list of all the things they think are good in our world using the letters in the word *creation*. Suggest they use a refrain such as the one in the Genesis story: God said, “This is good.”

When complete, invite the children to say and show their prayers. They may want to teach their refrain motion for “This is good!” to the group so they may all respond together.

To conclude, pray a short prayer of your own or the following one: “Thank you, God, for all you have given us. Amen.”

Challenge the children to think of ways to make their prayers available to the congregation. Your congregation may be able to use one, or a combination, of the prayers in worship on a coming Sunday as a responsive or antiphonal psalm of praise.



Offering God's Grace



Remind the children that creation is a gift from God, grace. God created the world beautiful. God delighted in creation, calling it good and very good. Tell the children they are going to photograph examples of grace, beauty, and joy (perhaps things God delights in) in the world and share their findings with the congregation. Take the children on a brief nature walk. Provide several digital cameras or smartphones. Ask the children to find examples of grace (God's gifts), beauty, and/or joy in God's creation and take pictures of them. If taking a nature walk isn't possible, give the children magazines, and invite them to find pictures.

Return to the meeting space. Encourage the children to tell about something new or awesome that they saw. Invite them to consider how they might share the grace, beauty, and joy they found in God's creation with the congregation. Ideas might be: create a poster or mural, make a slideshow of pictures, write a prayer or litany to share in worship, write new words to a familiar tune and sing it in worship, and so forth. Work together on their chosen idea and share God's good creation with the congregation.



Extra Activity

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 invite the children to complete the prompts on the sheet, telling about themselves. 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.”

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My Name



I AM GOOD!

Self-Portrait

My Family

My Favorites

Food: _____

Color: _____

Place: _____

Prayer: _____

I'm really good at ...

