



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)
2018–2019

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 2, 20, 26

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

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

purple cloth

six votive candles
(purple if possible)

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Celebrating

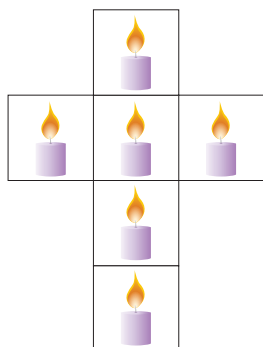
GN 2, strips of fabric or
dish towels

Offering

copies of **GN 3**

Extra

copies of **GN 4**



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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG B T MS

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 the placement of the candles.

Ask two volunteers to write “Leviticus 19:18” and “Deuteronomy 6:4–5” each on a strip of construction paper to use as bookmarks. Have them find these verses in the Bible, place each bookmark, and practice reading the verses aloud. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

Singing

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

Recall the story of Jesus’ transfiguration. Ask if anyone remembers what God said from the cloud. If necessary say, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” Ask, “How can we listen to Jesus?” Suggest that we can listen to Jesus through the stories he tells. Sing “You Are My Own Dear Son”—**MM 22; SCM 20**.

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.

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?"*

Preparing to Hear the Story

Show the children the picture on **SCM 2**. 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 told 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 ourself, but he wants to know who is our neighbor.

Jesus told a story about some travelers on a road. One of them was 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

M L

Invite a child to find Luke 10 in the Bible. Have a volunteer or two read Luke 10:25–37. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Explain that the man who was an expert in God's law, the commandments, was raised in the Jewish religion. One of the first prayers he would have learned is the Shema (shuh-MAH). Ask the volunteer with the Deuteronomy 6:4–5 bookmark to read those verses. Jewish people pray those words every morning and night. This man also would have known what we call the Golden Rule. Ask if anyone knows what the Golden Rule is. Have the volunteer with the Leviticus 19:18 bookmark read the verse. Wonder why people call those words the Golden Rule. Ask the children what they think it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

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.





Challenge the children to listen for the Shema and the Golden Rule and who lives it out as you read it aloud a second time using **SCM 2** or the story audio. If reading, use your voice, your expressions, feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Reflecting on God's Grace



Reflect on God's grace together. Ask the children where they saw God's grace in this story. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ How does the story show the Shema, or loving God with all our heart, with all our being, and with all our mind?
- ▼ What do you think Jesus wanted the man to understand about showing love for God?
- ▼ How would you answer Jesus if he asked you about being a good remaining neighbor? How can you be a good neighbor, according to Jesus' story?
- ▼ What do you think it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself?

Singing

Listen to “God Loves You, and I Love You”—**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



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

Form pairs of older children with younger ones. Give each pair a card from **GN 1**, and 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.



Celebrating God's Grace

MS LD

Before the session, set up a relay course. Evenly space seven chairs in a row or seven spaces on the floor. Place a numbered strip from GN 2 on each chair, numbers 1–7 in order. If you are using the floor, tape the strips of paper so they don't move during the game. Place strips of fabric or dish towels on chair 6.

Play a game to remember the story, what Jesus calls us to do, and how we can help our neighbors.

Form two teams. Use the following directions:

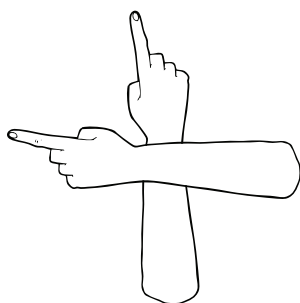
- ▼ Children will take turns participating in the relay by running to the chairs in order, reading the strip of paper, and following the directions. Some children may need assistance with reading.
- ▼ The next person in line may begin when the person before them is at the fourth chair.
- ▼ No one may pass a person at a chair. One coming next may help a person, but then must wait until that person has moved to the next chair.
- ▼ When all the children on a team have finished, they sit down and decide what the memorized words were and the order they were in (*Love God; Love Neighbor*).
- ▼ When all the teams have finished, invite the children to shout out the memorized words in order.

Discuss ways to be good neighbors to others.

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 posture 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.



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. As a group, look at the ideas on **GN 3** and color the icons. 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 strip each day during the week and do the simple act of kindness written there.

Extra Activity

Distribute copies of **GN 4** 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 4** 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”—**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. 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 who we may not pay attention to.
In Jesus’ name, we pray.
Amen.

Send the children off with a blessing for a good week and your hope to see them next Sunday.



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).



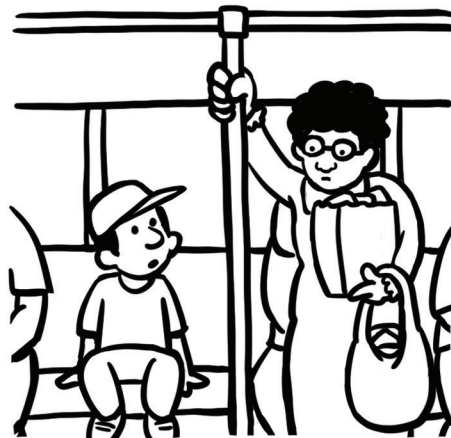
Your friends have come to your house, and your little brother wants to play with them too.



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



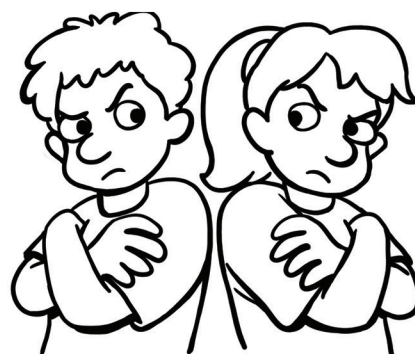
On the school field trip, you get paired up with a new kid who doesn't speak much English and has brought strange food for a snack.



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.

Good Samaritan Game Strips

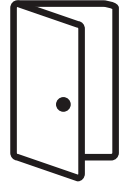
1. Read 1 John 4:8, CEB, and remember the thirteenth word:
“The person who doesn’t love does not know God, because God is love.”
2. Cover your eyes and walk around the chair, saying, “I don’t see anyone.”
3. Read Genesis 1:1, CEB, and remember the second word:
“When God began to create the heavens and the earth.”
4. Run to three people and say, “I don’t have time. I’m so busy!”
5. Read Psalm 59:16, CEB, and remember the twentieth word:
“But me? I will sing of your strength! In the morning I will shout out loud about your faithful love because you have been my stronghold, my shelter when I was distraught.”
6. Wrap the arm of someone from another team in a “bandage” using a strip of fabric.
7. Read Romans 13:10, CEB, and remember the eighth word:
“Love doesn’t do anything wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law.”

My Simple Acts of Kindness

Smile at someone who looks sad.



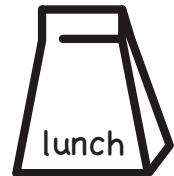
Open the door for someone.



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.





