



The Two Houses

Goal: To practice ways to listen to Jesus and act on his words.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 7:24-29

When you look at this story about the building of two houses, you will see that it comes right after the Sermon on the Mount and immediately follows Jesus' teaching about prayer and fasting, seeing, judging, and worrying about what's important. Jesus asks those who are following him to think about their lives and how they will put into practice what they have been hearing him say.

Jesus describes the two builders, one who built a house on rock and one who built a house on sand. When the storms came, the house of the wise builder survived while the house of the foolish builder was destroyed. And we are left to think about what it means.

What kind of house are you building in response to Jesus' teaching? Is it a house that is built on hospitality and love for others, a house where there is justice and mercy for all? Or is it a house built on judgment and worry, stocked with treasures?

With this parable, Jesus invites the hearers to consider a different way of living. He is challenging his hearers then and now to let his teachings take shape in the ways that we construct our lives. A life lived in grace and gratitude and thanks to God is surely built on a strong foundation.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Some of your children may have had the experience of building a house on the sand at the beach and coming back the next morning to discover it had been transformed or removed by the tides. In telling this story of the two builders, children will be able to understand how important it was for Jesus to keep helping the people remember what was important. Some have said that this story summarizes the earlier teaching in Matthew 5 of what it means to be blessed. Helping children be aware of how they live their lives in response to God's gracious love is a process of building, a little bit each day. The good news is that we do this all our lives until we take our last breath.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story of the two builders is concrete and abstract at the same time, so it can work on several levels with younger and older children. Younger children will quickly grasp the story about the two builders, one wise and one foolish, and what happened when the storms came. The story you will tell the children will remind them that when they follow Jesus' way of love, they build a strong life. Both younger and older children will be able to talk about ways they can follow Jesus' way of love so they will build a strong life.

*God of wisdom, forgive my foolish ways. Help me build
a strong foundation of faith for your children. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2019–2020

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 13, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

bookmark

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: small rocks,
sand, water, cup
measure, two plastic
bins

choice 2: building
blocks, interlocking
bricks, log-house blocks

choice 3: Bible; small,
sealed bag of sand;
large, flat rock; tote bag
or backpack

Exploring

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1,
brown or gray
construction paper

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

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.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual 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

SD **B** **A**

Welcome the children by name as they arrive, and say, “You are God’s beloved child.” Prompt the response, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.” Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time. Explain to the parents/caregivers that the children will hear the story that Jesus told about two people who built houses, one on rock and one on sand.

Invite the children to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Sand and Rocks**—Ask the children to count the rocks and stack them in a plastic bin, and then build a mountain out of sand in another bin. Using a measuring cup, pour one cup of water over the rocks and the same amount over the sand. Observe and discuss what happens to the rock mountain and the sand mountain.
- 2. Building**—Invite the children to play with the various building toys. Encourage them to build structures that are opposites of each other—short and tall, wide and narrow, big and small. Observe and discuss the differences with the children. You may also provide play tools for children to use to pretend to build houses.
- 3. Heavy Lifting**—Place the Bible, a bag of sand, and a rock into a tote bag or backpack. Show the children how heavy the bag is. One at a time, remove the sand, the rock, and the Bible. Ask the children to feel the objects and to describe them. Wonder aloud what the Bible tells us about what Jesus taught us.

B *Vary your activities so that the children move about, sit, use their muscles, and rest again. Some behavior deviations are the result of too much sedentary activity.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, playing “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**MM 21**.

We Praise God

B M MS

Play a game like Follow the Leader, except all the sounds and actions are ways of praising God. Encourage the children to think of other ways to praise God. Allow the children to take turns leading the group:

We praise God when we walk! (*walk around the room in a line*)

We praise God with our hands! (*clap your hands*)

We praise God when we bounce! (*jump up and down*)

We praise God with our voices! (*shout “Praise God!”*)

We praise God when we spin! (*spin around*)

We praise God with our feet! (*stomp your feet*)

We praise God when we skip! (*skip around the room*)

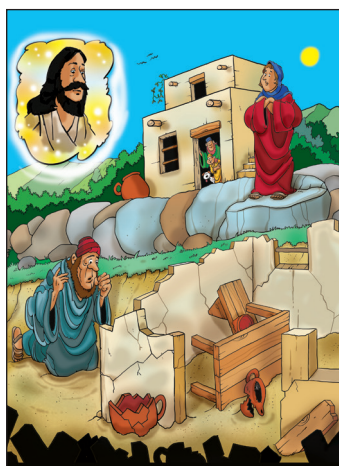
We praise God with our arms! (*give hugs*)

We praise God when we dance! (*dance with your whole body*)

March and Stretch

M MS

Play “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**MM 21**—and let the children march to the music. Use the music and marching as a time for stretching and movement. Then play “We Are Growing”—**MM 28**. While this song plays, bring children together in a circle. Lead them in a series of movements that go from bigger and more active to smaller and less active, while keeping the beat of the music. For example, start by marching in place with knees high, swinging arms wide and then making progressively smaller movements, stopping the arms and feet altogether, and gently swaying to the music.



Hearing the Story

L B C

Open a Bible to Matthew 7, so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God’s people. Explain that today’s story is about listening to Jesus and doing what he says to do.

Read **SCM 13**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Ask the group to think about the different sound effects that would enhance the telling of today’s story. They may want to look around your space to find materials that would aid in making sound



effects. Encourage them to figure out ways to retell the story with as few words as possible. Begin the story and let the children fill in by prompting them with “what happened next?” Engage the children in conversation about the story.

- ▼ I wonder, “Why is it wise to follow Jesus’ teachings?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Why would it be foolish not to follow Jesus’ teachings?”

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. The Wise Man Built His House upon a Rock

M MS

Sing or say this song with the children, and have them join you in doing the motions. You can also download the song from many online digital music sites or find a video on YouTube.

The wise man built his house upon a rock, (*pound fist of one hand on top of other fist in rhythm*) . . . (*repeat twice*)
and the rain came tumbling down. (*wiggle fingers in the air*)

Oh, the rain came down, (*wiggle fingers down*)
and the floods came up, (*wiggle fingers up*) . . . (*repeat twice*)
and the wise man’s house stood firm. (*pound fist of one hand on top of other fist*)

The foolish man built his house upon the sand, (*pound fist of one hand on top of other fist in rhythm*) . . . (*repeat twice*)
and the rain came tumbling down. (*wiggle fingers in the air*)

Oh, the rain came down, (*wiggle fingers down*)
and the floods came up, (*wiggle fingers up*) . . . (*repeat twice*)
and the foolish man’s house went “splat!” (*clap hands once*)

LG Help children build a firm foundation by telling them the stories that Jesus told and by modeling the behaviors—prayer, study, and service—that put Jesus’ words into action.

2. Build House on a Rock

B

Remind the children that Jesus told a story about a wise person and a foolish person. Ask the children to recall what the wise person did. Suggest, if necessary, that the wise person built a house on a rock, and it stood firm in the storm. Comment that Jesus said the wise person is the one who listens to him and follows what he says to do.

Tell the children they will make a house on a rock to remember to do what Jesus says. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the picture of the house. Read the tabs on the house: “Do what

Jesus says!” After the children have colored their houses, help them cut out their house. Show the children how to fold along the dashed lines to make their house. Fold the bottom tabs out, not inside the house, so the children may see the words.

Give each child a piece of brown or gray construction paper to be the rock the house is built on. Have the children tape or glue the bottom tabs to the construction paper rock.

Encourage the children to take their houses home and tell the story of the two houses—one on rock and one on sand—to their families. Remind them that the wise person is like the one who built the house on the rock and does what Jesus says!

3. Doing What Jesus Says

LG

Play a game to practice listening to Jesus and acting on his words. Have the children stand up and spread out in the room. Tell them that you will play a game like “Simon Says.” When they hear, “Jesus says . . .,” they should act out what Jesus is telling them to do. If you give a direction without saying, “Jesus says . . .,” they should not follow it. Here are some ideas:

- ✎ Jesus says, “Help your neighbor.”
- ✎ Jesus says, “Pray to God.”
- ✎ Yell at your friend.
- ✎ Jesus says, “Read the Bible.”
- ✎ Jesus says, “Take care of animals.”
- ✎ Stomp your feet.
- ✎ Jesus says, “Shake hands with a neighbor as a sign of peace.”
- ✎ Cross your arms and act angry.
- ✎ Jesus says, “Praise God.”

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of the story about two houses. Engage the children in conversation as they color by using the following wondering questions.

- ✎ I wonder, “Who is wise?”
- ✎ I wonder, “What does this story about two houses tell us about what we need to do?”
- ✎ I wonder, “What can I do to follow Jesus?”

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.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Have the children help clean. Use this simple rhyme to encourage them to clean up:

Child of God, child of grace,
clean up your place!
Child of God, child of grace,
make a clean space!

Sing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**MM 19; SCM 18**—together while the children serve and enjoy the snack.

After the snack, wonder together what we did today that would be something Jesus would like us to do. Listen attentively as they tell you. Then tell the children what you thought. You might say, “I think we were good listeners to Jesus’ words,” or “I noticed we were kind to one another, and Jesus wants us to be kind.”

Sit in a comfortable position and tell the children to find a comfortable listening position. Breathe deeply and sit up so everyone can see every other face. Say: “When we pray, we tell God about what makes us happy and what makes us sad.”

Mention something that makes you happy and something that makes you sad (perhaps a recent event in your community or the world). Ask the children what things make them happy or sad. After your conversation, pray together.

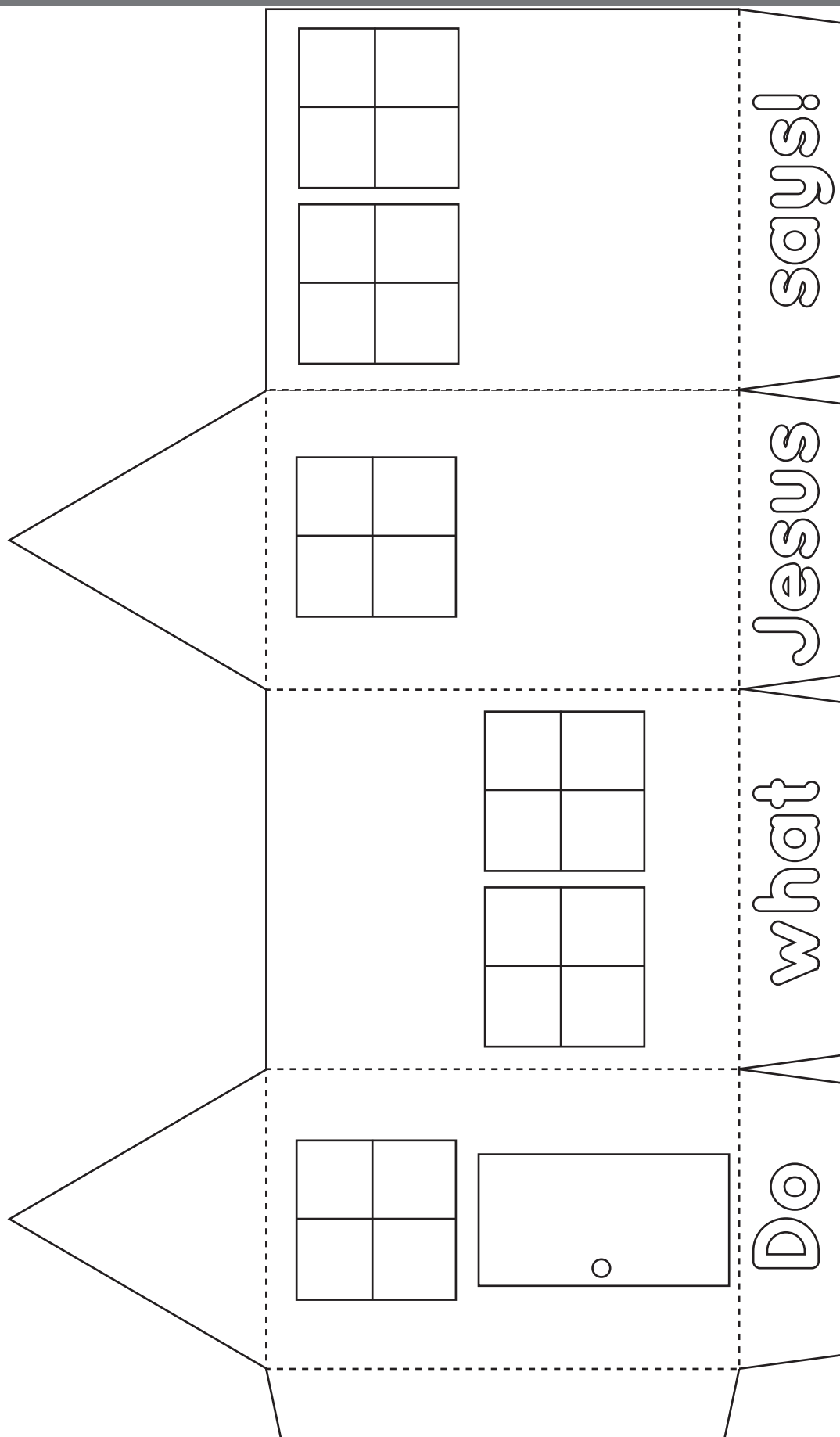
To conclude the prayer, you might say:

Thank you, God, for Jesus and his words and actions,
teaching us how to be his followers. Help us make wise
choices and do what Jesus would like us to do. Amen.

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), you are a beloved child of God. Find ways to follow Jesus this week. The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email 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).



The Two Houses



Jesus tells a story about two houses.

