



You Are the Messiah!

Goal: To practice declaring that Jesus is the Messiah.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 16:13–20

This story delves into theological themes beyond the knowledge of children, so this session is about verses 13–16, where Jesus asks the disciples to identify who Jesus is. “Who am I?” is a question children can entertain, about themselves and about Jesus.

Peter was a key figure throughout the ministry of Jesus and in the early church. He is credited with making the first clear confession of faith in Jesus; it is to Peter that the reply “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) is attributed.

Christ is not Jesus’ last name! In biblical terms, the Christ is God’s anointed one, the person sent to save God’s people. When Peter said, “You are the Christ,” he proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, the one God promised to send to the Jews to lead them in God’s way. *Christ* is the Greek word for *Messiah*. Because the New Testament was written in Greek, Jesus’ followers began to call him “Christ” or “Jesus Christ.”

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children have varying images of who they are. The youngest children are sorting out who they are in relationship to family members and a small community of people outside their home. Older children are struggling to establish an identity of their own, and beginning to feel the pressure of their peers to conform.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the third Sunday in Lent. You have an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider how Jesus wants us to live. When children name who Jesus is for them, the response from God is to call them “beloved child.” Explain that, because we know that Jesus was sent by God, God knows us as beloved children. If they are confused about “beloved,” say that it is another way of saying that God loves us. Ask, “Who are we?” and prompt the children to answer, “We are God’s beloved children.” As you affirm each one’s uniqueness, also emphasize the gift of our diversity. We don’t have to look the same, be the same, or act the same to be one in Jesus Christ. God’s love in Jesus is what brings us together, even in our differences.

Dear God, help me to be a disciple of Jesus and declare that he is the Messiah in my life and my way of living. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2019–2020

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 3, 3a, 3b, 22,
25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: church pictorial
directory or pictures of
familiar people in the
congregation

choice 2: adhesive
name tags

choice 3: several shapes
and sizes of mirrors

Exploring

choice 3: adhesive
name tags

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

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!

Before the session, obtain a church pictorial directory, if your church has a current one. If not, take pictures of ten or twelve people who are familiar to the children and print the pictures.

Write the word **YES** in large letters on a sheet of paper and the word **NO** in large letters on another sheet of paper. Use in “Hearing the Story.”

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

C **LD**

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 a story about Jesus wondering about who people say he is.

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

- 1. Who is that?**—Using a church pictorial directory or pictures of familiar people, have the children identify the people and tell how they know them.
- 2. Who are you?**—Set out adhesive name tags and markers. Invite the children to write their names on the name tags and put them on, then introduce themselves to others and learn their names.
- 3. Look at you!**—Invite the children to look at themselves and each other in the mirrors. They might want to make silly faces, or pretend to be someone else. Ask, “Who do you see in the mirror?”

T *When lining up, consider setting an order each time. For example, one time have children wearing blue line up first; another time have children whose name starts with J line up first. Engaging them while they transition lends order and draws attention away from undesired behavior.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Hello, Hello! How Are You?”—**MM 24**; **SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

All of Me

MS L

Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

My hands are for clapping. (*clap hands*) /
My arms can hug tight. (*hug yourself*) /
My fingers can wiggle, (*wiggle fingers*) /
or I can turn out the light. (*pretend to turn off a light switch*) /
My legs are for hopping. (*hop*) /
My eyes help me see. (*cup your eyes with your hands*) /
I love my body (*cross arms over chest*) /
because God made me. (*raise arms in the air*) /

Child of God

MS L

Invite the children to stand with you and follow your actions as you lead them in a motion poem adapted from the rhyme “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around.” Laugh out loud and rejoice in the grace of God!

Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)
Child of God, child of grace, touch the ground. (*touch the floor in front of you*)
Child of God, child of grace, reach up high. (*reach arms high above your head*)
Child of God, child of grace, wink one eye. (*wink one eye*)
Child of God, child of grace, climb the stairs. (*use arms and legs to pretend to climb*)
Child of God, child of grace, say your prayers. (*fold hands in front of you*)
Child of God, child of grace, touch your nose. (*touch your nose*)
Child of God, child of grace, touch your toes. (*reach down and touch your toes*)
Child of God, child of grace, knock on wood. (*pretend to knock on a door*)
Child of God, child of grace, we are all good! (*hug yourself*)
Child of God, child of grace, turn around. (*turn around in place*)
Child of God, child of grace, sit right down. (*sit down on floor*)



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.



Hearing the Story

L

Open a Bible to Matthew 16. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Tell the children that today's story is about Jesus wondering who people say he is.

Read **SCM 3**. Ignore the "YES" and "NO" words in the parentheses in this first reading of the story. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Tell the children you will read the story again. Explain that when you hold up the YES sign (**SCM 3a**), they should all shout "Yes!" and when you hold up the NO sign (**SCM 3b**), they should all shout "No!" Read the story again using the cues in the parentheses.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Jesus Is Messiah

T

Before the session, using a white crayon, write JESUS in large letters on white card-stock paper for each child.

Provide watercolor paints, brushes, and water. Encourage the children to discover who the Messiah is! As they paint, the name of JESUS will emerge.

T *Transition times vary, so plan accordingly. Cleanup 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.*

2. Who Do You Say That I Am?

L VI

Gather the children in a circle and tell them that you are going to play a game. You will tell them some things about someone or something, and they should see if they can figure out who or what it is. Use suggestions below. If you have more time, describe more people or the children in your class.

- ▼ I eat worms. I live in a nest. I lay eggs. I sing in the trees. I can fly. (bird)
- ▼ I eat worms. I live in the water. I swim and swim. I have fins and scales. (fish)
- ▼ I have fur and four legs. I wear a collar. I like to chew on bones. I bark sometimes. (dog)
- ▼ I have fur and four legs. I'm very soft, but I have sharp claws. I like to purr. Sometimes I say, "meow!" (cat)
- ▼ I live in a house. I drive a car. I have _____ hair and _____ eyes. (describe yourself, the color of your clothing, and so forth) I teach the (name of the class) at (name of your church).



- ▼ (Describe your pastor or other church person that the children would know.)
- ▼ I was born in Bethlehem in a manger. I healed sick people. I taught people about God's love. I love everyone in the whole world. (Jesus)

VI Sighted children learn by looking at the whole picture before exploring the parts. Many visually impaired children experience things the other way around. Describing color, height, and other physical characteristics may not be helpful. Try describing the person's voice or their role in the child's life. You can help the child put these pieces together by providing extra explanations and giving him or her a chance to explore using other senses.



3. Who You Are



Before the session, make an adhesive name tag for each child with the word Beloved written on it. Leave space for the child's name.

Remind the children that Jesus asked his friends who people thought he was. Jesus knew who he was! He was God's Son, the Messiah. That means that he has a special job to do to tell everyone about God's love.

Ask the children to line up in front of you to receive a blessing. Tell them you are going to ask their name. When they answer, you will write it on a name tag. Then you are going to ask them, "Who are you?" Tell them that they are God's beloved. Explain that *beloved* means that they are very, very loved by God, and that answers the question of who they are.

One by one, ask each child, "What is your name?" When they answer, invite the rest of the children to repeat it. Then ask, "Who are you?" and encourage the answer, "I am God's beloved." Invite the rest of the class to say, "(Name) is God's beloved." Then give the child their name tag to put on.

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of GN 1 and crayons. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "What are the disciples thinking?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Jesus feel when Peter said who Jesus was?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What does the worm hear?"

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.



Ages 3-5

You Are the Messiah!

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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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children to snack time, singing “Thank You, Jesus”—**MM 30; SCM 25**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor.

Ask the children what they will tell their families about today’s story. Accept all responses. Just as Peter knew who Jesus was, who do you say Jesus is?

Enjoy a snack.

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), tell others who Jesus is. The grace of God is with you.”

You Are the Messiah!



Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah!

