



Your God Shall Be My God

Goal: To give thanks for the ways God cares for us through the people around us.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Ruth 1:1-22

The story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, shows us loyalty and love.

Naomi and her husband had moved from Bethlehem to the country of Moab. Elimelech died as did Naomi's two sons, who had married Moabite women. When Naomi could not provide for herself and her daughters-in-law, she decided to return to Bethlehem. Naomi pleaded with them to return to their mothers' homes where they could be safe and remarry. Naomi was worried about their safety since Moabites and Israelites were enemies. Both women initially refused to leave Naomi and said, "We want to go with you and live among your people" (v. 10). But Naomi persisted, saying her life was bitter, so she could not provide for them.

One daughter-in-law leaves. Orpah "kissed her mother-in-law good-by[e], but Ruth held on to her" (v. 14). Ruth said, "I will go where you go, I will live where you live; your people will be my people, your God will be my God" (v. 16). Though they were of different countries, bonds of openness and love between Ruth and Naomi were deep. Ruth wanted to be with Naomi, to be of her people, and even serve Naomi's God. Grace was given; and Ruth and Naomi were grateful to God and each other.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many of the stories in the Old Testament are told to help the people remember who they were in relation to God. We meet people like Naomi and Ruth who are part of the family tree of Jesus. Children can connect with this story by naming people in their family who remind them of Naomi, a woman who loved her family and whose generous spirit, kindness, and faithfulness were known by everyone she met.

Children will also be able to hear the possibilities of living with difference and diversity, and how it's possible to live peacefully with those who might be considered to be an enemy.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The story of Naomi and Ruth helps the children become familiar with two strong women who lived in a culture where it was not at all easy for them to live by themselves. Children will be helped to understand the nature of the culture where men were responsible for taking care of women and what it was like for women like Naomi and Ruth to live on their own without a man to provide for them. They were also brave because of their commitment to live among people considered to be Ruth's enemies. Learning to live with those who are different is still a challenge for us today.

*Loving God, show me now how to relate to the children
so they glimpse your love. Amen.*



Supplies

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio recordings
(see p. vii)

travel objects

candle

green fabric

lemon slices

honey

spoons

optional: pitcher of
water, glasses

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) 2, 14, 27–29,
36–39

Music & Melodies (MM)
2017–2018

Responding

Bonus Activity

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1 on card stock

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post the visual schedule shown in **SCM 36–37** to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM 38–39** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG A B M MS FA

Greet each child with, “Grace be with you,” making certain you know his or her name. Introduce yourself to the children as well.

Ask the children to help set up the worship space. On a small table or tabletop space, place a green fabric and some lemon slices, honey, and spoons.

Place a candle and a Bible on the table. Bookmark Ruth 1.

Help the children make connections and make certain everyone is introduced to someone else. Invite them to sit comfortably in the worship space.

Give each person a spoon with honey on it to taste. Wonder together what sweet foods the children enjoy. Then hand out lemon slices. Provide enough slices for each child to have a taste. Ask: What does it taste like?

Explain that today’s story will introduce someone whose name means “sweet.” At one point, though, her life becomes sad, hard, and bitter, like tasting a lemon.

If desired, give everyone a glass of water (or another taste of honey) to take away the bitter taste.

Singing

Play and sing “For the Beauty of the Earth”—**MM 2; SCM 28**. Wonder together what parts of the creation we could help to beautify and preserve.

Praying

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to prayer time by naming one sweet thing that happened to them or someone they love. Then ask them (if they choose) to name one bitter thing that has happened. Offer your own sweet and bitter prayer concerns.

When all have had a turn, invite the group to join together in a prayer of thanks for all sweet and bitter moments, knowing that in all things God works for good. Pray:

Thank you, God, for our family and friends.

Thank you, God, for our homes.

Thank you, God, for caring for us.

Amen.

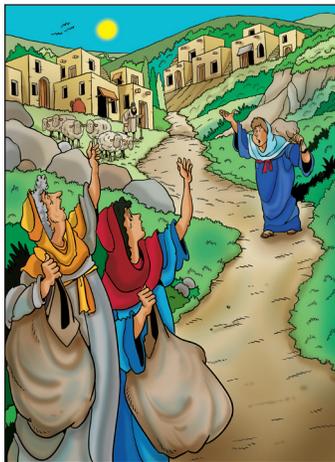


Preparing to Hear the Story

C L

Ask the children if they can remember a time when they were very thirsty or very hungry. Wonder what it would be like if you had to walk through a desert to find water and food.

Say that today's story takes place in two places: Moab and Bethlehem. Wonder aloud what the children know about Bethlehem. Using **SCM 14**, find Moab and Bethlehem. Measure the distance using the map scale, and compare the distance between them with places the children travel for vacation or to visit family or friends. Wonder together if it would be sweet or bitter to have to walk that far.



Hearing the Story

C L

Provide paper and crayons. Invite the children draw a road from biblical times.

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the book mark. Read the book's name (Ruth).

Read **SCM 2** or ask a volunteer to read. Use your voice and expressions to make the story lively. Conclude the reading with, "Word of wisdom, word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite the children to act the story out. Post the drawings of biblical-era roads to use as a backdrop. Let the children volunteer for the various roles. Ask the children to recall the events of the story in order. Invite them to suggest actions for the actors. Enjoy the play.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C L

Read Ruth 1:16 from the Common English Bible:

Wherever you go, I will go;
and wherever you stay, I will stay.
Your people will be my people,
and your God will be my God.

Help children remember Ruth 1:16 by reading the first part of each phrase and having them repeat the second part. Then form two groups that take turns providing the first part. After a few repetitions, they will be able to say verse 16.

Wonder aloud why Ruth insisted on going to Bethlehem with Naomi. Take turns describing the kind of love that Naomi and Ruth had for each other. Wonder together how Naomi and Ruth's love reflects God's love for us.

Singing

Sing "Wherever I May Wander"—**MM 1; SCM 27**. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Play with the children "Where You Go," which is much like the game "Follow the Leader." Have one child be the leader. That child gets to lead the others around the learning area. The followers do whatever the leader does. Where the leader stops, they stop. What the leader says, they say. Give each child a chance to be the leader.

After playing the game, wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, "What do you like about being the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What do you like about following the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What would you do if the leader tried to lead you someplace dangerous?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How would you know you could trust the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Ruth know she could follow Naomi?"

Praying God's Grace

Show the children how to cut light blue construction paper into teardrop shapes about 4" long. Cut enough to have three teardrops for each child. Print the names of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah on newsprint. Have the children write one of the names at the top of separate teardrops.

Invite the children to tell how the story made them feel. Then suggest that Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah probably had many sad times. Let the children name why each woman might have felt sad. On the teardrops, have the children write or draw words or images that show how the women cared for each other in their sad times. Say a prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah. Help everyone who is sad today. Show us how to be good friends with people who are sad. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Display the teardrops somewhere in your meeting space.

Offering God's Grace

Provide materials for the children to make caring bracelets to give to someone who cares for them. Show the children how to cut $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces of drinking straws (solid colorful ones if available) to make beads. Invite the children to think of a caring act for each bead they string on a pipe cleaner. Finally, have the children twist the ends of the pipe cleaner together to form a bracelet. As the children work, wonder:

- ▼ I wonder, "What makes someone good at caring?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Who cares for you?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Which caring friend could you give this bracelet to? Why?"

Bonus Activity

Help the children think about the people who care for them and for whom they care. Provide copies of **GN 1** copied on card stock. Help the children cut out the mobile shapes.

Invite the children to draw pictures or write the names of people they trust on the back of the mobile shapes.

When the mobiles are finished, invite each child to tell about one person who helps them and one person they help.

Hang the mobiles in the learning area as reminders of the story of Ruth and Naomi, and of the people the children trust.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Sing "God Is So Good"—**MM 3; SCM 29**—together

Explain that you are going to say a prayer together. You will say a line and the children will repeat it at (/).

God called Naomi and Ruth's names. /

God calls my name, too. /

Naomi and Ruth listened to God. /

I listen to God. /

God cared for Naomi and Ruth. /

God cares for us, too. /

As you send them forth, say to each one:

(Name), listen for God's call to care for other people.

Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org.

