



Welcome the Stranger

Goal: To offer God's grace in the kindness we show to others.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Ruth 2:1-4, 14-23; 4:13-22

When Ruth and Naomi needed grain, Ruth said, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers" (2:2; see Leviticus 19:9-10). She came to the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelech. Boaz was kind and granted Ruth special privileges to glean in his field for the whole harvesttime.

This led to their marriage and the birth of their child. Naomi had a son, named "Obed" (4:17). Obed was a comfort and fulfillment to Naomi. He represented continuity of the family line and was a gift of grace to Naomi—and Ruth.

Boaz welcomed the stranger, the foreigner Ruth, and provided for her. He offered grace in caring for her and, more broadly, in fulfilling his role as a relative of Elimelech as a family protector. Boaz was a "redeemer" as "next of kin." He provided God's grace in caring for Ruth and Naomi, for which they were grateful.

Obed became the father of Jesse, the father of David, and was of the family line into which Jesus was born—more grace and gratitude!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

This will be an interesting story for the children to follow as they continue learning about what happens with Naomi and Ruth. Older children will be able to think about the characters, the setting, and the plot of the story. Younger children will be able to tell the many kind things Boaz did so that Ruth and Naomi would be able to live well and safely in their home. Showing them the first chapter of Matthew so they can see how this family fits into the family tree of Jesus will help them remember these two remarkable women.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Where would we be in life without a helper? In some ways, that sums up this story. Children who grow up being invited to help others and learning how to work together have life skills that will be with them all their lives. The story of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi is rich with examples of this type of help and kindness toward others. Children can identify the ways that these characters exhibited the qualities of a helper. This story helps children understand the ways that God wants us to live in this world.

Loving God, as I think about your steadfast love, I yearn for relationships with such strong love too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 7, 15, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

Guided Play

choice 1: **SCM 7a**

choice 2: children's story Bibles such as *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim; children's books about Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz (optional)

choice 3: bell

Exploring

choice 1: paper plates, plastic forks, copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

choice 2: refrigerated crescent rolls, waxed paper, plastic knives, baking sheets, pot holders, spatula, small serving plates, internet-connected device

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!

You may want to obtain *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), available at www.pcusastore.com.

“Exploring God's Grace” choice 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

TD **LD** **LG** **F** **FM**

Greet children as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell them that today's story is about Naomi, Ruth, and a man named Boaz. Boaz helped Ruth and Naomi. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Making Bread**—Show the children **SCM 7a** and explain how wheat becomes bread. (Grains of wheat are harvested, ground into flour, made into dough, and baked into bread.) Give the children play dough and invite them to use their imaginations to make wheat into bread.
- 2. Reading Corner**—Set up a space with floor pillows and several children's Bibles open to the story of Ruth. Invite the children to look at the pictures of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. Provide a children's Bible and some other children's books such as *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim; *Ruth Takes Care of Naomi* by Joy Melissa Jensen; *Ruth and Naomi* by Karen Williamson; *Tea with Milk* by Allen Say; and *Domitila: A Cinderella Tale from the Mexican Tradition* by Connie McLennan.
- 3. Acknowledging Kindness**—Invite the children to play with blocks or toys. Pay attention to kindness happening among the children. Acknowledge and praise kindness. Ring a bell and say the child's name. Children will want to be seen and acknowledged and will begin to do acts of kindness.



- T** Provide nonverbal and verbal cues before transitions. Using the visual schedule with the arrow, point to and note, “Story time is next.”

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2**; **SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Calling the Children

F A

Instruct the children to walk around the room. Tell them that you will call them one by one to join you in the story corner. Call each child by name. When all the children are gathered, line them up by height. Then have them mix up, and line them up by age (as best you can). Invite them to sit down.

We Are God’s Family

L

Say the action poem and invite the children to follow your motions:

You and you and you and you (*point to those in the circle*)
are part of God’s big family. (*hug yourself*)
I stretch my arms to hold you all, (*stretch arms around each child on each side*)
a great big circle we will be. (*all hold hands together*)
God’s arms reach around the world (*stretch arms out wide*)
and hold each child in loving care. (*hug yourself*)
For God gives us all we need each day (*pat yourself on the head*)
and God loves it when we share. (*hug yourself and then stretch arms out wide*)



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

L MS

Open the Bible to Ruth 4 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about Naomi, Ruth, and a man named Boaz. In this story, they will hear how Boaz welcomed Ruth and helped her in her new home.

Read **SCM 7**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again and invite the children to stand and do the following motions each time they hear the names Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz:

- ▼ Naomi—put hands on head like wearing a head scarf
- ▼ Ruth—gather wheat
- ▼ Boaz—open arms in welcome



EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Ruth Gleaning Wheat

L FM

Give each child a sheet of paper and a plastic fork. Pour some yellow and brown paint on a paper plate. Show the children how to dip the back of the fork into the paint and press the tines onto their paper to make sheaves of wheat.

As their wheat pictures are drying, hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the picture of Ruth with the grain bag on her shoulder.

Remind the children that Ruth went into the fields to gather the wheat that Boaz told his workers to leave for her and Naomi.

After the children have colored their pictures, cut out the picture of Ruth with the banner that says, “Boaz was kind to Ruth.” Tell the children to glue their picture of Ruth to their picture of wheat.



2. Making Bread

FA TD

Give each child a section of dough on a sheet of waxed paper and a plastic knife, and let them cut small triangles of dough.

Starting at the wide base of the triangle, roll the dough into miniature crescent roll shapes.

Bake according to package directions. Because these are miniature rolls, check five minutes early.

While the bread is baking, talk about how wheat becomes flour and how flour is used to make the dough. Watch the YouTube video “Millstones—Wheat Flour Milling” (bit.ly/MillingGrain) to show the children how wheat becomes flour using a millstone. If time permits, watch a modern-day explanation of how wheat becomes flour using the YouTube video “Episode 5 About Milling” (bit.ly/ModernMilling).

Use a spatula to put the rolls on serving plates. Allow the rolls to cool. Serve some of the rolls at snack time.

After class, share the rest of the rolls with another class, people arriving or leaving church, or the children’s parents.

3. Using the Grain to Make Bread

Ask the children if they know how Ruth used the wheat grain she gathered. Tell them, if necessary, that wheat is ground into flour to make bread. When Boaz left grain for Ruth to gather, he was making sure she had food to eat.

Sing “This Is the Way We Make Our Bread” to the tune of “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush.” Use the suggested motions or make up your own with the children.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



This is the way we gather the grain, gather the grain, gather the grain.

This is the way we gather the grain, so early in the morning.
(*pantomime cutting the grain and gathering it in a bundle*)

This is the way we grind our seed, grind our seed, grind our seed.

This is the way we grind our seed, so early in the morning.
(*on bended knees, pantomime grinding the flour with a stone*)

This is the way we mix our bread, mix our bread, mix our bread.

This is the way we mix our bread, so early in the morning.
(*pantomime mixing dough*)

This is the way we build our fire, build our fire, build our fire.

This is the way we build our fire so early in the morning.
(*pantomime placing logs and building a fire*)

Now we will bake and eat our bread, eat our bread, eat our bread.

Now we will bake and eat our bread, so early in the morning.
(*pantomime eating bread*)

This is the way we welcome our friends, welcome our friends, welcome our friends.

This is the way we welcome our friends, to our family table.
(*give hugs, high fives, fist bumps, and so forth to others*)

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.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Ruth and Boaz. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “How did Ruth feel when Boaz invited her for lunch?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Were other people gleaning the fields with Ruth?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Boaz feel meeting a stranger from another land?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as walking in place, bending down to touch the ground, stretching from side to side, and so forth.*



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, and listen to “Care Enough to Care”—**MM 27; SCM 23**. Wonder together how we can care for others as Boaz cared for Ruth.

Call the children to snack time. Enjoy the miniature crescent rolls. Tell the children that Naomi and Ruth were thankful for how God took care of them through the kindness of others, especially Boaz. Ask the children who has been kind to them, and encourage the children to thank those people.

Invite the children to take turns saying something they are thankful for as your prayer today.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), be kind to others. The grace of God is with you.”



Welcome the Stranger



Boaz welcomed Ruth into his fields.

