



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, 7a, 15, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

pipe cleaners (4 per
child)

candle

green cloth

Responding

Celebrating

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1–2; **SCM 7b, 7c**

Offering

wrapping paper

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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.

Before the session, scatter pipe cleaners around the space, enough for each child to have four pipe cleaners.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

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.

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship center with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Have several volunteers practice the Scripture reading for today.

Tell the children that the practice of *gleaning* happens in today’s story. Ask if anyone can tell what gleaning is. Explain, if necessary, that long ago, and still today, farmers leave some of their produce for people who need food. In times past, farmers would leave some of their crop for people to gather. Today, farmers donate some of their crop to food banks.

Invite the children to imagine they are hungry travelers who have come upon a field with stalks of grain (pipe cleaners) left for them. To be sure that everyone who has need gets a portion, tell the children to take four stalks of grain each. Have the children hold on to their grain for use in “Hearing the Story.”

Singing

Play and sing “Wherever I May Wander”—**MM 2**; **SCM 15**. Invite the children to wander about your gathering space, making motions that reflect the lyrics.

Praying

Turn on the candle. Allow children time to talk about sweet and bitter moments in the past week. 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

Invite the children to tell what they know about Ruth and Naomi. Use the following points, if necessary, to share their story:

- ▼ Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law and both their husbands had died.
- ▼ Naomi decided to return to her hometown of Bethlehem.
- ▼ She urged her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to stay in their own country.
- ▼ Ruth chose to go with Naomi, to claim Naomi's home, community, and God as her own.
- ▼ As they entered Bethlehem, they were poor, widowed, hungry travelers.

Show the children **SCM 7a**. Give the children an opportunity to tell what they see happening in the photo. Locate and read Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19, which explain the custom of gleaning. Explain that Ruth gleanes a field in today's story.



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 C L

Invite a volunteer to find Ruth 2 in the Bible. Ask volunteers to read Ruth 2:1–4, 14–23; 4:13–22. Conclude the reading 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 center.

Read the story again using **SCM 7** or listen to the story audio. Invite the children to form groups of two or three children. Divide the story into the same number of sections as groups and assign a section to each group. Using their pipe cleaners, have them form figures to retell their section of the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace C LG L

Wonder together about Ruth and Naomi's situation:

- ▼ I wonder, "Why did Ruth need to gather grain in the field?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did it feel doing such hard work?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did she feel about coming to Bethlehem?"

Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ Where do you see God's grace in the story?
- ▼ How can you offer kindness to others as a sign of God's grace?

LG *It's important to help children understand the need to share, act generously, and give freely. They learn that they are responsible for their part in creating a caring community. Kindness and generosity are contagious.*



Singing

L

Play and listen to “Care Enough to Care”—**MM 27; SCM 23**. Teach this song a few words or phrases at a time using **SCM 23**. Play the song again, encouraging the children to sing along.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace

C LG

At the top of a sheet of newsprint, print “People help others by . . .” Have the children complete this sentence, thinking first about the ways Naomi and Ruth helped each other. As you consider Ruth’s and Naomi’s actions, ask:

- ▼ How did Ruth and Naomi show their love for each other?

Print responses on the newsprint. When the children have come up with several ideas about the ways Naomi and Ruth showed a loving relationship, have them think of their own family relationships or friendships. Ask how the children know that someone cares about them and how they show someone that they care. Add their answers to the newsprint.



Celebrating God’s Grace

F

*Before the session, tape **SCM 7b** and **SCM 7c** together to make the gameboard. Cut the stalks of wheat from **GN 1**, and the game markers and die from **GN 2**.*

Remind the children that Ruth gleaned grain from the field for food to eat. Begin the Gleaning Kindness Game by having all players scatter the wheat in the field in the middle of the board. The object of the game is to pick up all the grain and place it in the basket. Each player will roll the die and move forward that number of spaces. If they land on a space with words, they can read or have someone help them read the directions. The game is finished when all the grain is in the basket.

- F *Sometimes children protest that they’re being treated unfairly when it may be only that they’re not getting what they want. When self-interest overrides attempts to be fair, ask them to flip the situation and look at it from the other person’s perspective.*



Offering God's Grace

LG

Recall that Ruth showed her friendship for Naomi by traveling with her to a strange land. Wonder together how we use our hands to offer our friendship to others. Ask the children to name some ways we do this. Help the children trace their hands on different pieces of wrapping paper. Glue the hands in a pattern around the edge of a sheet of newsprint. In the center of the sheet write, “Our Offerings of Friendship.” Put the names of the children near or on the hands. Hang the poster in your space as a reminder to offer friendship to others.

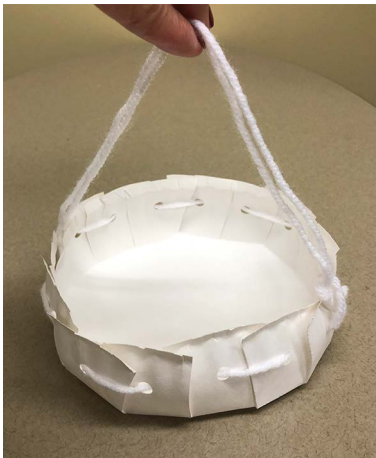
Extra Activity

F LG

Before the session, make enough copies of GN 3 and cut them apart so each child has seven stalks of wheat. Each child will collect seven random stalks, so it is fine if they get the same activity on multiple pieces.

Tell the children that they will make a small basket to help them glean ways to act kindly using the following directions:

- ▼ Decorate the back side of a paper plate like a basket using markers.
- ▼ Make about fifteen cuts in the paper plate at regular intervals of about four segments, cutting from the edge just into the inner circle.
- ▼ Punch a hole in the center of each flap and fold it up.
- ▼ Using a 3-foot length of yarn, lace the plate using a simple in-and-out pattern. (Consider wrapping one end of the yarn with tape to make lacing easier.)
- ▼ Pull the yarn tight so that both ends meet evenly and tie together, forming the basket.
- ▼ Lace the ends of the remaining length of yarn through the hole on the opposite side of the basket and tie in place, forming a handle for the basket.



While the children are working, scatter the wheat around the room. Wonder together about ways that people showed each other kindness in the story and ways that we can show kindness today. Tell the children to glean seven stalks of wheat from the scattered stalks around the room. Encourage those who have found seven stalks to help those who need more.

Challenge the children to pull one stalk of wheat from their basket each day and do the act of kindness on it.

LG *Providing opportunities for children to offer help, express generosity, and do simple acts of kindness helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

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

Sing “Care Enough to Care”—**MM 27; SCM 23.**

Tell the children that:

- ▼ Ruth showed Naomi kindness.
- ▼ Naomi helped Ruth.
- ▼ Boaz showed Ruth kindness.
- ▼ Ruth and Boaz helped Naomi.
- ▼ Kindness is catchy.
- ▼ One kindness leads to another.

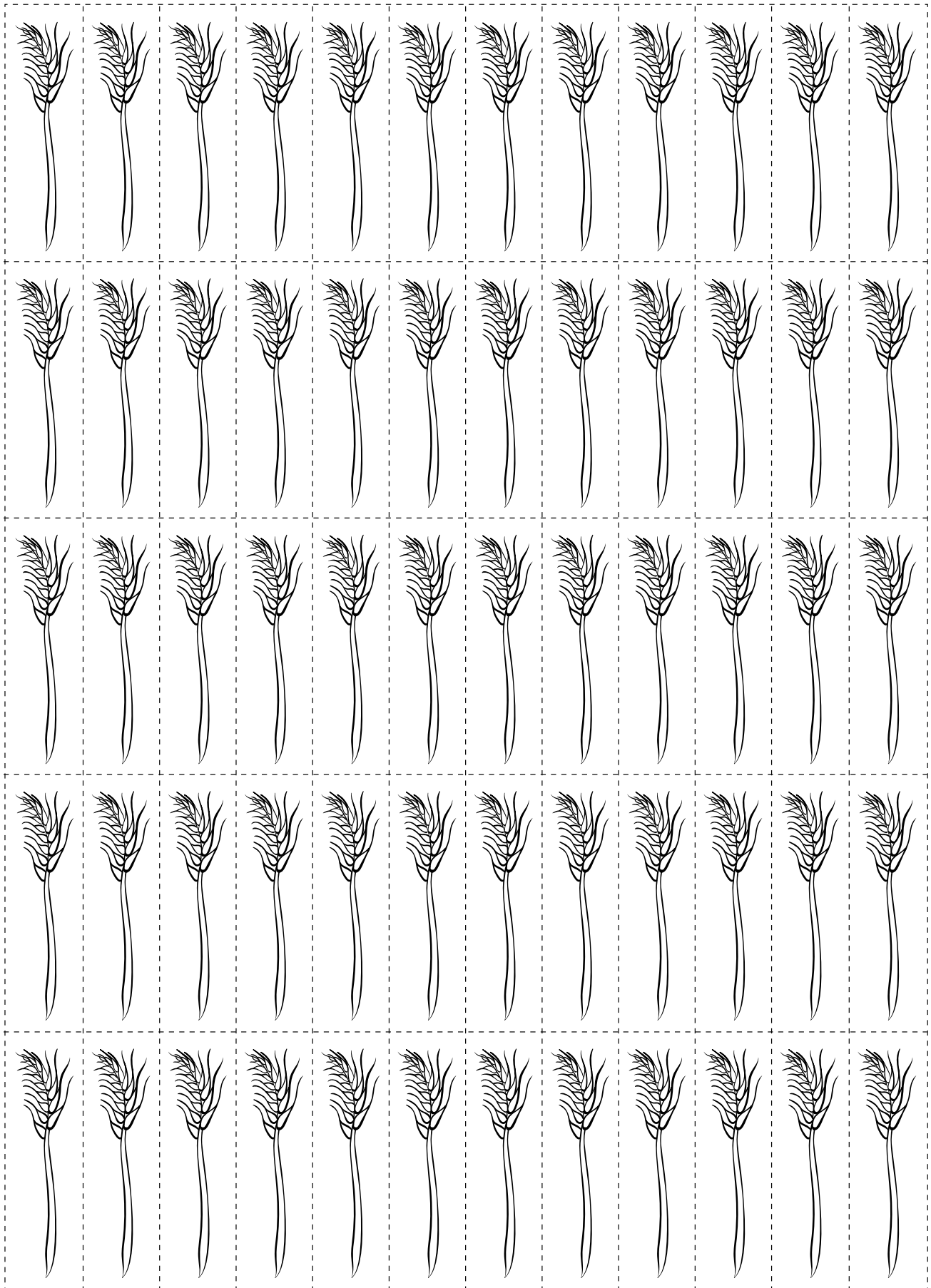
To pray, invite the children to repeat each line after you:

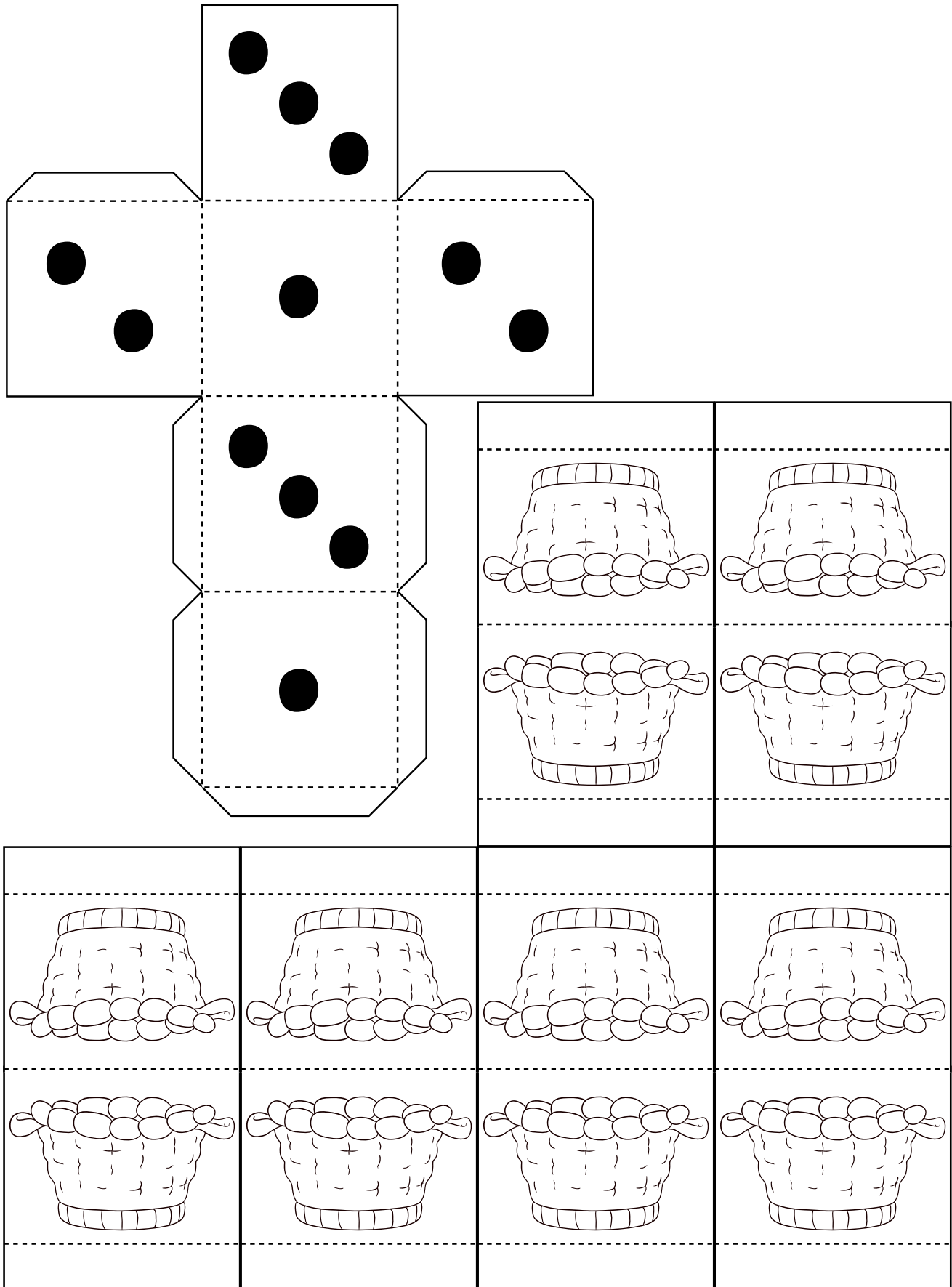
Dear God, you want us to love others /
as we love ourselves. /
May we show kindness to one another. /
May we be grateful when we receive kindness. /
Amen. /

Bless each child as they leave, saying, “(Name), you are a child of God. Be kind to others.”



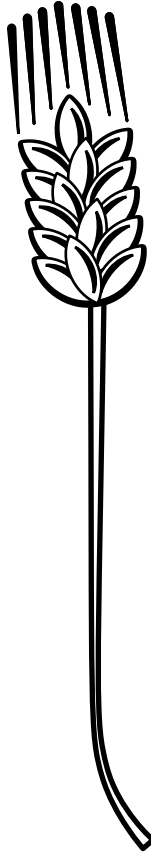
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



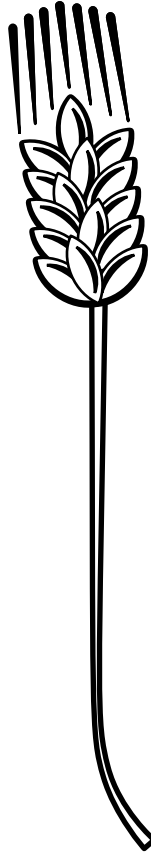




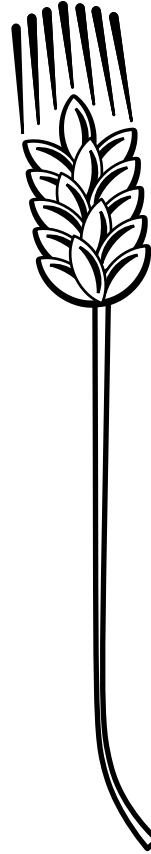
Hold the door open
for someone.



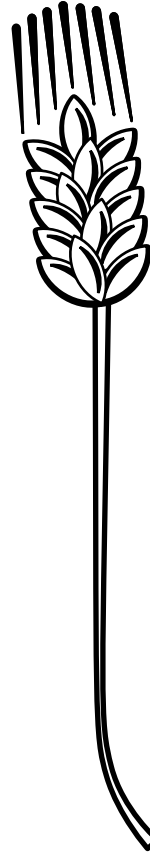
Thank someone.



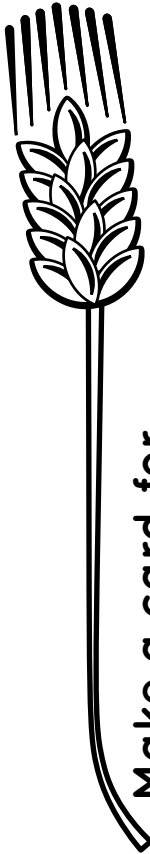
Clean up after someone.



Give a compliment.



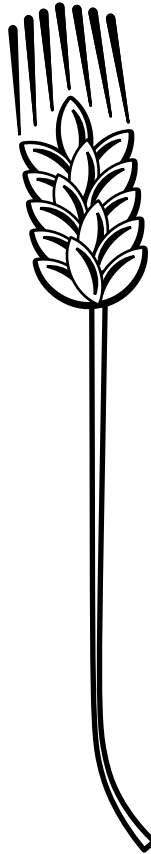
Help someone before they ask.



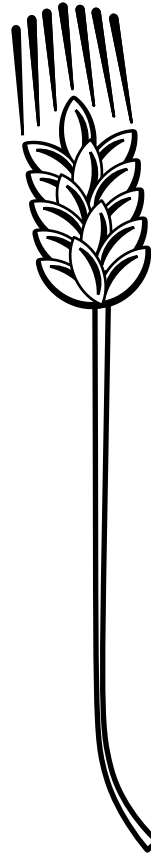
Make a card for
someone and give it to them.



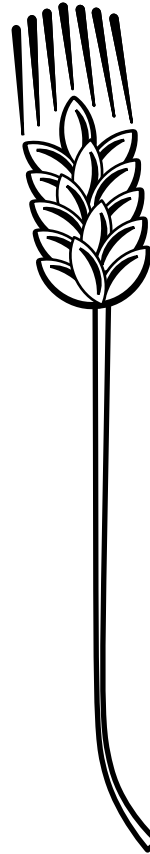
Smile at someone
new and say hello!



Ask someone about their day.



Give someone a high five.



Pick up litter.

