



God Speaks in Stillness

Goal: To practice attentiveness to God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In 1 Kings 19:1-18

King Ahab was perhaps the worst of all the kings of Israel. His wife, Jezebel, was a Baal worshiper (*Baal* means owner or lord). In Canaan, the Baals were nature gods, owners of particular localities, and controllers of fertility. This religion focused on the cycles of the year, and the people practiced cult activities such as child sacrifice and prostitution to ensure the coming of rains. Ahab and Jezebel imposed this entire system on Israel.

The prophet Elijah spoke out against these practices. He even stood before King Ahab and prophesied a drought. It came, but the people remained unconvinced. King Ahab blamed Elijah and instituted a manhunt for him. The time arrived for God to end the drought and show King Ahab the error of his ways. Elijah proclaimed that Ahab forsook the commandments of God. Elijah commanded King Ahab to meet him at Mount Carmel. The king brought four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah. The term *Asherim* (Hebrew plural of Asherah) refers to male and female fertility symbols associated with the worship of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. The “showdown on Mount Carmel” proceeded. God destroyed the Baal prophets. For this, Jezebel vowed to take Elijah’s life. Elijah witnessed the glory, but his confidence in God soon failed. Elijah ran for his life, suddenly too fearful for his own safety to trust God, who had just given him victory!

Where would Elijah find grace? In the stillness of God’s steadfast presence!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Peer pressure and uncertainties are some dominant factors in the lives of children today. Children can identify with fear and apprehension, though they may not name it so. Though their issues may be like Elijah’s or different (or both), they are real. Moreover, the children’s apprehensions know no socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, or “place” boundaries. Many children experience self-doubt. Even though some of these fears are unexpressed, they are with the children. They seek comfort and reassurance. Give substantive thought to how to help children be attentive to God’s steadfast presence, especially in the still and quiet times.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children are eager for and open to discovery. Lead them gently and securely into discovering some of their fears and naming them. They can pray to God about the fear, read about biblical people who faced fears, seek advice from parents and other trusted adults, find their own quiet space where they can talk with God about their fears, and then trust God to help them handle and overcome fears. When listening for God’s answer, encourage the children to realize that a solution to any fear may come to mind the moment they pray about it, or it may come awhile later. But it will come.

*O God, lead me into a quiet place so that I might know
and trust your presence during my deepest fears. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 10, 15, 17

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

Exploring

choice 2: goldfish
crackers, floor pillow,
red and blue crepe
paper streamers

choice 3: copies of **GN 2**

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

If you have a leader or volunteer available to read a story, have them read *Where Are You Hiding, God?* by Elisabeth Zartl (pcusastore.com). It is a wonderful book about a young girl looking for God and then finding God all around and within herself.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner 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 with special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choices 1 and 2 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

SD

Greet the 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 the parents/caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell the parents today’s story is about the prophet Elijah and how he looked for God and found God in the quiet.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

- 1. Elijah Looks for God**—Tell the children that today’s story is about a man named Elijah who lived long, long ago. Explain that Elijah wanted to find God and looked for God in many places. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to follow the path and see where Elijah looked and then found God. Suggest that the children color their pictures.
- 2. Rhythm Instruments**—Invite the children to use the rhythm instruments to make different kinds of sounds such as rain—gentle rain and a rain storm; wind—a breeze and howling wind; the earth shaking and rumbling; and fire crackling. Have a conversation about what other sounds they can make that sound like something they know.
- 3. Quiet Corner**—Place pillows on the floor. Have books available. Play quiet music, like “Harp Music.” Invite the children to sit quietly and listen to the music or look at a book.

T *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Thank You, Holy God”—SCM 15. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Follow Me

L MS

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

I am looking for God. (*cup hands around eyes*)
 I am following God. (*march in place*)
 I am learning to share. (*move both hands out with palms up*)
 I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor’s shoulder*)
 I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*)

Hands Go Up

L MS

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

Hands go up. (*raise hands in air*)
 Hands go down. (*move hands to sides*)
 I can turn myself around. (*turn around in a circle*)
 I can stand up. (*place hands on hips*)
 On one shoe. (*stand on one foot*)
 I can listen, (*cup hand by ear*)
 So can you. (*point to another*)
 I can sit. (*sit on floor*)
 I’ll show you how. (*place hands in lap*)
 Bible time is starting now. (*point finger to wrist*)



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

Turn on the candle, saying, “God, your word is our light.” Repeat the phrase, prompting the children to say “light” with you.

Open the Bible to 1 Kings 19 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about the prophet Elijah and how he found God in the quiet.

Read **SCM 10**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

After you have read the story, read it again inviting the children to follow your actions indicated in the parentheses in the story.

Turn off the candle.



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. God Is with Me Always

TD

Before the session, cut up squares of blue, brown, red, and yellow tissue or construction paper. For each child, divide a paper plate in half by drawing a line across the diameter, and then in quarters by drawing a second intersecting line. Cut out a circle from GN 2 for each child.

Remind the children that Elijah thought God might be in the loud and powerful forces of nature: the wind, earth quaking, and fire. But Elijah found God in the quiet. Wonder with the children how God might be all around, in the noisy things and in the stillness.

Give the children the paper plates divided into quarters. Invite them to glue blue paper for wind in one section, brown for earth quaking in another, red for fire in another, and yellow for silence in the last section. When they have finished, give each child the circle from GN 2 and invite them to glue it in the center of their plate. Read what is written on the circle, "God is with me always," and invite the children to read it together.



2. Elijah Finds God

MS L

Set up a simple course, described below, that the children can move through. Remind the children that Elijah was afraid and went to several places to find God. Tell them that they are going to pretend to be Elijah and go looking for God.

Line the children up and describe Elijah's journey to them using the stops on the course. Have them start the course one at a time. Wait about thirty seconds between each start. Have a leader stationed between the stops to help the children remember what to do at each stop.

1. Elijah went to the desert and was tired. Stop to rest on a chair. Count to ten.
2. Elijah woke up and found food and water. Eat five goldfish crackers and drink a small cup of water.
3. Elijah went to the mountain and rested. Lie down and rest on a pillow. Count to ten.
4. Elijah heard wind, felt the earth quake, and saw fire. Wave the blue and red crepe paper streamers and stomp your feet. Have streamers for each child so the children can continue to wave the streamers until everyone is finished with the course.
5. Then there was silence. Everyone stop and be silent! After a few moments of silence, whisper quietly, "God said, 'Elijah, I am with you always!'"



3. Experiencing the Stillness M C

It is not always easy to quiet down young children, but remind them that Elijah was able to find God in the stillness. Invite the children to practice stillness and attentiveness to God with breathing exercises. Suggest that breathing exercises can help a person become calm and focused, and more aware of God within and around us.

Do the following exercises with the children. Lead them in a quiet and relaxed voice, pausing between instructions.

- ▼ **Basic Breathing:** Invite the children to sit in a comfortable position. Tell them to relax their shoulders, arms, and neck. Tell them to breathe in through their nose and out through their mouth. Encourage slow, even breaths by saying, “Breathe in . . . breathe out . . .” several times. Then say, “God is . . . with me,” as they breathe in and out.
- ▼ **Belly Breathing:** Invite the children to lie on their backs on the floor in a comfortable position. Have them place their hands on their bellies. Tell them to breathe in through their nose and out through their mouth. Invite them to be aware of the rise and fall of their bellies with each breath. Say, “God is . . . all around,” as they breathe in and out.

Invite the children to gather and engage them in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ How did it feel to breathe and pay attention to your breath?
- ▼ Did you feel the stillness?
- ▼ How is God with us here?
- ▼ If God is all around, how is God also in the noisy things?
- ▼ How do you find God?

4. Coloring Page C

Hand out **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “How did Elijah feel when he thought that he could not find God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Where can we find God?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Is God with us too?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as hopping up and down, wiggling their nose, wiggling their fingers, and so forth.*

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder 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

Call the children together, singing “God’s Promises”—**SCM 17**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Ask the children where they see God. Remind them, if necessary, that God promises to be with us, that God is all around in the world and in the people God made—in the wind and the noise, and in the quiet moments too.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Invite a child to give a prayer of thanks or use this prayer:

God, we give our thanks:
For food that fills our bellies,
For time with friends and family,
For homes where we find love.
We give our thanks for these.
Amen.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), the grace of God is with you always.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).





God Speaks in Stillness



God speaks to Elijah in the quiet.

