



# God Blesses Ishmael and Isaac

Goal: To know that God loves us.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Genesis 16; 21:1-7, 9-13

God desires peace for all God's children. Love for other people—welcoming them as brothers and sisters—is one of the signs of God's kingdom. We can imagine God's heart breaking when sibling rivalry overtakes and underscores divisions in the human family.

Sarah is learning to trust God, but it is so hard. Sarah gives up on God's promise that she will have a child with Abraham and comes up with her own plan. But God honors Sarah's plan. Sarah insists that Abraham and her slave Hagar produce an heir. When Hagar becomes insolent with Sarah, Sarah deals harshly with Hagar. Hagar flees into the wilderness and meets an angel who instructs her to return to Sarah. A son is born to Abraham and Hagar, and they name him Ishmael, meaning "God hears."

Thirteen years later, Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah. Naming the child Isaac (meaning "laughter") characterizes the old couple's joyous gratitude and reminds Sarah of her initial laughter. Even though jealousy and discord led Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, God's blessing—God's grace—is on both children, Isaac and Ishmael. Indeed, it is on all children.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children may struggle with the thought of Abraham, a parent, deserting a child. Some may have felt or have been deserted by a parent; they may have friends or family members who have experienced such feelings. Others may have experienced desertion or rejection in other ways. Children may hear people comment that certain people are different from, better than, or not as good as others. Some children tease or ridicule others about their families' backgrounds or origins, about their physical attributes, or about their socioeconomic status. The effects of such experiences can range from a momentary sense of sadness to deep pain and affected self-esteem.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be sensitive to the different experiences represented in your group. Help the children see that God remembers them, cares for them, and calls their names even when they feel alone and are unaware of God's presence. There is tremendous security and safety in that knowledge. Help them see the beauty within the diversity that God has made and the image of God in one another. Just as God extends love and hospitality to every person and does not cast us away, you demonstrate God's love when you recognize the worth of every child.

*I praise you, God. Help me understand your unconditional love and empower me to give that love to others. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 3, 3a, 15, 16

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

blanket or mats

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: a variety of  
stickers

choice 2: baby dolls and  
clothes, fabric, blankets,  
baskets or cribs

choice 3: copies of  
**Grace Notes (GN) 1**

## Exploring

choice 1: box with a  
mirror inside

choice 2: **SCM 3b**

choice 3: **SCM 23**

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 that 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.

Before the session, for “Welcoming and Guided Play” choice 1, draw a large first letter of each child’s name on a sheet of paper.

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

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the words “and also with you.”

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about Abraham’s sons, Ishmael and Isaac.

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

1. **Initials**—Provide the sheets of paper with the large letters and a variety of stickers. Help the children find their initial. Allow the children to cover their initial with stickers.
2. **Pretending**—Provide baby dolls and clothes, small pieces of fabric, blankets for wrapping the dolls, and baskets or cribs. Invite the children to pretend that the dolls are babies and that they are the caregivers. Have a conversation about what babies need and about the different ways we show we care for them.
3. **Parents and Children**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons or markers. Invite the children to draw lines between the grown-up animals and the young ones that belong to them and then color the pictures. Help as necessary. Have a conversation about the ways God loves us is by giving us adults who care for us. Wonder with the children about the people who care for them.

**T** *Transitions can be difficult for children. This may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to a child and model and encourage appropriate responses.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

Call the children to the story corner, singing “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands”—SCM 16. Encourage the children to sing along, repeating words and phrases as seems appropriate.

### God Takes Care Song



Sing this song to the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down”:

God takes care of all of us, all of us, all of us.  
God takes care of all of us; God loves you and me!

Join hands and move in a circle to the left as you sing, changing direction with the second line.

Repeat the song, using the names of the children, such as:

God takes care of Jeremy, Jeremy, Jeremy.  
God takes care of Jeremy; God loves Jeremy!

At the words “God loves (*Name*),” drop the joined hands and hug or point to the child you named.

After the song, tell the children that God loves them and takes care of them at church, at home, at school, when they are playing, and when they are asleep. Encourage the children to thank God.

### Echo Prayer



Help the children find a comfortable way to sit. Model good listening skills, such as placing your hands in your lap or raising a hand to signal taking turns to speak.

Call each child by name. Invite the children to say how they are today. Ask: “When you are happy, what do you do?”

Lead the children in an echo prayer, having them repeat each phrase you speak:

Dear God, /  
You made us, /  
You made everything. /  
Thank you for loving us. / Amen.



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](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story

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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 Genesis 21 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible.

Tell children that they are going to hear another Bible story about Abraham and Sarah. Ask them to tell you what they remember about Abraham and Sarah. You might show **SCM 3a** to help them remember.

Show the children the picture on **SCM 3**, telling them the names of the people in the picture and asking them to repeat the names Sarah, Isaac, and Ishmael.

Read **SCM 3**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Pay special attention to making your face smile or frown whenever there is a part of the story that speaks about laughter or about being angry.

To review the story, sing this song to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down":

Abraham and Sarah moved, Sarah moved, Sarah moved.  
Abraham and Sarah moved, and God gave them a home.

Hagar had a baby boy, baby boy, baby boy.  
Hagar had a baby boy; she named him Ishmael.

Sarah had a baby boy, baby boy, baby boy.  
Sarah had a baby boy; she named him Isaac.

Abraham said, "Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you,  
God."

Then they all said, "O thank you, God, for loving all of us."

Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."  
Turn off the candle.

T *Transitions can be difficult situations for children. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands together or stretching.*



## EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



### 1. Children of God

Comment that Isaac and Ishmael were children of God. Mention that you know other children of God.

Invite the children to discover who else is a child of God. Pass the box with the mirror inside. Each child may lift the lid and look inside. Ask: "Who else is a child of God?"

After each child has had a chance to look in the box, ask who they saw. As each child tells who he or she saw, say something such as, "Yes, you have been chosen to be a child of God."

Explain to the children that we all are called to be children of God. Remind the children that God told Abraham that he would have as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren as there are stars in the sky. Just like Isaac and Ishmael, we are part of God's family.

Reinforce that no matter what our family looks like, God loves us.

### 2. God Loves Us



Show the items cut from **SCM 3b** and let the children name each item. Talk about why you need each item. Tell the children that God provides all these things because God loves us.

Put no more than four of the items on the table. Ask the children to close their eyes. Remove one item, placing it behind your back.

Invite the children to open their eyes and tell which item is missing. Repeat using the other items as often as the children find the activity fun and engaging.

### 3. God Gives Us a Gift

Give thanks to God for blessing all the children in the world by singing together "God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)" —**SCM 23**. Remind the children that the song is in English and Spanish, and urge them to sing in both languages. Encourage the children to dance or make motions while singing. Use the words "gift," "mercy," "love," and "grace" as prompts for movement.

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.

### 4. Coloring Page



Hand out **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "What game were Ishmael and Isaac playing?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Why does Sarah look angry?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How does God show love for us?"



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

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

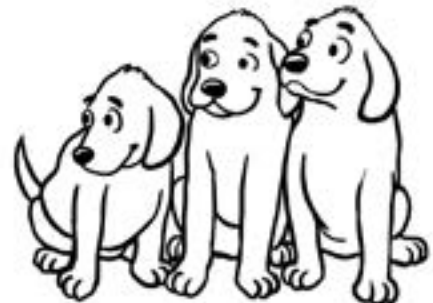
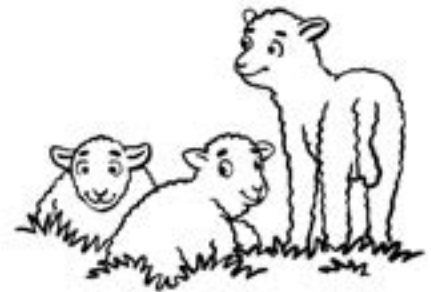
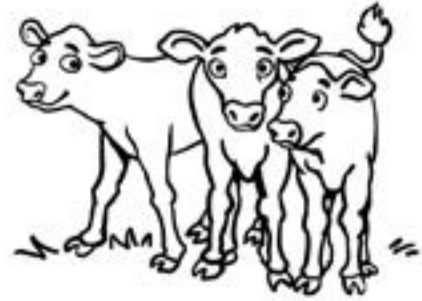
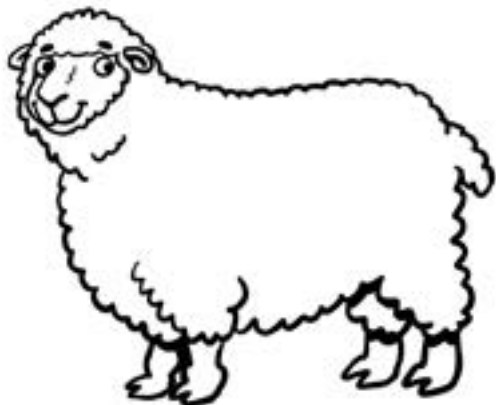
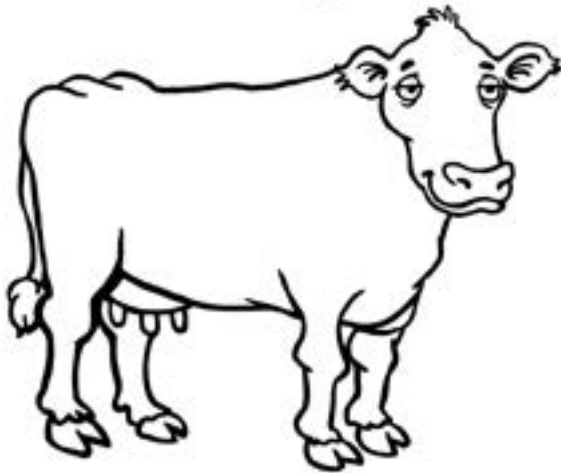
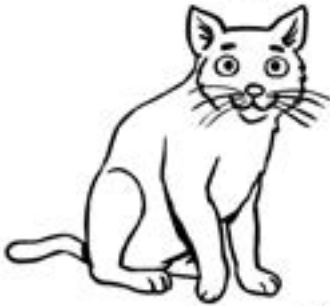
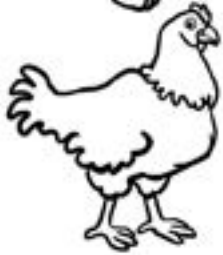


Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

While you serve a snack, sing together “Thank You, Holy God”—**SCM 15**.

Help the children sense that God loves them and cares for them. Say: “I wonder whether something we’ve talked about or done today has reminded you of ways you are God’s child. Can you think of one way you could thank God this week?”

As the children leave, put your hands on each child’s head and give this blessing: “(Name), you are God’s child; may you always know God’s grace.”







# God Blesses Ishmael and Isaac



Sarah looks on, as Ishmael and Isaac play.

