



Your God Shall Be My God

Goal: To trust and follow God.

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" (see v. 10). But Naomi persisted, saying her life was bitter, and she could not provide for them.

One daughter-in-law left. Orpah "kissed her mother-in-law [good-bye], but Ruth clung to her" (v. 14). Ruth said, "Where you go, I will go; / where you lodge, I will lodge; / your people shall be my people, / and 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 families who remind them of Naomi, a woman who loved her family and whose generous spirit, kindness, and faithfulness were known by everyone she met; or Ruth, a brave woman who chose to follow God, even though it meant leaving what was familiar to her.

. . . 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 follow their faith. Naomi did not know where she would be welcome or who would care for her, but she knew God would provide. Ruth wholeheartedly gave herself to God.

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



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 17, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: suitcases

Exploring

choice 1: small pretzels;
round oat cereal, such
as Cheerios; square
corn cereal, such as
Corn Chex; dried
cranberries; mixing
bowls; small measuring
cups or large spoons

choice 2: snack mix
from “Exploring
God’s Grace” choice 1
(optional)

choice 3: balloons or
rubber balls

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

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!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

TD **B** **M** **MS** **F** **FM** **SD**

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 whom you do not know personally. Tell the parents today’s story is about two women named Ruth and Naomi, and how Ruth chose to follow God. Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

- 1. Packing Bags**—Tell the children to pretend that they are going on a trip. Invite them to pack a suitcase. Ask them what they are packing and why they are bringing those items.
- 2. Follow the Leader**—Play “Follow the Leader.” Have the children take turns being the leader.
- 3. Play Dough Families**—Invite the children to make their families out of play dough. Demonstrate by showing them simple shapes and lumps of play dough for members of your family. As they work, engage them in conversation about who is in their families.

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 “Kum Ba Yah (Come by Here)”—**SCM 20**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Come and Hear

MS L A

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” and do the motions indicated. Invite the children to join in with you.

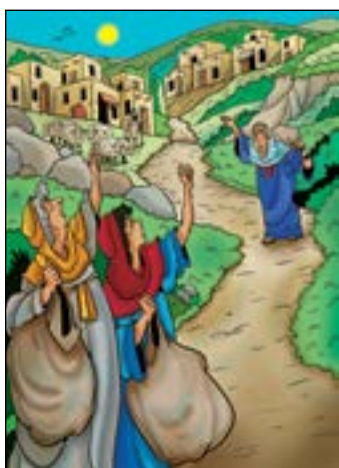
Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*) /
Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the left*) /
Come and hear God’s story. (*walk four steps to the right*) /
Sit down and fold your hands. (*fold your hands in your lap*) /

Follow Me

L M

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*) /



L Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each step.

Hearing the Story

Open the Bible to Ruth 1 so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about two women, Ruth and Naomi, and how Ruth chose to follow God.

Read **SCM 8**. 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 Orpah.

- ▼ Naomi—put hands on head, like a wearing a head scarf
- ▼ Ruth—walk in place
- ▼ Orpah—wave good-bye

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.



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Snacks for the Journey

TD FA

Tell the children that they are going to make a snack mix together. If you are going to do the next activity, “Go on a Journey,” you can tell the children that it is for a journey you will all take together. Hand out paper lunch bags, and have the children decorate their bags. Put each ingredient in a mixing bowl. Instruct the children to take a scoop of each ingredient and put it in their bags. They can close the bag and shake it to mix up the ingredients. Enjoy your snack now or on your journey! If you have plenty, consider making some snack mix for those who take care of other people in the church.

2. Go on a Journey

A B MS FA

Remind the children that Naomi and Ruth went on a long journey back to Naomi’s homeland. Gather the children at the door to your room. Tell them they are going on a journey like Ruth and Naomi. Before they leave, invite them to repeat after you:

On this journey and in my life, /
I will trust and follow God. /

Take the children on a journey around your church. If possible, include these stops along your way:

- ▼ Water fountain—Invite the children to take a drink of water as Naomi and Ruth would have stopped by a stream for a drink of cool water.
- ▼ Climb stairs—Have the children climb up stairs and back down again as Naomi and Ruth would have traveled over mountains.
- ▼ A place to rest—Sit down and rest in a quiet place as Naomi and Ruth would have stopped to rest. Repeat the phrase:

On this journey and in my life, /
I will trust and follow God. /

- ▼ Kitchen—Stop and have your snack mix from above or pretend to break bread as Naomi and Ruth would have stopped to eat.
- ▼ Return to your classroom—Enter the classroom and shout, “Hooray! We’re home!” as Naomi and Ruth would have been greeted with excitement to be home. Repeat the phrase:

On this journey and in my life, /
I will trust and follow God. /

Feel free to add more stops to your journey.



T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as marching, skipping, and crawling around the room.*



3. Stick Together Relay

F B

Before the session, blow up one balloon for every two children. Place a tape line at each end of the room.

Remind the children that Ruth loved Naomi and wanted to stick together with her. Remember what Ruth said:

Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live too.
I will love the people you love. And I will love your God.

Family like Ruth and Naomi stick together. They trust and follow God. Form teams of two, and give each team a balloon. Explain to the children that, in pairs, all of the team members will move the balloon from the first tape line to the other and back, without using their hands, arms, mouths, or feet.

If the balloon falls, the pair must pick it up, and return to the start line before continuing. Encourage cooperation over “winning” the game.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Ruth and Naomi. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- I wonder, “What did Naomi and Ruth see on their journey?”
- I wonder, “How did Ruth feel going to a new land?”
- I wonder, “When are times that you trust and follow God?”

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.



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG FA

Call the children together, singing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate. Ask the children how they might stick together with their families this week and follow God.

Invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer:

Dear God, /
Thank you for loving us. /
Help me to trust /
and follow you /
like Ruth did. /
Amen. /

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

Your God Shall Be My God



Ruth says to Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go. And I will love your God."

