



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, 16, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

dark bedsheets

cloth

candle

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1,
goldfish crackers, pillow,
red and blue crepe
paper streamers

Celebrating

GN 2

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.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **B** **T**

As the children arrive, have loud lively music, as loud as reasonable, playing in the background.

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Part of today’s story takes place in a cave. Invite the children to create a cave using dark bedsheets, chairs, and any other supplies you have in your room. Children will be sitting outside the cave for worship and to hear the story.

Have them create a worship center just outside the cave with a table, a cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Ask children to help prepare today’s activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

When you feel that the group is ready, turn off the music. Invite the children to sit at the entrance to the cave in silence. Allow for fidgeting, until all are settled. Then say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Tell the children that today’s story is about a messenger from God called Elijah who, at a time he was afraid, sought God and found the voice of God in a whisper.

Singing

Elijah knew that his life was in God’s hands. Play “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands”—**SCM 16**—as children listen. Invite them to think about what the song is saying and to create movements. Play the song again, adding the actions that the children created.

Praying

M

Turn on the candle to remind the children that the candle represents God’s light and presence. Encourage a few moments of still silence as children focus on the flame. You can invite one of the children to pray or use the prayer below:

Caring God, we know that you are always with us, but sometimes we get scared and forget. Help us remember, through Elijah’s story, that even when we are scared and life is hard, you are with us and take care of us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story

Comment that today's story tells us about a time when Elijah went to hide in a cave because he was very afraid. Have a conversation about what the sounds of the cave would be like, and if it was dark or cold.

Tell the children that the story they are about to hear continues the story of Elijah. King Ahab is angry with Elijah because Ahab wanted the people to worship his gods, but Elijah had proved that God was the true God. So King Ahab sent his army out to capture Elijah.

Wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, "How did Elijah feel when he was running away?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did God help Elijah during his journey?"



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

Help a child to find 1 Kings 19 in the Bible and place it in the worship space. Encourage the children to pay attention to Elijah's mood and feelings, and where he finds God. Read **SCM 10** or play the story audio. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Encourage the conversation by asking how Elijah felt when he was inside the cave and what he thought about during the silence.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C

Read the story again, inviting some children to play the parts and some to create sound effects for the great wind, earthquake, and fire. Remember to leave a few moments of silence after reading the phrase "the sound of sheer silence."

Invite the children to talk about times when they have experienced fear like Elijah. Share experiences you have had as well. Ask:

- ▼ What have you done during scary times? Have you turned to God?
- ▼ Have you felt that God listens to you?
- ▼ What kind of message do you think God sends?
- ▼ What do you think God's whispers are like?
- ▼ In what times or spaces do you find God's presence?

Listening

M

Take time to sit in silence. Then play "Harp Music" as children listen. Remark how we can pay attention to God's presence in times of quiet. Turn off the candle.

- M** *Sitting quietly for a prayer may be difficult for some children. Consider having them hold something, such as the Bible, that may be needed soon. This will give them something to focus on as well as providing an important role for them.*



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



Claiming God's Grace

MS FA

Before the session, cut apart the signs on GN 1 to use at the stations.

Ask the children to help you set up a simple course, described below. Have a volunteer place the signs at each station.

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 twenty seconds between each start.

1. Elijah went to the desert and was tired. Stop to rest in 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 the wind, felt the earth quake, and saw the fire. Wave 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, "Elijah, I am with you always!"

Gather the children in a circle and have them sit in silence with their eyes closed. During that time, move behind each child and whisper, "(Name), God is with you always."

Celebrating God's Grace

VI

Before the session, cut apart the words or phrases on GN 2.

Invite the children to play several rounds of charades. Have one of them select a slip of paper and act out the word or phrase using only silent motions. Invite the other children to guess the word or phrase. Traditionally, the child who guesses correctly gets to go next. Instead, consider taking turns to create a more noncompetitive environment.

VI *Students with visual impairments include those with mildly impaired vision and those who are blind. If you choose to do charades, describe actions with as much detail as possible. Be as specific as possible to help create mental pictures.*



Praying God's Grace C

Share with the children that praying is one of the best things that we can do when we are afraid. Gather simple art supplies such as paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, paint, and paintbrushes.

Invite the children to create a prayer they could say during scary times. It can have words and/or pictures. Allow for time to share their creations with the whole group, and invite them to keep their prayers in a place where they can see and use them whenever they feel afraid.

GN 3 Solution:
Listen for God.

Extra Activity LD

Remind the children that Elijah needed to pay attention to hear God's voice. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and have the children start at the bottom of the page near Elijah. Begin by writing the letter L in the first space below. Have them write every other letter in order in the spaces. Suggest that it might be helpful to cross off the letters that they do not use. Ask the children to read together what they have found.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather everyone in a circle. Remind the children that God is with them through their moments of fear and that they can pray to God to share what they are feeling. Just like with Elijah, God is listening.

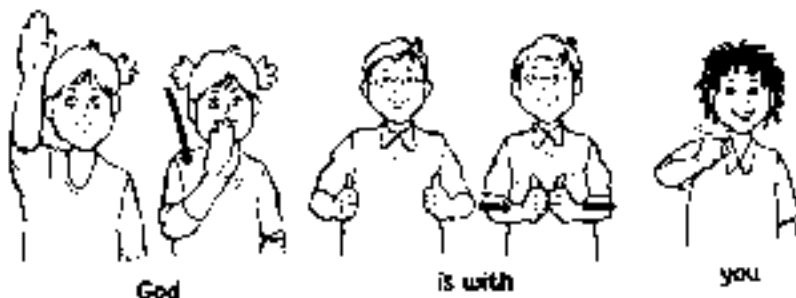
Sing "Our God, Fills Us with Love and Joy"—**SCM 25**—as a reminder of God's presence and love.

Tell the children that today's sending will be done in silence. Teach the children the phrase "God is with you" with the movements that are shown below. One by one, have the children share this sending with the child on their right. After the sending has been passed around the circle in silence, everyone will repeat the movement one last time and then say, "Amen."

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.



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).



Lie down and rest.
Count to 10.

Wave blue and red
streamers and stomp
feet. Continue until
everyone arrives.

Rest in a chair.
Count to 10.

Eat 5 crackers and
drink water.

Run away

Angels

Messenger

Elijah

Mountain

Cave

Bush

Afraid

Wake up

Wind

Fire

Earthquake

Whisper

Prayer

