



God Blesses Ishmael and Isaac

Goal: To celebrate the grace of God by being kind to people who are outsiders.

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

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 2a, 3, 3a, 16, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

natural or tan-colored
bedsheet

candle

Responding

Extra

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

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.

A bedsheet from previous session will be used this and the next session. If you choose not to use the bedsheet, plan to adapt the activities.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

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

As they arrive, ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to prepare the space. Show **SCM 2a**. Remind the children that Abraham and Sarah built an altar of stones to remember God’s promise of a family. Explain that today’s story is about how God fulfilled this promise to Abraham’s family, including Hagar and Ishmael. One promise has something to do with stars in the night sky. Wonder together what stars have to do with God’s promises.

Give the children paper, crayons, and scissors, and invite each child to make a star. Let the children make their own decisions about how to make stars. Ask children to write their names on the stars. Encourage them to make more stars and write the names of friends and family members on the additional stars. Tape the stars to the walls. Spread the bedsheet on the floor.

While the children draw, cut apart the figures on **SCM 3a**. Attach the figures to craft sticks.

Gather on the bedsheet, pretending it is the desert. Invite them to imagine it is night time. Ask:

- ▼ What do you see in the sky?
- ▼ What did God promise Abraham and Sarah?

Singing **L**

Sing “God’s Promises”—**SCM 17**. Help the children learn the song. Sing the words one phrase at a time, and ask the children to repeat each phrase. Add simple movements as the children sing.

T *For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take.*



Praying L

Turn on the candle as a reminder that God is present among you. Invite the children to pray an echo prayer:

Loving God, /
thank you for blessing all people of the world /
with your love. /
Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story

Show the figures cut out from **SCM 3a**. Introduce Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. Explain that Abraham and Sarah wanted a family and God blessed them with a son, Isaac, when they thought they were too old to have children. Say that each person was a blessing, a person God loved.

Show the Hagar and Ishmael figures. They, too, were people God loved. Ishmael was Abraham's son too. Say that Sarah and Hagar were not nice to each other. Today's story is about the blessing of children and the grace that comes out of a difficult situation.



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

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

Read **SCM 3**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, facial expressions, and gestures. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again or use the story audio. Invite volunteers to use the figures from **SCM 3a** to act out the story as you read.

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Wonder with the children what an outsider is. Tell the children that an outsider can be someone who is left all alone or is not chosen by others to join in. Ask them who in the story they think were outsiders and why they were treated that way. If necessary, suggest that Hagar and Ishmael were outsiders. Assure the children that God loved them.

Share a personal experience of being treated as an outsider (for example, if you were left out of games at school). Tell the children what difference God's love and grace made for you then.

Encourage the children to name personal experiences of being treated as an outsider or of treating someone else as an outsider. Affirm God's desire for us to treat one another with kindness, even if we are different from one another. Assure the children that God loves the outsiders.



Singing

Sing “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands”—**SCM 16**.

Help the children learn the song. Sing the words one phrase at a time, and ask the children to repeat each phrase.

Turn off the candle.

- C** Give children time to respond and to share, understanding that, for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Play a game to invite the children to think about ways they can include and accept others that feel like outsiders.

Tell the children that they are going to play a game called “Laugh, Frown, or Walk.” If they choose “laugh,” they should walk and laugh out loud. If they choose “frown,” they should cross their arms, put on an angry face, and stand in place. If they choose “walk,” they should walk in slow motion.

Invite the children to stand in a circle. On the count of three, the children choose if they want to laugh, frown, or walk and do the corresponding actions. The children that are doing the action that is in the minority must leave the circle. If all the children do the same thing or there are an equal number of children doing an action, call that round a draw and play again. Continue until only one or two children are left.

Then invite all the children to rejoin the circle. Play the game again, but this time, encourage the children to make an effort to do the same thing so no one has to leave the circle. It will take a few turns for this to happen, but encourage the children to find a solution. After they have finished, ask them if this part of the game was easy or hard.

Remind the group what being an outsiders means and how Hagar and Ishmael were outsiders. Then encourage them to share one way they can be kind to people who have been left out.

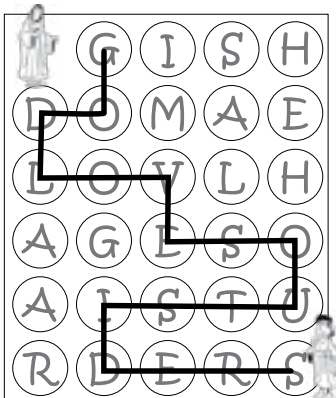
- MS** Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate such as instead of walking, children simply stay in place, laughing, frowning, or simply doing nothing.

- If you have red hair, go to 1.
- If you are wearing socks, go to 2.
- If you have more than one brother or sister, go to 3.
- If you like milk, go to 4.
- If you like broccoli, go to 1.
- If you don't like homework, go to 2.
- If you can ride a bike, go to 3.
- If you like to draw, go to 4.
- If you are the oldest child in your family, go to 1.
- If you are a boy, go to 2.
- If you are good at math, go to 3.
- If you like ice cream, go to 4.
- If God loves you, come to the center.



GN 1 Solution:

Ishmael, Hagar



Celebrating God's Grace A MS

Celebrate grace as being kind to one another as God is kind to us.

Designate four corners (or areas) of your meeting space and number them 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Invite the children to move to the appropriate corner if they identify with the prompt. Read each prompt, giving children time to move to the corner or stay in place. After they have played the game, invite ideas about how the prompts could have included more children. For example, the prompt, "If you have red hair . . ." could have been, "If you have hair"

Encourage the children to name ways they can be kind to children who feel left out.

Offering God's Grace TD

Brainstorm together ways the children can respond when someone is being excluded by a group. Tell the children they will make an "I will 'knot' let you down bracelet" to offer to another child. Provide two pipe cleaners per child.

- Have the children bend each of their pipe cleaners in the middle around their finger.
- Put the loop in their right hand over the one in the left.
- Push the ends of the one in the right hand up through the center of the loop in the left hand and pull.
- Twist the ends around each other to form a circle.

Encourage the children to take the bracelets home to give to someone who needs a friend.

A Adapt any activity to suit your children's needs. Ask yourself, "How can I change this activity so that this child can do it?"

Extra Activity

Help the children show God's kindness to Hagar and Ishmael by solving a puzzle. Distribute copies of GN 1 and crayons or markers. Invite the children to help two people who feel left out find God's promise to them by drawing one continuous line connecting the letters to the words, "God loves outsiders." When they have connected the letters in the phrase, fill the spaces below the puzzle with each remaining letter in order to find out who the two people are. The first letter of each name is already filled in.

Help the children remember that, even though Hagar and Ishmael were left out—outsiders—God loved them. God loves everyone! Wonder together how we can show kindness to people who feel left out.



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

Invite the children to gather in a circle. Sing “God Is with Me”—**SCM 18**. Ask the children how they plan to be kind and to share God’s love and care this week with those who are left out like Hagar and Ishmael.

Ask the children to retrieve the stars taped to the wall. Remind the children that the stars help us remember that when God makes a promise God always remembers it. One of God’s promises is to love everyone and that means all the people written on the stars and all the people who feel excluded and alone.

Before the children leave, send them with a blessing: “Go into the world and be kind to others. May the grace of God help you.”

G I S H
D O M A E
L O V L H
A G E S O
A I S T U
R D E R S

I _____

H _____
