



God Provides Food and Water

Goal: To experience the grace and faithfulness of God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 16:1-8, 13-15; 17:1-7

The Hebrew people should have learned their lesson by now. God had provided for them. The pillars of cloud and fire were continuously with them, providing them with visible reminders of God's presence and guidance (Exodus 13). The Red Sea had been parted, allowing them to cross unharmed (Exodus 14).

But now their stomachs were empty and their throats were parched. They grumbled and complained. Moses cried out to God, "What shall I do with this people? They are getting ready to stone me" (17:4).

Through gifts of bread (*manna*, "What is it?") and water, the Hebrews again discovered God's grace and care.

This story illustrates the themes woven throughout the entire narrative of the journey to the promised land—God's guidance, people's complaints, and God's faithfulness. The people were growing bolder and louder in their demands, and Moses cried out in fear to God. At first the people believed they would arrive at their destination in a relatively short time, perhaps days or weeks. Now the journey had stretched to months, perhaps even years, and the end was nowhere in sight.

As one commentary notes, "These wilderness stories are increasingly about a people stuck between promise and fulfillment. Wilderness is no longer simply a place but a state of mind" [Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 187].

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Keep in mind the focus of this session as you work with the children. Although the story is about the Hebrew people demanding food and water, the focus is on God's faithfulness to the Hebrew people. God provided for their needs as they wandered throughout the desert. How do the children in the group experience God's faithfulness? Helping them make this connection will provide them with something far greater than simply learning a story—it will help them continue building their relationship with God.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you prepare for this session, think about the characteristics of the children in your care. What things do children generally complain about? How might they complain when they are hungry or thirsty? How might they identify with the Hebrew children? Encourage them to imagine what the Hebrew people felt and experienced.

O God, I am hungry and thirsty for your love. Persuade me to trust that you are always near, providing for my needs. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 6, 19, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

cloth

candle

flatbread, bowl of water,
cactus plants (optional),
stones

Responding

Celebrating

wrapped candies or
cookies, bottle of water
for each child

Praying

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

Offering

water, bread or cookies

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

Play “Go Down, Moses” as children arrive. Welcome each child with “(Name), the grace of God be with you.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Ask one of the children to help you spread a cloth on the floor, allowing space for children to sit around it. Ask the children to help create a worship center on the cloth with flatbread, a bowl of water, cactus plants, stones, a candle, and a Bible.

Suggest that one or two children lead today’s singing.

Draw everyone’s attention to the worship center. Ask them what they think the various items represent. Explain that today’s story reminds of us two moments when God heard the people complaining in the wilderness and gave them bread and water. Engage in conversation about why bread and water are so important. Explain what the bread in the story is called (manna) and what it may have tasted like (waffles and honey).

Singing

Play “Go Down, Moses”—**SCM 20**. Ask the children to listen to the song and then ask them what they remember about Moses and about how God saved the people of Israel. Then play the song again and ask the children to sing along.

Praying **C**

Turn on the candle to remind us of God’s presence. Share with the children that God sent a big pillar of fire to guide Moses and his people through the wilderness at night and a cloud pillar by day. Wonder together why that may be. Suggest that God was present and guiding the people night and day.

Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Affirm each child’s response. Respect those who do not wish to share.

Remind them that God is with them day and night, when they are sad or glad. Prompt the children to respond to each share with “Thank you, God, because you hear us.” Finish the prayer with “Amen.”



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Remind everyone that the Hebrews had left Egypt in a hurry and did not take a lot with them. Explain that it was a difficult journey. Wonder together if the people trusted God to take care of them.

Ask the children to imagine they have been wandering for weeks in the desert. Their food and water have run out. Ask them to walk in place as if they were tired, hot, and hungry. Have the children name their biggest worry as they wander in the desert.



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

Invite one of the children to find Exodus 16. Tell the children that you will read **SCM 6**, a story based on the Bible story. Use your voice, expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood. Use a grumbling voice as you tell how the people complained to Moses and questioned why God had led them out of Egypt. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Invite the children to act out the story as you read it again. Encourage one or two children to pretend to be representatives whom the people have appointed to go to Moses. Another child can be Moses. Others can be the Hebrew people. To help the children prepare for their roles, discuss:

- ▼ Why did the people complain? Why would they have wanted to go back to Egypt?
- ▼ What reasons did they have to trust God?
- ▼ Do you think Moses ever doubted that God would provide for the people?
- ▼ How did the people react when God provided for them?

Read the story and pause at appropriate times to let the children add some dialogue and action. Enjoy the dramatization.

Singing

Celebrate God's love for the people of Israel and for us by singing "God Takes Care of Me"—**SCM 19**. Turn off the candle.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty during story time. To help with focus and comprehension, suggest listening prompts, engage them with movement, or provide a specific item to find within the story picture.*



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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



Celebrating God's Grace

F MS FA

Before the session, hide wrapped candy or cookies representing manna and bottles of water around your space, enough for everyone to have one of each.

Remind the children that God provided for the Hebrews in the desert: manna from heaven and clean water.

Send the children to find the items that God provided (food and water). Tell them to find and take only one of each so that all children can find what they need. When everyone has returned, celebrate God's grace and faithfulness by having a snack with what you have gathered.

Praying God's Grace

M A

Ask the children to find a quiet place away from distractions. Invite them to close their eyes and then gently take them through the Desert Meditation on **GN 1**. Pause briefly as indicated between each step.

Encourage the children to share their reactions to the desert meditation. Be sensitive to children who have experienced real food scarcity.

- ▼ What did you imagine as I led the meditation?
- ▼ When were some times you were really thirsty or hungry?
- ▼ Did you complain about it? What did you say?
- ▼ How did you feel when someone gave you something to drink or eat?
- ▼ Why do you think it is important to give thanks for what others give us?
- ▼ What do you think God provides for you?
- ▼ How might you give God thanks?

Finish by saying a simple prayer of thanks to God for being faithful and supplying for our needs.

M *Some children need to move more than others which makes sitting still a difficult task. Set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*



Offering God's Grace



Recall that when the Hebrew people complained about being thirsty and hungry, God provided water and manna, which was like bread, for them. Water and bread can be symbols of God's care for us.

Invite the children to share stories of times when they have been really thirsty or hungry and have received food or water. Share your stories of hunger or thirst. Remind the children that those times give us just a small idea of what it was like for the Hebrews to be really thirsty and hungry in the desert.

Involve the children in sharing water and bread with others. Set up a table in a central area of the church. Have the children create a poster to remind church members that: "God provided water and bread for the people in the wilderness. God provides water and food for us." Display the poster on or behind the table. As people pass the table, have the children offer them a cup of cool water and bread or cookies.

Extra Activity

Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Consider playing the story audio as the children do the maze. Ask if they remember the things that the people complained to Moses about. Remind them that God, not Moses, provided manna and water along the way to the Promised Land.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to finish the sentences, in short phrases: "I know God was with the Hebrews when . . ." and "I know God is with me when . . ." After a child says something, everyone claps twice.

Close with a prayer:

Gracious God, you give us what we need every day. Thank you for giving us (*invite children to share*). Thank you for water, for food, and for taking care of us. Forgive us when we complain and help us always to trust in you. Watch over (*name each child*) this week, and gather us together again in your name. Amen.

Close with calling each child by name and saying, "(*Name*), rejoice! God is with you!"

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story with their families 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).

Desert Meditation

Imagine that you are in a hot, dusty desert. There isn't a cloud in the sky. You haven't eaten all day. *(Pause.)*

Feel the heat of the sun prickling on your skin. Imagine that you can reach down and pick up a handful of sand. Feel its coarse dryness. Close your fist and feel the heat of the sand in your palm. *(Pause.)*

Now feel the grains of sand trickle through your fingers. *(Pause.)*

Imagine that you are barefoot. Picture yourself taking a few steps. Curl your toes in the sand. *(Pause.)*

Now turn your attention to your face. There is a gust of dry wind sweeping over your cheeks. Sand has blown into your eyes. Can you feel its grittiness? Now feel your breath as it enters your nose. It is so dry and scratchy. *(Pause.)*

Focus on your mouth. Imagine that your lips are dry and cracked. Move your tongue inside your mouth. Are there a few grains of sand around your teeth? Notice your throat, how dry it feels. *(Pause.)*

You are so thirsty. *(Pause.)*

Now imagine that Moses has just hit the rock and fresh clean water is pouring out. You gather with all the others for a long, long drink. *(Pause.)*

Now as you continue to sit quietly, I will slowly count backward from three. When I reach one, you will bring your attention back to the group.

Three. *(Pause.)*

Two. *(Pause.)*

One.



