



God Hears Daniel's Prayers

Goal: To know that trust in God is an important element of growing in faith.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Daniel 6:6-23

After the fall of Jerusalem, Daniel and three of his friends were exiled to Babylon where they were being trained so they “could serve before the king” (1:1-7, CEB).

After a series of incidents in which the young men maintained fidelity to their Jewish faith, officers and chief administrators persuaded the king to issue a law that “for thirty days anyone who says prayers to any god or human being except you, Your Majesty, will be thrown into a pit of lions” (6:7, CEB).

In response, Daniel prayed and praised God three times a day, “just like he always did” (v. 10, CEB). His enemies found him praying and reported this to the king. When the king tried to save him, the men invoked that “the law of Media and Persia, including every law and edict the king has issued, cannot be changed” (v. 15, CEB). So the king gave the order and Daniel was thrown into a pit of lions.

But the next morning, Daniel was unharmed. He said God had shut the lions' mouths and “not a scratch was found on him, because he trusted in his God” (v. 23, CEB). God's grace had preserved the faithful Daniel. He was grateful for God's protection.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

For children, their “moral compass,” that which helps them know how to make good decisions, is something they learn at home, at school, and at church. This story about Daniel tells about a time when he acted faithfully in response to God, and how God protected him from harm. Children can connect easily with the drama and danger in the story as they hear it read and act it out. Having them imagine modern-day situations they face can help them consider how to make good and right decisions about living in response to God. It would be a great way to help them see the connections between this story and their lives.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This memorable and vivid story of Daniel surviving the life-threatening danger of the lions' den is included in all children's Bible storybooks. As you tell this story to the children, be aware of their ways of engaging with the story. Some may connect with the miraculous nature of the way God protected Daniel. Others may be curious about God's saving presence with people today. Some children may be curious about Daniel's commitment to following God in spite of the consequences. As you can see, this story presents many options for their engagement and reflection.

God, who comes to us as Word, open my mind to a deeper understanding of the richness of faith. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 13, 13a, 21,
23, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

cloth

candle

Responding

Claiming

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

Celebrating

blindfold, chairs

Praying

card stock, art supplies

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.

Welcoming and Preparing LG A

Play “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**—as the children arrive.

Welcome each child by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite the children to place a cloth, candle, and Bible on the worship table.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

Ask children to cut out the figures of Daniel standing, Daniel praying, the lion, the guards, and the king from **SCM 13a**.

Tape a wooden craft stick to the back of each figure. Ask for volunteers to prepare a puppet show of the story. Give them **SCM 13** and invite them to practice.

Begin a conversation about courage by asking:

- ▼ What does the word *courage* mean to you?
- ▼ What shape or form might courage take?
- ▼ If courage were a color, what color might it be?

Set out paper and markers and invite the children to draw a picture of courage. Take a moment for volunteers to show and tell about their drawings.

Singing MS

Listen to “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**. Encourage the children to create steps for a circle dance. Some step suggestions include the following: circle right, circle left, come to the center, and raise arms up. Repeat the song and have the children sing along while dancing their steps.

Praying C

Turn on the candle, reminding everyone of God’s presence. Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond accordingly to each share with “Praise God!” or “Hear our prayer, gracious God.” Then end by saying:

Holy God, we praise you for all you have done and continue to do in the world. We know you are always with us, but sometimes it is hard to remember. Help us to place our trust in you. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Explain that today's story is about a Jewish person who lived long ago in a foreign culture outside of Israel. Daniel trusted God to be with him, and Daniel showed his trust in God. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- Who do you trust to take care of you when you are sick?
- Who do you trust when you are crossing a busy street?
- If you are lost, who do you trust to help you?
- How do you show you trust someone?

Suggest that the children listen for ways that Daniel trusted God and how Daniel demonstrated that trust in the Bible story.

Hearing the Story B L

Invite a volunteer to open the Bible to the book of Daniel. Place the Bible on the worship table.

Read the story on **SCM 13** using your voice and expressions to make the story engaging. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again, inviting the volunteers to perform their puppet show.



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.

Situations:

- being with friends who are gossiping or saying mean things about others
- being tempted to cheat or steal
- observing family members waste water or other resources

Reflecting on God's Grace C LD

Ask:

- What did Daniel do because he trusted God?
- How is trust a part of faith?
- How can you strengthen your faith and trust in God?

Form small groups. Provide paper and pencils. Direct each group to write down three situations in which it would take courage to stand firm in their faith and trust God. Ask each small group to read its list to the full group. If they need help, see the suggestions in the sidebar.

Have the children brainstorm ways they could demonstrate courage and stand firm in following God even in difficult situations. Keep the lists for "Praying God's Grace."

Singing T

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing "Our God, Fills Us with Love and Joy"—**SCM 25**. Invite the children to raise their arms in the air and spin them in circles while singing.

Turn off the candle.

T *Transition times can be more frustrating to children if they have to wait. Be prepared to move to the next activity and alert children of upcoming changes.*



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Discuss some real-life dilemmas and imagine how to stand firm in faith and make faithful decisions. Distribute copies of **GN 1**. One at a time, ask for a volunteer to read each situation aloud. Discuss it as a group:

- ▾ What is the problem in this situation?
- ▾ What are some decisions that could be made?
- ▾ How could the main character stand firm in his or her faith and commitment to living in God's ways?
- ▾ Why would this take courage? What might happen?
- ▾ What would the characters say to each other?

Form pairs and ask each pair to choose one of the situations to act out, showing a solution. Encourage the children to try some of these ideas when they face similar situations.

LD *A child with learning disabilities may be no less able than other children; they just receive, process, and/or respond differently. If writing or reading is difficult for a child, encourage them to participate to the best of their abilities, acknowledging their efforts.*

Celebrating God's Grace



This activity provides a tangible lesson in trust, especially helpful for children as they try to understand the concepts of faith and trust.

Tie a blindfold on one person. Use chairs to arrange a simple obstacle course. Lead the blindfolded person to the beginning of the obstacle course. Ask one child to lead the blindfolded person through the course by voice only, or have the children take turns giving directions (*turn right, take three steps forward, and so on*). The directions work best when one person speaks at a time. If others would like to be blindfolded, rearrange the obstacle course before each one begins.

Wonder aloud how it felt to have to trust someone or the group to walk through the obstacle course. Ask:

- ▾ Just as you trusted the people giving directions when you were blindfolded, even though you couldn't see them, how can we trust God to help us even though we can't see God?



Praying God's Grace

LG

Remind the children that Daniel prayed to God, showing his trust in God's help and care. Wonder together whether Daniel was a person who prayed often in his life. Ask the children what they think Daniel might have prayed at the time of this story.

Explain that if we have a habit of praying, we may pray with more confidence when we are afraid or anxious. Using the lists of situations created in "Reflecting on God's Grace," invite the children to get back into their small group, choose a situation, and write a prayer for that situation. Tell them that prayer is a conversation with God. In writing their prayers, they can use the following format:

- Tell God the situation.
- Ask for the help they need.
- Thank God.
- Make a declaration or statement of trust or praise.

Invite the groups to share their prayers, with all responding "Amen" at the end of each prayer.

Extra Activity

Give the children copies of **GN 2** and invite them to create family trees of those who have been faithful to God, trusting God in various situations. Encourage them to think of as many people as they can, including their family and friends, as well as people in the news. If needed, refer to newspapers or the Internet for the names of people who are acting in trusting and faithful ways.

Tell the children to write their own name on the line provided and then write the names or draw pictures of the people on the family tree. Invite children to add words describing how these people demonstrated their trust in God and were an example of faith. Be sure to have the children include their own names on their trees!

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to gather in a circle. Explain that there are different ways to pray. You can kneel, bow, look down with your eyes closed, put your hands together, or raise your arms and look upward. Play "God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)"—**SCM 23**. Tell the children that whenever the music stops they should pose in a prayer position. Play and stop the music several times. When the music stops, invite the children to share a prayer concern.

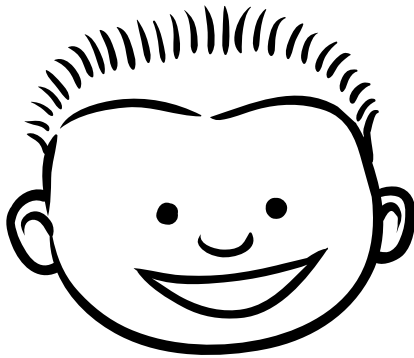
After the last stop, invite them to choose their favorite prayer position. Lead a prayer, remembering to name the children's concerns. Remember them in your prayers during the week as well.

Send each child with the following blessing: "(Name), go in peace to love and serve the Lord."



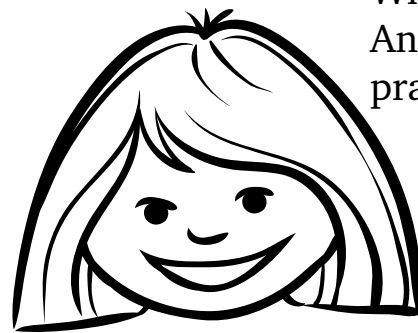
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

Johnny is hanging out with his friends at school. Some of them begin teasing Chip by making fun of the video games he plays. Johnny knows they are just joking, but he also can see that Chip is upset and hurt. What could he do? What might Johnny's prayer be?



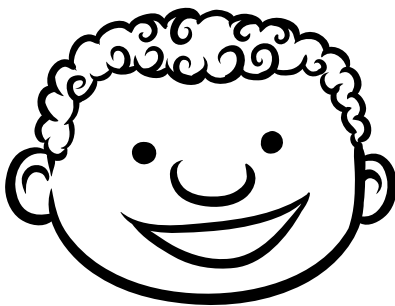
Angela's friends start complaining about one of their teachers. One of them yells that this teacher is "retarded" and "psycho." Everyone else laughs. Angela doesn't like this teacher much, but she thinks her friend's choice of language is not appropriate. What could she do?

What might Angela's prayer be?

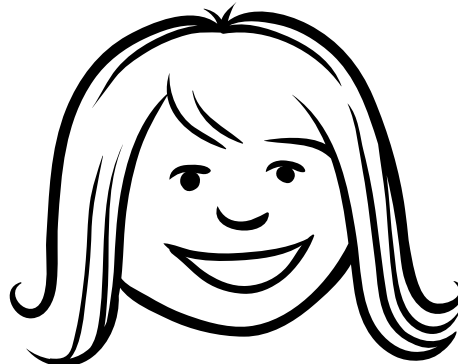


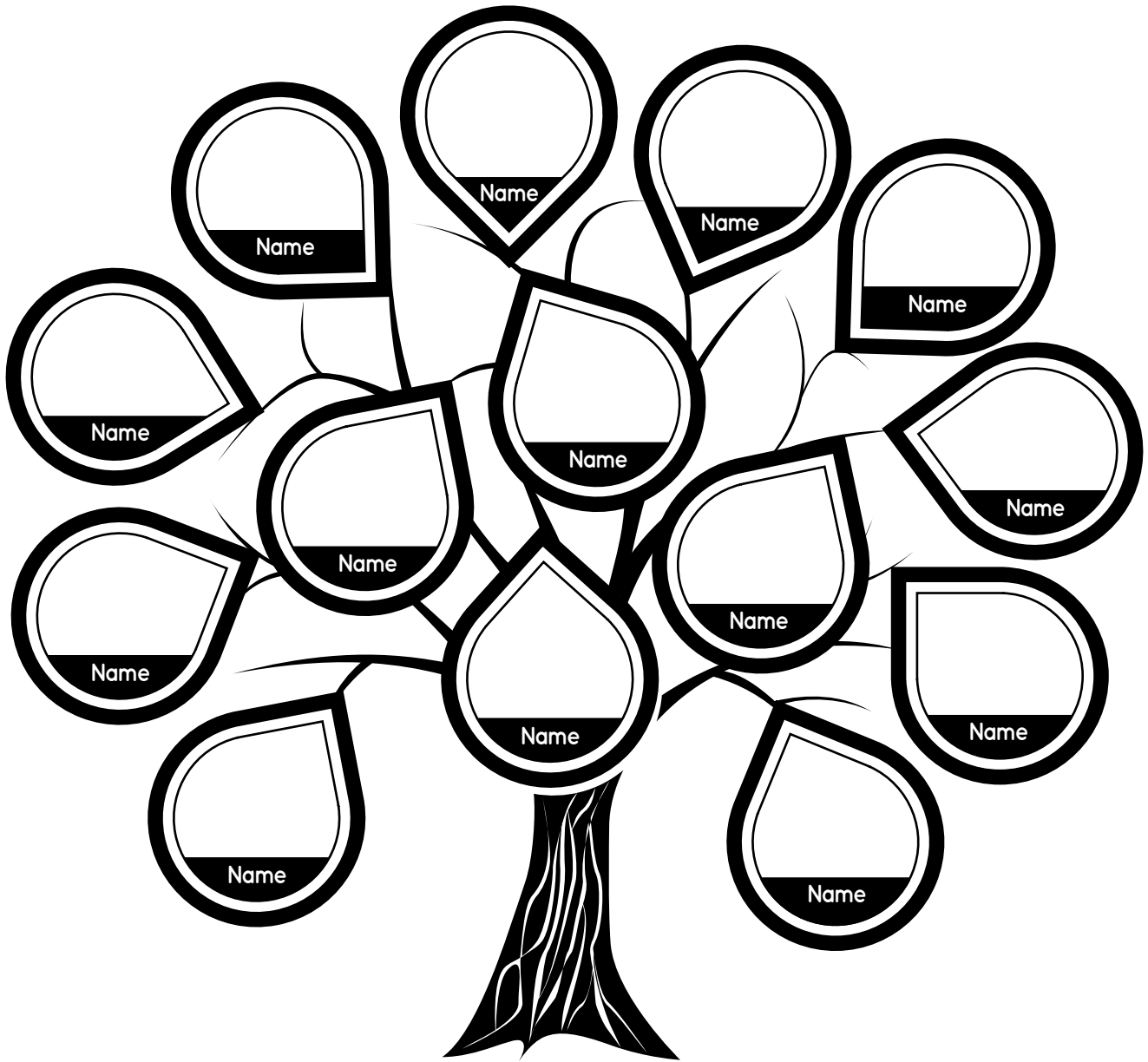
Don's family attends worship and Sunday school at their church nearly every Sunday. Don's hockey coach has announced that the team will begin practicing on Sunday mornings. Don's parents say no. Don is afraid that when he tells the coach he can't be there on Sundays, the coach will say

he can't be a starting player. What could he do? What might Don's prayer be?



Ellen's friends have worked out a way to store answers for a test on their cellphones. They want to help her set up her phone to do the same thing. Ellen knows her friends will make fun of her if she doesn't agree to cheat. What could she do? What might Ellen's prayer be?





Faith Family Tree