



# 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](http://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

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

## Responding

### Praying GN 2

### Offering bread or cookies

### 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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires 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 tablecloth with flatbread, a bowl of water, cactus plants, stones, a candle, and a Bible.

Invite three volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passages. Suggest that one or two children lead today’s singing.

Draw everyone’s attention to the worship center. What might the various items represent? Explain that today’s story reminds us of two moments when God heard the people complaining in the wilderness of hunger and thirst and provided bread and water for them. Engage the children 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, inviting the children to sing along.

### Praying **C**

Turn on the candle to be reminded 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.

Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Affirm each child’s response. Prompt the children to respond to each share with “Thank you God, because you hear us.” Respect those who do not wish to share. Finish the prayer with “Amen.”

Remind them that God is with them day and night, and when they are sad or glad.



### Preparing to Hear the Story



Give each child a copy of **GN 1**. Trace the possible route of the people as they left Egypt. Explain that the people were leaving Egypt to escape from Pharaoh, who wanted them to be slaves. The children can trace the route on their maps.

Explain that it was a difficult journey. Wonder together if the people trusted God to take care of them. Remind everyone that the Hebrews had left Egypt in a hurry and did not take a lot with 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](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story



Invite one of the children to find Exodus 16. Invite three volunteers to read Exodus 16:1–8, 13–15; 17:1–7. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Before you read **SCM 6**, tell the children you will read them a story that is found in the Bible. Use your voice, expressions, feelings, and 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.

### Reflecting on God's Grace



Invite the children to reenact the story and use their imaginations to add dialogue and action. Encourage one or two children to pretend to be representatives whom the people have appointed to go to Moses. Another child can be Moses. To help the children prepare for their roles, discuss:

- ▼ Why were the people worried? 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 them?
- ▼ Was Moses ever afraid?

Help Moses and the chosen representatives prepare for their roles—what the representatives will say to Moses and what Moses will say to the complaining people. Enjoy the reenactment.

### 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.



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

### Claiming God's Grace LG

*Before the session, cut strips of blue construction paper wide enough to write or draw on.*

Remind the children of the story about a rock in Horeb where God gave water to the Hebrews. Speak about times when God provided for your needs. Ask the children to share their stories about when they have needed something and someone provided for them. When our needs are satisfied, we give thanks to God for God's grace and faithfulness.

Invite the children to create a large three-dimensional rock, or some boulders, on the side of a wall or freestanding in the room. Provide large grocery or garbage bags, newspapers, and tape. Use painter's tape if you are adhering the rock to the wall.

When they finish making the rock or boulders, provide blue strips of construction paper. Invite the children to write or draw things they are thankful for on the strips of paper and to tape them to their rocks.

Gather around the rock and give thanks for the blessings in the lives of the children.

LG *Teach kids about the power of teamwork. When kids learn to support others, cooperate, and problem solve as a group, they become better leaders.*

### Praying God's Grace L

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 2**. Pause briefly as indicated between each step.

Encourage the children to share their reactions to the 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 our needs.



If your group participated in a coat drive over the last two sessions, remind the children that today is the last day to bring in a new or gently worn coat. Together, write a dedication prayer for the coats. If possible, pray the prayer during your worship service to share with your church community. Arrange to have the coats delivered to the named local agency.

### Offering God's Grace

C LG

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 of the message from today's lesson: "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 3. 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

LG C

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to finish these two sentences with 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](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



## Route Out of Egypt

Rameses southeast to Succoth

North to Baal-Zaphon (between Succoth and Baal-Zaphon was probably the site of the crossing of the Red Sea, or Sea of Reeds)

South to Marah

South to Elim

Southeast through the Wilderness of Sin to Dophkah

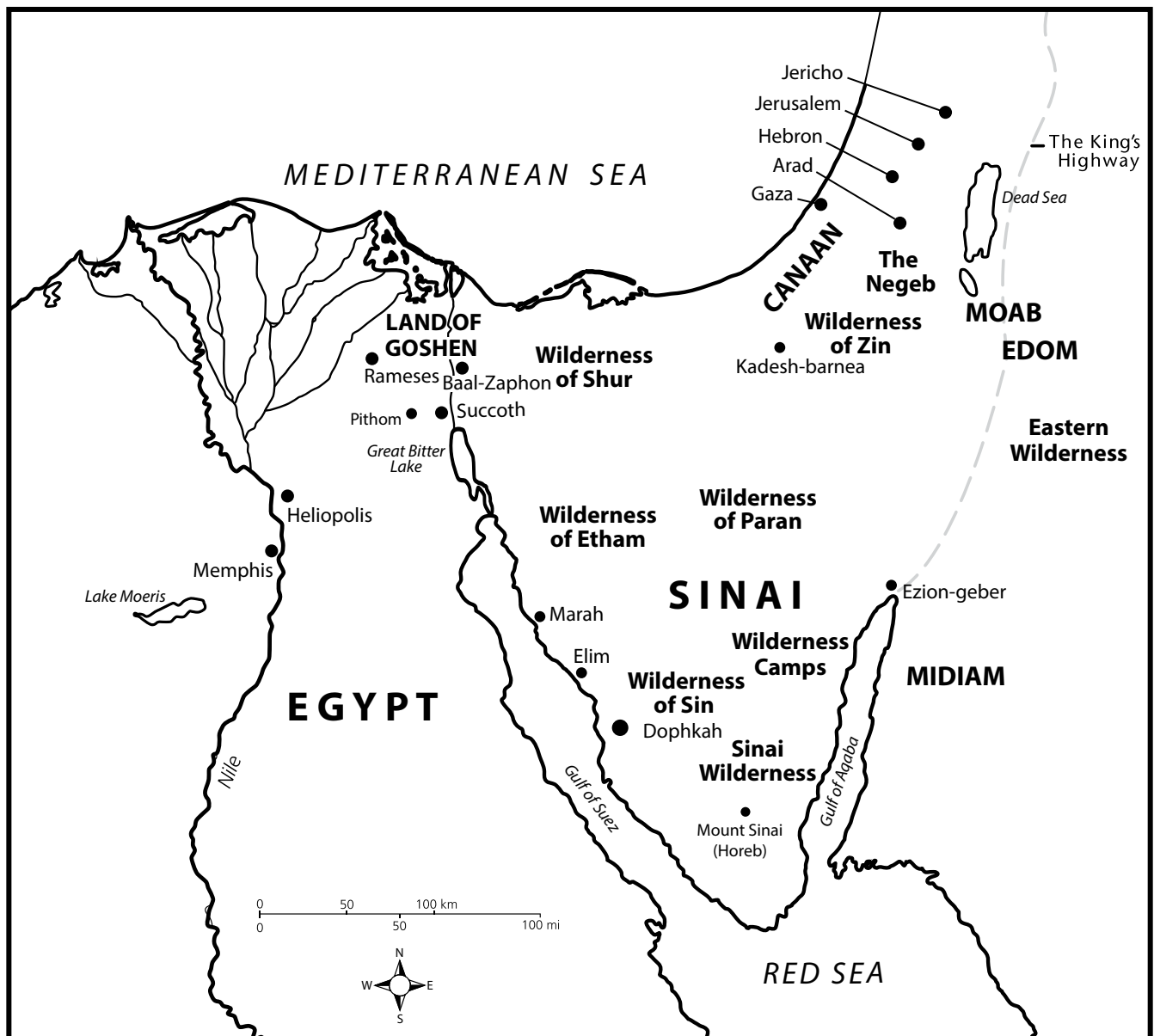
South through the Sinai Wilderness to Mount Sinai (Horeb)

Northeast through Wilderness Camps

North to Kadesh-barnea

Northeast through the Wilderness of Zin then south to Ezion-geber

Northeast through the Eastern Wilderness to Edom







### 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.



