



Your God Shall Be My God

Goal: To dedicate ourselves to following God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Ruth 1:1-22

The story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, shows us loyalty and love.

Naomi and her husband had moved from Bethlehem to the country of Moab. Elimelech died, as did Naomi's two sons, who had married Moabite women. When Naomi could not provide for herself and her daughters-in-law, she decided to return to Bethlehem. Naomi pleaded with them to return to their mothers' homes, where they could be safe and remarry. Naomi was worried about their safety, since Moabites and Israelites were enemies. Both women initially refused to leave Naomi, and said, "We want to go with you and live among your people" (see v. 10). But Naomi persisted, saying her life was bitter, and she could not provide for them.

One daughter-in-law left. Orpah "kissed her mother-in-law [good-bye], but Ruth clung to her" (v. 14). Ruth said, "Where you go, I will go; / where you lodge, I will lodge; / your people shall be my people, / and your God will be my God" (v. 16). Though they were of different countries, bonds of openness and love between Ruth and Naomi were deep. Ruth wanted to be with Naomi, to be of her people, and even serve Naomi's God. Grace was given; and Ruth and Naomi were grateful to God and each other.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many of the stories in the Old Testament are told to help the people remember who they were in relation to God. We meet people like Naomi and Ruth, who are part of the family tree of Jesus. Children can connect with this story by naming people in their families who remind them of Naomi, a woman who loved her family and whose generous spirit, kindness, and faithfulness were known by everyone she met; or Ruth, a brave woman who chose to follow God, even though it meant leaving what was familiar to her.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The story of Naomi and Ruth helps the children become familiar with two strong women who lived in a culture where it was not at all easy for them to live by themselves. Children will be helped to understand the nature of the culture where men were responsible for taking care of women, and what it was like for women like Naomi and Ruth to live on their own without a man to provide for them. They were also brave because of their commitment to follow their faith. Naomi did not know where she would be welcome or who would care for her, but she knew God would provide. Ruth wholeheartedly gave herself to God.

*Loving God, show me now how to relate to the children
so they glimpse your love. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 17, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

green fabric

plate of lemon slices

honey

spoons

pitcher of water, glasses

biblical costumes

Responding

Celebrating

SCM 8b and 8c

Offering

card stock copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1, ink
pads, cleansing wipes

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.

Before the session, prepare a plate with lemon slices, one for each child.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **B** **M** **MS** **FA**

Greet each child with “Grace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.”

Ask the children to help set up the worship space. On a small table place a Bible, a candle, a green cloth, a container of honey, a plate with some lemon slices, and spoons.

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

Squeeze or pour honey on spoons for each person to taste. Wonder together what sweet foods the children enjoy. Then hand out lemon slices. Have enough slices for each child to have a taste. Ask the children to describe the different tastes.

Explain that today’s story will introduce Naomi, whose name means “sweet.” At one point, though, her life becomes sad, hard, and bitter, like tasting a lemon.

If desired, give everyone a glass of water, or another taste of honey, to take away the bitter taste.

Singing

Play and sing “God Hears Our Prayers”—**SCM 19**.

Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Invite the children to prayer time by naming one sweet thing that happened to them or someone they love. Then ask them (if they choose) to name one bitter thing that has happened. Offer your own sweet and bitter prayer concerns.

When all have had a turn, invite the group to join together in a prayer of thanks for all sweet and bitter moments, knowing that in all things God works for good. Pray, or have a volunteer pray, this echo prayer.

For all the sweet times in our lives /
we thank you, God. /



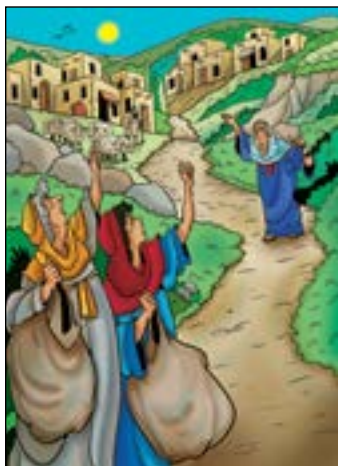
And even for all the bitter times /
we thank you, God. /
We know you are with us /
all the time. /
Amen. /

Preparing to Hear the Story

C L

Ask the children if they can remember a time when they were very thirsty or very hungry. Wonder what it would be like if you had to walk through a desert to find water and food.

Say that today's story takes place in two places: Moab and Bethlehem. Wonder aloud what the children know about Bethlehem. Using **SCM 8a**, find Moab and Bethlehem. Measure the distance using the map scale, and compare the distance between them with places the children may travel for vacation or to visit family or friends. Suggest that it was about 30–60 miles, depending on the route they took; however, it was very rugged land that would have taken about 7–10 days to walk. Wonder together if it would be sweet or bitter to have to walk that far.



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

LG C L B

Invite a child to find Ruth 1 in the Bible so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 8** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

After the children have heard the Bible story, invite them to act it out as you read it again. Let the children volunteer for the various roles. Invite them to suggest additional actors that could be in the scene and actions for the actors. Use costumes as you wish.

B *Providing opportunities for children to act in front of others can be a fun way to learn from one another and can build children's confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*

Reflecting on God's Grace

C L

Read Ruth 1:16 from the Common English Bible:

Wherever you go, I will go;
and wherever you stay, I will stay.
Your people will be my people,
and your God will be my God.



Help children remember this verse by reading the first part of each phrase and having them recite the second part. Then form two groups that take turns in the same manner. Switch parts. After a few repetitions, they will be able to say verse 16.

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- ▼ What do you think it meant for Ruth to leave Moab and go with Naomi?
- ▼ What she was giving up?
- ▼ What she was gaining?
- ▼ Why do you think Ruth wanted to go to Bethlehem with Naomi?
- ▼ What do you think it meant that Ruth would follow God?
- ▼ What does it mean that we follow God?

Singing

Rejoice in God's love by singing "God Is So Good"—**SCM 17**.
Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

LG MS F

Play a "Follow the Leader" game with the children but with the emphasis on the follower—where you go, I will go. Have one child be the leader and the other children think of themselves like Ruth. The leader gets to lead the others around the learning area. The followers do whatever the leader does. Where the leader stops, they stop. What the leader says, they say. Give each child a chance to be the leader.

After playing the game, wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, "What do you like about being the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What do you like about following the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What would you do if the leader tried to lead you someplace dangerous?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How would you know you could trust the leader?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Ruth know she could follow Naomi?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What does it mean to follow God?"

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Encourage children to keep others' needs in mind as they lead.*



Celebrating God's Grace

MS LD VI A B

*Before the session, cut apart the cards on **SCM 8b** and **8c**. Create a path using painter's tape on the floor. Tape the cards along the path randomly. Leave enough space between cards for the children to follow the noted directions. Add blank cards to lengthen the path, telling the children that those are rest spaces. Ensure that the yellow card is last.*

Recall from your conversation together what it means that Ruth said that she would follow God. Ask the children what she might do as a follower of God. Ask them what things they do as a follower of God.

Tell the children they are going to play a game to practice following directions and ways to follow God. Show them the path you have made on the floor. Invite them to line up by birthdays, with the child with the next birthday first and so on. Children take turns by tossing a coin. If it lands heads up, they will move forward one space; tails up, they will move two spaces. Tell them to read and follow the directions on each paper. Be prepared to assist with reading as needed.



Offering God's Grace

LG TD T

Wonder together what “comfort zone” means. Remind the children that Ruth left what was comfortable to follow Naomi, and in doing so she dedicated herself to following God.

Tell the children they will make bookmarks to hand out to the congregation or place in the pew racks to remind people that following God means stepping outside of their comfort zone. Hand out card-stock copies of **GN 1** and read aloud the sayings on the bookmarks. Invite the children to comment on how these sayings might reflect Ruth's journey or their own experiences. Ask them if there are times they have stepped out of their comfort zones.

Have the children cut apart the four bookmarks. Show them how to make fingerprint footsteps by tapping their index fingers on an ink pad and “walking” them up the bookmark, making three or four sets of footprints. Provide cleansing wipes so children can clean off their fingers. Demonstrate how to add toes to the footprints by making five small dots across the top of each fingerprint footprint. Set the bookmarks aside to dry. Allow children to make several sets of bookmarks so that you have plenty to distribute to the congregation.

Hand the bookmarks out after worship or place them in the pews of the sanctuary when it is possible to do so. Encourage the children each to take a bookmark home to remind them that they, too, may follow Ruth's example of dedicating herself to follow God.

T *Washing hands can take time! Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*



Extra Activity

LD VI

Remind the children that Ruth told Naomi, “Wherever you go, I will go.” Tell them that Ruth wanted to follow Naomi and that one way to follow is to follow someone’s footprints. Hand out copies of **GN 2** to the children. Allow time for the children to trace the path of the footprints following the direction that the feet face. Encourage the children if they struggle. Remind them that following someone can be difficult at times, but if you keep in the right direction, you can still find the way.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Sing together “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**.

Ask the children to name easy ways they can follow God. Then ask them to think of ways that may challenge them to step out of their comfort zone to follow God. Invite them to share as they wish.

Pray the following prayer:

Gracious God, you call us to follow you. Sometimes it is easy, but sometimes it is hard and we feel uncomfortable. May we be like Ruth and step out of our comfort zone to follow you. Thank you for being with us at all times. Amen.

As you send them forth, say to each one, “(Name), you are a child of God. Step out of your comfort zone and follow God!”



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).

Life
begins
at the
end
of your
comfort
zone.

Step
outside
of your
comfort
zone.

Say
YES
to new
adventures!

**I'm not
telling
you it's
going to
be easy,
I'm
telling
you it's
going
to be
worth it.**

Follow God!

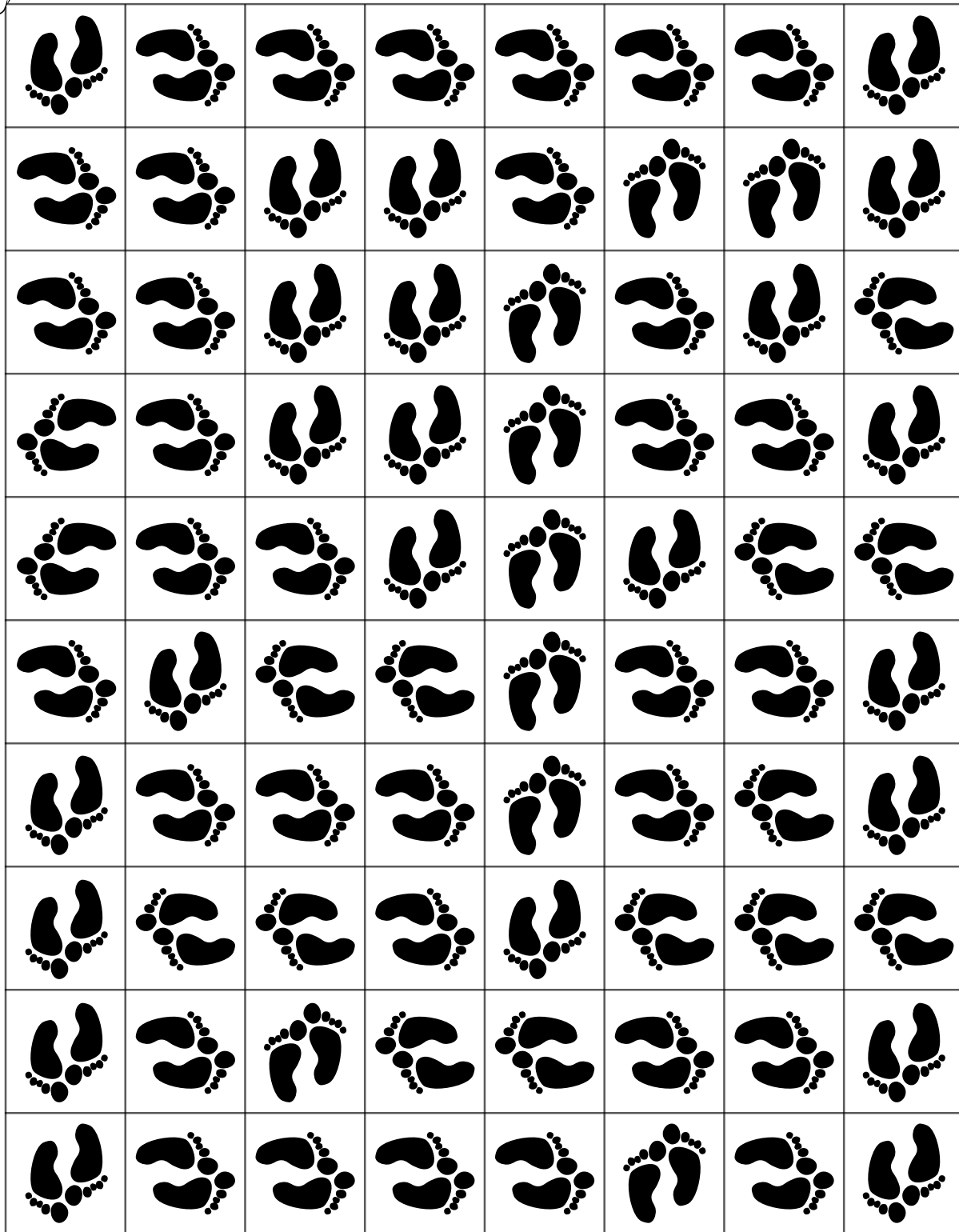
**Follow
God!**

**Follow
God!**

**Follow
God!**



START



FINISH



