



Elisha Helps a Family

Goal: To recognize that God provides for us in unexpected ways.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In 2 Kings 4:1-7

The prophet Elisha helped a woman in great need. Her husband had died with a debt. Those to whom he owed money were ready to take away her two children as slaves (v. 1, CEB). When Elisha asked what she had left, she said, nothing “except a small jar of oil” (v. 2).

Elisha instructed her to “go out and borrow containers from all your neighbors” and get as many as possible (v. 3). She was to fill the containers with oil and set aside the full ones. As she kept pouring the oil, she asked her son for another container—but no more were left (v. 6).

Then, “the oil stopped flowing.” She reported this to Elisha, who instructed her to “sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what remains” (v. 7).

The widow was both faithful and resourceful. She went to Elisha and asked for help for her family. The continual flow of oil for the containers was God’s way of graciously providing the resources for the woman’s debt to be paid and for her to be able to keep her two children with her at home. Surely no words can express the gratitude the woman felt for the grace she received!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

As children grow in their understanding of money and the cost of items like clothes, food, toys, or books, they gain a sense of its value and what it takes to live. As their experiences with others increase, they also have a sense about difference and inequity, and how some people have a lot of money and others have very little. As children are given money, either by getting an allowance or by earning it from doing jobs at home, their understanding of the economy—payment and debt—also grows. These concepts are present in this miracle story of Elisha and this faithful and resourceful widow.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The text says that the woman was afraid that her children would be taken away as slaves so that her husband’s debt could be paid. Debt–slavery was a common problem in the ancient world, and it’s important to be thoughtful and careful in your explanation if children have a question about it. They may also have questions about how Elisha was able to make the oil keep being replenished. We don’t always have easy answers for miracles like this. When people are kind and thoughtful like Elisha, then everyday miracles, like making sure people have enough to eat and children are safe, can happen.

*Dear God, by your grace open my eyes, heart,
and hands to the needs of others. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 10, 20, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

variety of empty jars or
containers

small jar of olive oil

bread (optional)

Responding

Celebrating

one or two small
containers

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.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **FA**

Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a green cloth, and a variety of empty small jars. Place the small jar of olive oil in the center of the table to be surrounded by all of the empty containers.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice today’s Scripture reading.

As the children prepare the worship space, talk about some of the uses for olive oil during Old Testament times. It was used in cooking, seen as a sign of wealth, used to anoint those called by God, and used to make soap and lotions.

Provide a little bread for the children to dip in the oil and taste. Put a drop on each child’s hand and let them rub it in as a lotion.

Singing

MS

Play and sing “God’s Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29**; **SCM 24**. Have the children create motions to go with the song.

Praying

M

Turn on the candle. Lead the children in taking a few deep breaths. Ask them to repeat this prayer after you:

God, help us to recognize unexpected ways you care for us.

Lead them in taking two more deep breaths. Say, “Amen.”

M *Sitting quietly for a prayer may be difficult for some children. Consider having them hold something, such as the Bible, that may be needed soon. This will give them something to focus on as well as provide an important role for them.*



Preparing to Hear the Story

On newsprint, write “Elijah” [E·li’jah] and “Elisha” [E·li’sha] in large letters. Point out the difference between the names. *Elijah* means “My God is Yahweh.” *Yahweh* is one name for God. *Elisha* means “My God is salvation” (or “saves us”). Encourage the children to practice saying the names Elijah and Elisha. Explain that they were both prophets, people who were messengers of God’s word to the people. Comment that it is easy to mix up these two prophets because their names are so similar. Tell the children that today’s story is about Elisha and how he helps a family.



Hearing the Story

LG LB

Invite a child to find 2 Kings 4 in the Bible. Invite a volunteer to read 2 Kings 4:1–7. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read **SCM 10**, a retelling of the story, or listen to the story audio. Use your voice and expressions to make the story come alive. Invite the children to act out the story using the empty jars and containers in the worship space and pretending to fill more and more of them as the story suggests.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C

Remind the children that Elisha’s name means “My God is salvation” (or “saves us”). Wonder together how God provides salvation to the woman and her children in such a difficult situation.

- ▼ How does God save the woman? (*God provides a way for her to get out of debt.*)
- ▼ How does God save her children? (*God saves them from slavery.*)
- ▼ Would God have blessed the woman if Elisha had not been there? Why? Why not?

The story ends with the family thanking God for God’s gift. List some ways we can thank God for providing for our needs.

One of the things we can do to thank God is to find ways to help others when they are in situations like that of the widow and her children. Ask the children to identify people in their communities and city who are in need. Listen to what the children are saying. Sometimes they notice things that adults don’t.

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing together “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 20**. Encourage the children to follow the actions in the song (sing, clap, dance, shout, and praise).

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Ask the children if they ever received something they didn't expect but needed. It may be helpful to provide an example of your own or use the example of a person who is sick and receives dinner from a kind neighbor. The neighbor provides food and also a smile that makes them feel cared for.

Provide newspapers and magazines. Invite the children to work alone or in pairs to find God's grace or unexpected care in a story or picture.

Come together and allow those who wish to share the pictures and stories they found to do so. Affirm all contributions.

Celebrating God's Grace



Remind the children that Elisha told the woman and her sons to go out and find as many empty jars as they could. Ask the children who they would ask to borrow a jar from. Play "I've Got a Jar."

- ▼ One person is Elisha's friend. The others are neighbors. Everyone stands in a circle.
- ▼ Elisha's friend closes her or his eyes and keeps them closed.
- ▼ Give a container to one or two neighbors. The neighbors hide the container(s) behind their backs and turn so Elisha can't see it.
- ▼ With eyes opened, Elisha's friend walks in and out of the circle and asks one neighbor at a time, "Do you have a jar?" The neighbors keep turning so Elisha's friend cannot see if they have a container.
- ▼ When Elisha's friend goes up to a neighbor without a container, the neighbor shows both hands and says, "I don't have a jar." If the neighbor has a container, the neighbor shows the container and says, "I've got a jar."
- ▼ Then the neighbor gives the container to Elisha's friend and the game ends.
- ▼ Choose another of Elisha's friends and play the game again.

Wonder together:

- ▼ What was surprising or unexpected in the story?
- ▼ What surprising or unexpected things have you experienced that turned out to be a good thing for you or your family?
- ▼ Did you tell God, "Thank you"? How?



Praying God's Grace



Create paper chains of gratitude. Invite the children to spend a few minutes cutting strips of paper. Have the children write or draw on each strip:

- Ways they can help people in need
- Names of people who have helped them
- Ways that God has helped them

Encourage the children to make a chain with their strips. Some children may have a chain with two links, others may have a chain of ten links—all lengths are appropriate.

Invite them to link their chain with the person next to them until all the links make one big chain.

Invite everyone to hold part of the chain. Offer God an echo prayer of gratitude for the ways we experience God's care.

Loving God, /
Thank you for food and shelter from the storm. /
Thank you for clothes that help to keep us warm. /
Thank you for . . . (*prompt responses from the group*).
Amen.

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

GN 1 Solution:
N, EE

Extra Activity



Wonder together what kinds of jars the woman and her sons may have found to collect the oil. If the children do not mention it, suggest that during biblical times clay jars may have been fairly common. Hand out copies of **GN 1**. Challenge the children to find the two clay jars that are the same.

After the children find the jars, ask the children if they have ever been surprised by having more than they need—perhaps food or supplies—when there were more people than anticipated at an event or activity, or money when they didn't think they had enough for something. Invite them to share their stories and where God's grace may be found.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

Gather the group and challenge them to be like Elisha, a messenger of God, who helped people know that God was there to help them in their need.

Teach them to say this response after you anoint each child: “God is our salvation.” Go to each child, address him or her by name, anoint each with oil (*dab a little oil on the back of their hand*), and say: “(Name), God is always with you. Show God’s love and help those in need.”



