



Elisha Helps a Family

Goal: To hear how God helps a family.

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)

blanket or mats

snack

internet-connected
device

Guided Play

choice 1: plastic
containers, such as food
storage receptacles,
bowls, and cups

choice 2: water play
area

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **Grace
Notes (GN) 1-2**

choice 2: air-dry clay

choice 3: plastic
containers from “Guided
Play” choice 1

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

Water play is a soothing activity for young children. Supervise it carefully and remind the children of a few simple rules, such as no splashing. Remind them to share.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, place plastic containers, such as food storage receptacles, bowls, cups, and so forth, around the room for “Guided Play” choice 1.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

TD **SD**

Greet the children as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be attentive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell them that today’s story is about how the prophet Elisha helped a family. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

1. **Finding Jars**—Tell the children that, in today’s story, they will hear about some boys who needed to find many jars. Invite the children to find all the containers in the room.
2. **Playing with Water**—Invite the children to play with the water using different size bowls and measuring cups.
 - ▼ Place a plastic tablecloth or drop cloth on a low table or on the floor under the water play area.
 - ▼ If you use a tub of water, set it on a low table.
 - ▼ Put bowls and cups near the water table or tub, and invite the children to play with the items in the water.
3. **Playing with Play Dough**—Invite the children to make simple pinch-pot bowls with play dough by pressing their thumb into the center of a lump of play dough. As they form their jar, tell them that they will hear a story about a family who needed to find many jars to help them out. Show the children how to elongate their bowl into a jar-like shape by gently squeezing the bowl and pulling upward.



T For some children, consistency in transitions is important. Growing in Grace & Gratitude utilizes familiar songs and rhymes as a way to aid in the ease of routine without making it feel stale.

Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “God’s Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29; SCM 24**. Repeat words and phrases in English and Spanish as appropriate. Invite the children to try to sing in both languages, assuring them that it is OK to make mistakes.

Jump and Shout

L MS

Using the tune “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” teach the children the following song:

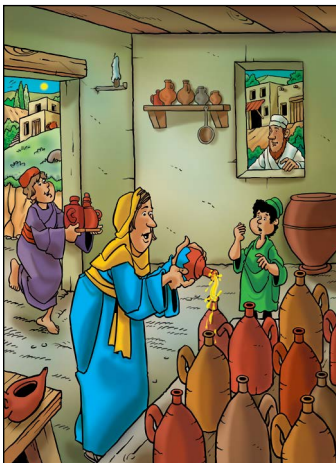
If you’re happy and you know it,
jump and shout. (*Jump and shout.*)
If you’re happy and you know it,
jump and shout. (*Jump and shout.*)
If you’re happy and you know it,
then your face will surely show it.
If you’re happy and you know it,
sit and rest! (*Sit down, hands in lap.*)

Watch a Potter at Work

VI T

Tell the children that you are going to show them a video of a potter making a clay pot. Show the YouTube video “Making a clay pot hd.avi” (bit.ly/MakingAClayPot).

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Hearing the Story

L

Open the Bible to 2 Kings 4 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about how the prophet Elisha helped a family.

Read **SCM 10**, but do not do the actions and words in the parentheses during the first reading. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again, inviting the children to follow your actions and repeat the phrases in parentheses in the story.



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Many Jars FM

Give each child a copy of GN 1 or GN 2. Invite the children to color the jars. Have them cut out the jars; assist with cutting as needed. Tell the children that they are going to bring all their jars together to remember how God helped a family.

Gather the children around a large piece of mural paper. Write the title "God Helps a Family" on it. Invite the children to glue their jars to the paper with a glue stick. Read the title of the mural. Give the children yellow crayons and invite them to color as if oil is being poured into their jars.



2. Make a Jar TD T

Using air-dry clay, invite the children to make a pinch pot. If the children made pinch pots with play dough during "Guided Play" choice 3, they will be familiar with this activity, but they can take home the pots they make now.

Invite the children to make simple pinch-pot bowls with the clay by pressing their thumb into the center of a lump of clay. As the bowl is formed, show the children how to form their bowl into a jar-like shape by gently squeezing the bowl and pulling upward.

T *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*

3. Acting It Out A

Invite the children to place all the plastic containers from "Guided Play" choice 1 around the room. Retell the story and invite the children to act out the parts of Elisha, the woman, and her sons.

Use a small bottle or container representing the oil jar to pretend to fill all the "jars" (plastic containers) the children find.

Remind the children that, when the woman needed help, she turned to God. God's messenger, Elisha, helped both her and her family.



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

4. Coloring Page C

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did the woman and her sons’ faces look like when the oil didn’t run out while they were filling the jars?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did the family feel when they paid back the money they owed?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did they use the extra money for?”

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Give children time to respond, and let them know their contribution is valued.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD FA

Call the children together, singing “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 20**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Ask the children how God provides for them and their families. Ask how they can be thankful for what God has done for them.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

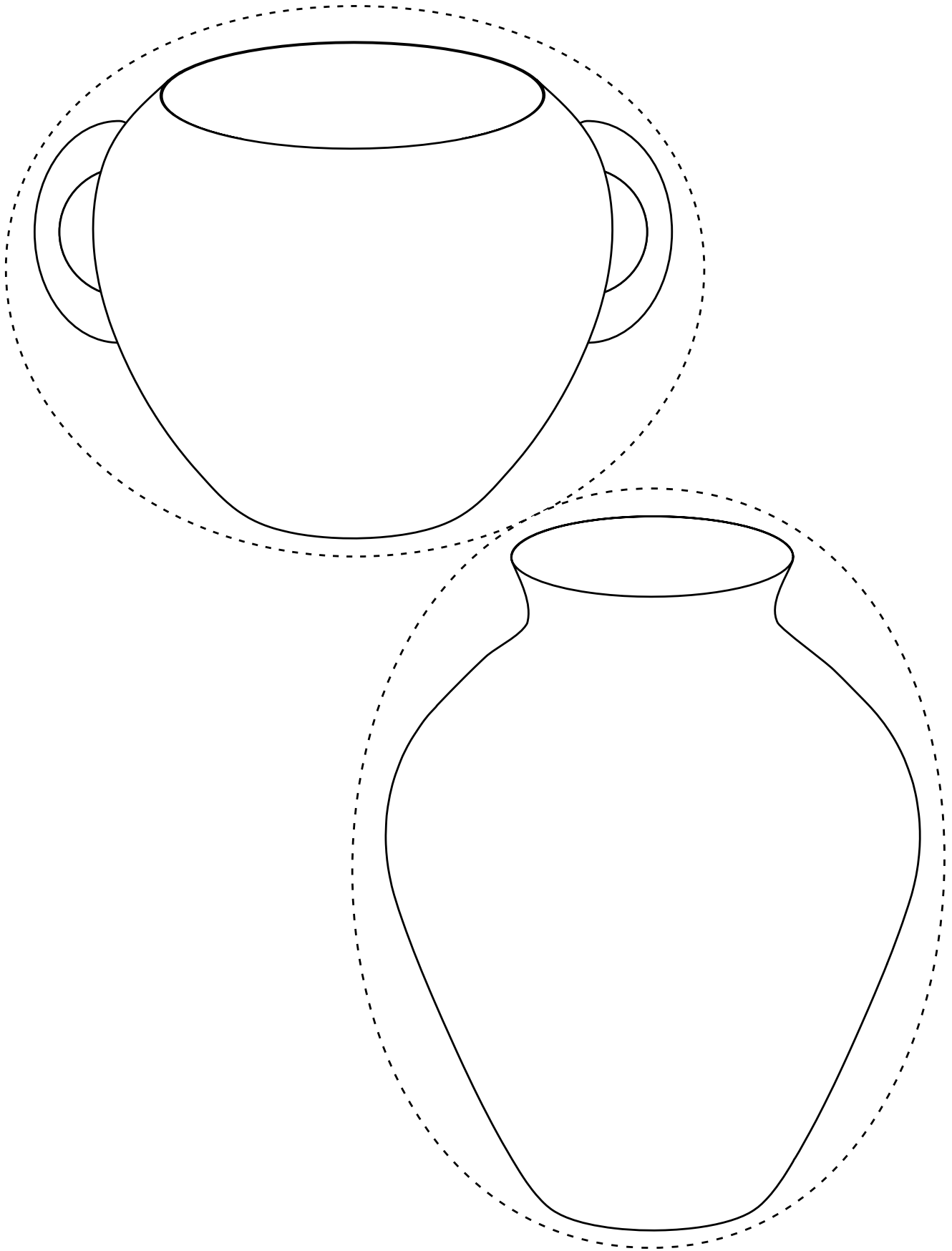
Thank you, God, /
for the food before us. /
Thank you, God, /
for the friends beside us. /
Thank you, God, /
for the love between us. /
Amen. /

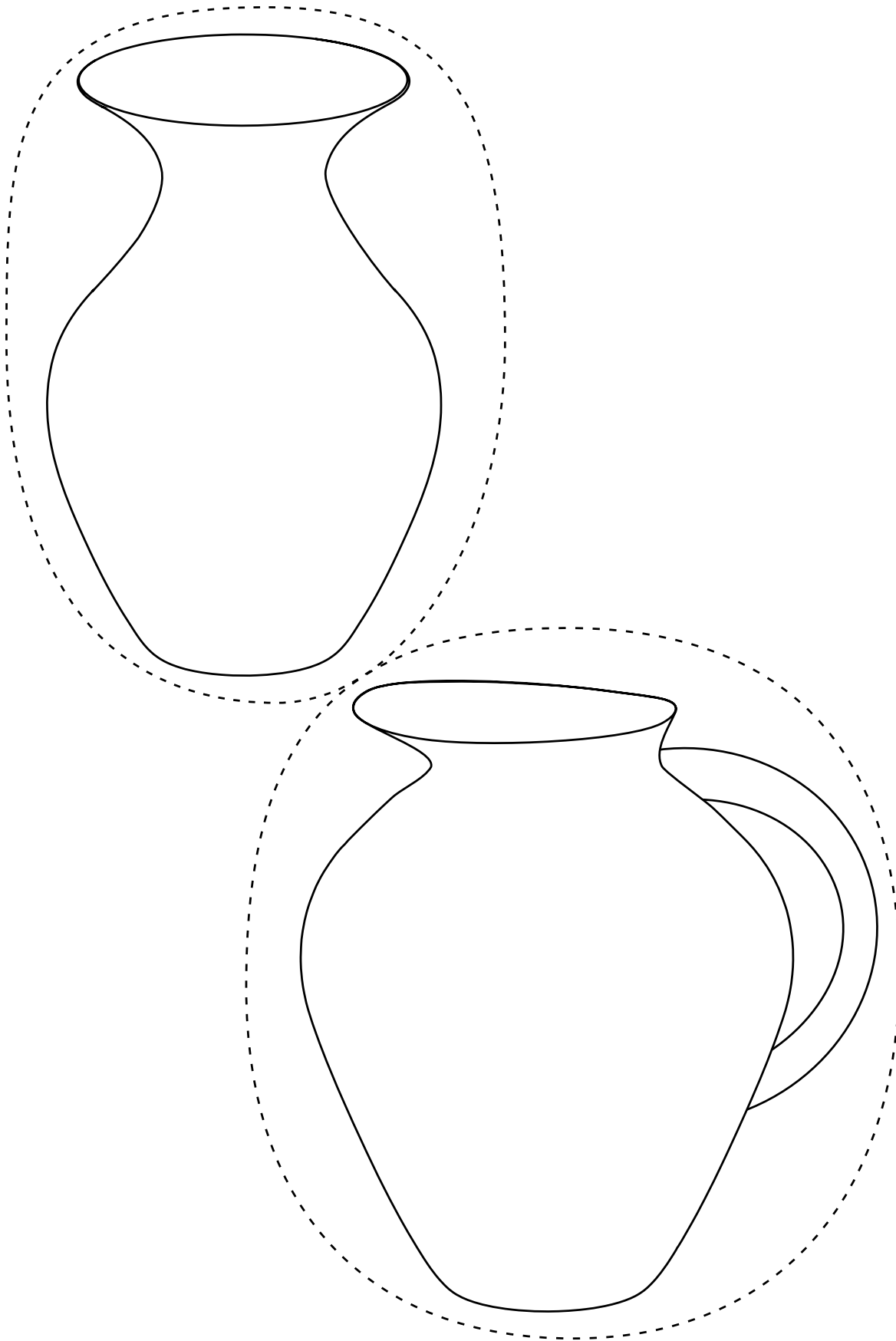
Enjoy a snack together.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), God cares for you. Go in God’s grace.”



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).





Elisha Helps a Family



One jar fills many jars with olive oil. Praise God!

