

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Who Is Jesus?



SAMPLE SESSION
a companion curriculum for
Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum

It is through the stories of the Bible that we get to know God, the things Jesus did and said, and ourselves as beloved children of God and as members of the faith community.

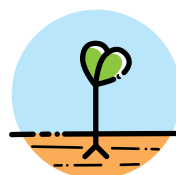
In this curriculum, children will:

- ✎ read and hear stories from the Bible using *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*;
- ✎ pause to let the story find its way into their hearts and minds;
- ✎ engage their curiosity and imagination through wondering questions and activities exploring God's presence, God's actions, and God's grace in the story; and
- ✎ wrestle with their place in the story, what God is calling them to do, and how they follow God's way of loving and living as disciples of Jesus Christ.



This intentionally multiage children's curriculum will:

- ✎ support spiritual development at all ages as well as foster cooperation, collaboration, and compassion within a diverse group of children;
- ✎ foster a sense of community;
- ✎ encourage wondering;
- ✎ invite moments of stillness; and
- ✎ be exploratory, imaginative, and relationally focused.



Key features include:

- ✎ 35 units that focus on biblical themes or people and their stories;
- ✎ 148 Old and New Testament stories from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*;
- ✎ 3, 4, or 5 sessions per unit, print or download, for flexible and adaptable use;
- ✎ intergenerational activity suggestions for worship, education, connections, and service for each session;
- ✎ an overview of each unit; and
- ✎ a page for each session that helps the leader make connections between the biblical story, the world today, and the spiritual lives of children and adults.



Ideal for:

- ✎ small congregations with wide age gaps in Sunday school;
- ✎ mid-size and large congregations that want mixed age groups to take advantage of the benefits of a multiage Sunday school;
- ✎ a family Bible study at church or at home;
- ✎ a weeknight children's Bible study;
- ✎ summer Sunday school classes; and
- ✎ congregations looking to experiment with an intergenerational model.

Downloadable At-Home Kit Guide:

- ✎ Free At-Home Kit Guides provide instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download them at bit.ly/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page.

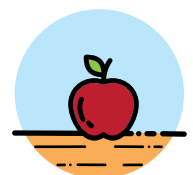


Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum

Availability list of the 35 units

(includes 148 stories from the Story Bible)

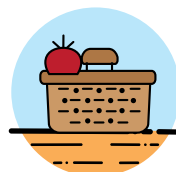
Available NOW	Sessions	Print	Download
✂ Creation	3	644001	644001D
✂ Abraham and Sarah's Big Family	5	644002	644002D
✂ Esau and Jacob	4	644003	644003D
✂ Brave Women and Men in the Old Testament	5	644004	644004D
✂ People Jesus Met	5	644007	644007D
✂ Healings and Miracles	4	644009	644009D
October 2020			
✂ God's Messages	4	644005	644005D
✂ The Birth of Jesus	5	644006	644006D
✂ Parables Jesus Told	5	644008	644008D
✂ Last Things	5	644010	644010D
✂ Surprises	5	644011	644011D
✂ A New Church	5	644012	644012D
July 2021			
✂ The Exodus	5	644013	644013D
✂ Joshua	4	644014	644014D
✂ Elijah and Elisha	4	644015	644015D
✂ Tell Me about God	4	644019	644019D
✂ Jesus Teaches	4	644022	644022D
✂ More Parables Jesus Told	4	644023	644023D
October 2021			
✂ Job and Jonah	4	644016	644016D
✂ Listening for God	3	644017	644017D
✂ Hopes and Dreams	3	644018	644018D
✂ Jesus: Beginnings	3	644020	644020D
✂ Who Is Jesus?	3	644021	644021D
✂ Saul/Paul	4	644024	644024D
Summer/Fall 2022			
✂ Joseph	3	644025	644025D
✂ Ruth and Naomi	3	644026	644026D
✂ David	5	644027	644027D
✂ Queen Vashti and Queen Esther	3	644028	644028D
✂ Celebrating	3	644029	644029D
✂ Wise	4	644030	644030D
✂ Songs, Prayers, and Wise Sayings	5	644031	644031D
✂ Jesus and Friends	5	644032	644032D
✂ More Healing and Miracles	5	644033	644033D
✂ The Body of Christ	5	644034	644034D
✂ Living as Christians	4	644035	644035D



How to Order

Available in units of 3, 4, and 5 sessions, print (P) or download (D), for flexible and adaptable use.

	P	D
3-Session Unit	\$27	\$24
4-Session Unit	\$36	\$32
5-Session Unit	\$45	\$40



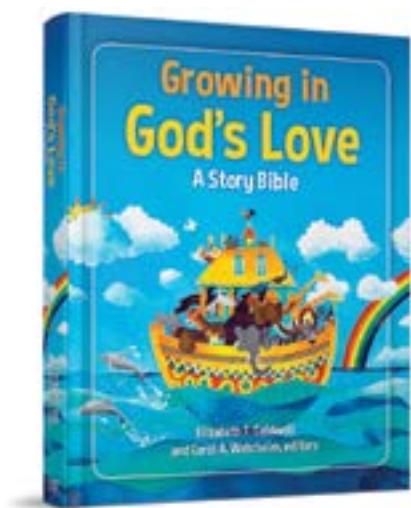
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Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible

Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim, eds.

Nurture the faith of the children in your life with *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. This engaging resource features 150 popular Bible stories that are organized by thirteen themes, including Strong Women and Men; Listening for God; Parables; Healings and Miracles; and more. *Growing in God's Love* features diverse artwork from more than twenty artists to appeal to a variety of ages and learning styles. Three reflection questions—Hear, See, Act—are included at the end of each story to help children further ponder the message of the story.

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible is perfect for Sunday school classrooms, children's sermons, vacation Bible school, and gift-giving at baptism or other milestones.

9780664262914 · ~~\$25.00~~ / \$16.25

Bulk discounts are available.

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Unit Overview and Connecting page written by Carol A. Wehrheim
Sample session written by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Meg Rift

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John 10:11-16 8



The Light of the World
John 8:12 20



The True Vine
John 15:1-8 14



The Bread of Life
John 6:35-37 6

Not included in sample

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First edition
Published by Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville, Kentucky

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Printed in the United States of America

Introduction

How do you get to know someone and form a relationship? You meet them. Get to know them. Ask questions. Discover things about them. Talk with each other. Share stories. Wrestle with what you learn. Discern your place in the relationship, with others, and with the world. Repeat.

One of the first ways we begin to understand God's self-revelation is to hear, engage, and wrestle with the written Word. In other words, it is through the stories of the Bible that we get to know God. It is through the stories of the things Jesus did and said that we get to know Jesus. It is through the Holy Spirit that we live and learn together. We get to know ourselves as beloved children of God and our place in the faith community.

In this curriculum, children will:

- read and hear stories from the Bible, adapted and told as age-appropriate stories using *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*;
- pause to let each story find its way into their hearts and minds;
- engage their curiosity and imagination with the Bible story through wondering questions and activities exploring God's presence, actions, and grace in the story; and
- wrestle with their place in the story, what God is calling them to do, and how they follow God's way of loving and living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Benefits of a Multiage Setting

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum is intentionally a multiage children's curriculum. Multiage curriculum places spiritual development in a church family model and recognizes that age and development are not synonymous. It can appeal to all church sizes, with "family groups" spanning the various ages found in larger groups. There is the opportunity for the development of skills and character through encouraging disciples who support and care for one another; providing leadership and mentoring occasions; and supporting cooperation, rather than competition, as well as patience, tolerance, and compassion for those who are of different age or ability. Multiage curriculum provides a change from the typical school day and model of education. It offers open-ended materials that can challenge

children and allows for developmental diversity and individual differences. Children can develop a strong sense of community as they offer and receive support and encouragement.

Note about Supplies

Basic supplies, such as paper, newsprint, card stock, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, colored pencils, glue, glue sticks, scissors, and tape, will not be listed in the "Gathering Supplies" section. These items are considered general supplies to have on hand. Specific items required for the lesson will be noted in each session.

Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books (flyawaybooks.com) is a children's picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation and the publisher of *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. It features books that reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world and that retell familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at pcusastore.com.

Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by making a space of welcome and accessibility. You can adapt an activity by process, product, or environment—the way something is done, what is done, or the setting in which it is done. If you think a child may struggle with an activity, ask the question "How can I help this child be successful?"

Adapting the Process: Giving extra support to complete activities is an example of changing the process.

Adapting the Product: Having children make or do something different is an example of changing the product when the original plan is inaccessible for a child.

Adapting the Environment: Thinking about the room where you gather helps children feel welcome and included. Considering lighting, space, and furniture; displaying children's projects; and using liturgical seasons and symbols help children feel that the room is a place where they belong.

Unit Overview

Remembering These Stories

One way to get to know a person is to ask them to tell you who they are. In the stories in this unit, Jesus tells us who he is: the good shepherd, the true vine, the light of the world, and the bread of life. These stories are found only in the Gospel of John.

Remembering How These Stories Connect

These four texts are called the “I am” statements of Jesus. According to John’s Gospel, Jesus also describes himself as the gate (John 10:7, 9); the resurrection and the life (11:25); and the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). Jesus’ descriptions all use objects and ideas that would have been familiar to his audience, whether the disciples or a crowd of the curious.

Jesus as the good shepherd (10:11–16) conjures a connection with David, the young shepherd whom God chose to be the king of Israel. The shepherd image is also common in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 40:11 for one example). Both country and city dwellers would quickly understand the role of the good shepherd.

Jesus also uses the image of the true vine (John 15:1–8) with his followers as the branches. With himself as the vine, Jesus can speak of God as the vine grower. This description of Jesus also incorporates his followers, as did the image of the good shepherd.

Jesus’ reference to himself as the light of the world (8:12) is the briefest “I am” statement in these four

stories. However, he is teaching in the temple in the presence of Pharisees who immediately question his ability to speak of himself in this way.

When Jesus speaks of himself as the bread of life (6:35–37), the connections with other texts are numerous, from the manna God sent to the Israelites during the exodus to the bread that will be broken at the Last Supper.



Remembering Why These Stories Are Important to Our Faith

Just as the disciples, the Pharisees, and others wanted to know who Jesus is, so we ask the same question today. Each time Jesus speaks about himself, we pay close attention. Each statement reveals another facet of Jesus’ relationship

to God and, in turn, our relationship with God. These “I am” statements also encourage us to meditate on the metaphors that reveal Jesus and God to us in our world.

Remembering to Wonder

- ✎ In this country, most people are not familiar with the day-to-day work of shepherds, which is probably quite different from that of Jesus’ day. What metaphor might we use for Jesus that would be similar to the good shepherd?
- ✎ What might these “I am” statements mean for the church today?
- ✎ Which of these metaphors or images has the most meaning for you?

The Good Shepherd: John 10:11-16

Worship

Education

Connections

Service

The True Vine: John 15:1-8

Worship

Education

Connections

Service

Not included in sample

The Light of the World: John 8:12

Worship

Education

Connections

Service

THE BREAD OF LIFE: JOHN 6:35-37

Worship

- Sing a hymn about bread.

- ✦ Sing the hymn “Loaves Were Broken, Words Were Spoken” (*Glory to God* #498).¹ Prior to the worship service, invite several people of various ages to learn the following movements to the refrain of the song:

By your **body** (touch hands to chest and thighs)
broken for us, (use hands to pretend to break a stick)

by your **wine** (use three fingers of right hand to make a W, make a rotational movement by jaw)

of life **outpoured**, (start with both hands in fists, right over left in front of chest, then open hands outward and down)

Jesus, **feed** again (move right hand, with thumb on top of fingers from left open palm, upward toward mouth)

your **people**. (place thumb between pointer and middle finger on each hand, moving both hands in rotational movement forward)

Be our **Host**, (both hands, palms down, fingers spread apart; move upward into fists)

our **Life**, (both hands palms toward body, thumbs up, pointer fingers pointing toward each other; move upward)

our **Lord**. (right hand in L shape, move from left shoulder to right hip)

Have the volunteers teach the congregation the movements used during the refrain before the worship service or before the hymn is sung. Then lead the movements during the singing of the hymn.

Education

- Explore Bible stories about bread and feeding.
 - ✦ Read Exodus 16:2–5, 11–15, 31, the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, the time where God sent them manna to eat. Or read “Just Enough,” page 96 in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*. Wonder together what it means to have enough—enough of your needs provided so that others may have theirs provided too.
 - ✦ Read John 6:1–15, the story of a boy sharing his lunch and Jesus feeding a large crowd. Or read “A Boy and His Lunch,” page 264 in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*.
 - Jesus’ statement about being the bread of life comes after the feeding of the five thousand. Read John 6:25–38 for a fuller context.
 - Tell about times when others have shared what they have with you when you needed it. Consider what it might mean if Jesus said, “I am _____ (what was needed and shared).”
- Be fed spiritually.
 - ✦ Sometimes we think about being fed spiritually—that we need spiritual food just as the body needs bread or physical food.
 - In what ways are you fed spiritually—reading Bible stories, praying, talking about faith questions and thoughts with others, meditating, worshipping, or some other ways?

1. Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., © 2006 GIA Publications, Inc.

Connections

- Bake bread.
 - ✎ Involve members of your family or church. Go to bit.ly/breadunderonehour for some bread recipes you can make in under one hour or use a favorite family recipe. Make enough bread to share with others.
 - ✎ Discuss:
 - What is your favorite kind of bread?
 - What do you like to eat with bread?
- Read a book or watch a video about bread.
 - ✎ People eat bread all over the world. Find the book *Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris (Harper Collins, 1993) or watch the YouTube video “Bread, Bread, Bread” (bit.ly/breadbookvideo).
 - ✎ Make a list of all the different kinds of bread you can think of. Place a mark by those you have tried.

Service

- Learn about gleaning.
 - ✎ Do an internet search for “gleaning.” Look at a definition, Wikipedia, and images.
 - ✎ Have a conversation about gleaning.
 - Who are the groups in your community involved in sharing food with those in need?
 - What is your local food bank? Is there a group involved in gleaning? Do an internet search for “gleaning near me.”
 - How can you get involved in helping feed others?
- Explore the Presbyterian Hunger Program.
 - ✎ Go to bit.ly/preshungerprogram. Explore the list on the right under “Learn More.”
 - ✎ Discuss:
 - Are there ways you can be bread for others as a family or church?

Connecting

The Bread of Life John 6:35-37

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible, p. 334

✦ **Goal:** To explore what the bread of life is.

Connecting with Biblical Text

The Gospel of John is unique. It doesn't follow the same story pattern as the other three Gospels. One of the things it includes are statements where Jesus says, "I am . . ." and usually describes himself as something familiar, such as light, vine, or shepherd. In John 6:35, we read about him saying to his disciples, "I am the bread of life." This follows two miracle stories: feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on water. Just like the Israelites, who asked for a sign from God and received manna to feed them, those following Jesus asked for a sign. Jesus responds that he is the bread of life. Following in the way that Jesus teaches means hungers are filled and thirsts are quenched. John 6:33 is important because Jesus says, "The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (CEB). So in following the teachings of Jesus, we join him in bringing life to the world.

If you would like to read a short commentary article on this text, go to: bit.ly/breadoflifecommentary.

Connecting with the World

- ✦ Who are the groups in your community involved in sharing food with those in need? What is your local food bank? Is there a group involved in gleaning? (Do an internet search for "gleaning near me.") How can you get involved in helping feed others?
- ✦ Learn more about the organization Bread for the World at bread.org. What resources would you like to read?
- ✦ Become familiar with the Presbyterian Hunger Program: bit.ly/preshungerprogram.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

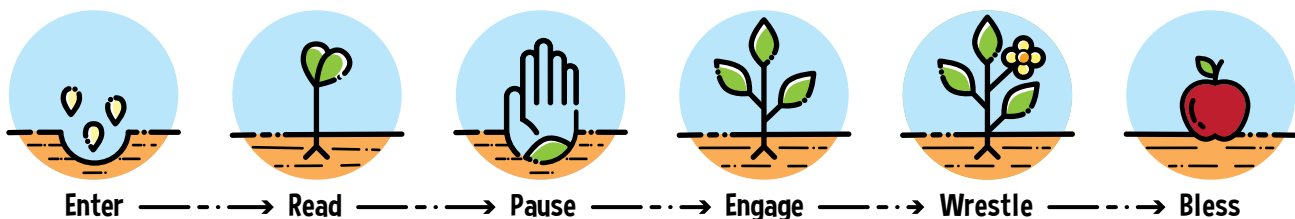
Children may remember a time when they were really hungry and their stomachs started to growl. They may also remember a time when they felt a different kind of hunger, a spiritual hunger—that comes when feeling sad, alone, hurt, angry, or separated from someone they love. They probably wouldn't identify those feelings as spiritual hunger, but they are longing for sustenance. Just as eating fills an empty tummy, so, too, sharing ourselves in our presence and in conversations with others not only makes us feel good but also shows a way of living in response to Jesus. God loves each of us unconditionally. In response to God's love, we love others. We share what we have with others. In doing this, we join Jesus in bringing life to our neighbors in the world. We share the bread of Jesus, and we also become bread for one another.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

For adults, this session offers the chance to pause and reflect on Jesus' statement "I am the bread of life" and how their spiritual lives are nurtured in knowing this. Think about these ways to connect with this topic:

- ✦ Reread the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, the time where God sent them manna to eat. Recall stories of Jesus feeding people in the Gospels.
- ✦ Try baking a different kind of bread this week, involving others to help. A great website for recipes is 17 Bread Recipes You Can Make in Under an Hour (bit.ly/breadunderonehour). Make enough bread to share.
- ✦ Recall meals at the table at home or meals shared at the table at church. How is Jesus made real to you in sharing bread? How does this give you life?

*God, who fills the hungry with good things,
fill me with the bread of life so that I may be bread to others. Amen.*



Leading

Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Drawing supplies
- ✓ Bibles
- ✓ Copies of Resource Pages 1, 2
- ✓ Loaf of bread (and gluten-free bread, if needed)
- ✓ Bread cloth
- ✓ Olive oil or butter
- ✓ Napkins, plates, bread knife, butter knives
- ✓ Internet-connected device

Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, John 6:26–37. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read the story “The Bread of Life,” page 334 in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*.

In what ways do you engage with this passage:

- ✓ What do you think it means when Jesus says, “I am the bread of life”?
- ✓ If you could illustrate it, what would you include in your picture?
- ✓ What are your hungers?
- ✓ How is your faith nourished?
- ✓ In what ways are you fed, nourished by your faith or by your participation in a community of faith?
- ✓ In what ways is your spiritual life nourished by prayer, pausing, and reading of Scripture?

As you think about this text and other stories of Jesus talking about meals, where do you wrestle with connecting them to ways Jesus wants us to be bread today? How have you been involved in acts of sharing bread or meals with others?

Recall the names and faces of the children you will teach. What do you know about them? Pray for them.

As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with items such as floor pillows, cushions, or bean bag chairs in a circle. Place a cloth on a small table or the floor with the bread, olive oil or butter, and a candle.

Invite older children to read one of the following passages silently and prepare to summarize the story for the group: John 6:1–15; Luke 14:16–24; Luke 22:1–20; or Luke 24:13–35.



Enter into sacred space together.

Invite the children to gather in the seating area.

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God of life, /
open our ears /
so that we may hear /
your Word to us today /
and be fed by it. /
Amen. /

Point out the drawing supplies. Encourage everyone to use them during the session for illustrating anything they are hearing or considering as they engage with the story of Jesus as the bread of life.

For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take. Give them a prompt to help them move into the next part of the session.



Read a story about God's people.

If you have predominantly younger children in your group, explore comparisons. Use the examples “She was as busy as a bee” and “The classroom was a zoo when the teacher left the room.” Ask the children to explain what those examples mean. Invite them to suggest some comparisons using the prompts: When I’m tired, I’m like . . . ; When I’m excited, I’m like . . . ; and “God is like . . . Tell the children that Jesus used words to paint pictures for people. Sometimes he told stories, and sometimes he compared himself to something so that people might think more about who he was and what he did.

Leading

Invite the children to listen to how Jesus used bread to talk about life.

Read the first paragraph of the story, “The Bread of Life” (p. 334).

Have a conversation using the following prompts:

- What is your favorite bread? Why?
- Have you ever made bread? What was that like?

Read the rest of the story.

- What stories do you remember about Jesus and food?

Invite older children to summarize one of the passages they read about Jesus and food.

- Why do you think we have so many stories about Jesus eating with people?



Pause to let God’s Word enter into hearts and minds.

Suggest that the children may sit quietly or use the drawing supplies quietly to illustrate a word, image, or feeling from the story.

Turn off the candle.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God’s story.

Wonder together:

- What is the setting of this story?
- Who is there?
- Why are the disciples asking these questions?
- Why do you think Jesus said, “I am the bread of life”? How is Jesus like bread? What did he want people to remember about him?

Choose one or more options:

Watch the YouTube video “Breaking Bread—Johnny Cash” (bit.ly/JohnnyCashbread). Wonder together:

- What is Johnny Cash saying about bread?
- What do you think “breaking bread” means?
- What are the different ways people are breaking bread together in the video?

Play the song again and invite the children to join in singing the refrain.

Many children have food allergies, such as milk, egg, wheat, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Provide alternatives to keep children safe.

Eat bread together. Break the bread. Tear off chunks or use a bread knife to cut slices. Invite the children to pour a bit of olive oil on their plates and dip their bread in it or spread butter on their bread. Explain that the word *companion* comes from two words meaning “with” and “bread.” Wonder together how this word relates to the story.

- How is Jesus *with* you as a companion?



Wrestle with our place in God’s story.

Ask the children where they see themselves in this story. Have them consider if they are a disciple asking questions, a bread eater, a bread sharer, or possibly even bread for others.

Choose one or more options:

Watch a video about a child who wanted to share food with people (bit.ly/superherochild).

Wonder together:

- What do you want to remember from today?
- How can you be bread for others?

Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and invite the children to complete the prompts with words or pictures.

Invite the children to share any art they made during the session.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Teach the children the Hebrew blessing prayer for bread. Go to bit.ly/Hebrewbreadblessing or hand out copies of Resource Page 2.

- ✎ Show the children the blessing written in Hebrew. Tell them that Hebrew is read from right to left, so the Hebrew word on the right is *Baruch* or Blessed.
- ✎ Click on the audio to hear the blessing in Hebrew or read the phonetic pronunciation provided on Resource Page 2.
- ✎ Try saying the blessing in Hebrew together.
- ✎ Say the blessing together in English. Note that the audio version uses the word “Eternal” for *Adonai* and “Sovereign of the universe” where “Sovereign of all” is written.

Close with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

God, who fills the hungry with good things, /
fill me with the bread of life /
so that I may be bread to others. /
Amen. /

Encourage the children to make bread at home with their family. Suggest they make extra to share with others.



Grow with more.

- Tell stories.
 - ✎ Who do you know who likes to cook for others? How would you describe them?
 - ✎ What is one of your favorite memories of a meal with friends or family? How did it give you life?
- Eating Together
 - ✎ Tell the children that they are going to watch a video about some high school students who formed a new club at their school. Show bit.ly/NoOneEatsAlone. Talk together about the video using the following questions:

- What grade was Dennis in when he was eating alone?
- What do you think motivated Dennis and his friends to form the club We Dine Together?
- How do you think Dennis and others who sit with students who are alone are being like “bread” for others?
- Do you think you need a program like this at your school?
- How do you think it might help people if a program like this started in elementary school?

I am fed by Jesus when . . .

I am bread for others when I . . .

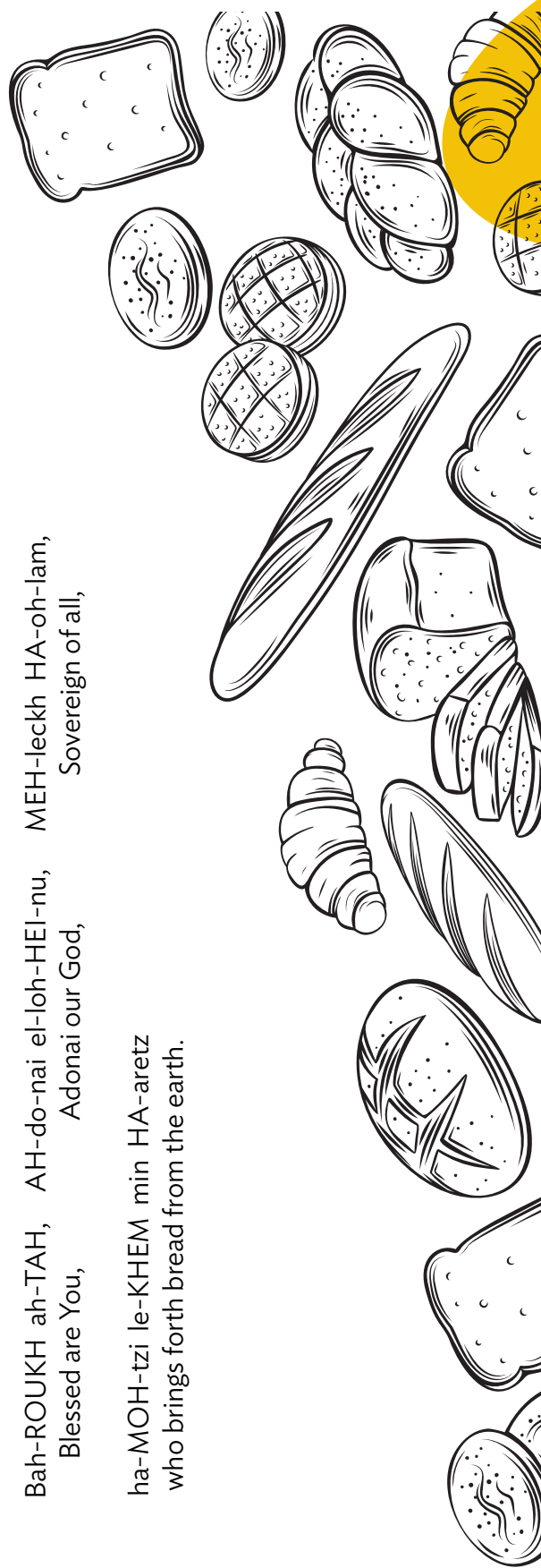


הַעוֹלָם, מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אַתָּה בָּרוּךְ
 HA-oh-lam MEH-leckh el-loh-HEI-nu AH-do-nai ah-TAH Bah-ROUKH
 of all Sovereign our God Adonai are you Blessed

הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ
 ha-MOH-tzi le-KHEM min HA-aretz
 who brings forth bread from the earth

Bah-ROUKH ah-TAH, AH-do-nai el-loh-HEI-nu, MEH-leckh HA-oh-lam,
 Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all,

ha-MOH-tzi le-KHEM min HA-aretz
 who brings forth bread from the earth.



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