

# READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

## A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

### God's Coming to Visit

By Franz Hübner, Angela Glökler, & Rea Grit Zielinski

We often find prayers, inspirational sayings, and day-to-day language that mistakenly include the idea that we must ask for God to be with us. While the understanding that God is ever-present is the basis for all that we believe, it's easy for us, as people used to being in control of our lives, to fall back on thinking that God needs to be 'invited in,' or even that God's actions are in response to ours. In this playfully illustrated story, excitement sweeps through a community of animals as they anticipate a visit from God. As you prepare to read the book, begin by looking at the cover, making note of the wide-eyed expressions of the animals, and imagine together what a speech bubble above each animal's head would say. Talk about what your response would be if you heard that God was coming to visit your family.



### ★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- Early in the book, word begins to spread that God is coming to visit! The story continues with, "How exciting! A little scary too." What do you think would be exciting about such a visit? What would feel scary?
- What preparations happen in your household when you are expecting a visit from someone special?
- From the very beginning of the book, the owl was trying to tell the animals "God is already here" but no one listened. When have you experienced a time when you had something to say, but nobody would listen to you?
- What do you imagine God might have said to the animals if God's voice could have been heard?

### ★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- It's easy to forget the comforting truth that God is already (and always!) with us. Discuss situations where knowing God is present feels especially meaningful.
- On the last page, the line "Sometimes the world was hard to understand" appears. Take this opportunity to share some things each person finds hard to understand in the world. Resist the urge to try to explain or provide answers.
- *With Younger Children:* Flip through the book, pointing out how the activities of the animals relate to their commonly understood traits (such as the owl being wise, the mouse being scared, and so forth). Discuss what traits members of your family are known for, making sure to reinforce that God loves each animal, and each one of us, just as we are!

### PRAY

God who loves us exactly as we are, we are grateful that you are always here! May we continually notice your presence; and may we, in return, listen for your voice as we strive to show our love for you and for one another. Amen.



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## ★ ★ DIG DEEPER ★ ★

As you share this book, there are so many directions your conversation can take. With younger children the joyful, almost giddy, delight of experiencing God with us is a great starting point. With older children, perhaps underscore the fact that we don't need to be impressive to be worthy of love. No matter what age or stage the children with whom you share this book are in, focus on the message from the owl near the end of the story suggesting what the animals should do ("be still and feel God's love, . . . share your worries with God and ask for help. . . . love God and one another"). Some ideas to consider as you dig deeper include:

- Explore the owl's instructions to the animals as possible spiritual practices using these ideas or some of your own:
  - Come up with practical ways to be still and feel God's love. Some ideas might include spending time in nature, listening to sacred music, or using mindfulness techniques to observe surroundings through a faith lens.
  - In considering how to share your worries with God and ask for help, spend time exploring different styles of prayer, and choose one or more to incorporate into your daily routine.
  - Come up with a concrete way to love God by caring for others through acts of service or hospitality, living into the instructions we see in Jesus' teaching from Matthew 25:35-45.
- Explore how this story reflects ideas in Scripture around God loving us just as we are. Some texts to get you started include 1 Samuel 16:7b and Psalm 147:10-11.
- Spend time thinking about how your family talks about God and the prayers that are regularly used, and find ways to reframe them to acknowledge God's ever-present nature. For example, instead of asking God to be present, pray for awareness of God's presence.

## MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

### ADDITIONAL BOOKS THAT CELEBRATE GOD IN OUR LIVES

- [\*Where Are You Hiding, God?\*](#) by Elisabeth Zartl
- [\*A Very Big Problem\*](#), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Annie Bowler
- [\*When God Gave Us Words\*](#), by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Darcy Day Zoells
- [\*God's Big Plan\*](#), by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Theodore Hiebert - Also available as a [board book](#)!

Guide written by Becky D'Angelo-Veitch and created in partnership with PC(USA)'s initiative "[Around the Table](#)" ([pcusa.org/resource/around-table](http://pcusa.org/resource/around-table)).



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