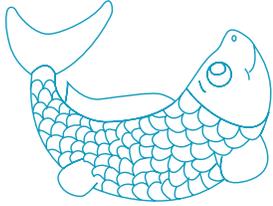




ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

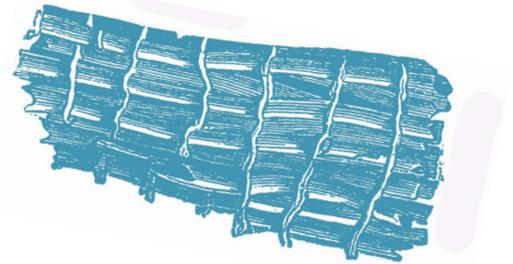
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT



Gracie Finds Her Gift

It was another beautiful day on the Red Sea coral reef. Gracie and her friends were playing a new game they had made up seeing who could blow the biggest bubble or who could blow the most interesting shape or who could make the most bubbles in one breath. Each of them seemed to do one of these things well, but not all of them.

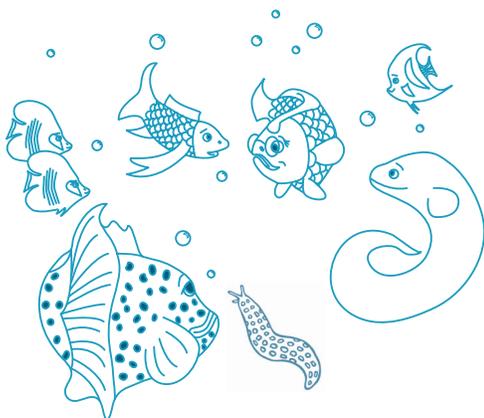
All at once they heard a loud noise that could only mean one thing — an outboard motor on a boat. All the fish scattered and hid among the coral far from the surface of the water. The sound changed at one point as the motor seemed to run into something. Gracie and her fish friends watched horrified as a chunk of a pipe organ coral was knocked away from its colony by the propellers on the boat motor.



“Oh, no!” thought Gracie. “If we don’t do something, this coral will die apart from its coral buddies.” She called out to her friends, and they all swam to where the pipe organ coral piece lay on the sandy bottom.

They looked at each other helpless to reunite this piece of coral with the rest of its family. What could they do as little fish? They prayed to the God of the Seas to help them save this coral family.

Gracie turned to Ephraim Eel, who was great at building things, and asked him if he knew of anything that they could build that would help the broken pipe organ coral to grow and survive. Ephraim thought about it and recalled that he had heard of divers who tied broken pieces of coral onto sturdy plants so that they could continue to grow and thrive near their previous colony.



“Great idea!” said the others, but they really didn’t know where to begin this task.

“Angie Angelfish,” said Gracie, “you know more about plants than any other fish around. What type of wood would be sturdy enough to hold the coral, yet light enough that some of us could plant it in the sand?”

“Bamboo” Angie replied immediately. “It is strong enough to hold the colony, but hollow on the inside, so it makes for a lighter building material.”

“That sounds perfect,” said Gracie. “Gus Grouper, you are the strongest, so can you find us a piece of bamboo that will work?”

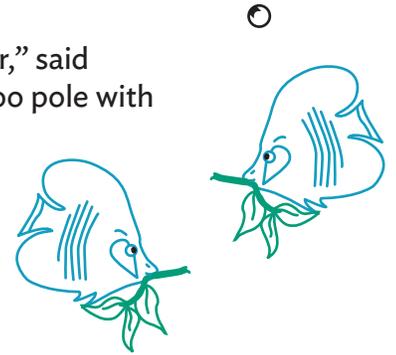
“I’d be happy to,” replied Gus, and off he went in search of just the right piece of bamboo.

“We’ll need something to tie the pipe organ coral to the bamboo pole once Gus finds it,” said Gracie. “Angie, what type of plant makes the best tying rope?”

Angie thought about this for a while and chose a particular sea grass that was long and strong, but fairly easy to tie.

“Benji and Belinda Butterflyfish, you work together so well as brother and sister,” said Gracie, “I think you should be the ones to tie the pipe organ coral to the bamboo pole with the grass, and Ephraim, you can hold the pole steady by wrapping your body around it.”

Each of Gracie’s friends did their part in making this repair. Gus brought the bamboo pole. Angie pointed out the best grasses to use. Ephraim steadied the pole with his body and Benji and Belinda tied the grass around the coral onto the pole until it was secure.



After they had finished the job, they all admired their work and congratulated each other on a job well done. Only Gracie seemed sad and discouraged.

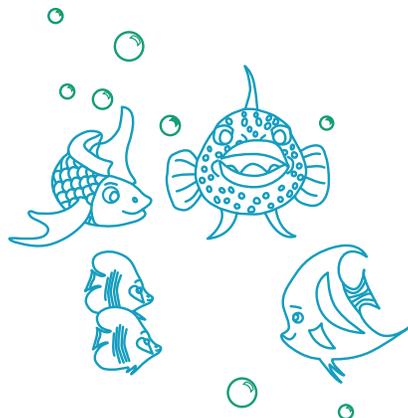
Angie was the first one to notice as they were best friends. “What’s wrong, Gracie?” she called. “Did we do something wrong?”

“No,” sniffled Gracie. “It looks beautiful and strong, and the pipe organ coral colony will live and grow.”

“Then, what’s the matter?” they all demanded.

“All of you were able to use your gifts in doing this important thing to save the coral colony, but I didn’t have any gift to give,” said Gracie. “I wish that I was a builder like Ephraim or knew a lot about plants, like Angie, or was strong like Gus, or worked together in a team like Benji and Belinda, but I don’t have any of those gifts.”

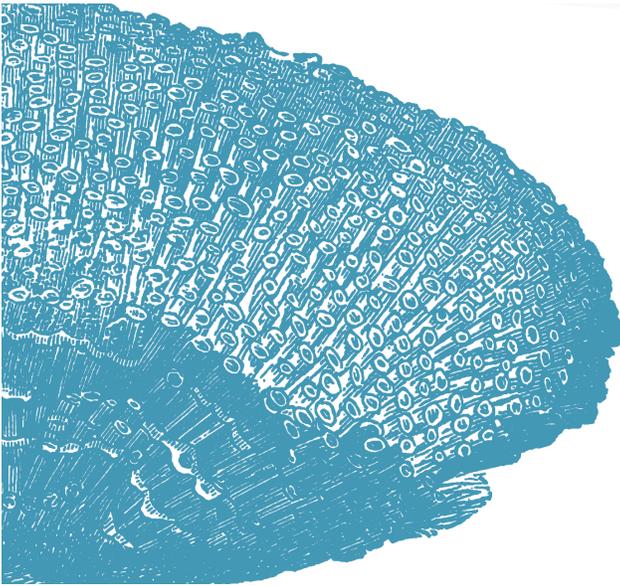
At this moment, Old Codfish, who had been watching the group for some time now, came swimming over to respond to Gracie. “But Gracie,” he said, “you have a very important gift that you gave to this project that no one else has.”



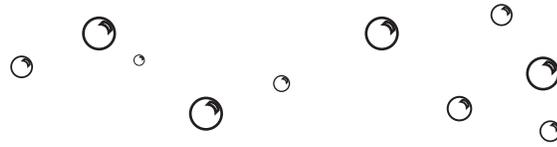
“What is that?” Gracie sniffled, unconvinced.

“You were able to see the gifts in all of your friends and to bring them together for the good of the pipe organ colony,” said Old Codfish. “This is a very important gift indeed and you should celebrate it, as well as the gifts of your friends.”

“Yes!” chorused all her friends. “Without you, we would never have been able to build this home for the coral colony. You saw what we could give, and we did!”



“Let’s all blow a bubble necklace of blessing around this pipe organ coral construction and welcome them to their new home,” cried Gracie, suddenly feeling much better. And they did. Some blew big bubbles. Some blew bubbles in weird and interesting shapes. Some blew many, many small bubbles, but together they surrounded the coral colony in love and prayers for new life.



For younger children:

- 🕒 Read these words from 1 Corinthians 12:4–5: “Now there are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit and there are a variety of services, but the same Lord.” Make a list of all the gifts that the children see in others and a list of all the gifts they see in themselves.
- 🕒 Gracie and her friends helped the broken coral colony by using their individual gifts. How might you use the gifts you listed in the last activity to help Creation or the people in your neighborhood?
- 🕒 One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) relies on the gifts of many. Some give money. Others give time or knowledge. Look at the website for OGHS and decide where your class or family can best use their gifts to help others. pcusa.org/oghs

For older children:

- 🕒 Look at the lists of gifts from 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 and Romans 12:6–8. Think of specific people who embody these gifts, then name other gifts that you think that God values in others and in yourself.
- 🕒 Divers really do repair coral reefs through a method similar to what Gracie and her friends used. Here’s a site where you can find out more about this: newheavenreefconservation.org/learning-resources/explore-topics/reef-restoration-methods. Plan a project with your class, family or a group of friends that uses your combined gifts (like Gracie and her friends did) to help someone else or benefit Creation.
- 🕒 One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) has many of these types of projects where people use their gifts of money, time and knowledge to help others in our world. Learn more about some of the projects happening around the world by using the interactive Google map provided on the OGHS site: pcusa.org/oghs.



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