

# Little Fish Finds Her Name

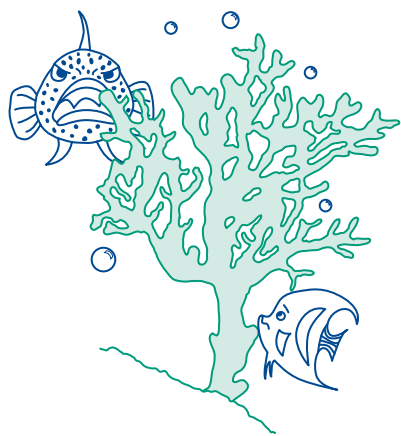
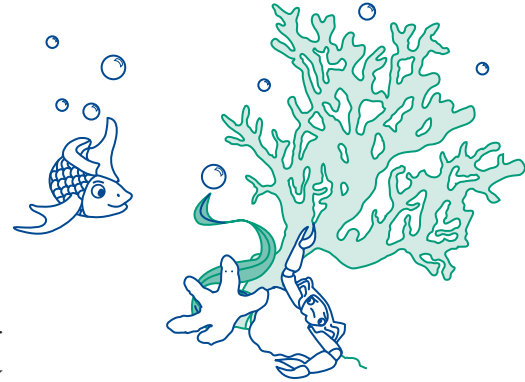
Little Fish wanted to know her name more than anything. She saw her neighbors Angie Angelfish, Benji and Belinda Butterfly Fish, and even Efraim Eel. They all had names. Everyone in her school had a name, but she was still just Little Fish.

Last year when she had asked Old Codfish about her name, He simply said, “All in good time.” Wasn’t this a good time? It was so hard to wait. She now knew that she was a girl fish, that she lived someplace called the Red Sea (even though it was more blue than red), and that there were many other fish who looked like her and swam around together in a school. She knew all these things that made her like the others in her neighborhood, but she wanted so much to know what was special about her.

Little Fish swam in between branches of the fan coral. It was hard to believe that each of these branches was a whole neighborhood, too. Tiny creatures lived in each of these little holes or had at one time. They were even smaller neighbors than she was.

As she swam happily in the warm water, Little Fish also needed to watch for unfriendly neighbors. There were those fish that she had been taught to fear—fish like hawkfish, sharks, and groupers who were said to eat little fish like her. If she saw one, her plan was to swim very quickly into the fan coral and stay very still. Maybe the unfriendly fish would think that she was part of the coral and leave her alone.

Little Fish felt the fear of the other fish before she saw the large grouper. It was swimming very quickly toward her school, which swam in all different directions away from the large fish. Little Fish followed her plan, swimming into the center of the fan coral and staying as still as she could and still remain in one place. The grouper chased the other fish one way and then the other, but the little fish were too fast for him.



Then he spied Angie Angelfish on the other side of the branch coral. She was so afraid that she couldn’t move. Little Fish couldn’t do anything but watch in fear as the grouper swam closer to Angie.

The grouper tried to make a quick dart through the coral to catch Angie, but somehow got wedged between two branches. Angie swam away to safety. Little Fish sent a bubble prayer of thanks to God for saving Angie.

Little Fish was still afraid to move. The grouper was struggling to free himself from the coral. What if she came out of her hiding place and the grouper suddenly became unstuck? All the stories she had heard about groupers came back to her. They were mean. They were not to be trusted.

And yet, when she looked at the grouper, she couldn’t help feeling sorry for him. He was trying so hard to free himself that he was actually scraping his sides on the sharp coral. The algae that surrounded the old homes of the coral creatures was now tangled around his fins. “Someone should help him,” she thought.

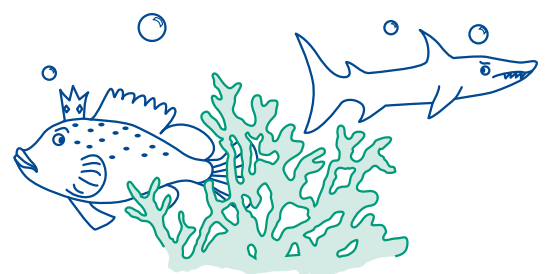
At this point Queen Blue Spot swam by. She looked at the grouper and swam away. “Why didn’t she help him?” thought Little Fish. “They are fish of the same kind. She is queen of her group and yet she did not stop.”

Shortly after, Sammy Shark swam up from the sandy bottom. “Surely this fish will help the grouper. He is a famous fish who all the others think is a hero.” But Sammy Shark kept right on swimming without even slowing down.

By this time the grouper was getting tired. He struggled less. It almost looked like he was crying. He didn’t look so scary to Little Fish. Maybe she could do something to help. She remembered a story she had heard that was first told by God’s own son, Jesus, about a Good Samaritan who helped a neighbor in need.

Very quietly she swam out from her hiding place and stopped a little way from the grouper. He looked at her with very sad eyes. What could such a little fish do to help him? When the others swam by without stopping, he had given up hope.

Little Fish thought very hard and then began to chew on the algae that was wrapped around the grouper’s fins. This was very hard work. It would be so much easier if there were others to help.



This gave her an idea. She went to find all her neighbors and those in her school. She told them her plan. At first they were as afraid as she had been, but when she talked about how the grouper had struggled, how the others had swum by without helping, and how sad his eyes looked, they decided to help. After all, as Benji Butterfly Fish observed, “This grouper is probably too tired and too hurt to think about eating us.”



All her neighbors began to chew on the algae. The grouper’s eyes opened even larger to see so many of these little fish helping him. When they had freed him from the algae, Efraim Eel gave him one big push from the rear with his head. The grouper popped right out of the branch coral and smiled a shy grin as he turned to thank his new friends.

“My name is Gus,” he said. You have taught me what many fishes all working together can do to help others. Yesterday I would have called you my enemies, but today you are my neighbors.”

Angie Angelfish turned to look at Little Fish. “It was her idea,” she said.

“Thank you . . . I’m sorry, I don’t know your name,” said Gus.

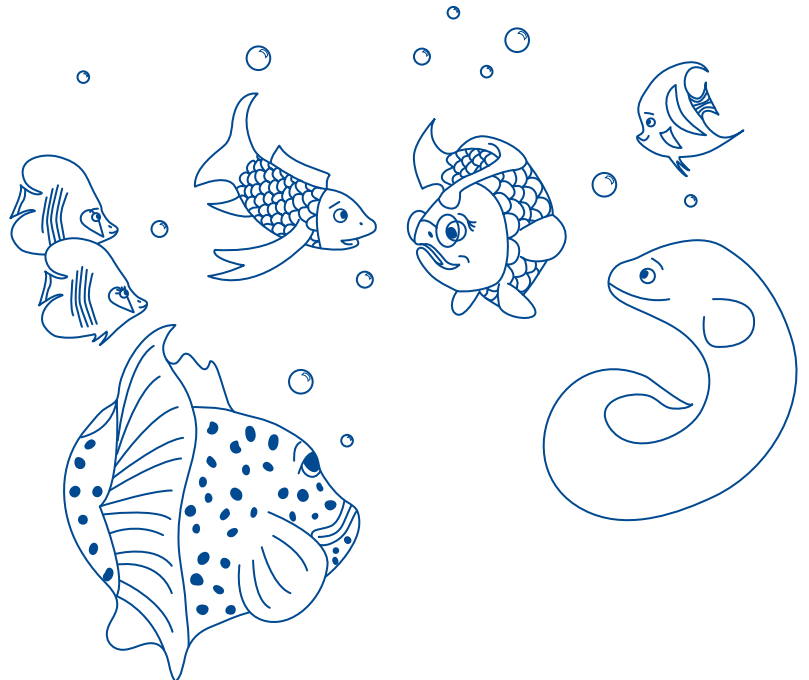
At that moment the Old Codfish, who had been watching from behind Efraim Eel’s cave, swam quickly to the center of the group, and said, “You may call her Gracie.”

“Thank you, Gracie,” said Gus.

“So my name is Gracie!” smiled Little Fish. “Is it because I am graceful when I swim? Or is it because I helped someone?”

“Child,” said Old Codfish, “You were named and loved by God before you did any of those things. Gracie, you are a gift to all of us, and especially to Gus today, because of who you are, not what you do. You are a child of God.”

All the fish in the neighborhood surrounded Gracie and sang a fish hymn of praise to God. Gracie smiled at her new neighbor, Gus, and wondered what new adventures were in store for them.



### Younger Children Questions:

1. Who are Gracie’s neighbors? Who are your neighbors?
2. How did Gracie help Gus? How do you help?
3. God loves Gracie for who she is, even when she doesn’t always do the right thing. What do you think God loves about who you are? Does your name say something about who you are?
4. One Great Hour of Sharing Offering helps all kinds of people be neighbors to each other. Who would you like to help next? Who can help you? (*Poster can be used to give them some ideas of people in need.*)

### Older Children Questions:

1. Gracie remembers Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:29–37, that inspires her to act to help Gus. Read this story and compare it to Gracie’s story. What is the same? What is different?
2. How are you a neighbor to those who are different from you? How do you work with others to help someone who needs help?
3. Gracie’s name comes from the word “grace,” which means God’s gift of love to us that isn’t earned, bought or taken. How do you know that God loves you and gives you this grace? What can you say or do to thank God for this wonderful gift?

Using the “Who is my neighbor?” map, look for the Red Sea, where Gracie and her friends live. Find all the projects that this offering supports that involve water. (*Stamps 2, 4, 7, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21 all mention water in their descriptions*) How does water help the people who live near it? How does water sometimes destroy things? How can we help to make sure that people get the water that they need?