

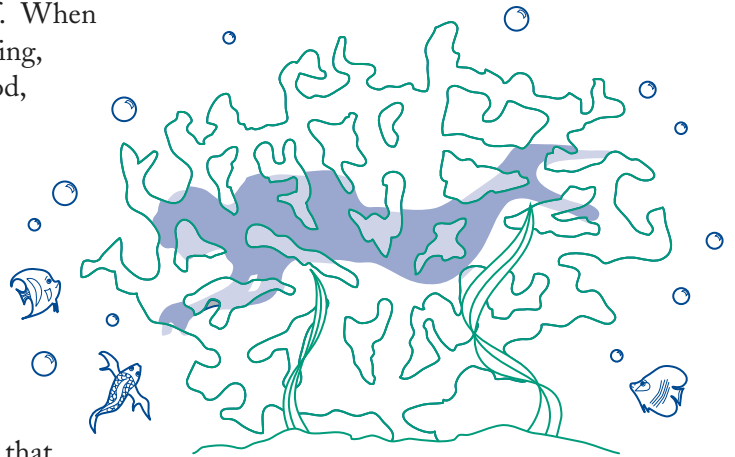


Gracie and the Two-Legged Fish

You may want to make copies of the story for the children. Because the story works better if the children don't realize at first that the big new fish is a human, it may be useful to read the story first, and then ask the children to color the pictures in their copies of the story. Then, as they are finishing, you can read the story again and ask the questions at the end.

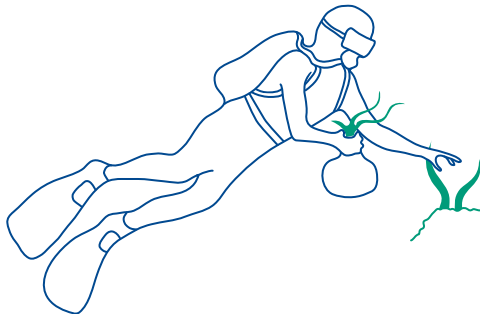
It was a day that Gracie would never forget, the day she first met the strange, large, two-legged fish. It began like most days on the coral reef. When the morning light touched the coral where they had been sleeping, Gracie and her friends swam out, prayed a bubble prayer to God, and began searching for breakfast.

Later that morning, Gracie was looking for a stone for her favorite game, "Pass the Stone." Suddenly, the sea seemed to grow dark. The coral turned from its usual hot pink to a dull dusty rose. Gracie looked up toward where the light had been and saw something unlike anything she had seen before. It was as large as a shark, but with two large, skinny fins behind and two smaller fins on each side of its body. What looked like its head was very small except for the large, flat eye that seemed to cover its whole face. Tubes came out of its head and connected to a big yellow thing on its back. The body of the strange fish was sleek and black, without scales. It held something in its smaller side fins that it kept bringing up to its face.



Gracie heard a click before a bright light appeared. Then she could hardly see for a moment.

Gracie was so startled by the strange fish that she forgot to hide. She just stared and stared. The strange fish pulled something from its body that looked like an upside-down jellyfish. Reaching down with its shorter fins, the strange fish began picking up algae and putting it inside the thing that looked like a jellyfish.



"What if this strange fish decides it wants to collect little fish, too?" thought Gracie. "I better warn my friends." She swam off as fast as she could and found the others behind the sponge bed. She described to them the strange fish she had seen. Gus Grouper said he had heard other fish talk about these strange creatures. He thought they were called "humans" and that their fins were not fins at all, but things called "legs" and "arms." Gus told the other fish terrible stories of humans who had caught his cousins for food. He'd also heard they poured sticky liquid into the water that killed all the fish, coral, and algae. This last story reminded Gracie that the human she had seen was taking away some of their algae.

Gracie had never really liked the algae. It had caused Gus all kinds of problems last year, and too much of it could poison the water so that no fish would be able to live. On the other hand, she had learned in school that the algae held the coral reef together. It also produced the oxygen that they all needed to breathe. Suddenly, the algae seemed very important. "Maybe we should hide the algae from the humans so that they can't find it," she said.

The others agreed that this sounded like a good idea. They began collecting all the algae they could find. They stuffed it into crevices. They asked the rays to cover it with their large, flat bodies. They tied it between the branches of the coral so it would be hard to remove. But Gracie began running out of ideas. "If only we could build a huge cave and post all the really scary fish with big teeth around it, then no human would dare to take our algae." As if to start building the cave, Gracie swam down to the rocks and dislodged one with her tail. It had been on the sea bottom for a long time, and when she turned it over she couldn't believe what she saw. It was almost as if something or someone had scratched a picture of her into the rock!



At that moment Old Codfish, who had been watching everything with an amused look, cleared his throat. "Let me see what you found, Gracie," he said. She brought over the stone with the fish scratched on it. "You have found something very important." Gracie called the others and they swam over to Old Codfish to see the stone, too.

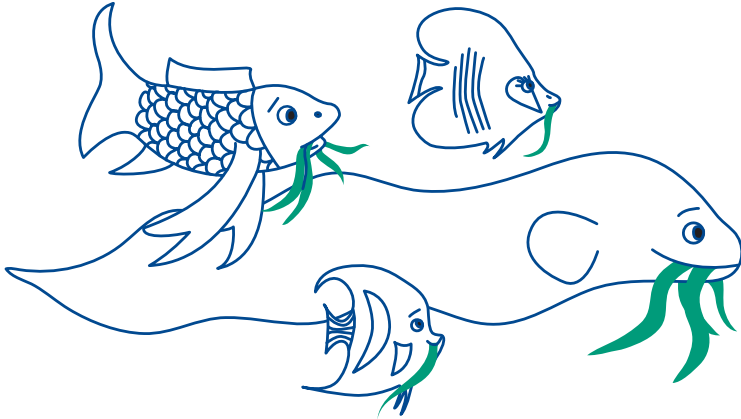
"This is a gift from the humans of many years ago," began the old fish. "I have heard that a group of these humans used the sign of the fish as a way of saying that they believed in God and especially in God's son, Jesus. These humans, called Christians, were being hunted and arrested by others. Some of them had very little food

or other belongings, but they shared with each other all that they had.”

“They don’t sound so bad,” said Benji Butterflyfish.

“I think that if they remembered how God always provided for them in the past and still does today, perhaps they would learn how to share with others again,” mused the Old Codfish.

“Maybe if we showed them how to share the algae, they would remember,” said Gracie. She had been feeling guilty for hiding all the algae and wanting to build a big, scary cave. She began untying the plants from the coral and bringing back the algae from the crevices. The others helped her. Working together they soon had the reef looking the way it had looked in the morning.



As the sun set and the water became darker, the little fish looked around their beautiful world. They said an evening bubble prayer to God, thankful for the day of fun and sharing. Gracie swam back into her coral, ready to dream about the human she had met this day. She felt that sharing the reef’s algae would change her life. She hoped the human would discover how to share as well.

Younger Children

Gracie learned to share the algae that was important to her reef world. Who shares with you? With whom do you share? What do you share?

Read together Acts 2:42–47 (or Acts 2:43–47). Think together about how your church shares with others. Look at some of the ways that churches together can make a difference with the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. (Use the stamp and map poster, for instance.)

Your class can make a Gracie the Fish of your own with the One Great Hour of Sharing materials. If you do, invite Gracie to play her favorite game, “Pass the Stone.” You will need a beautiful small stone for each person playing (perhaps with a Christian fish symbol drawn on it) and your favorite church song or hymn on a compact disc. As the music plays the children begin exchanging stones with each other until the music stops. Whoever they last shared with becomes their partner, and they are asked to share a story with this person. Some ideas for sharing stories might be: your favorite present, a time that you shared with someone, how your family shares, what you might say to Gracie if you met her. This game can be played multiple times choosing a different story topic each time. Children can be invited to take the stones home as reminders to share with others—both our things and our lives.

Older Children

Read Luke 12:22–31. Jesus talks about God’s care for all of us and not worrying so much about having enough stuff. What connections do you see between this story and Gracie’s story? Think about what this might have to say about sharing resources and changing lives.

Water and plants, like algae, are important resources for all of God’s creation. Do some research online about the many ways that both water and algae/seaweed are important to all of us. What other resources would you list as being important globally? Use the sharing calendar and One Great Hour of Sharing materials to look at how water, plants, and other resources are shared throughout the world.

Think about a possible project for your class to do that involves sharing resources. Perhaps you could find out what your church is already doing or find ways to raise money for the world by supporting One Great Hour of Sharing.