



The beginning of the school year may find children a little uneasy or shy, but it also offers them an opportunity to learn to welcome others. Here are two stories about welcoming the newcomer. The first is an Old Testament story of Abraham's hospitality, and the second echoes the same story in a modern setting. Read both with the children and discuss using the questions.

Welcome Friends: Abraham's Guests

Abraham was sitting by his tent, which was his home. It was very hot. He noticed three men standing under the nearby oak trees. Abraham jumped up and ran to them. Abraham bowed to the ground in front of them to show them he was friendly and respectful. "You are welcome here! Please stay and rest," he said as he stood up. "You must be hot and tired. I will bring you water to wash your feet. Rest in the shade of these trees, I will be back with food, too!"

Abraham hurried to the tent where he asked his wife, Sarah, to make bread, using only their best flour. He chose the most tender meat to be cooked. Abraham then went to get milk and cheese. As soon as the food was all ready, he brought everything before the guests. He stood near them while they ate.

Abraham did not know it then, but his guests were angels!

Discussion Starter: How did Abraham welcome his guests? Who were his guests?

Welcome Friends: Zach's Guest

It was the first day of school. Zach sat down on the rug with the other children. The teacher said, "Welcome! I hope you will enjoy being in my class! Let's start with a story."

As the teacher read, Zach looked around. He thought he liked school, but he felt a bit afraid. He wished just a little that he was at home, playing with his toys right now. The teacher seemed nice, but he'd rather have been with his dad instead.

Just as the story was finished, there was a knock at the door, and the teacher went to answer it. When she came back to the rug, she was leading a little girl by the hand. The girl looked very shy, even a bit afraid.

"Children, this is Mikiko. She just moved here from Japan and doesn't speak English yet. Because no one here speaks her language, we will have to show her that she is welcome. Zach, would you find Mikiko a place to sit for snack?"

Zach looked at Mikiko's scared face. He forgot he wished he were home. He smiled at her. Then he took Mikiko's hand and led her to a table. He patted a chair so Mikiko knew she should sit down, and he sat next to her. He pointed to her juice cup and cracker, rubbed his tummy and smiled. Mikiko smiled and rubbed her tummy too. Soon, Zach and Mikiko were eating and giggling together.

"Thank you, Zach, for helping Mikiko feel welcome already," the teacher said.

Discussion Starter: How did Zach help Mikiko feel welcome? Who was Mikiko?