

Living for Life

June's Theme: Who is God?

God is the Supreme Being. People refer to God in many ways: Creator, Father, Mother, Shepherd, and Rock, and this isn't even the entire list. God is the source of love. God saves us and protects us. God loves us. Jesus referred to God as his father.

We can think of God in many ways. This packet provides us with a starting point. Although the entire Bible is about God, this packet offers a few selected ways to think about God.

Package Contents

- Wondering Cards:** This package has six wondering cards. Use them for conversation starters when the family is together, such as over a meal, after watching television show if a card seems applicable to the story or riding in the car together as a way to pass the miles. Use them throughout the month. They can be used once or multiple times.
- Scriptures:** *(enter the color)* This package contains four scriptures all having to do with God. Discuss at least two of the scriptures during the month. Find the scripture in the Bible and then discuss one or two of the questions on the reference sheet. You can rephrase the question if it will help them to answer the question. Also, you can revisit the scripture at another time during the month if you want to ask the other questions. Bear in mind that the answers are not clear cut, black and white. You can answer them too.
- Prayers:** *(enter the color)* This packet contains several prayers. Prayers are our way to converse with God. There are different types of prayers, just as we can have different conversations with God.
- Activity Sheet:** *(enter the color)* This month's activities use four hymns to open our thinking about God. Each hymn has the music and lyrics with a YouTube link to a performance. Try to answer the question following each hymn. (These hymns are reprinted under the church's copyright license CCLI copy license 11260555)

See the obverse side for Bible information.

Basic Bible User's Instructions

The Bible contains writings which are thousands of years old. It is a sacred book containing wisdom, although written long ago, it remains fresh as scriptures still can teach us how to live today. Some people call the Bible an operating manual for life.

The Bible contains "books." Each book has one or more chapters, and each chapter has verses.

When we reference a scripture, we cite the book, the chapter, and the verse or verses. Thus, if we see a reference to Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the citation would be Luke 2:8-20. It means:

- The Gospel According to Luke
- Chapter two
- Verses 8-20

Note that a colon separates the chapter and the verse(s).

Furthermore, the Bible we use as Protestants has two major sections: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament has the same books as in the Jewish Bible (although in a different order). The section often called the New Testament is scriptures used by Christians to understand Jesus and our faith.

Books of the Bible

Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures		New Testament	
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew	Titus
Exodus	Song of Solomon	Mark	Philemon
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke	Hebrews
Numbers	Jeremiah	John	James
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts of the Apostles	1 Peter
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans	2 Peter
Judges	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1 John
Ruth	Hosea	2 Corinthians	2 John
1 Samuel	Amos	Galatians	3 John
2 Samuel	Obadiah	Ephesians	Jude
1 Kings	Jonah	Philippians	Revelation
2 Kings	Micah	Colossians	
1 Chronicles	Nahum	1 Thessalonians	
2 Chronicles	Habakkuk	2 Thessalonians	
Ezra	Zephaniah	1 Timothy	
Nehemiah	Haggai	2 Timothy	
Esther	Zechariah		
Job	Malachi		
Psalms			
Proverbs			

Psalm 18:1-19

Questions:

- Which description of God do you like best?
- Do you remember a time when you were really in trouble and help came? How did God have a hand in helping you?
- Does this psalm make God sound like a superhero? If yes, what is God's superpower?

About Psalm 18:1-19

This is a poem of thanksgiving for victory in a battle. When we read poems, we should read them as though they are words painting a picture. The words, though, do not mean that what was described actually happened.

Psalm 23

Questions:

- When you read this psalm (or hear this psalm) how do you feel when it is over?
- Do you feel that God loves you?
- How confident are you that God will provide what you need?
- What is the difference between need and want?
- Why do you think the writer made us like sheep?

About Psalm 23

This is one of the most famous psalms. It describes God as a shepherd. It is a poem typically read for comfort.

1 John 4:7-9, 19-21

Questions:

- Are we born to love each other?
- Since we cannot see God, how do we know God loves us?
- Why must we love other people?
- How do we feel when we know we are loved?
- When we are scared, does being with someone who loves us help us be less afraid?

About 1 John 4:7-9, 19-21

This was part of a letter written by an unknown teacher to people associated with John, the writer of the fourth gospel. Here the author wrote about love and God's part in it.

Psalm 139:1-18

Questions:

- It seems in this psalm that God watches us all the time. Is that spooky and scary or comforting and assuring?
- How does God know us before we are born?
- Are you ever alone?

About Psalm 139:1-18

This psalm, a poem, describes God as all-knowing about each of us. It reminds us that we have an intimate relationship with God and that God never abandons us.

How much control does God have over our lives?

What did God give you today?

What can we do to help God?

What is the difference between a superhero and God?

Why does God need us?

Why do we need God?

Prayers

Praying is our way to have a conversation with God. There are different types of prayers, just as we might have different conversations with God. The following are different examples of prayer.

Prayers for God's Presence (*asking for God to be with us*)

Generous God, you lift the poor from the dust and seat them with princes. You make the lame leap for joy and the blind to see. You make the barren woman the mother of children. Jesus' love for the world kindled our passions for peace and justice. Come among us. We are your hands and feet to make the impossible possible. May we fulfill Jesus' vision of your realm on earth. Amen.

Come among us, O God, and set our hearts firmly upon you. Encourage us to deal graciously with what we have so justice can prevail. Make our hearts steady so we will not fear. May we tap the generosity that is in us to make your presence real. Show us that our light will shine brightly through our ministries of hope. Grant that by our grace and love, we will make Jesus alive to this community. Amen.

O God, you are my friend. When I am alone, I look for you, I listen for you. I feel lost right now. Come and show me the way. Come beside me, O God. Amen.

Prayers of Petition (*requesting something from God*)

You have given me a fertile hill, O God. You cleared it of stones. The ground is ready. You have given me good vines. Prepare me to tend your garden. I will feed your vines with love and use the gifts you have given us to make them flourish and bear fruits of justice for a world in need of your healing peace. Amen.

(Based upon John 15:1-8) We are an old vine in our community, O God. Over the years we have grown and produced much fruit. These fruits have brought healing and comfort as well as borne witness to peace and justice. O Vine Grower, we have come to see our fruits are not as big and life-giving as in the past. We have noticed of late that our vine has many unruly branches. We know we must prune our vine, but we don't know where to begin. Help us to dress our vine. Grant that your Holy Spirit will guide and direct our pruning. As we discern our future, let us not lose sight of Jesus' call for our ministries to bear fruit again. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving (*giving thanks to God*)

I look out to see God's hand across the hills.
Green has given way to reds, oranges, and yellows.
Thank you God for your Creation.
Thank you God for filling our eyes with delight.

The days are shorter. The nights are cold.
I awaken to brisk mornings and mists across the fields.
Thank you God for shelter.
Thank you God for your protection.

Apples hang from the trees.
Pumpkins glow in the fields.

Grapes, big and plump, burst with sweet nectar.
Thank you God for the harvest.
Thank you God for the sweetness upon our tongues.

God has been good to me. Amen

Generous and loving God, thank you for this time I have had with my friends. I'm grateful for the joy we shared. I give thanks that we can laugh together and tell each other jokes. This time we had together has made me feel good. This friendship is a blessing to me. Amen.

Prayers of Confession (*asking God for forgiveness*)

Merciful God, we strive to live as Jesus taught. Yet, we sometime let fear and uncertainty turn us inward. We lose hope when the darkness in our world overwhelms us. Forgive us. Remind us and prod us to set aside our fears and to trust in you. Turn our gaze to the world beyond ourselves. Let the gospel's fire chase the world's darkness to renew our hope for your realm of peace on earth. Amen.

You, O God, are my help and shield. I learned long ago to trust in you and the teachings of Jesus. Yet, I put our faith in my own schemes. I yearn for the certainty of my past. I place my trust in false hopes and dreams. Forgive me. Renew my trust in your ways. Abide with me as I walk into my future with hope. Instill in me faith in Jesus' teachings. Amen.

(*Based upon Psalm 23*) You are the shepherd, O God, who beckons me to follow. You will lead me beside still waters and through the darkest valleys. Yet I want to go my own way. You promise that I need not fear evil, and yet I do. I turn aside the table you set before me and reject the anointing oil. Forgive my self-righteousness. May I trust in your way and accept all that you offer, and in so doing find the true peace that only comes from you. Amen.

Activity: **Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spE-BE23qxA>)

7 **Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise**
 Walter C. Smith, 1824-1908, alt. ST. DENIO 11.11.11.11.
 Welsh Hymn Melody

1 Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
 2 Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
 3 To all, life thou giv - est to both great and small;
 4 Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light,

In light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
 Nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might;
 In all life thou liv - est, the true life of all;
 Thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight;

Most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
 Thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
 We blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,
 All praise we would ren - der; O help us to see

Al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise.
 Thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
 And with - er and per - ish, but naught chang - eth thee.
 'Tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee. A - men.

ADORATION AND PRAISE

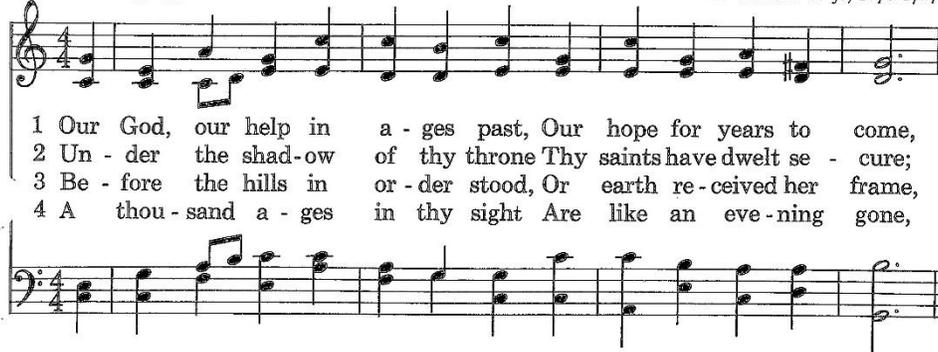
How would you draw a picture of God after listening to this hymn?

Activity: **Our God, Our Help in Ages Past**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsARaTv7B3U>)

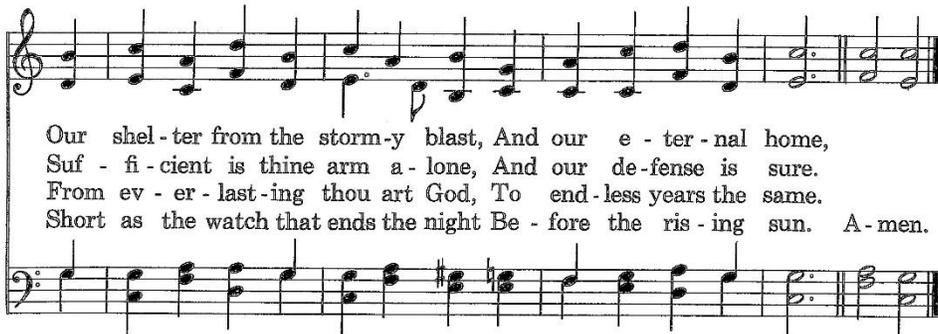
Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

Based on Psalm 90
Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

ST. ANNE C.M.
Attr. to William Croft, 1678-1727



1 Our God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,
2 Un - der the shad - ow of thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood, Or earth re - ceived her frame,
4 A thou - sand a - ges in thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home,
Suf - fi - cient is thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.
From ev - er - last - ing thou art God, To end - less years the same.
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun. A - men.

- 5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.
- 6 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

When would you feel comforted by this hymn?

Bring Many Names

Brian Wren, 1989

Gen. 1:27

Unison

1 Bring man - y names, beau - ti - ful and good, cel - e - brate, in
 2 Strong moth - er God, work - ing night and day, plan - ning all the
 3 Warm fa - ther God, hug - ging ev - ery child, feel - ing all the
 4 Old, ach - ing God, grey with end - less care, calm - ly pierc - ing

par - a - ble and sto - ry, ho - li - ness in glo - ry, liv - ing, lov - ing God.
 won - ders of cre - a - tion, set - ting each e - qua - tion, gen - i - us at play:
 strains of hu - man liv - ing, car - ing and for - giv - ing till we're rec - on - ciled:
 e - vil's new dis - guis - es, glad of good sur - pris - es, wis - er than de - spair:

Hail and Ho - san - na! bring man - y names! great, liv - ing God!
 Hail and Ho - san - na, strong moth - er God!
 Hail and Ho - san - na, warm fa - ther God!
 Hail and Ho - san - na, old, ach - ing God!

5 Young, grow - ing God, ea - ger,
 on the move,
 say - ing no to false - hood and
 un - kind - ness,
 cry - ing out for jus - tice,
 giv - ing all you have:
 Hail and Ho - san - na,
 young, grow - ing God!

6 Great, liv - ing God, nev - er ful - ly known,
 joy - ful dark - ness far be - yond our see - ing,
 clos - er yet than breath - ing,
 ev - er - last - ing home:
 Hail and Ho - san - na,
 great, liv - ing God!

How many different ways can you think of God?

Activity: **God of the Sparrow God of the Whale**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDjs7CFpoGo>

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God of the Sparrow God of the Whale

1 Thess. 5: 18; Ps. 136

Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1983

(Introduction) G G7 Unison C Em Am Dm

1 God of the spar - row God of the whale
 2 God of the earth-quake God of the storm
 3 God of the rain - bow God of the cross
 4 God of the hun - gry God of the sick
 5 God of the neigh - bor God of the foe
 6 God of the a - ges God near at hand

G7 C FM7 E7 Am Em

God of the swirl - ing stars How does the crea-ture say
 God of the trum - pet blast How does the crea-ture cry
 God of the emp - ty grave How does the crea-ture say
 God of the prod - i - gal How does the crea-ture say
 God of the prun - ing hook How does the crea-ture say
 God of the lov - ing heart How do your chil-dren say

FM7 Em7 Am Dm 1-5 Gsus4 G 6 C

Awe How does the crea-ture say Praise
 Woe How does the crea-ture cry Save
 Grace How does the crea-ture say Thanks
 Care How does the crea-ture say Life
 Love How does the crea-ture say Peace
 Joy How do your chil-dren say Home.

After forty years in the ministry, Jaroslav Vajda wrote this text to provoke answers to how and why we serve God. By creating new poetic forms and adapting ageless ideas and expressions, Vajda speaks in the language of his time.

Tune: ROEDER 5.4.6.7.7.
 Carl F. Schalk, 1983

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Why do we serve God?