



God's Love is Always Following You

2003 At-Home Lent Resource

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**God's Love is Always Following You: 2003 At-Home Lent
Resource**

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Introduction

By Elsie Rempel

When regular worship as a family or a household supports the weekly worship in our congregations, our relationship with God is strengthened and all of our spirits are nurtured. Healthy connections grow between the home and the congregation.

During the season of Lent, God's children reflect on the life and death of Christ in ways that set us apart from our society. We prepare in a way that reminds us of God's great gift of redeeming forgiveness and it strengthens our anticipation of Christ's second coming. This year, our Lent materials remind us of the way God continues to pursue us with outstretched arms. We are also encouraged to persist in stretching out our arms to God and to others whom God would have us love.

This resource for the home is adapted from the congregational resource for Lent, which is available in the Mennonite Church resource: ***Builder – an educational magazine for church leaders.***

The ideas for the Scrapbook came from the January 2003 issue of ***Builder***. I adapted the rainbow idea in ***Worship for all Seasons: Volume 2***, edited by Thomas Harding, published by The United Church Publishing House, 1993.

Use the resource whenever and however it fits into your home's routines and life stage realities. If your family has younger children,

feel free to simplify, shorten and paraphrase the prayers and pondering thoughts. To use this booklet for daily worship times, repeat the litany for each day of the week, but change the scripture passages to the passages listed in #1 of the activities section. The activities correspond loosely to the scripture selections listed there.

Pondering Questions:

The pondering questions are designed to allow God to speak to each household member in a personal way. Enjoy a short time of silence after each question and feel free to share or ponder these thoughts in your heart.

You may want to add our recommended worship items to your home's worship corner. The collection listed below can help you make a holy space in your home and your hearts for God during the season of Lent. Feel free to adapt them to suit your home.

Worship items:

1. **Cloth:** A Festive cloth to cover a worship area. A simple or brocaded purple cloth would reflect both the royalty of Christ, our Lord, and the attitude of repentance which dominates the season.
2. **Paper:** A large piece of paper or white cloth, on which to colour or paint your special Lent rainbow.
3. **Candles:** Set one larger white Christ candle in the centre and place six candles in transparent candleholders around it. Alternatively, use a friendship candle ring with six tea lights around it. Purple candles represent our repentant preparation for Easter but you can also use white candles with a purple paper sleeve at the base.
4. **Scrapbook:** in which you can add a weekly response activity.
5. **A Bible and this booklet.** For families with younger children, you may want to read from the International Children's Bible, the New International Reader's Version, The Adventure Bible, or the NIV Beginners Bible.



God Remembers Us

March 9, 2003

Call to worship:

One: When we are restless and longing for a new start, God rejoices and keeps his promise to bring us new life. God is longing to renew the whole Earth.

All: We are glad God remembers us, seeks us and leads us in the truth. We lift up our hearts to the Lord.

One: Help us know your ways, God. As we light this first candle of Lent, make your truth shine so it can lead and teach us today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: Read [Genesis 8: 15 – 22](#)

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. When have you made a fresh start?
2. If God made us to bring joy and love to each other, why did we get so greedy and violent?
3. How can the light of God mix with our problems to produce a rainbow that reminds us and others of God's promising presence in our lives?

Song of the week:

“God loves all his many people”, *HWB #397* or “God’s Love is for Everybody”, *God’s Love is for Everybody: Songs for Small and Tall #1*.

Closing prayer:

One: God has promised, “I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature.” So let us go, trusting God’s unfailing promise to bring new life to us and all God’s creatures.

All: May God’s love renew us and shine through us even after we blow out this first Lent candle. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. Read Genesis 9: 8–17, Psalm 25: 1–10, Mark 1: 9–15, 16–20, 35–39 and I Peter 3: 18–22.
2. Start your own family Lent scrap book with stories of God’s love from the Bible, or from your family’s experiences.
3. Make a rainbow backdrop for your family’s worship centre. Let each strip of colour remind you of the weeks of Lent. The dominant colour for Lent is violet; it reflects our willingness to let God clean our souls. Colour the first stripe violet.
4. Notice acts of love and renewal among family and friends, and post them as little raindrop signs under the rainbow.
5. Look for signs of new life outside or on houseplants and make a list of the things you notice.
6. Create your own play or puppet play about God’s gift of the rainbow to Noah’s family.
7. Start some fun by mixing up a new batch of play dough, taking apart your Lego to build something new, or create a new community with Playmobil.
8. Find and enjoy a picture book about waiting. One possibility is “The Garden”, in *Frog and Toad Together* by Arnold Lobel, reprinted by Scholastic in 1999 (ISBN 0439158338).



God Promises Fruitfulness

March 16, 2003

Call to worship

One: God loves and makes promises to a great big family, a family that started when he called Abraham and Sarah.

All: Our family shares the faith of Abraham and Sarah, and so we praise you, God.

One: Pursuing God, who keeps on looking for us, meet us as we light this second Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when they became parents at such a late age?
2. What promises of God do you have a hard time believing?
3. What unexpected new life might God be leading you toward?

Song of the Week:

“O God, who gives us life”, *HWB* #483 or “In the Highways”, *God’s Love is for Everybody: Songs for Small and Tall* #12

Closing prayer :

One: Thank you God, for giving a baby to Abraham and Sarah when they were old. We thank you for the promise of new life for everyone in your huge family. Help us to be fruitful in the ways you choose for us.

All: May your peace go with us and help us trust your promises, even after we blow out these Lent candles. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week also read these passages from God’s word: Genesis 18:1–15, Psalm 22: 23–31, Mark 8: 31–38, Mark 9: 2–10, Romans 4: 13–25, Galatians 5: 16–18, 22–26.
2. The second stripe is blue. Use it to think of Sarah and her baby Isaac, and for all babies, who are signs of God’s promises to us.
3. Listen to #15, *God’s Family* on the CD, *God’s Love is for Everybody*, and think about all the different people in God’s family.
4. Make a fruit poster that shows ways God wants us to be fruitful. There are suggestions in Galatians 5.
5. Take a fruit basket to someone who needs encouragement, comfort, or compassion this week.
6. In your Lent scrapbook, make a family tree of the people who passed on the faith to several generations of your family. If you are the first generation of your family to belong to God’s family, imagine what your faith family tree could look like in the future.
7. Plant some multiplier onions or tiger lilies so you can enjoy their fruitfulness. (Start them indoors in a pot on a sunny window ledge if it’s too cold outside.)
8. Make a promise to someone you love and practice keeping it all week.



I am the Lord your God.

March 23, 2003

Call to worship:

One: God wants us to live meaningful and productive lives, so God gave us some rules to live by.

All: God the Lord is our God, so we will love God and try to keep God's good rules.

One: Pursuing God, who gives us good rules to live by, greet us as we light this third Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: Exodus 20: 1 - 11

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. Which commandments of God are refreshing and delightful for you?
2. How can God's wisdom give us life?
3. Why is it so hard to trust and obey God's rules?

Song of the Week:

“When we walk with the Lord”, *HWB #544* or “When you Learn to Follow Jesus (You Will Act a Little Strange)”, *God’s love is for Everybody...#14*

Closing prayer:

One: God, we live in a world of many choices. Thank you for loving us enough to give us your commandments as a guide to help us make good and wise choices. Forgive us when we disobey your will for our lives.

All: May your loving wisdom go with us and help us make wise and loving choices even after we blow out these Lent candles. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God’s word: Exodus 20: 12–17, Psalm 19, Proverbs 2: 1–11, Proverbs 17: 1–17, John 2: 13–23, I Corinthians 1: 18–25.
2. Colour the third stripe of your rainbow green for the creative growth that is possible among us when we live according to God’s good commands.
3. List the signs of God’s love and wisdom you find in the Commandments.
4. Talk about how the rules that help your family get along with each other also help you love and honour God. Then add a page of your family rules to your Lent scrap book.
5. Make up and play a cooperative (win-win) game with fair rules.
6. Give a gift of gratitude to someone who helps you make good choices.
7. Listen, sing along and act out the song “When God’s in Charge”, *God’s Love is for Everybody...#11*.
8. Talk about choices and guidelines. When is each one important?



God's Great Love Pursues Us

March 30, 2003

Call to worship:

One: When our poor choices (sins) get us into trouble, God's great love pursues us and calls us back to true life in Christ.

All: Even though we are tempted to do many things we shouldn't, we thank God when we do the good things for which God created us.

One: Pursuing God, who keeps on forgiving us when we break the good rules God gave us to live by, have mercy on us as we light this fourth Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: Read Numbers 21: 4 - 9

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. Why did the Israelites complain so much?
2. How did really being sorry and looking up at the snake for healing fit together?
3. How are my complaints different from those of the Israelites?

Song of the Week:

"For God so loved us", *HWB* #167 or "God loves a picnic", *God's Love is for Everybody* #5

Closing prayer:

One: God, your awesome presence keeps calling us to full and happy living. Keep drawing our eyes to our merciful Saviour. Help us build our lives around your holy will and within your holy presence.

All: May your healing forgiveness work within us and among us even after we blow out these Lent candles. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: Psalm 78:1–10, Psalm 107: 1–3 and 17–22, Luke 10:30–35, John 3:1–13, John 3:14–21. Ephesians 2:1–10.
2. Colour the fourth stripe of your rainbow yellow to reflect the joy that comes from trusting in God's healing love.
3. In your Lent scrap book make two lists on a chart shaped like a T. On one side list the things you tend to complain about. On the other side list the things you are really thankful for.
4. Tell a story about a time when you complained a lot or did something wrong but were still graciously accepted by your parents, employer or friend.
5. Paint pictures of your least and most favourite foods. Who would have liked eating Manna everyday?
6. Create a skit or a story about complainers who get a positive attitude adjustment after they get sick.
7. Pick a problem you like to complain about and ask God to help you with it. See what happens to your attitude as you learn to trust God to solve the problem.
8. Use a flashlight to show you what needs cleaning up in your closet and think about how God's light can help us clean up our attitudes. Then have fun cleaning!



God's Covenant Seeps into our Hearts

April 7, 2003

Call to worship:

One: Even though we keep forgetting you, God, you keep on pursuing us and wait for us to welcome you in our hearts and lives.

All: Help us embrace the joy of God's salvation and follow Jesus, so that others will see the new life you offer in our lives.

One: May the light of your love shine in our hearts as we light this fifth Lent candle and worship you today. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. What is it like to have God's loving law written on your heart?
2. How can learning obedience lead to greatness or honour?
3. Imagine what it will be like once everyone knows and loves God.

Song of the Week:

"Create in me a clean heart," *HWB* #128 or "The sacrifice you accept, O God," *HWB* #141

Closing prayer

One: Lord Jesus Christ, let the soil of our hearts be receptive to your good seed. Help us bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

All: As we blow out these candles, help us go into the world, ready to see God's inviting presence in everyone and everything we meet. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: II Kings 22:1–10, 11–13 and 18–19, Psalm 51:1–12, Psalm 119:9–16, John 12:20–33, Hebrews 5:5–10.
2. Colour the fifth stripe of your rainbow orange to remind you of God's warm sunshine and new chances for a new and righteous world.
3. Tell stories of how God has been faithful in pursuing and loving you. Pick one or more to add to your family Lent scrap book.
4. Make decorated posters for your bedroom that say, "*God loves me very much.*"
5. Listen to, or learn to sing the song "Tus Manos Señor", #7 from the CD and songbook, *God's Love is for Everybody: Songs for Small and Tall*. It describes the way Jesus' hands showed God's love.
6. Share God's love with a lonely person by doing something loving with your hands for them.
7. Make a big heart. When you catch someone else showing love, add a little heart onto the big one. See how full your big heart will get this week.
8. Plant some barley (or other seeds) in a dish of soil and wait for something new to grow.



We bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Palm Sunday
April 13, 2003

Call to worship:

One: Thank you God, that you came to meet us in human form. Even though we aren't always faithful, you lived on earth to show us God's big love.

All: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

One: Shine in our lives and fill this day with your love as we light this sixth Advent candle. Amen.

Listening to God's Word: John 12:12 - 19

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

1. What would Jesus have heard, seen, smelled during the Palm Sunday parade?
2. How would it feel to be part of that first Palm Sunday parade?
3. How do the colours of your rainbow help you think of the many feelings of the passion week?

Song of the Week:

“Hosanna, loud hosanna” *HWB* #238 or “Holy, holy, holy, Lord” by Steve Bell, *Deep Calls to Deep*, ©1993 Signpost Music.

Closing prayer:

One: Jesus, even though you share the source of all life and goodness with us, our commitment to you often wavers. Forgive us. We trust in the promise of your never-failing love.

All: As we blow out these candles, we want to live through the holy week with you, God, believing in your good and forgiving purposes. Amen.

Activities to choose from:

1. This week read these passages from God's word: Matthew 22:34–40, Matthew 26: 1–13, 26: 14–16, 26: 69–75, Thursday: Matthew 26: 20–35, Friday: Matthew 27: 27–54, Saturday: Matthew 27: 62–66, Sunday Matthew 28: 1–20.
2. Colour the final stripe of your rainbow red and think of how suffering is needed to complete both the rainbow of promise and God's plan for saving the world.
3. Enact a Palm Sunday parade in your house or in your neighbourhood with some friends.
4. Dry your Palm branches in a safe place or make some out of construction paper, to remind you of your donkey-riding Jesus in the sad times of this week.
5. Make the outline of a plain cross. Under it write Jesus' words: “Forgive them Father, for they don't know what they are doing.” Then add symbols to the four arms of the cross for things you could give up for Jesus, things you want to pray about, kind deeds that show people have God's law in their hearts, and symbols that show your love for Jesus. Then decorate the other side as beautifully as you can to show your joy that God raised Jesus back to life.

6. On Maundy Thursday or on Good Friday, use your lent candles and the Tenebrae litany on the following page to help you understand why Jesus had to die and why God raised him back to life.
7. When you decorate your Easter eggs, think about the new life that God gave Jesus and offers to us.
8. Bake pretzels to remind your family of simplicity and prayer. Share them with a neighbour or friend.



Maundy Thursday Litany

April 17, 2003

1. Make a copy of the litany page for each reading participant.
2. Prepare for this service with some quiet worship music and silence.
3. Light all the Lent candles and the Christ candle.
4. Add a metal bowl in which you can burn up your confession slips.
5. Write personal confessions on slips of paper before beginning the litany. (Keep them for the middle of the litany).
6. Have family or household members take turns snuffing out the candles.
7. Have family or household members take turns reading the "One" parts (depending on their ages).

Maundy Thursday Litany



One: When we hate or are unkind to each other, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #1)**

All: Jesus taught us to love each other.



One: When we are grabby and want everything for ourselves, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #2)**

All: Jesus taught us to share with others.



One: When we are afraid, the world seems dark and frightening. **(Snuff out candle #3)**

All: Jesus' love is stronger than our fears. He is the light of the world.



One: When we are jealous of others, and are angry because they have things we want for ourselves, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #4)**

All: Jesus taught us to be content with what we have and to look out for the good of others.



One: When we are deceitful and don't tell the truth, the world becomes a darker place. **(Snuff out candle #5)**

All: Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no." He expects us to be honest.



One: Because of people's hatred, greed, selfishness, jealousy and dishonesty, Jesus died on the cross. **(Snuff out candle #6)**

All: To Jesus' friends the world seemed like a very dark place.

One: Before he died, Jesus said, "Forgive them Father, for they don't know what they are doing."

Sing:

Sing "Were you there" while you burn up your confessions, lighting them with the still-burning Christ candle.

One: Jesus did not stay dead. God's love is stronger than all our sins, and on that first Easter, God raised Jesus from the dead. Because Jesus loved people enough to suffer

and die and still forgive, we, too, can be forgiven. Jesus' death can free us from the bad things we have done. It can also give us the strength to forgive others when they hurt us. Christ's love can be reflected in and shine through us.



When we are kind and loving to each other, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #1)**

All: Jesus' love shines through our loving deeds and words.



One: When we share and find joy in sharing with those who have less, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #2)**



One: When we trust in God's care for us and are freed from fear, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #3)**

All: Jesus wants us to trust him with our fears and worries so we can live freely.



One: When we are content with what we have, and are happy for others when they get something special, the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #4)**

All: Jesus wants us to trust him to supply us with what we need.



One: When we are honest with ourselves and others, the world becomes a safer and brighter place. **(Relight candle #5)**

All: Jesus said, "I am the truth." He will help us be truthful, too.



One: When we are loving, unselfish, trusting, content and honest, Jesus lives in our lives and the world becomes a brighter place. **(Relight candle #6)**

All: Because Jesus lives and wants to live in our hearts, God's light and love shine through us and brighten up the world. We thank God for the wonderful gifts of forgiveness and love which we can enjoy and share because Jesus died for us.

(You may want to add your own spontaneous prayers here.)

Sing:

Sing your favourite Easter Carol before you disperse.

Notes:

Jot down insights or moments that made your At-Home Lent Worship memorable:



First Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2003

God Remembers Us



Second Sunday in Lent, March 16, 2003

God Promises Fruitfulness



Third Sunday in Lent, March 23, 2003

I am the Lord your God



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30, 2003
God's Great Love Pursues Us



Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 7, 2003
God's Covenant Seeps into Our Hearts



Palm Sunday, April 13, 2003
We bless the One who comes in the Name of the Lord!



April 17, 2003
Tenebrae Service - Maundy Thursday Litany



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