



God Gives Good Gifts:

an At-Home Summer Worship Guide

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Summer Worship-At-Home Resource: God Gives Good Gifts

The Season of Summer:

Summer is a time to relax and recharge our batteries! Our journeys take us in a variety of directions, perhaps to the cottage or to a campsite. Wherever we find ourselves, there are opportunities to experience God in profound ways.

How to Use this Resource:

This Summer Worship-at-Home Resource offers creative ways for families and individuals to celebrate Sabbath and worship throughout the summer months. This resource may be used by those who are away from their church and wish to stay connected with the worship themes and/or by those who attend church and wish to continue their worship at home throughout the week.

What this Resource Includes:

Each week a Pondering Thought is offered to think about throughout the week. The Scripture passage may be read daily, perhaps using different versions of the Bible. The Wondering Thoughts encourage God's Spirit to speak to family members in different ways. Be comfortable with silence or share thoughts with one another. The Activities connect with the scripture passages. Families may choose to adapt the ideas to fit their life stages and interests. Hymns and Prayers are also included. Each week a Symbol is suggested as a visual reminder of God's good gifts. Find a place for this symbol where your family gathers.

Theme of this Resource:

"God Gives Good Gifts" is the theme of this resource. Each week a different gift is celebrated. These gifts are signs of God's creative work and gracious presence in our world. God invites everyone to experience these good gifts. There are many Bible stories which reveal God's generosity. As we enter into these stories we are reminded that God continues to give us good gifts today. Because God is generous, we want share these gifts with others.

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Week 1: God's Gift of Food

Thought to Ponder: We are thankful for all the good food we enjoy. Help us to find ways to share our abundance so that everyone has enough.

Scripture to Read: I Kings 17:8-16

“The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that was spoken by Elijah.” (1 Kings 17:16)

Wondering Thoughts:

-I wonder why the widow listened to Elijah.

-I wonder if there have been times when we have shared food with others.

-I wonder if there are other things God might want us to share.

Activities to Do:

1. Serve a meal at a soup kitchen or donate food to a Food Bank.

2. If you have a garden, share some produce with a neighbor.

3. Invite someone who doesn't get invited out to your house for dinner.

Hymns for Reflection: For the fruit of all creation, #90; God, whose farm is all creation, #391,

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for all the good food we enjoy and especially for.... (everyone lists a favorite food). Help us to be thankful for what we have and share what we have with others.

Symbol for the Week: basket of fruit or vegetables

Week 2: God's Gift of Life

Thought to Ponder: God's gift of life is an amazing gift! We are created in wonderful ways. Taking good care of our bodies is one way to respect God's gift of life to us.

Scripture to Read: Psalm 139: 7-16

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder how God can be everywhere at the same time.
- I wonder what it was like when I was inside my mother's womb.
- I wonder how I can let God know I am thankful for life.

Activities to Do:

1. Look at baby pictures and celebrate how we are all fearfully and wonderfully made.
2. Write "personal positives" about each person in your family. Post on your fridge door.
3. Go on a bike ride or hike and then give each other a massage!

Hymns for Reflection: I sing the mighty power of God #46, God whose giving #383, Lord, you have searched me #556.

Prayer: Creating God, thank you for the wonderful ways you have created each of us. Help us to treat our amazing bodies with respect and care.

Symbol for the Week: photo of your family

Week 3: God's Gift of Wisdom

Thought to Ponder: We need wise people in our lives to help us make good decisions. In our individualistic society, we are reminded to seek the wise counsel of others, especially those who have a lot of life experience.

Scripture to Read: Exodus 18:13-23

“Look for able men and women among the people, ones who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain. Set them as judges over the people at all times.” (Exodus 18:21,22)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder if Moses thanked his father-in-law for his good advice.**
- I wonder why Moses hadn't thought of a plan to make his work easier.**
- I wonder how I would have felt if I had been chosen to be a judge.**

Activities to Do:

- 1.Talk to someone older about what they've learned from life.**
- 2.Write a thank you note to someone who has given you good advice or taught you an important life lesson.**
- 3.Illustrate a wise saying from the book of Proverbs.**

Hymns for Reflection: Immortal, invisible, God only wise 70, Teach me, O Lord #487, Strong Son of God #488.

Prayer: Giving God, thank you for the gift of wise people in our lives. Help us to listen to their wisdom and make good decisions.

Symbol for the Week: photo of grandparents or older people

Week 4: God's Gift of Memory

Thought to Ponder: Special symbols help us remember the stories of God's love and care for us. They are reminders of God's presence with us in the past and in the future.

Scripture to Read: Joshua 4:1-7, 19-24

"When your children ask, 'What do these stones mean?' let them know how Israel crossed over the Jordan on dry land." (Joshua 4:21)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder what the first people did when they crossed the river.
- I wonder how the twelve people felt who were chosen to go get the stones.
- I wonder if those twelve stones are still standing by the Jordan River today.

Activities to Do:

1. Share favorite family memories.
2. Begin to make a memory box for the Summer of 2004!
3. Go on a memory walk. See how many things you can remember when you return home.

Hymns for Reflection: Great is the Lord, #87, Living Stones #60 (Sing & Rejoice)

Prayer: Everlasting God, you are always with us. As we remember both good and bad things in our lives, we know you are always with us. Thank you for the gift of memory.

Symbol for the Week: twelve stones

Week 5: God's Gift of Generosity

(Corresponds to Session 13 in Jubilee, Cycle D, Summer)

Thought to Ponder: We open our hands in generosity to others because of the generosity we have received from God. Giving is our best response to God's grace and love!

Scripture to Read: Exodus 35:4-9; 36:2-7

"Let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering." (Exodus 35:5)

Wondering Thoughts:

-I wonder why God wanted the people to build a tabernacle.

-I wonder how the children helped too.

-I wonder how we use our talents to honor God.

Activities to Do:

1. Imagine a society or church in which everyone gave so generously that the leaders would say, "Stop giving!" Write about a story about it.

2. Do random acts of generous giving.

3. Talk about money. There are good and not-so-good ways to use our money. Brainstorm ways to use allowances or money from part-time jobs in ways that honor God.

Hymns for Reflection: What gift can we bring #385, For the fruit of all creation #90, For God so loved us #167

Prayer: Loving God, you have given us so many wonderful gifts. Make us more aware of your generous blessings which surround us. Thank you most of all for your unending love which never leaves us. Help us to find ways to share all of your good gifts with others.

Symbol for Worship: silver or gold items

Week 6: God's Gift of Comfort

Thought to Ponder: God's gift of comfort is with us when we feel sad, lonely, or have lost something that is precious to us. God is a constant presence during times of loss.

Scriptures to Read: 2 Kings 24:8, 25:1-21; Psalm 137; Lamentations 1:1-4; Isaiah 40:1-5
"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God." (Isaiah 40:1)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder why the kings didn't follow God's ways.
- I wonder if the children of Israel ever got to leave Babylon and go back home.
- I wonder what kinds of things make me sad.

Activities to Do:

1. Look through the newspaper. Pray for people who are sad or suffering in our world.
2. Talk about tears. Cut out a large tear drop and write a prayer to God about things that make you sad.
3. Make a "sympathy" or "thinking of you" card to send to someone who is sad or grieving a loss.

Hymns for Reflection: God is so good, (Sing & Rejoice, #21), Great is thy faithfulness, #327, Comfort, comfort O my people, #176.

Prayer: Gentle God, you are a comforting friend when we feel sad. Help us to share your gift of comfort with others when they are going through a difficult time in their lives.

Symbol for the Week: box of tissues

Week 7: God's Gift of Forgiveness

Thought to Ponder: It's never easy to say "I'm sorry." Help us to be willing to admit our mistakes and give us strength to give and receive forgiveness. Grace us with forgiving and accepting spirits.

Scripture to Read: Genesis 33:1-20

"To see your face is like seeing the face of God." (Genesis 33:10)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder what it would be like to live away from your family for twenty years.
- I wonder what Jacob meant when he said he could see the face of God in Esau's face.
- I wonder if Jacob and Esau ever saw each other again.

Activities to Do:

1. Talk about family conflicts and how to resolve differences Jesus' way.
2. Make and illustrate a peace book "Peace is when..."
3. Make a Venn diagram of family members (similarities and differences).

Hymns for Reflection: Go, my children #433, When peace, like a river #336, And I will raise you up #596

Prayer: Merciful God, thank you for your grace and compassion to us. Forgive us our wrongdoings and help us forgive those who wrong us. May we receive your generous grace and acceptance.

Symbol for Worship: teddy bear or beanie baby

Week 8: God's Gift of Protection

Thought to Ponder: We draw inner strength from God's journeying presence with us. Even when God seems absent, God is with us giving us courage, strength, and protection.

Scripture to Read: Exodus 14:1-25

"Do not be afraid. Stand firm." (Exodus 14:13)

Wondering Thoughts:

-I wonder if the children of Israel slept soundly that night with the Egyptian army so close by.

-I wonder what other dangers God protected the Israelites from.

-I wonder how God protects us.

Activities to Do:

1. Model with play dough or other art supplies. "God's Protection is like...."

2. Facing our fears. Brainstorm a list of fears and talk about creative ways of facing our fears.

3. Write bedtime prayers. How might the Israelites have prayed for God's protection as they slept beside the sea?

Hymns for Reflection: This little light of mine #401, Lead on, O cloud of Presence #419

Prayer: Protecting God, thank you for the way you care for us and protect us when we are afraid or in danger. Even when we aren't aware of your presence, you are always watching over us. Thank you that you never slumber or sleep.

Symbol for Worship: night light

Week 9: God's Gift of Service

(matches session 12 in Jubilee, Cycle D, Summer)

Thought to Ponder: Jesus shows us how to serve others. We can experience God's blessing when we choose to serve others rather than being served.

Scripture to Read: John 13:1-20

"For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder what it would be like if someone really famous wanted to wash our feet.**
- I wonder if it was always easy for Jesus to be a good example to others.**
- I wonder what Jesus meant when he said, "The servant is not greater than his master."**

Activities to Do:

- 1.Go for a barefoot walk on the grass or beach.**
- 2.Do a job around your house you have been putting off.**
- 3.Serve "breakfast in bed" to someone in your family.**

Hymns for Reflection: Will you let me be your servant #307, Je louerai l'Eternel #76

Prayer: Thank you God for Jesus, who shows us how to serve others. Help us to have a spirit of servanthood in our families, with our friends, and in our world.

Symbol for Worship: pitcher with warm water, towel, basin

Week 10: God's Gift of Healing

Thought to Ponder: God's gift of healing comes to us in surprising ways and includes our physical, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being. God wants us to experience wholeness and shalom in every part of our lives.

Scripture to Read: Luke 10:27-37

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart...and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder why the religious people didn't help the wounded man.
- I wonder if the wounded traveler ever got a chance to thank the Samaritan.
- I wonder what Jesus meant when he said, "Do this, and you shall live!"

Activities to Do:

1. Make a get-well card for someone who is sick.
2. Sidewalk art. Go outside and draw your favorite part of the story.
3. Go for a walk around your neighborhood for people and places who need God's healing touch. Pray for them.

Hymns for Reflection: God of our strength, #36, Healer of our every ill #377, O healing river #372

Prayer: Caring God, your desire is for our wholeness. May we receive your healing touch where there is brokenness in our lives. May we be instruments of healing to others in our neighborhood and in our world.

Symbol for Worship: a small bowl with olive oil

Week 11: God's Gift of Place

Thought to Ponder: God has given us a place to belong in our family, church, and neighborhood. God's gift of place is meant for everyone to experience and enjoy. When we show compassion to those who do not have safe and caring spaces to live, we are extending God's gift of place to others.

Scripture to Read: Numbers 27:1-11

"Give to us a possession among our father's brothers." (Numbers 27:4)

Wondering Thoughts:

- I wonder how Zelophehad's daughters felt when Moses died.**
- I wonder what the five women did with the property after they owned it.**
- I wonder how we would feel if we helped change an unfair law.**

Activities to Do:

- 1.Set up a tent. Invite some of your friends to come in.**
- 2.Do an act of kindness at a women's shelter.**
- 3.Make plans to adopt a refugee family through MCC..**

Hymns for Reflection: You are the salt for the earth #226, For we are strangers no more #322, Jubilate Deo omnis terra #103

Prayer: Generous God, it is so easy to take our homes for granted. Thank you for shelter, for clothing and for food. Help us find ways to share with others who do not have a place to call home.

Symbol for Worship: a blanket