

Studies on the character and nature of God

Year A

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Sources: Entering God's Presence – Youth With A Mission



God is Loving

God's love is not just one attribute among many; it is an overarching summary of all of God's moral attributes. Justice is an attribute of love. Mercy is an attribute of love. The same could be said of God's holiness, wisdom, generosity and faithfulness. They are all attributes of his love. His love and his goodness are what sets him apart from all other gods. The God of the Bible is the only God that can be described as "infinite, personal and loving".

The scriptures teach that his love for us is perfect (1 John 4:18), faithful (Ps 89:24), everlasting (Jer.31:3), unfailing (Ps.33:18,22, Ps 13:5), great (1 John 3:1, Lam 3:22, Ps 17:7), enduring (Ps 118:2-4), and that it has height, depth, width and length (Eph 3:16-19).

Evidence of God's love can be seen throughout the whole Bible.

His love for Israel was shown over and over as He chose, led, watched over, and kept forgiving:

For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure. The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. (Deut 7:6-8a; also Deut 10:14-15)

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (1 John 3:1)

That God's love extends to all peoples, all nations is also evident throughout the Bible.

God sent Jonah to the foreign Assyrian capital, Nineveh, wanting to give them a chance to repent and escape destruction. So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. (Jonah 4:2)

The Psalmists sing to the nations about God's love: I will thank you, Lord, among all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations. For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds Psalm 108: 3-5 (Also Psalm 115:1, 117)

Jesus commissioned the disciples to go to ALL nations:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. (Matthew 28:19-20a)

He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. 1 John 2:2 (Also John 3:16)

The love of God is what Paul says we are to be rooted and grounded in Ephesians 3:17:

Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong and he prays that God's people will understand, ... how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. (Ephesians 3:18-19)

Understanding and experiencing God's loving character is what holds us steady in the ups and downs of life.

Jesus expressed love throughout his life on earth and continues to do so by his death:

Jesus constantly showed loving kindness to the sick that he healed, downtrodden that he lifted, hungry that he fed, spiritually empty that he filled and sinners that he forgave and befriended. None deserved his love, but he was loving and kind because it is his nature.

He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. (John 13:1b) His prayer in John 17 expresses His love for the Father, for His disciples, and for us "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message." (John 17:20)

But when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:4-5a)

Paul tells us that nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39)

When there is revelation and understanding of God's love, our hearts are stirred to respond. Obedience and loving others, as God loves us, demonstrate that we love him:

All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. (John 14:23,24a; also John 15:9-10)

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. (John 13:34)

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. (Eph 5:1-2)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

God loved the 'aliens' (foreigners, temporary inhabitants), He told Israel to love them and we please Him when we love the nations: He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing. So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. (Deut 10:18-19)

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. ... Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. (1 John 3:16,18)

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 103:11 (NLT)

For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

1 Peter 4:8 (NLT)

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 John 4:9 (NLT)

John 13:34 (NLT)

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Romans 8:38-39 (NLT)

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT)

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

Questions and activities

1. God is "infinite, personal and loving". How is this different to false gods of other faiths?
2. Give at least 6 other adjectives that describe God's love.
3. Describe an example from the Old Testament where God showed his great loving kindness and forgiveness to the people of Israel.
4. What did Jesus ask his disciples (and us) to do, in order to share God's love.
5. When Jesus was on earth, who were the main types of people he showed love to?
6. How can we demonstrate that we love God?
7. What is the new commandment that Jesus gave us?
8. What is the greatest act of love that anyone can ever do? John 15:13
9. Read Luke 10:25-37. Explain how this story is a demonstration of how love. What was required on the part of the one person who actually showed love?
10. How does God want us to treat foreigners – to our land, our school, our community.

God is Merciful

The meanings of 'merciful' and "mercy" are:

- **merciful** – kind, compassionate, sympathetic, and sensitive; acting in this way to others.
- **mercy** – kindness, mercy, loving kindness; unfailing love; tenderness; faithfulness.

Mercy is an attribute of love. When a person who has done wrong is shown mercy, they are freed from the punishment they deserve. They are treated kindly instead.

God is perfectly just and merciful in all that He does.

God doesn't give us what we deserve, but looks on us with great compassion, and understands us. The greatest mercy ever shown was in Christ's death on the cross. He took the punishment that we deserved for our sin.

1 Timothy 1:15b,16b Paul says "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners."

God wants us to extend mercy to others as he does. Jesus says Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Lu.6:36).

Blessed are the merciful. (Matt.5:7)

Read and reflect on the parable of unmerciful servant (Matt.18:23-35).

James 2:13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

God also showed mercy in the Old Testament:

Ps 78:38 Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and did not destroy them all. Many times, he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury! (Neh.9:17-20, Daniel 9:9)

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. (NIV)

Psalms 116:1 "I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy."

Memory/Meditation:

Psalm 103:8 (NLT)

The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others

Daniel 9:8-9 (NLT)

O Lord, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

Ephesians 2:4 (NLT)

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.

Nehemiah 9:16-18 (NLT)

But our ancestors were proud and stubborn, and they paid no attention to your commands. They refused to obey and did not remember the miracles you had done for them. Instead, they became stubborn and appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love. You did not abandon them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf ... or when they committed awful blasphemies.

Titus 3:3-5a (NLT)

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But “When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”

Questions and activities

1. To have mercy on someone is to show kindness, instead of the punishment they deserve. How did God show mercy towards us through Jesus?
2. Make up an example of how a judge could show mercy on a person today. Write it as a play. (Some students can act out their scenarios for the class.)
3. What is the message behind the parable of the unmerciful servant?
4. Write a story about two friends who have had an argument. One says that the other has acted unkindly, and chooses to punish the friend by not speaking to them. Then the one who was hurt remembers the story of the unmerciful servant, and decides to show mercy, restoring the friendship.
5. Give an example from the Old Testament where God showed mercy on the Israelites.

God is Provider

It is clear throughout scripture that God is a Father who provides for the needs of His people:

God provided for Jacob's family in famine, taking them to Egypt where He had put Joseph in place. God said: "I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come," (Gen 45:11). God provided abundantly for the people of Egypt and surrounding nations: he provided grain during 7-year famine. Joseph willingly shared with his brothers and others, (Gen 42:1-38, 43:1-34, 44:1-34). (You can read the full story of Joseph and his brothers starting from Genesis chapter 37.)

He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call, (Psalm 147:9 and Psalm 111:5)

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:31-33 & Luke 12:28)

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 4:19).

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

Genesis chapter 22 tells us about the challenge that God presented to Abraham – to sacrifice his son! Abraham had to walk with Isaac towards the top of Mt. Moriah and answer his son's question "where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" The swift answer came: "God will provide." (Gen.22:8) After God's last-minute provision for Abraham, that place was given a new name - "Yahweh-Yireh, which means "God sees - the Lord will provide" v.14. It was not God's intention for Isaac to die, but he wanted to give us an illustration of the sacrifice that God himself would make in the future – the death of his own Son. God, in his great love and infinite wisdom at times, tests our faith and obedience, putting us in situations where we have to trust him, and him only, to be our provider. How we respond in such times reveals our hearts! As He tested Abraham, the "father of faith" he will, in his love, test us to help us learn to walk by faith, becoming fully convinced that he is our provider and can be trusted.

We are designed to live a life of dependence on God as our provider - leaning on Him as the one responsible for providing for his plans for our lives to come to pass. When we don't trust him and try to provide out of our own resources or cleverness we get into trouble!

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 speaks of God's promise to provide for Israel, but obedience was a condition. They were told that if they worshiped other gods the land would stop producing. Israel was also warned not to forget that God was their provider when in the future they would get to the promised land and prosper. (Deut. 6:10-12; ch.28)

God did provide for the Israelites even when they were disobedient and disloyal in the desert.

During these forty years, the Lord your God has been with you, and you have lacked nothing....your clothes and sandals did not wear out, (Deuteronomy 2:7; 29:5).

God not only provides for our physical needs but He provides everything we need for salvation through Jesus, all that we need to live for His glory, (Hebrews 13:21)

We have a rich spiritual inheritance, (Ephesians 1:18, 3:16-20)

We have the Holy Spirit to teach and help us, (Jn.14:16,17, 26).

God's provision is generous - He "richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment," (1 Tim 6:17b)

Jesus abundantly (supernaturally!) provided for host at Cana wedding, (John 2:1-10).

Psalms 65:9-13 paints a picture of God's overflowing abundance in the land.

God is pleased when His people are generous, gladly sharing provisions with others in need, Paul encouraged generous offerings for believers in need, (2 Co 9:6-8).

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 34:9-10 (NLT)

Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Psalm 84:11 (NLT)

For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

Hebrews 13:5 (NLT)

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Matthew 6:31-33 (NLT)

So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father

already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NLT)

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

Questions and activities

1. How did God provide for Jacob's family during the 7-year drought in Egypt?
2. What role does our generosity have in God's provision?
3. Write a Bible verse that shows that God provides for all of his creation.
4. In Matthew 26:31-33, what is the condition that God places on receiving the full benefit of his provision?
5. What did God provide for Abraham when he was asked by God to sacrifice his son?
6. What message was God giving to the world through Abraham's challenge?
7. What condition for provision did God place on the Israelites of the Old Testament?
8. How did he provide for them?
9. What does God provide for us apart from our physical needs?
10. Give an example in the Bible where God provided supernaturally.

Write a response to "God is Provider". How has God provided for you? What would you do if you were in need of God's provision? If God blesses you with abundant resources, what is your responsibility to him? What does the Bible say about thankfulness? (1 Chronicles 16:34; Philippians 4:6; Psalms 106:1).

God is our Saviour

Jesus died for us

The greatest act of love in the history of the human race happened about two thousand years ago on a wooden cross. What were the implications of this act of love? How should we respond to such love shown by both Father and Son? What does the cross mean for us today?

Read the account of the crucifixion and events leading up to it, from one of the four Gospels.

As we see the Father's longing that our relationship with him be restored, and what it cost him, our understanding of his immense love deepens ... our hearts respond back to Him with love. Hebrews speaks of how God has spoken to us through his son (Hebrews 1:2) and of how Jesus' death on the cross is the perfect sacrifice, once and for all, that enables us to come into God's presence! (Hebrews 9:9 -10:22)

Pictures of the cross, the suffering and death of Jesus, were written in the Old Testament scriptures – written hundreds of years prior to it actually happening! (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22:1-18; 69:21; Zechariah 12:10; Exodus 12 - the Passover lamb being slain; Numbers 21:4-9 – the bronze snake lifted up as Jesus was—John 3:14)

When [Jesus] was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. (Gal 3:13).

God made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. (Col 1:20).

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God" (1Co 1:18). "He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed" (1 Peter 2:22-24).

Because of Jesus willingness to die for us, God has exalted him to a place of honor. "...he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:8-11).

As followers of Jesus, we are called to walk the way of the cross:

Paul wrote "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians. 2:20; also Galatians 5:24; 6:14; Colossians 3:1-6)

Jesus said “if any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.” (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23, Mark 8:34)

Meditation/Memory:

1 Peter 2:24 (NLT)

He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.

Romans 8:34 (NLT)

Who then will condemn us? No one – for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting at the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (NLT)

He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves, instead they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

Philippians 2:8-9 (NLT)

When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all names.

Romans 6:6-7 (NLT)

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ, we were set free from the power of sin.

Hebrews 12:1b-2 (NLT)

Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NLT)

I passed on to you what was most important and what has been also passed on to me: Christ died for our sins just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NLT)

But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

Questions

1. What did people of the Old Testament have to do to their sins forgiven?
2. Why was Jesus described as “the perfect sacrifice”?
3. Give an example of an Old Testament reference to the death of Christ.
4. What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ”? (Galatians 2:20)

God is Holy

In the Old Testament the word “holy” means being set apart, sacred, separate. In the New Testament, to be holy means to be cleansed, purified, free from the guilt of sin, dedicated and consecrated, through Jesus Christ.

When God answers her prayers for a child, in 1 Samuel chapters 1 & 2, Hannah sang, “No one is holy like the Lord! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.”

Israel was told not to fear what the nations around them fear, but to ... “Make the Lord of Heaven’s Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble.” (Isaiah 8:13)

Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.” (Rev.15:4)

God is called the “Holy One” throughout the Bible (over 50 times): For example, in 2 Kings 19:22, Ps.22:3, 71:22, Proverbs 9:10, Isaiah 48:17.

Isaiah and John both had visions of the throne of God and creatures around it continually calling “Holy, holy, holy ...” (Is.6:1-8, Rev.4:1-11).

Moses was told to take his sandals off, a token of respect and submission in Middle Eastern culture, because he was standing on holy ground in the presence of God. (Exodus 3:5)

The “Most Holy Place” in Solomon’s temple was where the High Priest met with God, the place made available to us by Jesus, (1 Kings 6:14-16, Hebrews 9:2-12).

The Sabbath day was a separate, different day - And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. (Genesis.2:3)

God’s people are to be holy ... a different people:

Israel was called to be a holy people, different from the nations around - For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure. Deut.7:6 (also Lev.20:7)

For you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.....1 Peter 2:9 (and Exodus 19:6)

But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15,16 (Leviticus 11:44)

Part of being holy is hating sin as God does. (Deut 12:31; 16:22; Pro 6:16-19; 11:1; 20:10,23)

We are made holy by Jesus’ blood and also become holy as we make right choices.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

Meditation/Memory:

Isaiah 6:3 (NLT)

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

1 Peter 1:15 (NLT)

But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.

1 Samuel 2:2 (NLT)

No one is holy like the Lord! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

Revelation 15:4 (NLT)

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Colossians 3:12-13 (NLT)

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Proverbs 9:10 (NLT)

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

Isaiah 57:15 (NLT)

The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: “I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.

1 Peter 1:14-16

So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”

Questions and activities

1. What is the meaning of the word ‘holy’ a) in the Old Testament and b) in the New Testament
2. Give one Old Testament example of Scripture stating the holiness of God.
3. “You must be holy because I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15,16. How can we be holy?
4. How does God want his holy people to act, according to Colossians 3:12-13
5. We must hate sin but love the sinner. Give an example of how this could be done.
6. In 1 Peter 2 we are told that everyone who has accepted Jesus as Saviour, is a ‘priest’. In the Old Testament, a priest was a person sanctified for service to God and privileged to enter into his presence in the holy place, and to offer sacrifices. What do you think it means now, for all Christians to be priests?

God is Creator

The first thing God chooses to tell us about himself is that he is a creator. The Bible begins, “In the beginning God created...” (Gen 1:1).

Right from the start God wanted us to understand that he is a masterful artist, and a brilliant, original designer.

His great and powerful creativity sustains the universe. “Let every created thing give praise to the LORD, for he issued his command, and they came into being”. (Psalm 148:5)

He is the totally incomparable Creator, always was, always will be, the only God, uncreated, nothing like the ‘gods’ that others make and worship.

To create is to bring something into existence.

Our God is infinitely creative, THE inventor! His imagination and ingenuity are displayed all around us in the incredible variety, complexity, and beauty of the things He has created.

God created dry land and vegetation out of nothing. He spoke and it was done. (Genesis 1:9-13)

In Matthew 14:13-21 we see that Jesus, the son of God, has the same power as His Father to make something out of nothing. He fed 5,000, then 4,000 people with very small supplies of food.

The Old Testament describes the power of God as a creator:

But God made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. With his own understanding he stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12)

With my great strength and powerful arm, I made the earth and all its people and every animal. I can give these things of mine to anyone I choose. (Jeremiah 27:5)

Psalm 29:1-9 describes a storm which displays God’s power

He is a powerful Creator, but as our Maker He understands us and listens to us.

Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. ...The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. (Isaiah 40:26, 28b-29)

You formed the mountains by your power and armed yourself with mighty strength. (Psalm 65:6)

God created the earth and all that is on it with great wisdom, every part fitting together.

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small. (Psalm 104: 24-25)

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)

By wisdom the Lord founded the earth; by understanding he created the heavens. (Prov. 3:19)

Psalms 104 and 147 give a picture of our creative God totally able to provide for and take care of His people and all He has made.

Because we are created in His image, we too are designed to be creative, resourceful, imaginative, and inventive.

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 90:2 (NLT)

Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.

Jeremiah 32:17 (NLT)

O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!

Psalm 24:1-2 (NLT)

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.

Psalm 95:4-6 (NLT)

He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

Psalm 104:24-25 (NLT)

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small.

Colossians 1:15-16

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

Romans 1:20 (NLT)

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Jeremiah 32:17-19 (NLT)

O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you! You show unfailing love to thousands, but you also bring the consequences of one generation's sin upon the next. You are the great and powerful God, the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You have all wisdom and do great and mighty miracles. You see the conduct of all people, and you give them what they deserve.

Questions and activities

1. What does 'create' mean?
2. What is the difference between the God of the Bible and gods of other faiths?
3. Describe a creative miracle performed by Jesus in the New Testament.
4. What evidence is there in Colossians 1:15 for Jesus existing before the Creation?
5. Psalm 104:24 - 25 speaks of the variety of living things God made. Give an example of something that is very small and something that is very large.
6. Write a Bible verse that speaks of God's power.
7. Find and write a verse from Psalm 104 that shows how God will provide for us through his creation.
8. Some people think that God needed millions of years to create the universe. If God is truly great and mighty, and able to perform miracles, then how long did he actually need to create the universe? (Genesis 1)

God is the Life-Giver

Jesus declared, *“And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth”* (John 17:3).

Eternal life is not only a future experience of life after death. It is a life lived in close, intimate relationship with God. And it can begin even now. Jesus comes so that we may experience a *“a rich and satisfying life”* (John 10:10).

True life now, and on into eternity can only be found through Jesus:

- Jesus was recognized as the *“author of life”* Acts 3:15
- His purpose is opposite that of his enemy, Satan: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* John 10:10 (ESV)

And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment. John 3:36

The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. John 5:26

Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Romans 5:18b

- The Holy Spirit is God’s life within us!

So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. Romans 8:6

He has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us. 2 Corinthians 1:22

- The book of Revelation is full of images of life. Those who listen will be given fruit from *“the tree of life”* 2:7; the believers' names are written in the *“Book of Life”*; the believers are given a *“crown of life”* 2:10, 3:5, 21:27, and they will be led to *“springs of life-giving water”* 7:17. John is shown *“a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of the lamb”* that flowed through the city providing water from trees of life with constant fruit and *“leaves used for medicine to heal the nations”* 22:1-3.
- God is a life-giver and calls us to be life-givers too. Life is God’s greatest gift and it is therefore to be treasured and protected. Nothing is to be done which harms or undermines life. (Exodus 20:12-17 and Deut 5:16-21). Note the following of the 10 Commandments:

No. 5: *“Honor your father and mother”* – why? Because they gave you life.

No. 6: *“You must not murder”* – why? Because life is valuable. You are not to take life away.

No. 7: *“You must not commit adultery”* – why? Because short of murder, the most destructive thing that can be done to a person’s life is to steal away the most precious part of that person’s life – their spouse.

No. 8: *“You must not steal”* – why? Because material objects – though inanimate – represent the fruit of life’s labor; the hours spent gaining the resources needed to

acquire the possessions people possess. Theft does not steal all of life like murder, but it does destroy part of an individual's life relationships and thus diminish the quality of life.

No. 10: "You must not covet" – why? Any thought that springs up in the human heart which would end up destroying some aspect of someone else's life if the idea matured to its full implementation is damaging to life.

- Our words can enhance life. *"The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences"* (Proverbs 18:21).

- Jesus is "the Word" that gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (1 John 1:4)

Memory/Meditation

John 14:6 (NLT)

Jesus told them "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

1 John 5:11-12 (NLT)

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

John 5:24 (NLT)

I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

John 10:7-10 (NLT)

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Galatians 6:8-9 (NLT)

Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

Acts 17:24-25 (NLT)

He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

Questions and activities

1. How can we experience satisfying life on earth?
2. How can we experience eternal life?
3. What does Satan offer in contrast to life?
4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in giving life?
5. List the 10 commandments that speak about our responsibility to choose life.

God is Wise

The meaning of wisdom in the Bible is:

‘the supreme intelligence, that belongs to God’

For the Christian, wisdom is seeing and responding to life’s situations from God’s perspective. That is, seeing things how God sees them.

Solomon, who was one of the wisest men to have ever lived, says that “Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.”
(Prov.9:10)

All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen. (Romans 16:27)

For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully? (Job 9:4a)

All around the throne proclaim God to be wise. (Revelation 7:12)

God created the earth and all that is on it with great wisdom, every part fitting together. Oh Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104: 24. See also Psalm 139:13)

He counts the stars and calls them all by name. How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension! (Psalm.147:4-5)

By wisdom the Lord founded the earth; by understanding he created the heavens. (Prov. 3:19)

But God made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. With his own understanding he stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12; Also, Jeremiah 51:15-19)

God’s wisdom is different from that of the world. It is not just being clever. It’s knowing how to think, speak and act according to God’s principles.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. (James 3:17)

Jesus was filled with wisdom from childhood (Luke 2:40, 52), others were amazed at his wisdom (Matt.13:54, Matt.22:33, Mark 6:2, John 7:14-16), His wisdom was seen as being greater than Solomon’s! (Matt. 12:42)

When asked by some Pharisees if it was right to pay taxes to Caesar or not, Jesus’ answer ‘completely amazed them.’ (Mark 12:14-17)

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. (Isaiah 11:2-3) This passage is prophetic - of Jesus who would come.

God's Word instructs us in wisdom.

The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. (Psalm 19:7b)

Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. (Psalm 119:98-99)

In the Old Testament, God instructed people wisely and gave wisdom(skill). The same word is used to describe wisdom given to leaders and wisdom given to those who did skilled work for the temple.

Now Joshua, son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Deut. 34:9)

I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts. (Ex 31:3) ...The Lord has given them special skills as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet thread on fine linen cloth, and weavers. They excel as craftsmen and as designers. (Ex. 35:35)

God gave Solomon very great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore. In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt. (1 Kings 4:29-30; Also 1 Kings 10:24)

Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19), Joseph (Genesis ch.39-40), Ezra (7:25) were all given wisdom.

Gods wants us to be wise:

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. (Eph. 5:15)

How much better to get wisdom than gold, and good judgment than silver! (Prov.16:16)

The Holy Spirit gives wisdom and understanding.

Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him ... (Acts 10:19)

The Spirit led Philip to a man who was reading Isaiah 53 and didn't understand it - Philip was able to bring understanding of Jesus. (Read the whole story Acts 8:26-39!)

Wisdom comes from knowing (fearing, listening, obeying) God and involves being teachable:

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom. (Psalm 111:10)

Jesus said the one "who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise" Matthew 7:24 (The story of the wise and foolish builders in Matt.7:24-27)

It is wise to listen to and obey parents - A wise child pays attention to what his father teaches him. But anyone who makes fun of others doesn't listen to warnings. (Prov.13:1)

God wants to give us wisdom, we are to ASK for it:

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:5)

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:1-6)

I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:17 and Colossians.1:9)

Wisdom is more than just knowledge, it requires character.

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. (James 3:13)

Meditation/Memory:

Psalms 104:24 (NLT)

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.

Psalms 111:10 (NLT)

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom.

Proverbs 9:10-11 (NLT)

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life.

Matthew 7:24 (NLT)

Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.

James 1:5, 3:17 (NLT)

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.

Proverbs 2:1-6 (NLT)

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Questions and activities

1. What is wisdom according to the Bible?
2. How does a person show wisdom?
3. Choose a Bible verse that explain how God used wisdom when he created the universe.
4. Think of something in life that requires good judgment and wise decision making.
5. In Matthew 7: 24 – 27, what is the condition for being wise, stated by Jesus?
6. Think of a situation in life where you would need to ask God for wisdom.
7. What does God say he will do, if you ask for wisdom? (James 1:5)
8. What are some of the character qualities shown by a wise person?

God is a Servant

The ultimate expression of the servant-heartedness of God is in Jesus: his willingness to die on the cross for us.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45)

When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8)

God's servant heart means that he loves all persons equally.

When we take on his servant heart there is no room for regarding another human being as better or worse in value. He shows no favouritism. (Act 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25). We are told we to have the same attitude, (1Tim 5:21; James 2:2-8) which enables us to serve as he did.

Jesus was an obedient servant, relying on and trusting His Father throughout His life on earth.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8)

Jesus was a humble servant:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

He was born in humble circumstances into a poor Jewish family, (Luke 2:24)

He made a humble entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, and he suffered the humiliation of the cross. (Matt 21:1-17)

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. (Philippians 2:6-7)

We are to follow Jesus' example and serve others humbly.

Jesus performed the menial task of washing his disciples' feet then told them "I have set you an example that you should do what I have done." (John 13:15)

Jesus told his disciples, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (Mark 10:43-44)

Paul writes, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:3-5)

Peter teaches us to use our gifts to serve others and that we are to serve with God's strength, to glorify him, (1 Peter 4:8-11).

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud. (Proverbs 16:18-19)

Meditation / Memory

Matthew 12:18-19

Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen. He is my Beloved, who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not fight or shout or raise his voice in public.

Mark 9:35

He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."

Philippians 2:6-8

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Mark 10:42-45

Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 12:18-21 and Isaiah 43:1-4

Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen. He is my Beloved, who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not fight or shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally he will cause justice to be victorious. And his name will be the hope of all the world."

1 Peter 4:10-11

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

Questions and activities

1. What is the greatest example of a servant ever seen in the history of the world?
2. Find and write Scriptures to show that Jesus was a) an obedient servant, b) a humble servant.
3. What is the opposite of humility?
4. Read James 2:2-8. Describe what is happening here. Is the one favouring the person with the fine clothes and gold jewelry showing humility? Why not?
5. How do we become a servant for Jesus? (Mark 10:43-45)
6. What is the difference between a household servant and a slave, in terms of income?
7. Do you think that Jesus meant that we should work for Him without the expectation of always being paid?
8. What character qualities would you expect to find in someone who is a servant?
9. How can you be a servant in everyday life?
10. What gifts do you have, that could be used in service to God?

God is Protector

God's promise to protect those who love Him is clear, though this does not mean that believers are exempt from difficulty in a world where there is evil. (Most of the disciples were martyred). We are told not to FEAR. There are times when God miraculously protects, and times when Satan wins. We should pray for protection at all times.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

God protects His people through:

- the blood of Jesus
- the name of Jesus
- the word of God

Through the blood of Jesus we have protection from the punishment for sin:

- protection from enemy attack in the spirit world.
- protection from sickness and disease
- protection from physical danger
- protection from demonic attack

God's promises for protection:

I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name (Psalm 91:14, Psalm 41:1-2; 97:10)

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. (Psalm 46:1-2)

Psalm 121 speaks of the watchful protection of God

In Psalm 68:5 it says God is a father to the fatherless and a defender of widows.

But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. (2Thess 3:3; See also 2Tim 4:17-18)

In the Old Testament God regularly fought for His people as they trusted and obeyed him, winning impossible battles (Gideon and Hezekiah), sending hornets (Exo 23:28), hail (Exo 9), confusion (Josh 10:10).

Joshua acknowledges God's protection over Israel:

As we traveled through the wilderness among our enemies, he preserved us. (Joshua 24:17)

There are many prayers for protection recorded in the Bible (Ps 64:1; 69:29; 140:1,4)

In Psalm 35:1 David is being attacked by many enemies and he calls out: "O Lord, oppose those who oppose me. Fight those who fight against me." That is exactly what happened!

Jesus tells us to pray to God our Father, "rescue us from the evil one." (Matt.6:13).

Twice in John 17, Jesus asks God to protect his followers from the evil in the world. (v.11,15)

Man's strength is NOT enough to protect and deliver! (Read Psalm 147:10; Isa 31:1; Jer 9:23, 17:5)

The best- equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you. But the Lord watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love. He rescues them. (Psalm 33:16-19)

Paul prayed that believers will understand “the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.” (Eph 1:19-21)

Throughout the Old Testament God is called a 'fortress', 'stronghold', 'high tower', 'rampart', a 'shield', titles that show the 'battle' dimension of His protection (Psalm 9:9, 18:2, 37:39; Pro 18:10).

A fortress is a military stronghold, often a fortified city, a place of protection in war; a '*rampart*' is a defensive wall of a castle or walled city, a protective barrier; a *shield* is for individual protection in battle.

We may not face physical battles, but we do need God as we fight and wrestle against temptations, the flesh, the world and unseen forces of darkness (Eph 2:2, 6:12).

Ephesians 6:14-18 describes the armour (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of readiness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation) and weapons (sword of his word, prayer) given for the battles.

The biblical metaphors of *shelter* and *refuge* help us picture God's protection from things that try to harm us.

“**Shelter**” means “that which covers or defends from injury; a protection; security; a screen, a guardian or defender.

Psalm 31:20: You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them; You shelter them in your presence, far from accusing tongues.

The image of God spreading wings of shelter and protection is repeated through the Old Testament: Ruth 2:12; 2 Sam.22:3; Psalm 17:8, 36:7, 61:4, 57:1, 64:2, 63:7, 91:4

God's Spirit provided Israel with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to protect them from the harsh desert environment they were living in for 40 years after they left Egypt.

God also wants *us* to be a shelter to those in need, showing his love and sharing our faith.

“**Refuge**” means “a condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble”

Psalm 61:3 For you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

Psalm 17:7 By your mighty power you rescue those who seek refuge from their enemies.

Psalm 9:9-10 The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, do not abandon those who search for you.

He becomes our refuge as we spend time with Him and trust and pour our hearts to Him in hard places. Psalm 62:8 - Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.

In the Old Testament God established "cities of refuge" If a man had killed another man accidentally, he could flee to one of these cities, for safety and protection. (Numbers.35, Deut.19, Josh.20) These cities were available to all; their gates were always open; they were well known and within a day's journey; they were prominently located at high elevations, visible from great distances. Whoever needed to could flee to one of the cities, whether or not he was an Israelite.

The cities of refuge can also be seen as a picture of Jesus, the One to whom a sinner can run to, and plead for God's mercy.

As part of His protection God also asks **us** to be alert, vigilant and watchful for the enemy. Commands to watch, be careful and to be on guard appear around forty times in the scriptures.

Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. (Matthew 26:41)

Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. (Eph 6:18)

Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:14)

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (1Peter 5:8; See also Matt 7:15, 24:4,1, Acts 20:28, 1 Thess 5:6, 1 Tim 4:16)

Meditation/Memory:

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NLT)

He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Psalm 91:4 (NLT) But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

Psalm 59:16 (NLT)

But as for me, I will sing about your power. Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress.

Ephesians 6:10-11 (NLT)

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith

Psalm 61:1-4 (NLT)

O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe

refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me. Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings.

Questions and activities

1. Why should we pray for protection at all times?
2. What should we pray for protection *from*?
3. Although Jesus defeated sin and death at the cross, Satan still has power on earth for a little while longer, until Jesus returns. How do we fight Satan's works right now?
4. How can you explain to someone that God promises protection, but there are sometimes calamities?
5. Choose and write a Bible verse that speaks about God's protection.
6. God is a shelter and a refuge. What does this mean?
7. How can Christians be a shelter for others?

God is Truth

All three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - display truth in their every word and action.

Jesus is “the truth” (John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”)

Jesus is not *a* truth - he is *the* truth. He doesn’t just have truth or teach truth. He *is* truth. He is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 NIV).

When Jesus was on trial before the Roman authorities, Pilate asked him “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Jesus did not answer Pilate verbally for it was not necessary to do so. Pilate was looking truth straight in the face.

The Spirit of God is truth. Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as ‘the Spirit of truth’. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. (John 15:26; also, John 16:13; 1 John 4:6; 5:6)

The Spirit of truth convicts:

And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. (John 16:8)

The Spirit of truth guides and leads us into all truth. (John 14:17; 16:13)

The indwelling Spirit of truth helps us “carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to” us. (2 Tim 1:14)

The Spirit of truth is in those who belong to God:

But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception. (1 John 4:6)

The testimony of the Spirit of truth confirms that Jesus Christ is God’s Son (1 John 5:6).

Paul faced the truth of this at his conversion. (Acts 9:1-19)

God the Father is “the God of truth” (Isaiah 65:16a), and he is “the only true God” (Jeremiah 10:10).

He is the true God who demonstrated himself to the prophets of Baal, (1Kings 18:24; also 2 Chron 15:3; John 17:3; 1Thess 1:9).

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)

God rules “with mercy and truth”: then God will establish one of David's descendants as king. He will rule with mercy and truth. He will always do what is just and be eager to do what is right. (Isaiah 16:5), for “just and true are [God’s] ways” (Rev 15:3 and Rev 16:7).

God’s words are truth: “For you are God, O Sovereign LORD. Your words are truth, and you have promised these good things to your servant.” (2 Sam 7:28; also Psalm 18:30; Proverbs 30:5; Rom 3:4; Rev 19:9).

Truth sets us free. We are told that “For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17) and in like manner, it is “the truth that will set you free” (John 8:32)

God wants us as His people to walk in truth. (Psalm 26:3, 51:6, 86:11, 119:30. Eph.6:14)

Meditation/Memory:

John 14:6 (NLT)

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

Jeremiah 10:10 (NLT)

But the Lord is the only true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King!

Psalm 18:30-31 (NLT)

God’s way is perfect. All the Lord’s promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. For who is God except the Lord? Who but our God is a solid rock?

Psalm 33:4-5 (NLT)

For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does. He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.

John 17:3 (NLT)

And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

John 8:31-32 (NLT)

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 16:13-14 (NLT)

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.

Hosea 14:9 (NLT)

Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen carefully. The paths of the Lord are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But in those paths sinners stumble and fall.

1 John 5:20 (NLT)

And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

Questions and activities

1. Choose Bible verses to explain how each member of the Trinity – the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Father – all represent TRUTH.
2. How would you explain to someone that the Bible is truth, whereas books of other faiths cannot be relied on for the truth?
3. How does God's truth set a person free?
4. What does it mean for a Christian to "walk in truth"?
5. Give some examples of 'untruths' in the world around us.
6. When we hear or read messages through the media, (TV or social media), how do we know what is truth and what is not truth?
7. Discernment is the ability to know what is true and what is false. What does God say about the gift of discernment, available to all Christians? Read the following verses, then give your answer.
1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 John 2:27; 1 Timothy 4:1; Proverbs 15:14
8. Give an example of how can a Christian 'stand up for the truth'.

God is King

King of kings and Lord of lords

God is worshipped as “the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords” (1Tim 6:15).

In Revelation, we are told that “the Lamb ... is Lord of all lords and King of all kings” (Rev 17:14) and it is “on his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords” (Rev 19:16).

God reigns over all human kings: “He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings” (Dan 2:21). Even Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful king of Babylon recognized that “God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings” (Dan 2:47). Indeed, “The king’s heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he guides it wherever he pleases” (Pro 21:1). And one day, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

God has been King, ultimate ruler, since the beginning of time and always will be.

Expectations of a king

God expects earthly kings to “rule with justice and righteousness” (1Ki 10:9).

A king should detest wrongdoing and build his kingdom on justice (Pro 16:12).

“A just king gives stability to his nation, but one who demands bribes destroys it” (Pro 29:4).

Kings of the Old Testament

The Old Testament writers did not doubt their God was King. (Deut 33:5; Numbers 23:21; Psalm 24:7-10; 95:3; 145:1-3; Is 33:32; 43:15; 44:6). Until the time of David, the Israelite had no king but God. Samuel, who was a leader, was growing old. The people did not think that his sons would be suitable leaders, so in 1 Samuel chapter 8, we read that the Israelites asked for a king. God granted their request, and the boy David, who fought Goliath, was chosen as the first king.

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 God stipulates what a king should and should not do. Three things are prohibited. A king should not use his position to gain horses, wives, or gold for himself. In other words, he was not to give way to the temptations of power and authoritarianism, adultery and wealth. Lack of self-control in these areas would eventually destroy the king and the kingdom (as the case of Solomon vividly illustrates: 1 Kings 10).

God’s king would be characterized by the opposite spirit of worldly kings: he would display servanthood, instead of the love of power, purity, instead of the love of pleasure, and generosity, instead of the love of material things. Consider Jesus the model king who exemplifies perfectly all these Godly traits.

Jesus is our king

Jesus was declared to be a king before he was born, later the King of Israel, the King of the Jews.

“The heir to David’s throne will come, and he will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hope on him” Romans 15:12 (from Isaiah 11:10)

He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. Luke 1:32 (the angel speaking to Mary)

Wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews?” Matthew 2:1-2 (also Luke 1:33 to Mary)

Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel” John 1:49 - “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.” John 12:15 (from Zechariah 9:9)

The arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus centered on him being a king (John 18:33-37)

The governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. Matthew 27:11 (NIV)

Soldiers ridiculed His kingship by dressing him in purple robes of royalty, putting a crown of thorns on his head and giving Him a mock scepter.

Pilate said to the people, “Look, here is your king.” John 19:14.

The charge against him was written on the sign placed on the cross - “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Matthew 27:37 (Also Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38, John 19:19).

Jesus is our king, the one we bow before, pledge allegiance to and allow to rule our lives, the one who is coming back to earth as the warrior king who will judge the nations righteously and rule eternally.

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. Colossians 1:13-14

On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords. Rev 19:16

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 47:1-2 (NLT)

Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise! For the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth.

Revelation 19:16 (NLT)

On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NLT)

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Psalms 99:1 (NLT)

The Lord is king! Let the nations tremble! He sits on his throne between the cherubim. Let the whole earth quake.

Daniel 7:13-14 (NLT)

I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

1 Timothy 1:17 (NLT)

All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen!

Questions and activities

1. Although Satan is currently the prince of the power of the air, (Ephesians 2:2), God is ultimately still in control. What does God's title as 'King of kings and Lord of lords' mean to you?
2. What are God's requirements for an earthly king?
3. Who was the first human king in the Old Testament?
4. Why did the people want a king?
5. What rules did God set out for Israel's king?
6. How was this different from the kings of countries around them?
7. Describe Jesus as king when he was on earth. Was he the type of king the people were expecting?
8. Describe Jesus as king when he returns.
9. What does it mean to live under the kingship of Jesus? (Colossians 1:13-14)