

Faithful Living Together

The week, we receive ten rules for living in a loving community, and a psalmist notes that God's law is for people's well-being. Conventional wisdom and power structures are challenged, and Jesus turns over tables and invites people to consider a different way of faithfully relating to God.



Focus scripture Psalm 19

Additional scriptures
Exodus 20:1–7
1 Corinthians 1:18–25
John 2:13–22

Focus scripture: Psalm 19

Psalm 19 states that God's law can help people to live lives well. The psalm speaks to how God is revealed and offers an understanding of human life in God's creation. The psalm divides into three sections. Verses 1 – 6 are a creation hymn of praise. Here the psalmist uses metaphors, phrases and imagery to describe creation. Singing with creation, the psalmist declares that all creation praises God's glory.

The second section of the psalm (vv. 7–10) speaks of God's law, naming a love for the law, and that people have responsibilities under the law. It notes that God is revealed in both the scriptures and in the law.

The psalm's third section (vv. 11–14) is more of a prayer that speaks to God the creator. Verse 14, in particular, is often recited before a sermon.

At the time this psalm was written, the sun was worshipped as a god by some religious groups. The psalmist challenges conventional wisdom of the time by saying that the sun is a part of God's creation and order and that the sun joins with the rest of creation in praising God. In weaving creation and the law together, Psalm 19 may be evidence that ancient Israelites understood God's teachings in nature and law as one and the same.

Exodus 20:1–17 The community who receives these words are a once-enslaved people now wandering in the wilderness.

The commandments are a covenant within the already-existing covenant made with Abraham and Sarah and are written for a particular time, context, and people. For example, later, Moses (in Deuteronomy

5) names the ten commandments again with one noticeable difference: in Exodus, keeping the Sabbath as holy and a day of rest is noted as a blessing. In Deuteronomy, keeping the Sabbath as a holy day is a reminder that the people were enslaved, and so keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest is a justice issue to offer rest for workers.

These are laws of love, given for the well-being of the community.

Like Psalm 19, **1 Corinthians 1:18–25** also challenges conventional wisdom. Paul writes about what will "save" people: being foolish, not wise; being weak, not strong; being low and despised, not of means. God challenges the status quo and the power of empire by turning conventions upside down.

Jesus turns things upside down in **John 2:13–22**. The temple had a marketplace where the sale of animals was for the offering of animal sacrifices. It was also a place where currency could be exchanged into a standard coinage to purchase animals for sacrifice and to pay the temple tax. Jesus, filled with righteous anger, turns over the marketplace tables and critiques the market system. He calls for a dismantling of unjust systems. Jesus challenged the way of empire and invited people into a different way of faithful living.

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The Season of Lent is an opportunity to continue to reflect on what it means to live faithfully together. God calls us to respond in faith in our daily lives. Knowing that God has offered loving rules, an invitation to praise, challenges the status quo, and is committed to justice: how then shall we live?

Creator God, you have given us guidelines of how we can be in community together. Help us to follow your loving laws, to praise you more faithfully, and to live more justly so that we might be more faithful disciples living in a deeper relationship with you. Amen.

Lecture Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Most children have a natural appreciation of the wonders of creation. Younger children in this age group can often become absorbed by their explorations in nature: watching a colourful bug crawl along a leaf, looking at a spider web, noticing a drop of rain hanging on a blade of grass, finding a beautifully patterned rock or shell. They often don't experience a separation between themselves and the rest of creation. Older children often instinctively sense the greatness of God and the wonders of creation and the universe even though they may not be able to articulate this. Their interest in creation can draw them into Psalm 19 and the celebration of God's glory in the heavens. Even if you live in an urban environment

you can help children connect with nature by encouraging them to notice even the smallest weed growing through a crack. You can help them appreciate the grandeur of God's creation by bringing some nature books and magazines to the group.

All members of the group will be encouraged to explore ways in which they can show God's loving ways in their daily lives. This session will help them explore the idea of God's law as the loving and life-giving ways in which God calls people to live together. Pray that the children will sense an awareness of God as creator and be encouraged to explore their relationship with God through God's word.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Psalm 19, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 19).
- ❑ Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with the purple and blue bookmarks from previous weeks and a green bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- ❑ Bring matches, offering basket, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.
- ❑ Review resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110).

Gather

- ❑ Bring a copy of resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110) and an item from nature.
- ❑ Bring a variety of items from nature or magazine pictures of nature items.

Engage

- ❑ Bring resource sheet "[God's Ways](#)."
- ❑ **Research group:** copies of resource sheet "[Rosh Hashanah](#)," slices of apple, a dish of honey, spoons and plates

- ❑ **Action group:** poem "[As Far As I Can See](#)" (p. 23), large soft ball

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Prayer zone:** wide green ribbon, pieces of green paper
- ❑ **Craft zone:** small plain paper plates (cut in half), self-adhesive stars, glitter, craft foam, yarn, cardboard templates of star, crescent moon, and sun shapes (see patterns in *Virtual Resource Booklet* in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca)
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Thinking about God](#)"; option: recording of meditative music, such as "[Adagio](#)" (#29 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ **Writing zone:** resource sheet "[Rosh Hashanah](#)," strips of paper; print sentence starters on a sheet of poster board.
- ❑ **Music zone:** song "[To You, O God](#)" (p. 40 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7)

Bless

- ❑ Bring happy face stickers.
- ❑ Bring "[Blessing song](#)" (p. 110).



Faithful Living Together

Scripture
Psalm 19

FOCUS To explore our relationship with God through God's creation and God's word

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and remind children that we are in the Season of Lent, a time to learn about God's promises and to explore what it means to live in God's way. The colour for this season is purple.

Prayer Invite two volunteers to lead in the "Lent 3" prayer on the resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

Sing the song "[God Is With Us](#)" (on p. 110).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Place the box of items from nature in the middle of the group and invite some children to take turns lifting the items or pictures out. Invite them to share their favourite things in nature and talk about some of their favourite places to be in nature (for example, a tree fort in the back garden, a public playground, a forest, a lake).

■ **What are some of your favourite things to do in God's wonderful world?**

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table. Point out the purple and blue bookmarks marking the stories of Noah and Abraham and Sarah from the book of Genesis. Use the green bookmark to find this week's focus scripture reading in the book of Psalms. Explain that the psalms are songs or poems written to God, or about God and God's people.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[God's Ways](#)" to tell a story based on **Psalm 19**. Invite older children to help lead younger children in the words and actions for the response.

■ **Where does the person who wrote Psalm 19 see God's glory?**

■ **How do you think God's creation speaks without using any words?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Research group The children in this group will have an opportunity to learn about the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, when people celebrate God's law as "sweeter than honey" (**Psalm 19:10**). Provide copies of the resource sheet "[Rosh Hashanah](#)" and read together the information about this Jewish celebration and the tradition of eating apple slices dipped in honey. Distribute apple slices and invite children to spoon some honey onto a plate and eat the snack as you read aloud **Psalm 19:10**. Invite children to repeat the phrase, "God's rules are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey."

■ **How can living in God's way be "sweet"?**

Action group The children in this group will have an opportunity to reflect further on **Psalm 19:7–10** and the image of living in God’s way. Invite children to repeat each line and action after you for the poem “[As Far As I Can See](#)” (bottom of p. 23). When we follow in God’s ways we show God’s care and love. Gather in a circle and take turns throwing a soft ball to each other. Each time someone catches the ball he or she says one way they might follow in God’s loving ways.

Reporting Invite the research group to share information about the Jewish celebration of Rosh

Hashanah and the action group to teach the rest of the children the poem “[As Far As I Can See](#).”

The Bible story and us

The psalmist reminds us that when we follow in God’s ways, we show God’s care and love for everyone.

- **What would the world look like if everyone in the world chose to follow God’s loving ways?**
- **If you were going to paint a picture of God’s wonderful world, what would you include? Why?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall**  Invite children to add to the Lenten prayer wall. Tape a green ribbon to the sign beside the other ribbons. Distribute squares of green paper for the children to write or draw prayers that give thanks for God’s beautiful world. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.

- ❑ **Craft zone: Mobile** Psalm 19 declares that the heavens tell us about God’s glory. Distribute paper plates and craft supplies and invite children to make mobiles as reminders of God’s glory. Help them print “The sky shows God’s glory” on their plates and decorate with star stickers and glitter. Help them each cut a sun, moon, and stars from craft foam; punch holes in the shapes and along the bottom of the plates, and tie shapes on with yarn. Make a yarn hanger for the top.



- ❑ **Quiet zone: Evening prayer**  Many people pray at the end of each day. Provide children with copies of the resource sheet “[Thinking about God](#).” Have them review the information and spend some time in quiet meditation as they reflect on the two questions and say a silent

prayer. They might also like to write their responses and prayers on the back of their pages. Option: play a recording of meditative music to create a reflective atmosphere.

- ❑ **Writing zone: Sentence images** The psalmist uses different images to describe God’s way of love, peace, and justice. Invite group members to create their own images by completing the sentences in the section “God’s wise ways” on the resource sheet “[Rosh Hashanah](#).” Have them write their sentences on strips of paper and glue them on the four prepared sheets of poster board. Review together and add more images as time permits.
- ❑ **Music zone: Soul words** Psalm 19:7 tells us that God’s law, or God’s way revives the soul. Explain to the children that we can think of our souls as God’s Spirit inside of us. Play the recording of the song “To You, O God” (#17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7) and invite the children to listen quietly. (Downloadable MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca) Teach them the words (p. 40 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7) and invite them to create actions for each phrase.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Distribute happy face stickers and invite children to place these on the worship table near the Bible as they think about how living in God's way "rejoices the heart."

Prayer Read the words for the "Closing prayer" (below). After each line invite the children to join in on the phrase, "Your words, O God, give life."

Sing the "Blessing song" (p. 110).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "(Name), God loves you. Go and follow in God's loving ways."

Reflect

In what ways do the children in your group have opportunities to celebrate the marvels of creation? How have they expressed their understanding of God's wise ways as a path to follow throughout life?

Poem group

As Far As I Can See

As far as I can see, God is there. (*Shade eyes with hand and look around.*)

As high as I can stretch, God is there. (*Stand on tiptoe and reach up.*)

As low as I can go, God is there. (*Crouch down.*)

God says, "Reach out in love." (*Spread arms wide.*)

I will share some love with you. (*Shake hands and smiles at each other.*)



Closing prayer

One: God's word is perfect. It is richer than gold.
God's word is precious for the young and the old.

All: Your words, O God, give life.

One: God's word makes us glad, it opens up our eyes.
God's word can be trusted, the message is wise.

All: Your words, O God, give life. Amen.





GOD'S WAYS

Young children enjoy participating actively in a story. Rehearse the response (written in bold in the story) and the actions to go with the response. Older children in the group might like to lead the response.

Once there lived a songwriter who loved God and tried hard to follow in God's ways. One day the songwriter was drifting along in a boat, looking at the sky, and thinking about God's amazing creation. All day long the songwriter noticed the beauty of the sky, watching as the sun rose, travelled across the sky, and then went down in a blaze of red and orange. As the sun went down, the first twinkling stars appeared in the night sky.

"Amazing!" thought the songwriter. "God made the sky and everything in it: the sun, the moon, the clouds, the rainbows, and all the stars. Isn't God amazing?" As the stars twinkled in the night sky, the songwriter thought about all the wonderful things that God had made and how wonderful it was to live in God's world. "I'll write a song about this," decided the songwriter.

The beauty of the stars, the clouds, the sun, and the moon tell of the glory of God. They say no words, but their message goes around the world.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

From day to day and night to night
the message of the creator God goes around
the world.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

The sun awakens us to a new day.
And God's word sets us on a new path.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

We seek eagerly for God's word and God's path.
They are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

Yes, the people, from the smallest to the tallest,
praised God for God's creation and God's word.



Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the Jewish New Year that occurs every year in September or October...wait! Before you get ideas in your head about Jewish people breaking out the champagne and noisemakers and staying up until midnight on some school night in September or October – it is not exactly that way!

The Torah mentions the observance of Rosh Hashanah in Leviticus 23:23–25. *Rosh* (which is the Hebrew word for “Head”) *Hashanah* (which is the Hebrew word for “Year”) means “Head of the Year” and is the beginning of a holy period of ten days called the “Days of Awe.” You know how every year you go to the doctor for a check-up and he or she tells you how you are doing and what things you need to do to stay healthy (like eat more vegetables!)? Well, these ten days are a time for Jews to go for a check-up too. Instead of a check-up for the body, it is a check-up for the soul. And instead of going to someone else for the check-up, Jews are expected to examine themselves.

What do we examine? We examine the choices we have made, how we have treated other people, how we have acted to make the world a better place. All of us have some things we have done well, but all of us have things that we need to improve upon. For those things, we ask for forgiveness and work toward being better and making the world a better place.

Rabbi Morris from “Ask the Rabbi” in the Library and Action Zone of the Seasons website (www.seasonsonline.ca)

Sweeter than honey

During Rosh Hashanah Jewish people celebrate God’s law as “more precious than gold, than much pure gold; sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb” (**Psalm 19:10**). During Rosh Hashanah, there is a ritual of eating apples with honey and praying.

After dipping the apple in honey: “Blessed are you, Lord our God, who creates the fruit of the tree.”

After eating: “May it be your will, God and God of our ancestors, to renew on us a good and sweet year.”

God’s wise ways

The writer of Psalm 19 uses different images to describe the beauty and joy of knowing and following God’s wise ways. Create some of your own images by completing the following sentences:

God’s love is as powerful as...

God’s peace is as deep as...

God’s rules are as fair as...

God’s ways are as beautiful as...



Thinking about God

In Psalm 19, we learn that the creation around us reminds us every day and night of God's glory and greatness. We also learn that God's way or law is a wonderful help to be faithful to God. To help you think about God by remembering God's creation and by observing God's way, think about your day when you go to bed each night. Here is a way to do that. You can practice now by remembering what you did and saw yesterday.

Sit or lie quietly for a moment.

What beauty do you remember seeing in the world today?

Give God thanks for creating the beauty in our world.

When did you see someone showing God's love to someone else?

Give God thanks for teaching us how to be loving and kind.

Put this page by your bed so you will remember to end your day this way.

Rituals for Lent

Lenten rainbow pathway

Create a pathway of “stepping stones” using large circles cut from coloured construction paper: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Cut several circles of each colour to make the pathway connect from the doorway of your meeting space to the worship area. During Lent the children will follow this rainbow path of stepping stones to gather in the worship space during the opening ritual each week.

Gathering prayers

Choose two volunteers to read the opening prayer each week: one will light the candle and the other will place an object (symbolizing the focus scripture theme) beside the candle. These symbols can remain in the worship space with all five displayed on the fifth Sunday. There are only five prayers included on this page because there will be a special all-ages gathering on Palm/Passion Sunday.

Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**

Every day. **Every day.**

God will always love us. **God will always love us.**

Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you. **May God bless you.**

Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**

May God’s love surround you.

May God’s love surround you.

Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

Lent 1

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this first Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for the rainbow which is a sign of God’s love.
(*Place a rainbow-coloured object beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 2

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this second Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for all the stars in the sky that remind us of God’s love. (*Place a star beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 3

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this third Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”

for all the wonderful things in creation. (*Place an object from nature beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 4

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this fourth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for giving us hope when times are hard. (*Place a stone beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 5

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this fifth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for your love that is deep in our hearts. (*Place a heart beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

