

Known by Goodness and Mercy

This week's readings remind us that living into our covenantal relationship with God and all creation means giving voice and witness to the work of God's liberating spirit. We do so as an imperfect people who are redeemed by the same goodness and mercy we are called to live out.

Focus scripture: Exodus 33:12–23

Exodus 33:12–23 It was one thing for the people of Israel to be freed from bondage; it was another thing to live as free people. The experience of captivity to an imperial system of domination was never far from their hearts and minds. It would take time for them to learn a new way of being and living together in community. Captivity in Egypt taught them there was little or no mercy in systems designed to keep people under control and to maintain power for those with authority and privilege. Nor was there much of anything representing goodness in these systems. Now, having so quickly failed God, failed Moses, and failed each other by breaking their covenantal relationship, the people have every reason to expect retribution.

In contrast to these imperial norms, Moses seeks reassurance from God that the people, once freed from slavery, will no longer need to live by these old patterns. In seeking reassurance, Moses is unwilling to relinquish the hope and belief that broken relationships can be mended, covenant can be restored. Yet, at the same time, Moses never minimizes or glosses over the harm done when trust is broken. Repair work is needed.

The verses preceding today's text make clear that the violation of trust has created distance between God and the people. God intends to keep that distance. Fortunately for the people, Moses never makes light of the broken trust, but instead calls upon God to show this newly forming community what it means to live as a liberated people of faith. Moses asks God to reveal God's glory, made visible and evident in God's goodness and mercy.

Psalms 99 is a song of celebration and worship for the one who is revealed as a lover of

justice, who establishes equity, and executes justice and righteousness. This is the one who guided the people of Israel out of slavery into an identity as a free people. The people were far from perfect, at times failing the guidance they were offered, but the resulting brokenness was never ignored and ultimately healed through the forgiveness of the one who sets them free.

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10 is an encouragement to the church in Thessalonica and the church in every age to carry forth their shared witness as those who embody the gospel of freedom and justice proclaimed by Jesus. They are to be "imitators" of mercy, goodness, and the love of God. By being imitators, they become "examples."

Matthew 22:15–22 echoes the choice faced by the people of Israel; return to slavery, guided by the rules enforced by systems of domination, or live as free people, choosing the mercy, goodness, and love of God instead. When the Pharisees put Jesus to the test with the emperor's image on a coin, Jesus makes clear it is a choice we continue to face.

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Moses understands the unique role we are called to have in the world. The people have not been set free from bondage in order to replicate the very systems of oppression under which they had lived. As a liberated people, we are known by a new identity, one marked by goodness, mercy and therefore the glory of the one who continues to set us free from all that oppresses. All of today's texts speak to our identity as a people redeemed and set free from the brokenness in our lives and our world.



Focus scripture Exodus 33:12–23

Additional scriptures
Psalm 99

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10
Matthew 22:15–22



Seasons of the Spirit
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the
Revised Common Lectionary.

**Lover of justice,
you set us on a
path to freedom
marked by the
signposts of your
goodness and
mercy. Even when
we fall short, you
remain faithful,
inviting us into
right relationship.
Help us to live as
your people that
we may be the
witness to justice
and freedom you
would have us be.
Amen.**

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

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Explaining the nature of God to a child is no easy task! It can be challenging to put into words, and it is an abstract concept, which is difficult for those who are concrete thinkers. We can perhaps begin to address the nature of God by explaining how we can feel God's presence in tangible terms. We can tell children that God is everywhere, like the air we breathe, the wind we feel on our skin, a hug or smile from a loving friend. We know that God is with us when we feel love for one another. Most importantly, for young children, we tell them that God loves them, and cares about what they do.

For children in this age group we can start by turning our focus to God's Spirit present in these children and helping them become aware of this presence. They are open to a sense of wonder, and open to mystery, approaching the world with great curiosity. Their imaginations are becoming more complex and they are open to new experiences. Five-year-olds are able to use increasingly descriptive language to explore their world. Pray that the children will feel God's presence and become aware of the ways in which God is present.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Exodus 33:12–23, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 39).
- ❑ Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, and Bible with bookmark in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Music CD*, *Seasons Songbook* and *Season CD* (Volume 9), CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring "Gathering song" (on resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76) or "A Little Peace Song" (p. 5 in *SGF Songbook*; #1 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring blanket and resource sheet "[Moses Thinks About God](#)."
- ❑ Review information on resource sheet "[Storytelling Boxes](#)" (p. 78); prepare a box for this week, with the figures of "Moses #1" and "group of people" (enlarged as

much as possible), and piece of brown felt cut in the shape of a tent.

- ❑ Option: prepare materials for individual [storytelling boxes](#) (see p. 78).
- ❑ Bring sheet of poster board with the images of "The Ten Commandments" and "The golden calf statue" from poster [Storytelling Resources #2](#); bring this week's image of "Seeing God's Glory."
- ❑ Bring song, "God Is with Us" (on resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Music:** lyrics and recording for song, "I Feel God around Me" (p. 18 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9)
- ❑ **Game:** two copies of resource sheet "[God's Love](#)," enlarged; cut out the two sets of cards.
- ❑ **Paper chain:** heart and people shapes (see resource sheet "[Session Resources](#)," p. 79), yarn; follow instructions on resource sheet to prepare shapes.

Bless

- ❑ Bring "Blessing song" (on resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76) or song, "Jump for Joy" (pp. 14–15 in *SGF Songbook*; #10, *SGF Music CD*).

For groups consisting mostly of three-year-olds, supplemental resources can be downloaded from the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca.
user name: spirit
password: child



October 18, 2020

Known by Goodness and Mercy

Scripture

Exodus 33:12–23

FOCUS To feel God's presence through the love of others

Gather

Welcome each child, saying "Hello, *(child's name)*, we're happy you're here."

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Say,

**The colour green reminds us
to grow in God's way** (*point to the green cloth*).
**The Bible is a book of stories about God
and of people who loved God** (*point to Bible*).
**The light of the candle reminds us
of God's love** (*light the candle*).

Sing "Gathering song" (p. 76) or "A Little Peace Song" (p. 5 in *SGF Songbook*; #1 on *SGF Music CD*).

Pray Loving God,
thank you for this place.
Thank you for stories
that tell us about your love. Amen.

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

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Hi, everybody. I'm so happy to see my friends today.

Leader: We're happy to see you too, Priscilla! What have you been doing?

Priscilla: Yesterday I played with my friend Anna. We had a picnic outside. Girls and boys, what do you like to do with your friends? (*Encourage responses.*)

Leader: When we feel happy with our friends, that's a time when we can feel God with us. Today we're going to hear a story about someone named Moses, and a time when he felt God with him. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

- ☐ **Friends** Invite children to talk about their experiences of spending time with friends. Talk about the good feelings they have when they are together and explain that those are times when people can feel God with them. Today's Bible story is about someone named Moses, and a time when he felt God with him.

Engage

Before the story

Spread the blanket on the floor, gather in a circle, and invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and open it to the book of Exodus. Ex-

plain that this book has stories about God's people who lived long ago. Place the Bible and the story-telling box in the middle of the circle.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[Moses Thinks About God](#)," based on **Exodus 32:12–23**, and the items from the box to tell the story.

Poster ritual Invite a child to glue the image of "Seeing God's Glory" (from the poster [Storytelling Resources #2](#)) in the bottom left corner of the poster board with the images of the ten commandments and the golden calf. Invite children to name some of the times when they might feel God all around them, like Moses did, and print phrases to describe these times around the figure of Moses.

Retelling the story (*optional*) Distribute the small storytelling boxes and review the story pieces. Encourage children to use these props as you read again the story on the resource sheet "[Moses Thinks About God](#)."

After the story

Song "God Is with Us" (on the resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76).

Lead the children in singing the song, pausing after each line for them to repeat the words and actions.

Respond

Choose from the following activities:

- ☐ **Music** Songs help us celebrate the ways God is with us. Lead the children in singing the song, "I Feel God around Me" (p. 18 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9) or listen to the song together (#20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9). Encourage children to help make up other verses such as, "feeling the wind" or "playing with friends" or "helping my mother."
- ☐ **Game** We feel God's love when we enjoy our times together with friends. Place the images from the resource sheet "[God's Love](#)" face down in the middle of the group. Demonstrate



turning over an image and saying, "God's love shows when..." and describing what is happening in that image. Take turns turning over other images and describing the scenes in them. Then use two sets of cards to play a memory game, trying to find the matching pairs.

- ☐ **Paper chain** We feel God's love when people show love to us. Distribute prepared people and heart shapes and follow the instructions on the resource sheet "[Session Resources](#)" (p. 79) for making the "Hearts and people chain."

Bless

Gather in the worship space and light the candle.

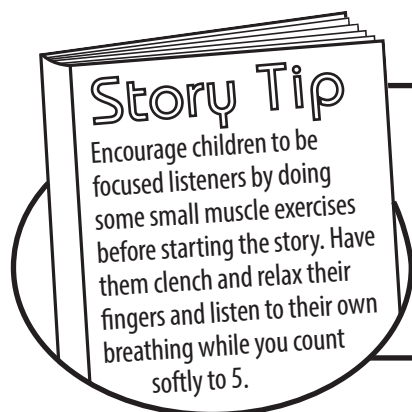
Pray Dear God, thank you for being with us.
Thank you for caring for us
through the love of our families. Amen.

Blessing Lead the group in the "[Blessing song](#)" (p. 76) or the song, "Jump for Joy" (pp. 14–15 in *SGF Songbook*, #10 on *SGF Music CD*).

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), we feel God's love in you."

Reflect

How might you continue to help children sense the mystery of God's presence? How can you foster an understanding of the holy greatness of God in your session times together?



Moses Thinks About God

(a story based on Exodus 33:12–23)

(Open the storytelling box. Remove the felt tent and place it near the edge of the blanket. Remove figures of Moses and group of people and place them nearby. At the appropriate times in the story, one or two children will use the other portion of the blanket to stand on when they are re-enacting a scene.)

It was the middle of the afternoon. Moses was sitting outside the tent. He wanted to be away from the people for a while so that he could be alone with God. *(Put Moses figure beside the tent.)* Moses found a rock that felt comfortable to sit on. He curled up on that rock and thought about God. “I wonder what God looks like? I want to see God,” Moses said to himself.

Moses looked around. He could hear the quiet babbling sounds of a river. And standing in the river were two women helping each other wash clothes. *(Invite two children to stand on the blanket and “wash clothes.”)*

Moses looked in another direction and heard a colourful bird chirping in the tree. And under the tree, a man and his son were helping each other gather branches and twigs for a fire.

(Invite two children to “gather sticks and pile them together.”)

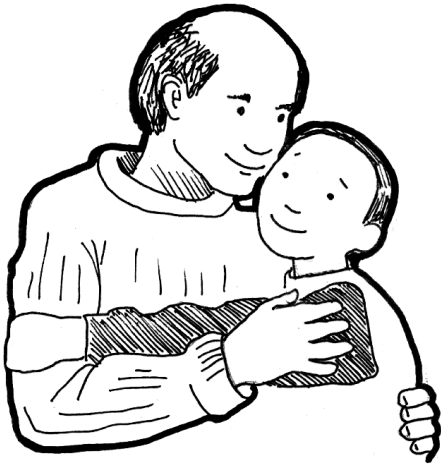
Then Moses looked into the distance. Some sheep were still nibbling grass while other sheep were dozing. And nearby two young people were helping each other care for these sheep. *(Invite two children to “tend to the sheep.”)*

Moses thought about everything he had seen and heard. And then Moses thought about all his friends who loved and cared for each other. *(Place group of people nearby.)* Deep within and all around, Moses knew and felt God’s love and goodness. Moses knew that even though he couldn’t see God, God was here. And Moses could feel God’s love when he was sitting by the creek, sitting on a rock outside his tent, experiencing the sights and sounds around him, or feeling love from his friends. Now Moses began to understand. God is not a human being like us. God is not a man or a woman. God is not old or young. God is different from anything we know. “I can feel God all around me,” Moses said. It was such a wonderful, wonderful feeling!



God's Love

We feel God's love when....



Additional Songs and Poems

Welcome song

(tune: "London Bridges")

Welcome, welcome, we are here!
Clap your hands! Shout a cheer!
We'll sing and pray and learn today,
to live and grow in God's good way.

Parting poem

Where do we see God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)
Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)
God's love is there, shining through,
in me (*point to self*) and in you (*point to others*).

Where do we find God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)
Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)
God's love can be found,
the whole wide world around (*spread arms wide*).

God Is with Us

(tune: "B-I-N-G-O")

God's with me and (*point to self*).
God's with you and (*point to another*).
God is with us always (*make a circle with arms*).
Yes, yes, when we love (*clap for each word*),
Yes, yes, when we care (*clap for each word*),
Yes, yes, when we help (*clap for each word*),
God's with us every day (*place hands over heart*).

Gathering song

(tune: "Jesus Loves Me")

Thank you for this lovely day (*arms held wide*).
Thank you for the ways to pray (*hand together*).
Thank you for the friends we see (*wave to each other*).
Thank you for your love for me (*hug self*).
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).
We thank you every day (*hands over heart*).

Blessing song

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

Now let's go out to share God's love,
share God's love, share God's love.
Every day, in every way,
let's share God's love with all.
(Repeat if desired, substituting the last line with phrases, such as "Let's be a friend to all" or "Let's show our care for all" or "Let's try and help someone.")

Shout It Out

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Share, share, share God's love,
share God's love today.
Shout it out and tell your friends,
God's love is here to stay!

Ten Young Bridesmaids

(Start by holding up 10 fingers. Put one finger down as each bridesmaid runs out of oil.)

- 10 young bridesmaids with lamps burning fine.
One ran out of oil and then there were 9.
- 9 young bridesmaids said, "The bridegroom is late."
One ran out of oil and then there were 8.
- 8 young bridesmaids said, "Now it's past eleven."
One ran out of oil and then there were 7.
- 7 young bridesmaids, with brightly burning wicks.
One ran out of oil and then there were 6.
- 6 young women asked, "When will he arrive?"
One ran out of oil and then there were 5.
- 5 young bridesmaids, standing in the room.
"Finally he's coming! Here comes the groom."
- 5 young bridesmaids with lamps burning bright,
went to the wedding and shared their light.

Just like the bridesmaids, we make choices, too.
We can let our lights shine depending on what we do.



STORYTELLING BOXES

During the month of October, we will hear several stories of Moses and the Hebrew people. Each week the children will march in a parade formation around the room until the music ends and everyone has arrived in the story area. A plain-coloured blanket is then spread on the floor, everyone sits around it, and a special storytelling box is placed beside you. The area in the middle of the blanket will be used for the story figures and props that are in the storytelling box.

Decorate a box (such as a shoebox with a lid) in any way you choose. The lid should be done separately so it can be removed easily to reveal the contents inside the box. As you tell a story, pull out the figures or objects as they relate to the story.

After the story, there is an optional activity whereby the children could have their own small

storytelling boxes. Each child would be given a box and the appropriate figures or objects for that day's story. (Copy and cut out the story figures found on this page. For extra durability, consider gluing the figures to poster board or construction paper before cutting them out.)

Items needed each week

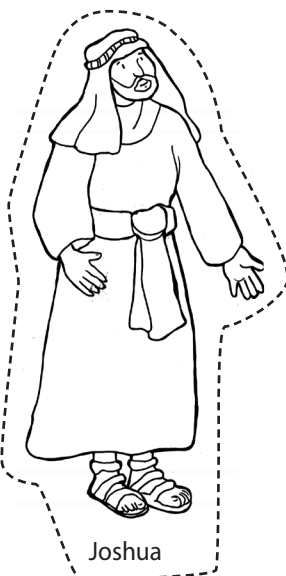
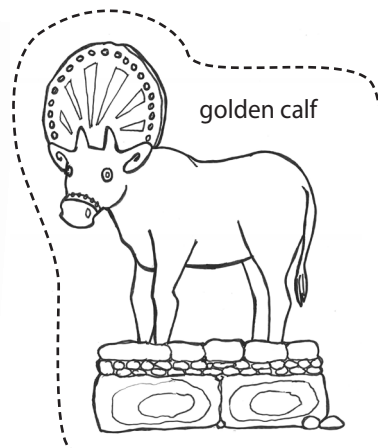
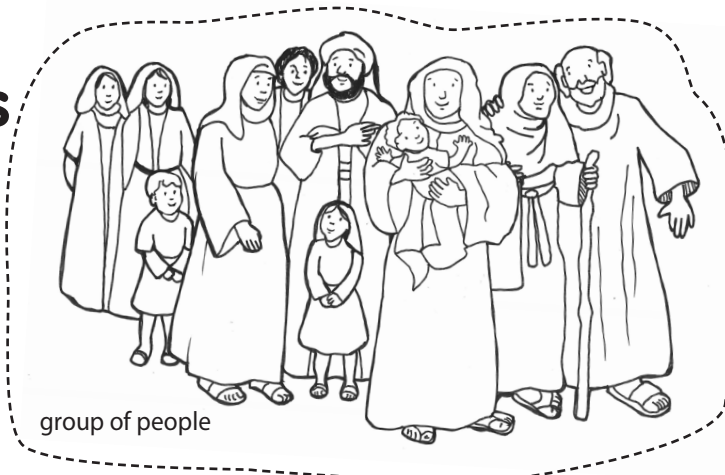
October 4: Moses #1, group of people, felt mountain, at least ten red paper hearts

October 11: Moses #1, group of people, golden calf, felt mountain

October 18: Moses #1, group of people, felt tent

October 25: Moses #1, Moses #2, Joshua, group of people, felt mountain

Story Figures



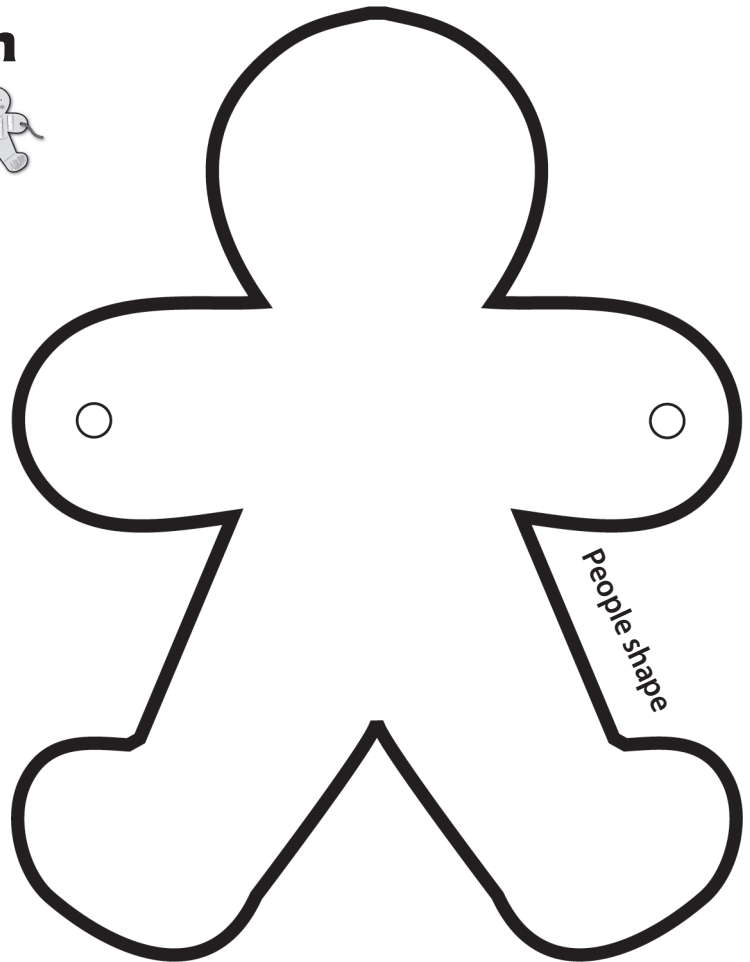
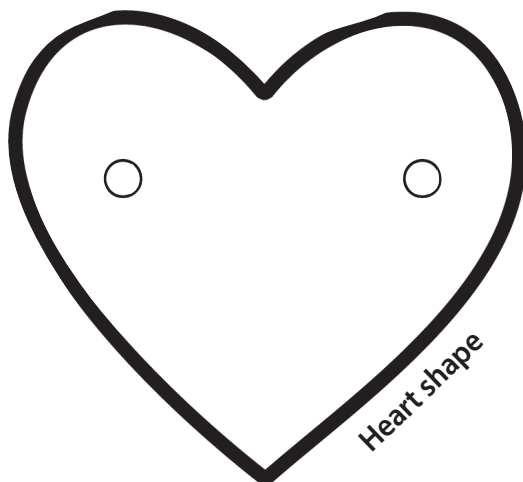
Session Resources

Hearts and people chain

(October 18)

Instructions:

1. Enlarge heart and people shapes.
2. Copy onto card stock/heavy paper.
3. Cut out one heart and one people shape for each child.
4. Use a hole punch to make holes as indicated on the patterns.
5. Thread yarn through holes to make a chain.



Scroll activity

(November 1)

