

WHO IS GOD?

by Laura Sweet

**Fours and Fives
Year 1
Quarter 4**

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INTRODUCTION -

WHO IS GOD?

Who is God? How do we introduce preschoolers to this great God we worship? How do we lay the correct foundation as they begin their years in church and Sunday School? This quarter seeks to give your students a good, basic understanding of the attributes of God - who He is and what He is like. You will discover that your students will love the “big ideas” taught in this quarter; preschoolers are often quick to embrace concepts that adults struggle with, such as the omnipresence of God (“God is everywhere” - Lesson 6) or His eternity (Lesson 7).

As with the first quarter, each lesson is divided into three sections - the Focus Activity, the Story Area, and the Project/Activity. For a description of how each of these sections works, see the longer Introduction to the first quarter. What follows is information specific to the needs of this particular quarter.

Story Area

Our lessons this quarter come from all over the Bible - Old and New Testament - as we illustrate different attributes of God. If you have been teaching Sunday School for awhile, you may have flannelgraph or illustrations for some of the Bible stories - for example, Noah’s Ark in Lesson 12. You will find the Bible story written out in each lesson. These are meant to be a guide as you retell the story from the Bible. Feel free to add details, etc., as you adapt the story to your class.

Project/Activity

We assume you have some common supplies in your classroom - scissors, glue sticks, crayons, markers, construction paper and tape. In addition, the following supplies will be used in one or more of the lessons this quarter - yarn; watercolor paints (optional); seeds, bulbs or acorns (optional); assorted buttons (optional); old magazines; paper baking cups; pipe cleaners or straws; shiny star stickers or drawing chalk; paper plates; crepe paper streamers.

Suggested Songs

Any songs from the last three quarters that focus on God will work this quarter as well. A few you might consider adding are listed below:

The B-I-B-L-E

My God is so Great

God is so Good

God Made Me

Holy, Holy, Holy

THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD

Exodus 34:1-5; 27-35

Lesson Aim

To teach students that the Bible was given to us by God and that it is His Holy Word.

Memory Verse

Read **Psalm 100** aloud to your class.

Lesson Background

There are many wonderful books in this world, and hopefully most of your students have experienced the joy of listening to someone read to them from a favorite storybook. This week we want to impress upon them that the Bible is a wonderful book as well, but it is so much more than that! It is different from every other book in the world because God Himself gave it to us. It is the book that tells us who God is and what He is like. It tells us our own sad, sinful condition and our need for a Savior. And it tells the glorious story of Jesus, who came to earth from heaven to save sinful men. The Bible is not just another book, or even one of several “holy” books, as many in our time would describe it. The Bible is God’s Word to man, and that makes it the greatest book of all.

If you have time this week, you may ask your students to tell you about their own favorite Bible stories. If some become confused or wish to tell you about other books, use the opportunity to discuss the uniqueness of the Bible compared to all other stories. “Yes, that is a good book, too, but that story is not from the Bible. That story is make-believe, but the stories we read in the Bible are all true. The Bible was given to us by God. That makes it the greatest book of all!”

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: Bible story books from your classroom or church library; construction paper; ribbon, yarn, stickers, stamps, or other “sundries”; illustrations or flannelgraph of the Bible story (optional).

Have a number of Bible story books out on the table for your students to look at as they come into class. You may choose one or two of them to read aloud if you wish (books that deal with some of the stories we’ve talked about this past year in Sunday School would be good choices; your students will recognize and remember them).

“These books tell different stories, but they all have one thing in common - all of these stories come from one book, the Bible. The Bible is the greatest book of all! It’s the greatest book because it tells us about God. But even more than that, it is the greatest book because God Himself gave it to us! Let’s go to our story area to find out more.”

At the story area, introduce Psalm 100 to your students by reading it aloud. Tell them that it is a wonderful psalm about God and about worshipping God. Let them know they will be memorizing the psalm for the next several weeks.

Bible Story (from Exodus 34:1-5, 27-35)

We come to church and Sunday School every Sunday to learn from a special book called the Bible. The Bible is special because God Himself gave it to us. That’s why we say the Bible is God’s Word.

Long ago, when God first called His people out of the land of Egypt, they did not have God’s Word to read. They didn’t know God’s commandments. They didn’t know what things pleased the Lord and what things displeased Him.

The Lord called His people to Mount Sinai, and there He spoke to them through a cloud and through thunder. But the people needed a written record of God’s commands so they would be reminded of His Word. God gave Moses His commands on two stone tablets; you may remember the story of when those first two tablets were broken. But the people could not go on without God’s Word, and so the Lord spoke to Moses again: “Chisel out two stone tablets,” He told Moses, “and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.”

Moses chiseled out two stone tablets, and then he got up early in the morning to meet with God on Mount Sinai. The Lord came down upon the mountain in a cloud and spoke to Moses. Moses was there with the Lord forty days and nights; during that time, he didn’t need to eat or drink, for he was in God’s presence. He wrote God’s commandments on the two stone tablets, and when he was finished he brought them down to the people of Israel.

But when Moses came down from the mountain, his brother Aaron and all the people were afraid to go near him! His face was different from theirs; it was bright, radiant with God’s glory, because Moses had been in God’s presence. Moses called to Aaron and the leaders of the people, and they returned to listen to the commands God had given him. After he finished speaking to the people, Moses put a veil over his face. Eventually, the glory would fade from his face, but it always returned for awhile after Moses entered God’s presence and spoke to Him. The brightness of his face reminded the people of Israel that Moses was God’s spokesman and that he was bringing the very words of God to them.

Today, most of our Bibles come from a bookstore. But all the words in our Bibles are words that God has given to His people. They were written down by prophets and holy men of the past, and they tell us many things. Our Bibles tell us about how God made the world. They tell us how Adam and Eve sinned and why we need a Savior. And our Bibles tell us the good news about Jesus, who died for the sins of His people and then was raised on the third day. That's why we study our Bibles in church and Sunday School. I hope you also learn about the Bible in your homes. The Bible is the greatest book of all because it is the word of God.

Project

Make Bible bookmarks with your class. These may be as simple or as elaborate as you would like. If you want the bookmarks to last longer, you could make them out of lightweight poster paper and laminate them or cover them with contact paper to keep them clean and sturdy. A nice touch is a pretty ribbon or colored yarn at the top. The bookmarks can be decorated with stickers, stamps, or pictures by your students. Or you may wish to write a verse from Psalm 100 on the bookmarks.

[NOTE: if you made bookmarks as an alternative project for one of the lessons in the second quarter, you may wish to make memory verse booklets instead. Cut a piece of construction paper in two, and then fold and staple the two pieces to make a book. Have students decorate the front any way they wish. As they work on their memory verses this quarter, you can write the verses on the separate pages. Give the student a small sticker when they memorize the verse on each page.]

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

I Kings 18:16-46

Lesson Aim

To show that the Lord is the one and only God of the universe.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:1 - "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth."

Lesson Background

The exclusivity of the Christian message is "politically incorrect" today; in our multicultural society, it is considered intolerant of other faiths to claim that the God of the Bible is the only God and that Jesus is the only way to heaven. No doubt Elijah would sympathize with our situation, since he was the original "politically incorrect" prophet! The Jews did not want to be limited to the monotheistic worship of the true God of Israel. They wanted to be like the nations around them and embrace other gods as well. But God was not willing to share his glory with the likes of Baal, just as Jesus was clear in proclaiming, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Elijah challenged the people: "The god who answers by fire - he is God." Of course, only the Lord could answer prayer in this manner, as the priests of Baal and Asherah would soon learn to their ruin. Sometimes we are tempted to wish that God would demonstrate His presence in such a dramatic way today. But the evidences are still all around us; only the Lord can change a man's heart and give him a new beginning, only the Bible speaks the truth about the universe and the human condition, and only Jesus offers hope for redemption and salvation. We may be politically incorrect, but the message we teach is ultimately *eternally* correct! Let us be confident of that as we bring this week's lesson to our students.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: photocopies of the worksheet; jellybeans or other small candies which can be sorted by color; gray and red construction paper and white paper; glue sticks; illustrations or flannelgraph of the Bible story (optional).

We're going to focus on the concept of "one" thing, and you can choose to do this in one of two ways. The easiest way is to make a photocopy of the worksheet, and have students circle the object when there is only one and cross out any extras when there are more than one.

Another way to talk about the number one is to bring a large bag of jelly beans or another small candy that can be sorted by color. Have the children help you sort the candies, and then tell them they may each have "one" of each color. Help any student who seems to struggle with this idea by showing him or her that "one" is always single, and by itself. After the candies are sorted and eaten, lead students to the story area.

Go over this week's memory verse and any songs you are learning before the lesson.

Bible Story (from I Kings 18:16-46)

For three years there had been no rain in the land of Israel. The rivers were all drying up! The crops in the field couldn't grow! The people and the animals were beginning to grow thirsty.

There was no rain in Israel because the Lord's people had forgotten their God. They were worshiping other gods, like Baal, who was supposed to be the god of the rain clouds. But was Baal really in charge of the rain? No, there is only one God, the Lord. He is the One who sends sunshine and rain. God stopped the rain in Israel to teach the people a lesson so they would return and worship Him.

Elijah was God's prophet, the one who had told the king of Israel that there would be no rain for three years. Elijah had been hiding from the king and queen because they were enemies of the prophets. The queen, Jezebel, had many of God's prophets killed! But now the time had come for Elijah to show himself to the king. He told the king to have all the people come to Mt. Carmel and to have the priests of Baal and the other false gods there as well. It was time for a showdown!

There were 450 prophets of Baal there on Mt. Carmel, and 400 prophets of the goddess Asherah. Only one man, Elijah, stood before the people as the prophet of God. He said to them, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Then Elijah proposed a contest. The prophets of Baal would prepare a sacrifice for their god and place it on an altar. But they would light no fire. Elijah would do the same. Both the prophets of Baal and Elijah would pray to their "gods" and ask them to send down fire for the sacrifice. "The god who answers by fire," Elijah said, "he is God."

The people agreed; it was time to learn, once and for all, who was the real God. The prophets of Baal went first.

All morning long the prophets of Baal cried to their god to send fire from heaven for the sacrifice they had prepared. They danced and shouted and pleaded with Baal, but there was no answer from heaven. The people watched the prophets, and Elijah laughed at them. "Shout louder!" he told them. "Maybe he

is sleeping, and must be awakened.” But Elijah knew why Baal wasn’t answering. Elijah knew there was only one true God.

Finally, the prophets of Baal had to stop. It was Elijah’s turn. He had the people repair the Lord’s altar so he could offer a sacrifice. Elijah did not want anyone to doubt God’s answer, so three times he had the people pour four large jars of water over the altar and sacrifice. The altar was soaking wet, and water filled a trench around it. Then Elijah began to pray.

“O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel,” he prayed, “let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things according to your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

As Elijah finished praying, the fire of the Lord came out of the sky! It burned up the wood, the sacrifice, the altar, the dirt around the altar - even the water in the trench! The people fell to the ground. Now they knew who was the true God of Israel - the one and only true God. “The Lord - He is God! The Lord - He is God!” they cried aloud.

There is only one God, and that is the Lord, the God of the Bible. He is the one we praise and worship. Perhaps you have seen idols of false gods or have heard of people who worship Allah or Buddha or another false god. But there is only one true God - the God of Elijah, who answered by fire from heaven. We need to worship Him all our days, and seek to do His will. Let’s pray together, that each of us will know Him and listen to His voice. (*Lead in prayer.*)

Project

Let’s make a picture of Elijah’s altar using the “torn paper” technique. Students should tear out round or square “stone” shapes, and arrange these on a blank piece of construction paper into an altar, using a glue stick. Then, using red paper, they can tear out long thin “tongues of fire” to place at the top of the altar. Plan to make a sample project so students can see what it should look like when they are finished.

Worksheet

There Is Only One God

Look at the pictures below, circle the object when there is only one, and cross out any extras when there are more than one.



GOD IS THREE PERSONS

Matthew 3:13-17

Lesson Aim

To teach that God is three persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:2a - “Worship the Lord with gladness.”

Lesson Background

How would you define the Trinity? One good definition is offered by James R. White, author of *The Forgotten Trinity*: “Within the One Being that is God,” he writes, “there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” His chapter on “What is the Trinity?” is a good one to read if you find the concept difficult or confusing. His definition gives the three foundational truths of the doctrine of the Trinity:

Foundation 1: There is only one God

Foundation 2: There are three divine persons

Foundation 3: The persons are coequal and coeternal

In Quarter 2 of this material we dealt briefly with the concept of the Trinity when we discussed the birth of Christ. We also taught a lesson on Christ’s obedience as seen in His baptism. This lesson, while reviewing parts of both of these previous lessons, really emphasizes the foundational truth of a triune God. You will find that it repeats the phrase “one God - three persons” several times to get the main idea across to your students.

We will be using the symbol of the triangle in several of our activities this week to symbolize the Trinity. If you have some students who are reading, you may wish to draw a triangle on a chalkboard and label the points God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You can then refer to this illustration as you teach and help connect the ideas of the triangle, the Trinity, and the nature of God.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: photocopies of the worksheet; illustrations or flannelgraph of the Bible story (optional); many construction paper triangles of various shapes and colors; plain drawing or construction paper.

Have students locate and circle the triangles on the worksheet and then color the picture. You may also wish to have several objects available with triangular shapes - triangular blocks, a musical triangle, triangle cut-outs, etc. You may also have other shapes, such as circles and squares, to compare them to triangles - but not too many shapes, lest it become confusing.

“We know that a shape is a triangle when it has three sides. Count the sides with me: one, two, three. One triangle, three sides. Sometimes Christians use the triangle to remember the Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God, three persons. Let’s go to our story area so we can have our Bible story and talk more about this.”

In the story area, go over your memory verse as a class. Also, have your students repeat the following with you:

“One God, three persons:
God the Father,
God the Son,
God the Holy Spirit.
One God, three persons.”

Bible Story (from Matthew 3:13-17)

The Bible teaches us that there is only one God. But our God is three persons. There is God the Father, who rules from heaven. There is God the Son, who is Jesus. And there is God the Holy Spirit. All three are one God. One God - three persons. This is a great mystery to us; how can One God be three persons? But then we remember that God isn’t like us. That’s why we praise Him for His greatness.

We see all three persons of the Godhead when Jesus was baptized by His cousin, John. Do you remember that story?

If you are using flannelgraph or an illustration of the story, some of your students may recall the details. If they desire to retell it in their own words, let them do so. Make certain the following facts are retold:

John took Jesus into the water and baptized Him. When Jesus came out of the water, something wonderful happened! God the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove and rested on Jesus. And God the Father spoke from heaven, and said “This is my son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”

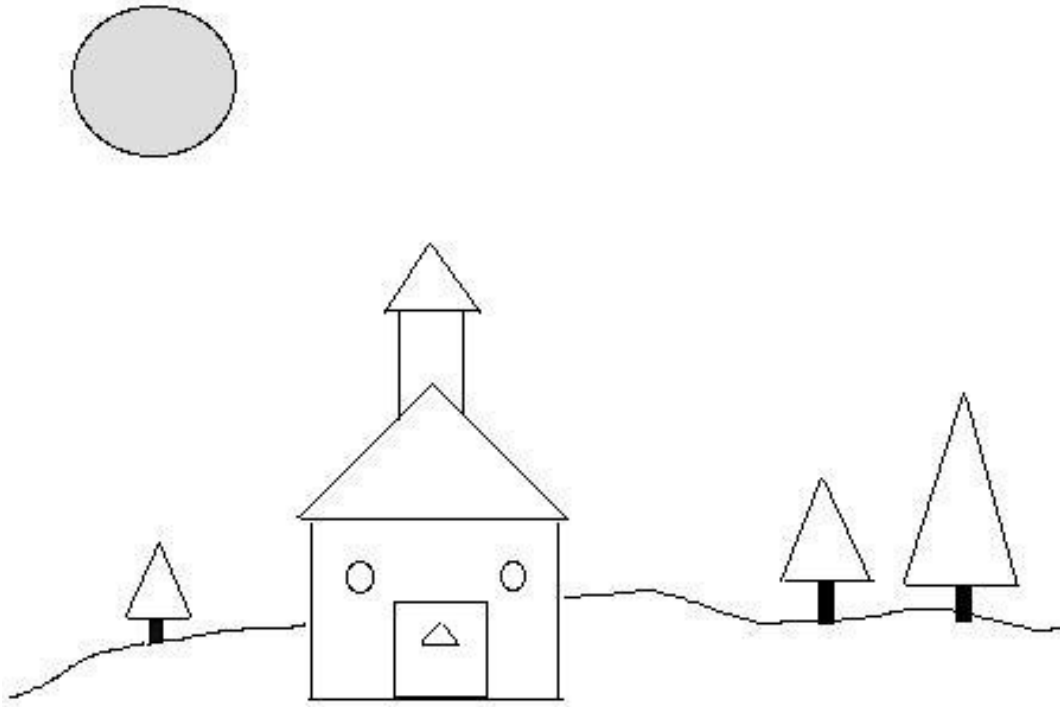
All three persons of the Trinity were there - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God, three persons.

But how can three persons be one God? We call this a mystery, which means it is difficult to understand. But we know that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are always in agreement. They have one plan for the universe, and they work together to accomplish that plan. That plan included Jesus dying on the cross, didn't it? And that plan includes the salvation of every one of God's children.

The Bible says, "How great is God - beyond our understanding!" If we understood everything about God, then He wouldn't be God at all. He would be just like us. I'm glad we have an awesome God. Let's spend some time this morning praising God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (*Lead in prayer.*)

Project

Let's make triangle pictures, or collages. Cut out triangles of various sizes, shapes, colors and angles for the students to arrange into pictures or designs. Students can choose a number of triangles to glue onto a separate piece of paper. They may make realistic pictures (triangles as trees or houses, etc.), or just pretty designs. Have crayons or markers available for students who may wish to add details to their pictures. As they work, show students that the triangle reminds us of the Trinity and help them recite the three persons of the Godhead.



Circle the triangles in the picture. Color the picture.

GOD CAN DO ANYTHING

Exodus 14

Lesson Aim

To show that there is nothing too difficult for God to do.

Memory Verse

Psalms 100:2b - "Come before Him with joyful songs."

Lesson Background

Moses and the people of Israel were caught between "the devil and the deep blue sea!" Pharaoh and his chariots were heading towards them, ready to defeat and enslave them all over again. But there was nowhere to flee; God had brought them to the edge of the Red Sea with no way of crossing the waters. The people, realizing their situation, began to panic: "What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt! ... It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exodus 14:11-12).

Here we see the limitations of man's power; there was no way to cross the water or to fight the superior forces of Pharaoh's army. We see the limitations of man's wisdom; it was a hopeless, doomed situation with no way out. And then, when all seems lost, God makes a way through the very midst of the water and makes certain, once and for all, that the Egyptians will no longer be a threat to His people. The Lord left no doubt that He is able to do anything! It was a lesson the people of Israel should have taken with them into the Promised Land. Unfortunately, they feared once more that the conquest of Canaan would be too difficult for God, and that fear cost them forty years of wandering in the desert.

Your students will have no problem this week believing that God can do anything. They are used to being dependent on the wisdom and strength of others and will take comfort and delight in a heavenly Father who can do all things. Sadly, we adults are the ones who, relying on our own wisdom and experience,

declare situations as hopeless and forget how great our God truly is. As you teach your students this week, allow them to teach you as well as you rejoice in the God who can do all things.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: several pairs of shoes with laces; illustrations or flannelgraph to go with the story (optional); *Prince of Egypt* video (optional) or watercolor paints and paper.

Have a number of lace-up shoes out with their laces untied. As students come in, have them try to “tie the shoes.” Some may have learned this skill while others have not; even those who know how to tie laces will probably have to concentrate. As they work on the shoes, talk about other things that are difficult for preschoolers to do - telling time, riding a two-wheel bike, and turning a cartwheel are a few you might discuss. You might give an example of something that took you a long time to learn - perhaps learning to whistle or blowing bubbles with gum.

“Some things are easy to do on the first try, but other things are harder to learn. We have to practice the harder things. And some things we will never learn how to do because they are too hard for us. For example, no matter how hard I flap my arms, I’m never going to be able to fly! But I know Someone who can do anything; nothing is too difficult for Him! I’ll bet some of you can guess who I’m talking about. Let’s go over to the story area and learn some more.”

Bible Story (from Exodus 14)

God’s people were finally leaving Egypt! For many, many years the Israelites had been slaves to the Egyptian people. Pharaoh refused to let them go, so the Lord had sent ten terrible plagues on the Egyptians. Finally, Pharaoh told Moses, the leader of God’s people, that they could leave the country.

Everyone was so excited! All the Israelite families packed their things, and together they left Egypt. God Himself was going to guide them to their new home in the Promised Land. He went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It was a difficult journey, but the people walked until they came to the edge of the Red Sea, and they camped there.

But when the Israelites looked back toward Egypt, they discovered something terrible - the Egyptians were chasing them! Pharaoh had changed his mind again and was bringing his army, with all their chariots, to capture the people again. Where could the people run? There was no place to go! The Red Sea was blocking their path and they were trapped.

The people saw no way out; how could even God help them now? They cried out to Moses. “Do not be afraid,” Moses told them. “Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

The pillar of fire that had been leading the people suddenly went behind them, coming between the people and the chariots of Egypt. God spoke to Moses and told him to stretch his hand over the sea. With a strong east wind, God drove the sea back and parted the waters, creating a path of dry ground between two walls of water. Now there was a way for the people to escape! The Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground until they got to the other side.

The Egyptians took their horses and their chariots and tried to follow God's people. But as they were making their way along the dry ground, the Lord told Moses to stretch out his hand again so that the water would return to its regular place. Suddenly the walls of water collapsed with the Egyptians caught in the middle. The sea swept them away - every last one of them. Now God's people no longer had to fear the Egyptians and slavery. Now they were finally safe!

Before God parted the Red Sea, the Israelites thought all was lost, didn't they? They were trapped and they could see no way out. But they had forgotten that nothing is too difficult for God. He can do anything! He can make a way through the Red Sea. Later, He would feed them manna, bread from heaven, and give them water from a rock. God's people would see many wonders as they traveled to the Promised Land. They would learn that the Lord is a great God who can do anything!

We worship the same God, don't we? We need to remember that nothing is too difficult for God. When we have problems, we can ask Him to help us. He can do anything! (*Lead in prayer.*)

Activity

Obtain a video copy of the animated movie *Prince of Egypt* and show the last ten minutes to your class (you can begin it just as the children of Israel come to the edge of the Red Sea). This well-made video will give your students some sense of what it must have looked like when God parted the waters so His people could pass safely through to the other side.

Alternate Activity

If you are unable to show the video, you could have students use watercolor paints and paint what they think the Red Sea looked like, either before, during, or after God parted the waters. You may wish to do a sample project first. Don't worry about your artistic talent (or lack thereof!), but use lots of blues and grays and blacks to give the impression of a large body of water. Your students will be inspired to add some of their own "details."

GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING

Psalm 139:1-6, 14-16

Lesson Aim

To show that God knows all about us, and everything else in existence.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:3a - “Know that the Lord is God.”

Lesson Background

There are verses in our Bible that tell us that God knows all the stars in the heavens by their name and that He is aware when even a sparrow falls to the ground. But Psalm 139 makes the omniscience of God personal; God knows all about you and me! He knows every move we make, every word we say, and every thought we think. He is “familiar with all our ways” - all our personality quirks, the things that make us smile or make us wince. He knows our personal shortcomings and our “secret” sins. He knows the heartaches that make us cry in the night when no one else is around. He knows all of these things, and yet He loves us anyway! No wonder David has to say “such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain” (verse 6).

As we teach about our all-wise, all-knowing God this week, we’re going to emphasize God’s knowledge of each of us. Let your students know that each one of them is a special, unique creation of God. Not only does He know all about them, but verses 14-16 tell us that He had us in mind before He created the world - what we would look like, what we would be like, and when we would be alive on the earth. Truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following - seeds, bulbs, acorns of different varieties of plants; or childhood pictures of yourself and other people in your church; white construction paper; red, yellow, black and brown yarn; assorted buttons (optional); glue or glue sticks.

You can choose to focus in on our lesson using two different versions of a guessing game. If you bring in seeds, bulbs and acorns, have your students try to guess what kinds of plants each will become once they are planted. "If you have never seen a bulb like this before, it's hard to imagine that, once it's planted in the ground, it will grow to be a beautiful daffodil like the one in this picture. But that's exactly what will happen! God designed great big oak trees to come from tiny acorns like this one. He also knows what kind of person you will grow to be; in fact, He knew that long before you were born! No one knows you better than God; let's go to the story area to talk more about that."

Another approach is to ask some members of your church to bring in baby or childhood pictures to share with your class (this works best if you ask people that your students recognize - the pastor, the pianist, another Sunday School worker, etc.). Have students guess who they think the baby grew up to be. "We can't always tell from a baby picture what a grown-up is going to look like, can we? Oh, the eyes may be the same color, and maybe even the hair, but people change so much as they grow up! Does anyone know what you will look like when you are grown? That's right - God knows; in fact, you were each part of God's plan long before the world was made. Let's go to our story area so we can talk some more about that."

Bible Story (from Psalm 139:1-6, 14-16)

When children are old enough to learn how to read and write, what happens? They go to school, or perhaps they are homeschooled by their parents. Then the lessons begin. You learn to copy letters and words and how to count to one hundred. Some of you are in preschool and kindergarten and are learning these things already.

Did God ever have to go to school? No - that's a silly question! Why didn't God ever have to go to school? (Take ideas from children - at least one should say "because He already knows everything.") That's right - God knows all things. He knows things you and I can never know no matter how long we go to school. He knows how many stars are in the sky, and even their names. He knows things we cannot see, all the things that happen all over the earth. He notices when even one little bird falls to the ground.

King David was amazed at everything God knew, and he wrote a psalm about it - Psalm 139. Even though God knows everything that is happening in the world, what surprised David the most was that God knew everything about him! Listen as I read some verses from this psalm. (*Read the first six verses out loud.*)

David says God knows when he sits down and when he gets up - every move David makes. He says that God knows the thoughts in his head. He even knows the words that David will say - before he says them! "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me," David says; we can't really understand how God knows us so well.

But God should know us better than anyone else because He is the One who made us. David says we are fearfully and wonderfully made; I think that's true, don't you? But even long, long before you were made, long before you were inside your Mommy's tummy, you were in the mind and heart of God. He knew all about you before you were born! He knew what you would look like, and how your voice would sound,

and all the things that would make you laugh and cry. David says, “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” The Lord even knows how long we will live on this earth.

Nobody knows us like God knows us. He knows everything, even the secrets of our hearts. He knows whether we truly love Him. He knows when we sin. He knows when we are thinking about Him, like right now in Sunday School. And even though we sin, He loves us and provides a way of salvation for us through His Son. Let’s pray that God will help us to know Him, and love and serve Him all the days of our lives. (*Lead in prayer.*)

Project

Students can draw “self-portraits” to remind them that no one knows them like God knows them. Have brown, yellow, black and red yarn available for students to use as hair. Blue, green, brown and black buttons can be glued on the face for eyes. Students may wish to draw only their faces, or perhaps pictures of their entire bodies. For some younger students, you may need to draw the outline of the body or face for them to fill in with eyes, nose, mouth and hair. At the top of each picture, you may write “God knows (name of child)” to help students and parents know the theme of this week’s lesson.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

Psalm 139:7-12

Lesson Aim

To show that God is everywhere and that we are always in His presence.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:3b - "It is He who made us, and we are His."

Lesson Background

The fact that God is omnipresent - that He exists in all places at all times - can be both comforting and unsettling. It is comforting to know that God is with us in all circumstances when we need Him; it is unsettling to know He is with us when we are doing something we shouldn't be doing. Hagar called the Lord "The One who sees me," and that fact gave her the strength to return to a difficult situation and an uncertain future (Genesis 16). It gave Jonah no comfort, however, to learn that even when he was headed in exactly the opposite direction of God's calling, there was no way he could hide from God!

For our students, it will be comforting to know that, when the lights go out at bedtime, God is still present with them. There is no reason to be afraid. But like us, they also need to be reminded that God sees them when they are disobedient; when they tell their parents a lie, God knows what really happened. But even when we sin, God does not desert us. He accompanies us even into "the belly of the fish" when we reap the consequences of our sins. And that's the real blessing of having an omnipresent God; nothing, not even our own sinfulness, can separate us from Him if we are His children! We are always in His presence.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: a small object to hide (such as a doll or stuffed animal); construction paper; glue or glue sticks; old magazines (travel, geography and mission magazines are best).

Play a hide-and-seek game with a small object such as a little doll or stuffed animal. Have your students cover their eyes as you hide the object; don't be too tricky! Allow the student who finds the object to hide it the next time until everyone has had a turn.

"It's fun to play hide-and-seek, isn't it? Sometimes you can find such a good hiding place that everyone has to give up and call for you to come out. We can hide this little doll from each other. Sometimes we can hide ourselves from each other. But we can never hide from God! Let's go to our story area and find out more."

Bible Story (from Psalm 139:7-12)

When it's time for bed and Mommy or Daddy turns off the light, have you ever been scared of the dark? Sometimes the room looks different when the lights are off and we get scared. That's why many children have night lights in their rooms.

Is the room any different when the lights are off? No, it's the same bedroom, isn't it? That's one reason why we shouldn't be afraid. But there's another reason not to be afraid, and that's because we aren't really alone, are we? God is there with us in our bedrooms. God is everywhere!

King David knew this about God. In Psalm 139, he says that there is no place we can go where God is not there. "If I go to the heavens, you are there," he says. "If I make my bed in the depths, you are there." No matter how high we go or how deep we go, God is there.

Then David imagines that he has wings and can fly all the way to where the sun rises in the sky. God is there, too, isn't He? Then he imagines turning around and going in the opposite direction, far, far away to edge of the sea. "Even there your hand will guide me," David says, "your right hand will hold me fast."

There is no place we can go, high or low, east or west, where God is not there. And there is no way for us to hide from God. David knows that even if he were in a completely dark room where there was no light at all, God would still be able to see him. "Even the darkness will not be dark to you," he says, "the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

What a wonderful God He is! No matter where we go, we know that God is always with us. He's here with us in our Sunday School class, isn't He? We can't see Him because He is a Spirit, but His Word tells us He is here. We don't ever have to be afraid that we are all alone because we are always with Him.

And we cannot hide from Him, can we? He always sees what we are doing, when we are doing what we should be doing and when we are *not* doing what we should be doing. God sees us when we are mean, or when we disobey, or when we tell lies. He always knows the truth, doesn't He? We need to ask Him to forgive us when we do something wrong.

God is everywhere! He watches over His children and takes care of them. He hears them immediately when they pray. There's no reason to be afraid of the dark, or anything else. Let's praise Him right now for who He is and ask Him to help us remember that He is everywhere. (*Lead in prayer.*)

Project

Make a classroom collage to remember that God is everywhere. Have students find pictures of different places in the magazines - these could be different countries, but they could also be places with which they are familiar, such as in the house, in the car, outside on the lawn, etc. Help students arrange the pictures in a collage on a piece of construction paper and glue them in place. Leave room on the collage for the words, "God is Everywhere!" Display your artwork in your classroom.

THE ETERNALITY OF GOD

Exodus 3:1-14

Lesson Aim

To show students that God never changes; He always was and always will be.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:3c - “We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.”

Lesson Background

“You haven’t changed a bit!” That’s one compliment most of us enjoy receiving, even if we know it isn’t quite true. Perhaps the most constant theme of our lives is change, and as we age we notice more - changes in ourselves, changes in our children, changes in the hometown where we grew up. And because the world we live in is so fast-paced, no other generation on earth has had to adapt as quickly to change as we have been forced to do. What a comfort in a world of constant change to know that God never varies. He always was, always will be, unchangeably the same throughout all eternity. He is an unmoving Rock to cling to and build upon when the world around us is “shifting sand.”

Your students will be very proud of the changes that have taken place in their lives - how much they’ve grown and how much they can do for themselves now that they are “bigger.” They are also very aware of birthdays, and many will be able to tell you the date of their special day (if not, check with the child’s parents). We will use these familiar subjects and contrast them to God, who was never born, who will never die, and who is always the same great heavenly Father. How privileged we are to be “His people, the sheep of His pasture.”

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: materials for a “birthday” bulletin board or wall (see Focus Activity); flannelgraph or illustration of the Bible story (optional); construction paper; crayons or markers.

For the Focus Activity, have your students help you make a “birthday” bulletin board or wall for your classroom. You can do this in several ways; one suggestion is to have large calendar with the dates marked for each child’s birthday. Or you could have a large birthday cake in the center of the board, and each child could have his or her name and birth date written on separate birthday “balloons” (cut out of construction paper). Example: “Sarah, May 10th.” The balloons can be stapled around the cake or calendar, and will serve as a reminder to sing “Happy Birthday” when a child celebrates.

“Birthdays are fun for the whole family! Children like their birthdays because they get presents and cake. But Moms and Dads enjoy them, too. It reminds them of the day you were born and makes them happy to think how much you’ve grown. You’ve changed a lot since you were a baby. We’re going to talk about that in the story area - and about Someone who was never born, who will never die, and who never changes.”

We are about half-way through Psalm 100, and this would be a good week to recite all the verses they have learned so far this quarter before beginning the Bible story.

Bible Story (from Exodus 3:1-14)

How many birthdays have you had? Some of you have had four birthdays; some of you have had five birthdays! Do any of you remember your very first birthday? Probably not, although you may have seen pictures or video of your first birthday party; we usually don’t remember it because we were too little. When you are a one-year-old you are still a baby. Think how much you’ve changed since then! What are some things you can do now that you couldn’t do when you were a baby? (*Get ideas from students.*) Walking, talking, dressing yourself - those are just a few things that you can do now that babies cannot do.

People are born, they get older, they change, and eventually they die. But there is Someone who was never born. [Note: If one of your students is confused because we talk about Baby Jesus being born, remind him that Jesus lived in heaven with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit before He was born on earth. When the Holy Spirit made a human body for Jesus, then He was born as a baby.] There is Someone who never changes. And there is Someone who will never die. You know who that is, don’t you? God! God always was and always will be. He never had a first birthday; He has always lived.

When God called Moses to be the leader of His people, He appeared to Moses in a burning bush. He told Moses He wanted him to bring the people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. It was a big job, and Moses was afraid. He had lots of questions to ask God; one of the questions was this: “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” After all, the gods of Egypt all had names, like Ra and Hopi and Isis. But our God isn’t like the false Egyptian gods, is He? He answered Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

I AM! That’s a strange name, isn’t it? But God was telling Moses who He really was. He is the only true God, who has always lived. He never had a beginning because He always existed. He will never stop living. He does not grow, or get smarter, or stronger, or change - because He already knows all things and has all power, doesn’t He? He is. He is God forever.

What a great God we serve! I'm so glad that He has always lived and that He always will live. We can trust Him yesterday, today and forever, can't we? Let's praise Him now for being the great "I AM" and for always being there for you and me (*lead in prayer*).

Project

We have a simple project this week, but one your students will enjoy because they are proud of how much they've already grown. Fold a piece of construction or drawing paper in half. On one side, have the students draw pictures of how they looked as babies. On the other side, let them draw how they look today. On the bottom of the paper you may write, "People change . . . but God never changes."

GOD MADE EVERYTHING

Genesis 1

Lesson Aim

To show students that God made everything that exists - our world, our families, and ourselves.

Memory Verse

Psalms 100:4a - "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise."

Lesson Background

"It is He who made us, and we are His." Our memory verse from Lesson 6 reminds us that we were created by God and that we owe everything to Him. One of the main reasons why Creationism is attacked and ridiculed is that the ungodly know that, if they acknowledge a Creator, they must also acknowledge that they owe their existence to that Creator. God would therefore be justified in expecting worship and obedience from humanity, and that is something many are unwilling to give. Therefore, it is easier to claim that the world just "evolved" through time and chance and that man owes nothing to any deity.

For Christians, the knowledge that God created all things, including ourselves, gives us a peace that the evolutionist can never know. It assures us that the world is not here by accident, but that it has a planned beginning and end. It comforts us to know that we are created in the image of God regardless of our appearance or physical limitations, and that all human life is worthy of dignity and respect. And it allows us to enjoy the beauty around us as a gift from our heavenly Father.

This will probably be a familiar story for many of your students. Unlike older children, who get bored with hearing something again, your preschoolers will enjoy this lesson even more because they know how it goes. That's one of the advantages of teaching this age group! If you are using flannelgraph to help tell the story, consider having a student come up to put the stars on the board, or the birds or the fish. Let them participate in this lesson as a part of the wonderful creation that God has made.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: old nature magazines or calendars; paper baking cups (about three per child); pipe cleaners or straws; glue sticks or tape; construction paper; illustrations or flannelgraph for the Bible story (optional).

As your students come into the classroom, have them help you locate pictures of God's wonderful creation from magazines or old calendars (you will use these pictures later in the lesson). It would be nice to have a variety of subjects - wildlife, sunsets, seascapes, and people. Point out the beauty of each picture as the students choose some that appeal to them.

"We live in a beautiful world, don't we? We know that all of these things didn't just happen, but that they were planned and created by God. God made everything! Let's go to our story area and talk about that."

Bible Story (from Genesis 1)

I want everyone to close your eyes - no peeking! Now, can you see me? No. Can you see my Bible? No. What can you see? Nothing. Just darkness, right? *(Have students open their eyes.)* Did you know that long, long ago, that's what our world was like? Nothing! There were no people, no animals, no trees, no flowers, no dirt, no water, no sky. Why, there wasn't even light - everything was dark. There was nothing but our great God. God has always lived, hasn't He, and He is the one who made our world. The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Remember when you closed your eyes and all you could see was darkness? That's all there was until the first day of creation, when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And when God saw the light, He was pleased because it was very good.

On the second day of creation God separated the sky from the waters, and on the third day He created the seas and the dry ground. Then God covered the earth with grass and trees and flowers. He put all kinds of fruit trees and vegetables on the earth. Do you know what He was doing? He was making this world for you and me, getting it ready so we would have lots of good food to eat. On the fourth day God made the sun and the moon and the stars - all the beautiful lights of the sky. On the fifth day, God created the fish that live in the sea and the birds that fly in the air, and He blessed them so they would fill the whole earth. And then, on the sixth day of creation, God made all the animals that live in our world.

But that's not all God created. He also made a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. They were the first people who ever lived. God loved Adam and Eve, and He made them a beautiful garden where they could live and be happy. And when God was finished making all of these things, He saw that everything He had made was very good. So on the seventh day, God rested; He wasn't tired - He was just finished because our wonderful world was complete!

(Show pictures you gathered during the Focus Activity. Point out some of the things God has made - trees, flowers, animals, etc.) God has made everything there is. Who made you? That's right, God made you. He decided who your parents would be, and what color your hair would be, and your eyes, and how tall you will be. God's world reminds us of many of the things we have learned about God. We know He is very wise because He knows how to make things like children, trees, horses and flowers. Not even the smartest person can do that. Only God. And the world reminds us of God's great power. Can you or I make something out of nothing? No. Can I say, "Let there be cake," and suddenly have a chocolate cake without mixing it or baking it first? No. I don't have the power to create things, but God does. Let's thank Him now for who he is and for all the wonderful things He has created *(lead in prayer)*.

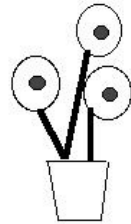
Project

Ask your students if they can make real flowers, like the ones that grow outside. “Only God is wise and powerful enough to make a real flower. But we can make some pretty paper flowers to remind us of the real ones that God has made.”

Pass out three paper baking cups to each student. Have them flatten the baking cups. They can cut notches on the cup for petals, if they wish. Have them cut out construction paper circles for the centers of their “flowers” and glue them in the middle of the baking cups.

For the “stem,” glue or tape your baking cup flower to a straw or pipe cleaner. You may also wish to glue paper “leaves” to the stem.

Note: If you like, you could have students take home their flowers in a “flower pot” - a decorated paper cup. Place clay in the bottom of the cup in which to stick the flowers so they will stand up.



GOD HOLDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER

II Kings 20:1-11

Lesson Aim

To show students that God is active in His creation today, holding our universe together.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100: 4b - "Give thanks to him, and praise his name."

Lesson Background

In his great passage on the supremacy of Christ, Paul states the following in Colossians 1:16-18 - "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

God created our world out of chaos, but He also maintains it so that it does not return to chaos. Clearly, He is the one restraining man from destroying the world through war and pollution. Our world will continue to exist until God decides to bring history to an end. When that day comes, His Son will gather His people from all over the earth and the final war against evil will be waged. The outcome is certain; all creation will finally acknowledge its creator as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Philippians 2:11; Revelation 19:11-16).

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: a clock or preschool “teaching clock” (a toy clock); black construction paper; shiny star stickers or drawing chalk; pictures or flannelgraph to illustrate the story (optional).

For today’s Focus Activity, find a clock or, better still, a “teaching clock,” with hands you can move. Ask your students if any of them can tell time yet (though with the prevalence of digital clocks, students often don’t learn this as early as they did in the past); put the hands at 10 o’clock, 11 o’clock, etc., and help them learn to recognize the hours.

“Our days go by in a regular pattern each day; we get up, eat breakfast, get dressed, go to school or church. Our favorite TV shows come on at the same time of day. We go to bed at the same hour most evenings.

“But what if, suddenly, our day began to go backwards? What if, after breakfast, we went back to bed, slept for eight more hours, got up, played outside, had supper, then lunch, then breakfast again? Wouldn’t that be strange? Time doesn’t work that way, does it? We never repeat a day; we get a new day each morning.

“Who created time? That’s right, God created time and everything else. And He not only created everything, He also holds everything together. He is in charge of everything. Let’s go to our story area to learn more.”

Bible Story (from II Kings 20:1-11)

King Hezekiah was a good king - a king who served both God and God’s people. But one day he became very sick; the doctors did not know how to help him. They began to fear that the king might die.

Isaiah, one of God’s prophets, came to visit King Hezekiah, but he did not have good news. He told Hezekiah to get the kingdom ready for a new king. “This is what the Lord says,” Isaiah told him, “you are going to die; you will not recover.”

Hezekiah was heartbroken; he was still quite young - not even forty years old. And there was so much to be done! As Isaiah left, the king turned his face to the wall and prayed. “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And as he prayed, the king wept bitter tears. He did not want to die so young.

Do you think Isaiah liked giving the king that message? No, I don’t either, but before he was even away from the palace, a new word from God came to Isaiah: “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father, David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you.’”

Isaiah went back to the king with this new message! He told Hezekiah that God had promised to give him fifteen more years of life, and that in three days, the king would be well enough to go up to the temple of the Lord. Then the prophet gave special instructions to the king’s doctors, who were on the way to treat the king’s sickness so he would get better soon.

The king could hardly believe his ears! He wasn't going to die; he was going to live fifteen more years! "What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord in three days?" he asked Isaiah.

Isaiah told the king he would have a sign on the stairway of Ahaz. God would show the king that He was in control of the whole universe and could heal Hezekiah of his illness. Isaiah gave the king a choice; he could ask God to move the shadows on the stairway of Ahaz ahead ten steps or backwards ten steps.

Hezekiah thought for a moment; the shadows would normally go ahead as the sun moved in the sky and the day turned to night. But to have the shadow go back ten steps - that would be a miracle! It would be as if the sun stopped in the sky and time went backward. This was the sign that Hezekiah asked from God.

God did make the shadow go back ten steps on the stairway of Ahaz, and King Hezekiah did live fifteen more years. God can do whatever He wants in the universe because He created it, and He holds it together. He made the sun stop in the middle of the sky one day when Joshua fought against the Amorites (Joshua 10). He is in control of the time, the planets, the weather, our sicknesses - our very lives. He keeps the earth and all of the other planets spinning in space. He causes the sun to shine. And He will go on holding our universe together until the day He decides to stop history and bring His children to live with Him forever. What a great day that will be! Until then, we can trust Him to bring "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night" (Genesis 8:22). Let's praise Him for making our world and for holding all things together (*lead in prayer*).

Project

Let's make "night-time" pictures to remember the God who created the universe and holds it all together. You can get some nice effects if you use black or dark blue construction paper. Students can use chalk or pastels to draw stars and planets in the sky. Or you can use some metallic star stickers (such as teachers use) to make shiny stars and have students draw other details. Tell your students that the next time they are outside after dark, they should look at the sky and think about the God who created the stars and the planets and holds the universe together.

GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD

Luke 15:11-32

Lesson Aim

To show students that God is always good and that He always welcomes His children.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:5a - “For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever.”

Lesson Background

“For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever.” There are many things to which we could point to prove the goodness of God; we could think of His provision for both the just and the unjust and the way He has met our material needs. We could think of the beauty of His creation and agree with Him that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). But the writer of Psalm 100 links God’s goodness with His never-failing love for His people, and what Christian could ever disagree with that? We do not have to consider God’s goodness in some abstract way; we have experienced it for ourselves, in our salvation and in our daily walk with Him.

The parable we will look at today, usually referred to as “the Prodigal Son,” is a favorite among believers because it points to the kind of heavenly Father we all need - one who will love us and welcome us despite our offenses, our rebellion, and our times of going astray. God is so good to us that He meets us on the way back to His fellowship, throws His arms around us, and proclaims us to be His children. Your students will love this story; let your voice and facial expressions convey the different emotions as you tell it: the disappointment of the father, the misery of the young man, and the joy of both as they are reunited once again as father and son.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: illustrations, flannelgraph, or projects from past lessons this quarter (see Focus Activity); pictures or flannelgraph to illustrate this story; construction paper and glue or tape (optional - see Project).

Use the Focus Activity this morning to help students review some of the past lessons from this quarter, many of which will remind them how good our God is. The easiest way to do this is to have pictures or projects from the last several weeks out for the children to see, and then discuss with them the things they remember. If you used flannelgraph, you could have some of the flannelgraph out for different stories, and then have the students match which ones belong with which stories. As you review, point out where we have already seen the goodness of God demonstrated.

“God was so good to His people! He made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea and escape their enemies!”

“God is good, isn’t He, to create such a beautiful world for us to live in.”

“God was good to King Hezekiah; He gave the king fifteen more years of life.”

“We’ve already heard many stories about God’s goodness to His people, but today I have a special story - a story that Jesus told - about our good God, and how He always welcomes His children. Let’s go to the story area to find out more.”

Bible Story (from Luke 15:11-32)

We know that while Jesus was on earth He was a teacher. Did He teach people how to read and write? No; what did He teach? Jesus taught about God, His heavenly father. Jesus wanted people to understand who God is and what He is like. One day He told this story to teach the people that God is always good.

Once there was a father who had two sons. The younger son told his father that he wanted his share of the family money. So the father gave him the money he asked for and the younger son left home. He went to live in a different country that was far, far away. The son thought he was having a fine time because he was out on his own. He didn’t have to obey his father’s rules. He didn’t have to do what was right. He spent his money on foolish and sinful things.

But one day the young man realized he had spent all of his money. And something terrible happened - the food in that country began to run out! The young man was hungry and there was nothing to eat. He had no money, no family, and no friends. Things looked very bad.

He had to get a job, but the only job he could find was a job feeding pigs. It was nasty work; the pigs were smelly and mean. And the young man had hardly enough to live on; he was so hungry, he wished he could eat the pigs’ food! Oh, if only he had done the right thing and stayed with his father! The son was very miserable.

But then he began to think. “My father treats the people who work for him better than this. They have lots to eat. I’ll go back to my father and say, ‘Father, I was wrong; I sinned against heaven and against you. I shouldn’t even be treated like your son anymore, but please let me be just one of your workers.’” So the son left the pigs and went back to his father.

What the son didn't know was that his father missed him very much. He wished his son would come back home. Every now and then the father would look down the road to see if his son was coming. And so, one day, while the son was still quite far from home, the father looked and saw his boy coming! The father was so happy, he ran down the road to greet his son. He threw his arms around him and kissed him!

The son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I know I shouldn't even be called your son." But the father wasn't angry with his son. He was ready to forgive. He called to his workers, "Quick! Bring the best robe, and put it on my son. Put a ring on his fingers and sandals on his feet. Let's have a feast and celebrate! For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost, but now he is found."

Isn't that a wonderful story? Jesus told that story to teach us something about God. God is like the father in that story. He loves us even though we sin. He wants us to come to Him and ask Him to forgive us. God is always good; He always welcomes His children when they come to Him. Let's thank the Lord right now for His great love (*lead in prayer*).

Activity

It's time for an action rhyme! This is a long one, and most of your students probably won't learn the words, but by the second or third time through they'll know some of the words and actions.

Once there was a son who went far from home, (*"walk" fingers down arm*)
Far from his daddy, away.
He spent his money on foolish things (*move hands like you're dealing out money*)
For he did not like to obey (*shake head "no"*)
But then one day his money was spent;
The son had nothing to eat. (*rub tummy*)
He had only rags upon his back (*point to back*)
He had no shoes on his feet. (*point to feet*)
He thought of his dad and he was sad;
He knew where he belonged (*nod head "yes"*)
He said, "I'll return to my father's house (*walk fingers down arm again*)
And tell him I was wrong."
The father saw him coming, and was glad, (*put hand over eyes like you're looking for someone*)
To see his boy safe and sound.
"Put a ring on his finger! Shoes for his feet! (*point to finger, feet*)
My boy who was lost has been found!"

Project

With the longer Bible story and the action rhyme, you probably won't have a lot of time for an art project. If you do have some time, however, you can make some construction paper "rings" with your students. Simply cut out some bands of paper, let your students decorate them, and then glue or tape them into rings they can wear (be sure to make the ring fit loosely so the student can slide it on or off easily).

If you'd like to do something more elaborate, you could have students string beads on yarn or tie knots in different-colored yarns to make rings. Be sure to remind them of the ring the father gave his son to welcome him home and how God welcomes us when we come to Him.

GOD LOVES HIS CHILDREN

Acts 12:1-19

Lesson Aim

To show students that God loves His children and hears and answers their prayers.

Memory Verse

Psalms 100:5b - "His faithfulness continues through all generations."

Lesson Background

The early church was going through a time of intense persecution. Already James, the brother of John, had been arrested and executed for preaching the Gospel. Now Peter was arrested, and there was little reason to hope that his fate would be different from that of James. But God answered the faithful prayers of His people, and Peter was delivered from prison and from death.

Did God love Peter more than James? No, of course not, but His plan for Peter was different from His plan for James. As we talk about God's willingness to hear and answer prayer, let's be sure to remind our students that we pray for God's will to be done. Sometimes He may answer a prayer in a way we don't expect, but that's because He is wiser than we are. We must trust in His love enough to realize that His ways are always best.

This story has a lot of natural humor, and your students will be quick to pick up on that. Enjoy the story with them; if you have been a Christian for awhile, you, too have probably had an experience when you were actually surprised that God answered one of your prayers! This story is a reminder to us all to pray in faith and trust that God loves us and will answer our prayers, in His own time and in the best possible way.

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following items: large piece of poster paper (or use chalkboard); illustrations or flannelgraph for story (optional); construction paper, scissors, tape.

As each child enters the classroom, tell them that you want to pray for them before the lesson. Ask them if there is something that the class could pray about, and write the prayer request on a piece of poster paper or on a chalk or dry-erase board. If you can draw a simple picture by the item you write down, that will help your students remember (some students may need some help coming up with a “request”; make suggestions when you can). If anyone in your church has special prayer needs, you may want to add them to this list as well.

“We are going to pray for these requests this morning before our lesson. God loves His children, and He hears and answers our prayers, doesn’t He? We’re going to talk about that this morning.”

At the story area, you may lead all of the students in prayer or you can have volunteers pray for each other. Also, you will want to explain the memory verse this week.

“God is faithful; He always loves and cares for His children. The word ‘generations’ means parents, children, grandchildren, and so on. God is faithful to us, He is faithful to our parents, and we know He will be faithful to our children. He is such a good God.”

Bible Story (from Acts 12:1-19)

We have spent some time this morning coming to God in prayer and bringing our special needs and requests to Him. We know that God loves His children. That’s why we pray to Him; we know He hears our prayers and always answers in the way that is best for us. Today our Bible story is about a time when God’s people prayed and God answered in a very special way.

After Jesus went back into heaven to be seated on the right hand of His Father, His friends taught the people all the things He had taught them. Peter, Jesus’ disciple, was one of these teachers; he preached the good news about Jesus Christ. Many people heard Peter preach and believed. They became Christians. But not everyone liked what Peter preached. The same wicked men who hated Jesus hated Peter, too. One day King Herod had his soldiers arrest Peter and take him to jail. He planned to have Peter killed!

When the Christians found out that Peter was in jail, they began to pray. The Bible says they prayed without stopping that God would save Peter and bring him out of prison. The Lord heard their prayers. One night Peter was sleeping in the prison. His hands were chained to the hands of two soldiers. There were two more soldiers guarding the door. But an angel of the Lord came into the prison and the entire room was filled with light. The angel woke Peter up and said, “Get up quickly.” The chains fell off Peter’s hands.

Poor Peter didn’t know what was going on! He thought all of this was a dream or a vision. He followed the angel out of the prison and into the streets of the city. Then the angel disappeared, and Peter realized what had happened. “Now I know that the Lord has sent His angel and saved me from Herod,” he thought. He decided to tell the other Christians what had happened, and he went to a house where many of the believers had gathered to pray for him.

Peter knocked at the door, and one of the Christians, a servant girl named Rhoda, went to ask who was there. “It’s me, Peter,” Peter said. Rhoda was so excited to hear Peter’s voice that she forgot to let him

in! She ran into the house and told the others that Peter was at the door. “You’re crazy,” the others told her. But Rhoda insisted it was true. “Perhaps it is his angel,” the believers thought.

Meanwhile, Peter kept knocking at the door. Someone finally opened the door, and they were all amazed to see Peter standing there. Peter told them how God had brought him out of prison. How happy and thankful his friends were to see him safe! They praised God for hearing and answering their prayers.

The Lord hears and answers the prayers of His people because He loves us. He doesn’t always answer our prayers the way we think He should; sometimes He tells us no. But He always does what is best for us. Let’s thank Him right now for being a God who loves His children (*lead in prayer*).

Activity

This is an action rhyme that involves the children as “knockers” while you do the narration. Have your students say “knock, knock, knock” with you each time and use their hands to pretend they’re knocking. In each verse the “knocking” part should get a little louder.

“Knock, knock, knock!” at the house of prayer;
Rhoda goes to the door, and asks “Who’s there?”
“It’s me, Peter,” she hears a voice say,
And Rhoda’s so excited that she runs away.

“Knock, knock, knock!” Peter knocks at the door,
This time a little bit louder than before.
“Peter at the door? No way!” they said.
“Rhoda, we think you’re crazy in the head!”

“Knock, knock, knock!” Peter knocks at the gate;
How much longer will he have to wait?
“Peter, it’s you! It’s true, we see!
God heard our prayers and set you free!”

Project

Have your students make paper “handcuffs” to remember Peter’s chains. This will look very much like the paper chains made at Christmas time, except they’ll be shorter, with two larger “links” on each end, into which the students can slip their hands.

Students will need about six strips of construction paper for the middle part and two larger strips for each cuff. Make sure the cuffs are large enough so their hands can slip easily in and out. After the students tape the chains together, you can use them to reenact the story (if you have time). When you get to the part where Peter’s chains fall off, the children can let their “handcuffs” slide off of their hands and onto the floor.

GOD HATES SIN

Genesis 6

Lesson Aim

To show students that God hates sin and punishes it, but that there is mercy for those who trust in Jesus.

Memory Verse

Recite all the verses of **Psalm 100** together as a class.

Lesson Background

If there is a quintessential Sunday School lesson for young children, it would have to be the story of Noah's Ark. Even people who know next to nothing about the Bible know something about Noah (although they probably don't know as much correct information as they think they do!). It is a common theme of story books, videos, toys, and nursery decor. Children are naturally drawn to this story about a "floating zoo!"

And yet, oddly enough, this is a story about sin and judgment and destruction. Unlike many others who tell this story, we will bring out the reason why God sent a worldwide flood - because He is holy and He hates sin. Thankfully, there is also grace in Genesis 6, as Noah and his family are saved from destruction - not because they are sinless, but because God is merciful to Noah and to the human race. It is a picture of the salvation sinful people can find in Jesus Christ when they repent and come to Him. Our prayer is that all of our students, like Noah, will "find grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: illustrations or flannelgraph for the story (optional); paper plates; brown construction paper, tape; other (see Focus Activity).

Today's is a "your choice" Focus Activity, dependent upon what you have in your classroom. You may want to get out any Noah's Ark toys in your room, if you have them, or puzzles, or color sheets. You may put out animal stencils or stamps or stickers with which the students may play. If you have Sunday School after your morning worship service, you might start out with "animals crackers" for a little snack.

If you do not have any of these resources, you could make a list with your students on the board of some of the animals Noah and his family had with them on board the ark (little pictures next to the things you list are always helpful for your non-readers). [Note: there is both a project and an activity listed after the Bible story; if you choose to spend a long time with the activity, you may want to have a shorter Focus Activity this week.]

"Our Bible story is about Noah's ark today! It's about why God sent the Flood, and how He saved Noah and his family and the ark full of animals. Let's go to our story area to find out more."

Bible Story (from Genesis 6)

Sometimes in church or Sunday School we use the word "holy." We say that God is holy, which means that He is perfect. God is always good. God never does anything that is wrong. God never sins; He always does what is right. Because God is perfect, we say He is holy.

God is holy, but people are not holy. Ever since Adam, the first man, sinned, all the people who have ever lived have been sinners. That includes me. That includes you. That includes every person who has ever lived except our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Because God is holy, He hates sin. It makes Him sad and angry when people do wrong things. There was a time, not long after God had created the world, when people were very wicked. They were so wicked, in fact, that the Bible says all of their thoughts were evil. They did not love God; they didn't even try to obey Him. They were violent people who hurt and killed each other. God gave them many chances to turn away from their sins, but they paid no attention to God at all. Because God is holy, He could not allow their sin to continue. Their wickedness would have to stop.

There was only one man in the whole world who was not wicked. His name was Noah. One day God said to Noah, "The earth is filled with violence. I am going to bring flood waters upon the earth to destroy all life under the heavens. You must make an ark so that you and your family may be safe. You must also bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you." God told Noah how big the ark should be and what he should use to make it.

Noah obeyed God; he and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, worked many years to build the ark. When the work was all finished, God told Noah to bring his wife, his three sons and their wives, and all the animals into the ark. What a sight that must have been! Can you name some of the animals that Noah had in the ark with him? When all the people and animals were safely in the ark, God shut the door. Then it began to rain. It rained for forty days and forty nights, and the whole earth was covered with water. All the wicked people who refused to obey God were destroyed. Only Noah and his family were saved.

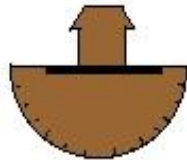
God is holy, so He hates sin. We are not holy, and our sin makes God unhappy. God made a way for Noah and his family to be safe from His punishment. He has made a way for us to be safe from punishment, too, and that way is through His Son, Jesus Christ. That's why we need Jesus as our Savior. Jesus has already taken the punishment for sin, so if we belong to Him, we don't need to be afraid of God's punishment. I'm glad Jesus was willing to come and die on the cross for my sin. Let's thank Him now for coming to earth to be the Savior (*lead in prayer*).

Activity

Let's pretend to be some of the animals that Noah took on the ark with him. You can make some suggestions, like growling lions, hopping bunnies, slithering snakes, giant elephants, dogs, cats - and don't forget the bugs! If you have lots of children you could line them up two by two and reenact the boarding of the ark.

Project

For each student, have a small "hut" shape drawn on brown construction paper for them to cut out (do this before class). Then have each student color the back of a paper plate brown. Fold the plate in half, and then attach the "hut" figure with tape at the fold. Your finished "arks" will even rock back and forth!



JESUS IS GOD

Mark 2:1-12

Lesson Aim

To show students how Jesus demonstrated the power and wisdom of God while He was here on earth.

Memory Verse

Review all of **Psalm 100** with your students.

Lesson Background

We have already discussed in Lesson 3 of this quarter that the Trinity consists of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This last lesson of Quarter 4 makes the connection among the different attributes of God we have studied and shows that these attributes were also demonstrated by Jesus while He was here on earth. The healing of the paralytic shows Christ's goodness, His love, His ability to do anything (including the forgiveness of sin), and His omniscience as He knows what is in the hearts and minds of those around Him. He has the power, authority and wisdom of God; no wonder those who witnessed the miracle said "We have never seen anything like this!"

Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following items: long construction paper; crepe paper streamers; stickers, stamps, crayons or markers; tape; flannelgraph or illustrations of the Bible story (optional).

This week's craft project is a little more involved than most, so we'll start it during the Focus Activity and use it to interest the students in today's story. We're going to make construction paper

“windsocks” (see the illustration of the finished project at the end of the lesson). Give each student a long piece of construction paper; they will be rolling the paper into a cylinder and taping the two longer ends together. Before they do that, however, have your students decorate the construction paper with crayons, markers, stickers, etc. Each windsock will say “Jesus is God”; some of your fives will be able to print this themselves, while younger students will need your help.

“Our windsocks will look pretty when they are hanging up, and they have an important message, too - ‘Jesus is God.’ Our lesson today is about a time when Jesus showed He was God to the people who had come to listen to Him. That was a special day - especially for one man who had a terrible problem. Let’s go to the story area to learn more.”

Bible Story (from Mark 2:1-12)

We’ve been talking in Sunday School about the great God we worship. We’ve said that God can do anything, that He knows everything, that He is always good, and that He loves His children. We know that God has always lived, that He made all things, and that He holds everything together. And we know that God is three persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

That means that Jesus, God’s Son, is God, doesn’t it? That means that all the things we’ve said about God are true of Jesus. He has all power. He knows all things. He is always good and loving.

Our Bible story is about a day when Jesus showed He was all of these things. Jesus was preaching in somebody’s house and many people had come to listen. Others came because they knew Jesus had power to make sick people well, and they wanted Him to heal them, so many people came and squeezed into the house. Soon there wasn’t room for even one more person! There wasn’t even room to stand outside the door!

There were some men who wanted to see Jesus very much. They had a friend who could not walk. They knew that Jesus would be able to heal him. But it would be hard to bring their friend to Jesus because all their friend could do was lie in bed. They decided that four of them would carry their friend on his mat-bed to the house where Jesus was teaching.

But when the man and his four friends got to the house, they couldn’t get inside! There were too many people. How do you think that made them feel? Yes, I think they were very sad. But then they had an idea; they would carry their sick friend to the top of the house. In those days, it was easy to take the tiles off the roof of a house. So the four friends carried the sick man to the top of the house. They took part of the roof off, and then tied ropes on each end of the man’s mat-bed. They lowered the man into the house from the roof, right to where Jesus was teaching!

Jesus stopped speaking. He must have looked deep into the sick man’s heart and soul. The sick man had faith that Jesus could heal him. He must also have been very sad and sorry for his sins because Jesus said to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

When some of the people in the house heard Jesus say that, they were very angry. “How dare Jesus say such a thing!” they thought. “Only God has power to forgive sins!” They didn’t believe that Jesus was God. They didn’t know He had the power to forgive sins.

Even though these men didn’t say anything out loud, Jesus knew what was in their hearts because He is God and knows everything. He said, “Why are you thinking such things? I will show you that the Son

of Man has power to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the sick man and said, “I tell you, get up, take up your mat and go home.” Immediately the man stood up before them all; he took his mat-bed and went home, praising God for His power and goodness. He was very happy, not only because he could walk, but because his sins had been forgiven. He had been born into God’s family that day.

Jesus is God; He has power to forgive sins. He can see into our hearts, and He knows what is there. He can do for you what He did for the sick man; He can forgive your sins and give you a clean heart. Then you will be a part of God’s family, too. I pray that every one of you will come to Jesus for forgiveness for sins. Let’s praise Him right now for His power and His wisdom and His love (*lead in prayer*).

Activity

Have your students stand and act out some of the feelings in this story. They can be happy, as the men who learned that Jesus was in their town, and then sad when they couldn’t get in to see Him. They can act out the happiness of the healed man, the anger of the Pharisees, and then the wonder of the crowd.

Project

Finish the windsocks you began during the Focus Activity by taping the construction paper into a cylinder shape. Have students tape pieces of crepe paper streamers to the bottom of the windsock to catch the breeze. Finally, tie a string at the top so the windsock may be hung. While these paper windsocks will not be weather-proof, they could be hung on a porch or in a child’s bedroom. Or, if you like, you could hang some in your classroom as decorations.

