

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Alongside

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

To print the children's bulletin for ages 3 to 6, copy pages 18 and 19 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. To print the children's bulletin for ages 7 to 12, copy pages 20 and 21 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. **[Important Note: When printing children's bulletins, in the "Print" dialog box, please make sure you have the "Page Scaling" option set to NONE. Do not "fit" or "shrink" to fit the printable area. Feel free to contact us if you have problems printing.]**

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Sermon

In 1965, Bob Butler lost his legs in a land mine explosion in Vietnam. He returned home a war hero. Twenty years later, Butler was working in his garage in a small Arizona town on a hot summer day when he heard a woman's screams coming from a nearby house. He began rolling his wheelchair toward the house, but the dense shrubbery wouldn't allow him access to the back door. So he got out of his chair and started to crawl through the dirt and bushes.

"I had to get there," he later said. "It didn't matter how much it hurt."

When Butler arrived at the pool, he saw a three-year-old girl named Stephanie Hanes lying at the bottom. She had been born without arms and had fallen in the water and couldn't swim. Her mother stood at the edge of the pool screaming frantically.

Butler dove to the bottom of the pool and brought little Stephanie up to the deck. Her face was blue, she had no pulse, and she wasn't breathing. Butler immediately went to work performing CPR to revive her while Stephanie's mother telephoned the fire department. She was told the paramedics were already out on a call. Helplessly, she sobbed and hugged Butler's shoulder.

As Butler continued with his CPR, he calmly reassured her. "Don't worry," he said. "I was her arms to get out of the pool. It'll be okay. I am now her lungs. Together we can make it."

Seconds later, the little girl coughed, regained consciousness, and began to cry. As they all hugged and cried and rejoiced together, the mother asked Butler how he knew it would be okay.

“The truth is, I didn’t know,” he told her. “But when my legs were blown off in the war, I was all alone in a field, and there was no one there to help except a little Vietnamese girl. As she struggled to drag me into her village, she whispered in broken English, ‘It okay. You can live. I be your legs. Together we make it.’ Her kind words brought hope to my soul, and I wanted to do the same for Stephanie.”¹

The words of that little Vietnamese girl are true for all of us. There are times when we cannot stand alone. There are times when we need someone to be our legs or our arms. We all face times like this, and when we do, Paul describes what happens. Reading from The Message Bible:

All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah!
Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside
us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he
brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times
so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for
us.²

God Comes Alongside

The first thing we see here is that when we go through hard times, *God* comes alongside us. He is right there, helping us, comforting us, and strengthening us. And I’m sure that, if we had time, each

one of us here today could tell a story about how we have sensed God's special presence during one of life's difficult times.

God is the ultimate Care-giver. In Him, we find a confidant and companion who comforts us, encourages us, and gives us hope when life looks dark. Today, I want to examine three things that God does when He comes alongside. Of course, I'm sure there are more, but today I want to focus on these three aspects: sharing feelings, listening, and exercising confidentiality.

God Shares Our Feelings

In Psalm 56:8, David describes God as the intimate Lover who knows our every sorrow:

You've kept track of my every toss and turn through the sleepless
nights, each tear entered in your ledger, each ache written in your
book.³

Have you ever felt like nobody understood you? Ever felt like nobody could possibly know what it was like to live your life with your challenges and your hurts? Let me assure you that right now, God knows *exactly* how you're feeling. He knows every sorrow. He feels every ache. He knows every joy. He sees every tear.

In the person of Jesus Christ, God personally took on our human condition, and He has experienced the entire range of human emotion—everything from happiness to despair to frustration

and anger. Whatever you're feeling today, He knows it, and the Bible says God comes right alongside you to share it with you completely. God identifies with all of our feelings.

God Listens

Going hand in hand with this sharing of feelings is the fact that God listens to us. Isaiah 65:24 even says, “*Before* they call out, I’ll answer. *Before* they have finished speaking, I’ll have heard.”

These are the words of God spoken directly through the prophet. God doesn’t just hear us *when* we call out to Him. No, He hears us *before* we call. The Bible also says that when we are too weary to pray, the Spirit prays for us, shaping our tired groans into prayers.

You see, the moment a crisis in our lives squeezes our heart in pain and anguish . . . God *hears* that. He knows what we need before we do. He knows that we’re calling out for Him before we ever speak a word. And, like a mother who hears her newborn baby crying, He *always* answers. God listens to us. He hears you.

God Keeps Secrets

And the third thing God does as He comes alongside us is to offer us His confidentiality, His willingness to keep our secrets. Psalm 44:21 says that God knows the secrets of our hearts. And, in Jeremiah 23, God asks, “Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?”⁴

This might seem like a frightening thought. I'm sure each one of us has done things that we wouldn't want another person to find out about. We have hidden parts of ourselves that we don't like others to see. But we can't hide anything from God. He knows us inside and out. But it's important to remember that He doesn't use that information against us. He keeps our secrets.

Consider the story of the woman caught in adultery found in John 8. Have you ever thought about the actions of Jesus in that story? It's sort of odd, isn't it? This group of men has thrown the woman at the feet of Jesus and asked if they ought to stone her. And then, Jesus just bends down and starts to write in the dirt with his finger.

The Bible doesn't say what Jesus wrote, but it doesn't take too long for all the men to drop their stones and go away. Do you think that their leaving had something to do with what Jesus was writing? Is it possible that Jesus—who had said that anyone who was sinless could cast the first stone—was writing the anonymous, secret sins of the men on the ground?

Imagine what Jesus must have known about all those men! If anyone was in a position to expose them, it was Jesus. He could have gone right down the line and exposed them as hypocrites, but He didn't do that, because *God doesn't do that*. God keeps our secrets. He wants us to know that we're safe with Him. Today. Right now. You're safe with Him.

God Brings Us Alongside Someone Else

So, when we are in need, God is right alongside us, helping us. But He doesn't just leave it at that.

After He has come alongside to help us, Paul says that He then brings *us alongside someone else* who needs comfort and help.

Do you realize what this means? God gives us the opportunity to do for someone else what He has just done for us. In this way, He gives us a little glimpse of what it's like *to be Him*. He gives us a taste of the blessing it is to love others and to share in their sorrows. He allows us the privilege of comforting another person by sharing feelings, listening, and exercising confidentiality.

As we see the supreme example of a Care-giver in God, He also gives us the opportunity to reach out to the people around us who are in need. As the body of Christ, we are all called to be God's hands and feet and voice of hope to the world around us. And when we choose to do that, we will find that the little Vietnamese girl was right: It be okay. Together we make it.

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1. "Haphazard Handoffs," Homiletics, Vol. 19 No. 4, p23-24.
 2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, *The Message*
 3. Psalm 56:8, *The Message*
 4. Jeremiah 23:24, NIV

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

God of hope, Your presence is so comforting. You are the friend of the brokenhearted and the companion of the weary. Come be with us now, and blanket us with Your peace. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come to this place of peace and hope. Come to this place of comfort and encouragement. God is a tender friend who knows you thoroughly and loves you still. He is eager to spend time with you.

He alone is worthy of our praise and adoration. Come now, let us worship Him!

PARTICIPATORY PRAYER *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Dear Lord, You understand everything. You know our every heartache. Yet, we have looked elsewhere for comfort and healing. You hear us when we call. Yet, we have often neglected to speak to You about our hurts. You keep our secrets. Yet, we are often afraid of having our deepest, darkest places exposed. How refreshing it is to be in Your presence! Remind us of Your love today. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

God sees you, He knows you, and He loves you deeply. He will calm You with His love and rejoice over You with singing. Once again, He reminds you that you are forgiven and accepted in His sight. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Is there anything better than being in God's presence? He alone brings assurance and hope. And as we are touched by His Spirit, we have the opportunity to give our own gifts to help others discover the peace they can find in Christ. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Wonderful God, You have heard all of our prayers today, even before we have spoken them to You. You are both a gracious Giver of gifts and a gracious Receiver of the gifts we return. As we offer this money to You, we also consecrate our lives to be used by You for the benefit of others. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Dear Jesus, Friend of wounded hearts, You bring healing to every part of our world. You created us, and You know what it is to *be* one of us. You are acquainted with grief. You are familiar with sorrow. You have experienced every possible human emotion—happiness, frustration, anguish, hope, disappointment, and joy. You have triumphed over the evil in this world.

God of comfort, Your love is pure. It does not shrink back from darkness. It does not turn up its nose in disgust. Though You know us thoroughly, You love us thoroughly. And our hearts are overwhelmed by the reality of such love. You delight in Your creation—rejoicing over us with singing. You long to be reunited with us face to face.

Our Great Helper, the One who comes alongside, You are steadfast and constant. In a world that is shifting sand, You are rock solid. You are strong. You are firm. You are hope and assurance. And that is how we know we can come boldly before You today as Your beloved children, acquainting You with our needs, the needs You are already aware of. **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

Thank You for hearing us, even before we have called on You. May Your peace reign in our hearts, Lord Jesus. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may the God who comes alongside to share your feelings, to listen to your prayers, and to keep your secrets also bring you alongside someone else, so that you can be there for that person just as God has been there for you. Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Illustration

Purpose: To help children understand why God calls us alongside others.

Suggested Props: Baby doll with bottle, legos or building blocks

Good morning, boys and girls. I brought a couple of things to show you today. First of all, I have this. *[Hold up the doll.]* What is this?

That's right. It's a doll. What do we do with dolls? *[Give time for children to answer...play with them, dress them, feed them, etc. Perhaps you can pull out the bottle or other accessories here.]*

We can do lots of fun things with dolls, can't we? What is a doll similar to? It's like a baby, isn't it? *[If you have a small baby in your congregation, you might want to point it out.]* A doll is like a baby, but it's not a real baby, is it?

But when we play with dolls, we can pretend that we have a baby. We can feel like we're little mommies and daddies. We can sort of feel what it's like to dress a baby and hold a baby and feed a baby. We pretend to take care of it, just like it was a real, live baby.

Okay, here's the second thing I have for you today. *[Bring out the legos or building blocks.]* Who has some of these at home? What do you do with these? *[Give time for children to answer...]*

We can make a lot of things with these blocks, can't we? What sorts of things? Can you make a building with them? Can you make a house with them?

Now, if I made a house with these blocks, could I live in it? Would it be a real house? No, it's more like a pretend house. But we can feel what it would be like to make a house or create a building. And sometimes, young boys and girls who play with these kinds of blocks develop a love for building things, and they grow up to be engineers who make *real* houses and buildings.

So, why did I bring these things to show you today? Well, if you listen very carefully, in our Scripture reading, you're going to hear about how God gives us an opportunity to be like Him. How many of you would like to be like God? Me too.

Now, there's a big difference between *being like God* and actually *being God*, right? We know that we can't actually *be God*. There is only *one* God. And one of the things God does is to come right alongside us to help us when we go through bad times in our lives. Isn't that nice? He's right there, just like a best friend, to help us.

But then the Bible says something very important. It says that after God is done helping us through our bad time, He will bring *US* right alongside *SOMEONE ELSE* who is going through a bad time. And in that way, we can help them just like God helped us.

When we do that, it's like playing with our dolls or building things with our blocks. Even though they aren't real babies or real buildings, we get to feel what it would be like to have a real baby or build a real building. And when we help someone else like God helped us, even though we don't turn into God, we get to feel exactly what it's like to be like Him and to help other people.

This week, I want you to watch out for ways that you can help someone else. Maybe you can say hello to someone at school. Or maybe you can include somebody in a game you're playing. Or maybe you can just smile at someone you don't know. Whatever it is, when you help someone else, I want you to also remember that you can always trust God to help you whenever you need it.

Responsive Reading

God, You are a faithful Helper in time of need.

You come alongside us when we go through hard times.

You understand every pain.

You have experienced every sorrow.

You feel every ache.

You suffer when Your children suffer.

You hear us when we call.

You never abandon us.

And You hear us even *before* we call.

You know our every need.

You alone can read the heart. You know us through and through.

You are a gentle and compassionate friend.

You keep our secrets.

You don't keep a record of wrongs.

You are the ultimate Care-giver.

Thank You for helping us to be care-givers like You.

Hymn

Jesus Knows Our Every Feeling

sung to the tune of *Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* (Galilee-Jude)

alternate tune: *In the Cross of Christ, I Glory* (Rathbun)

Jesus knows our ev'ry feeling.
He has borne our every grief.
He stays with us, right beside us
In our trust or unbelief.

And the Father's sure to hear us,
E'en before we call His name.
Whether near or far from heaven,
He will answer just the same.

And the Spirit keeps our secrets.
In His confidence, we rest.
Like a newborn sleeping soundly,
Sheltered in its mother's breast.

May we learn to love as You do,
Helping others without fear.
Sharing feelings, keeping secrets,
With a sympathetic ear.

Words by Kelley Lorencin

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Song Suggestions

Hymns

Come down, O Love divine (Down Ampney)

Words and music by Richard Littledale and Ralph Vaughn Williams

Jesus, lover of my soul (Martyn)

Words and music by Charles Wesley and Simeon Marsh

There is a balm in Gilead

Traditional Negro spiritual

Praise Songs

Draw me close

Words and music by Kelly Carpenter

© 1994 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Gentle rain

Words and music by Elton Smith, Larry Holder, and Peter Gringhuis

© 2009 Peter Gringhuis, Elton Smith, and Lawrence Keith Holder

Jesus, lover of my soul

Words and music by Daniel Grul, John Ezzy, and Steve McPherson

© 1992 Hillsong Publishing

Ten thousand angels

Words and music by Lynn Cooper

© 1997 Lynn Cooper

The shelter of your wings

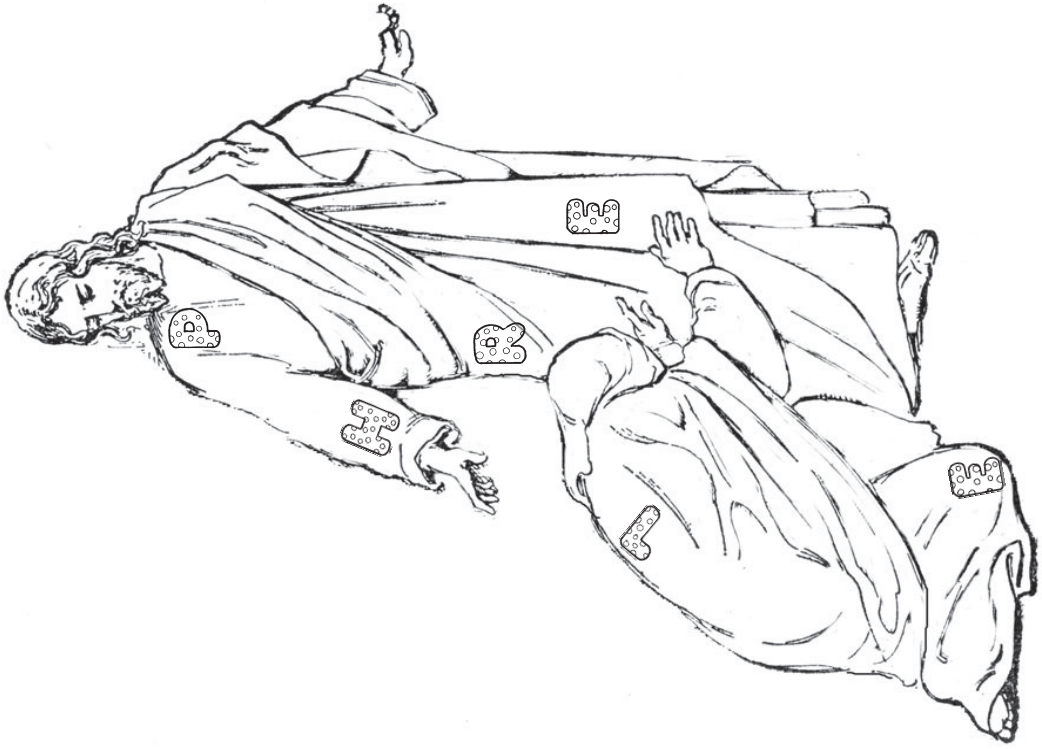
Words and music by Elton Smith and Gilberto Barreto

© 1997 Elton Smith and Gilberto Barreto

God helps us when we need help.

Circle the hidden letters in the picture below.

HELPER



Wee Worship

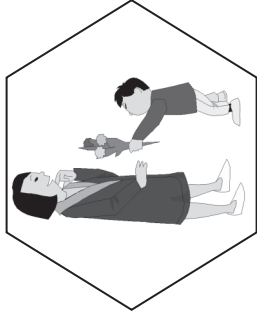
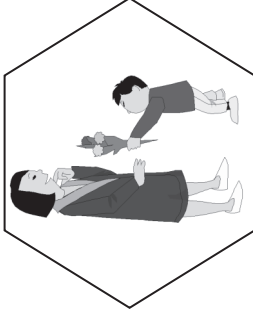
ages 3 to 6 2 Corinthians 1:3-4



God Is Our Helper

God comforts us when we feel bad.

Draw a line to match the shapes below.



God's hand helps us when we're in trouble.

God helped David fight a giant. Count the hands in the picture. Circle the correct number below.



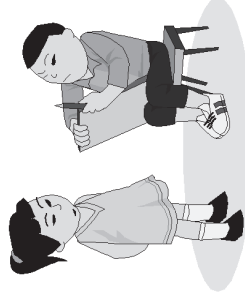
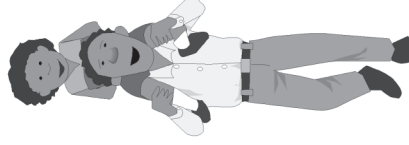
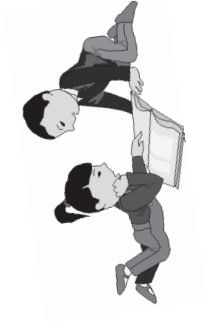
3

4

5

God comes alongside us.

"Alongside" means to be next to someone. Circle the pictures below where people are next to each other.



Find the set of letters that will complete each word.

God is our _____ and _____

present h_____ in _____

P **46:1**



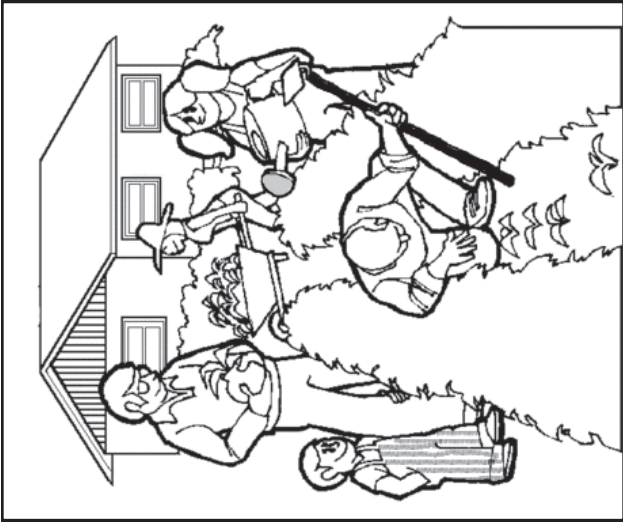
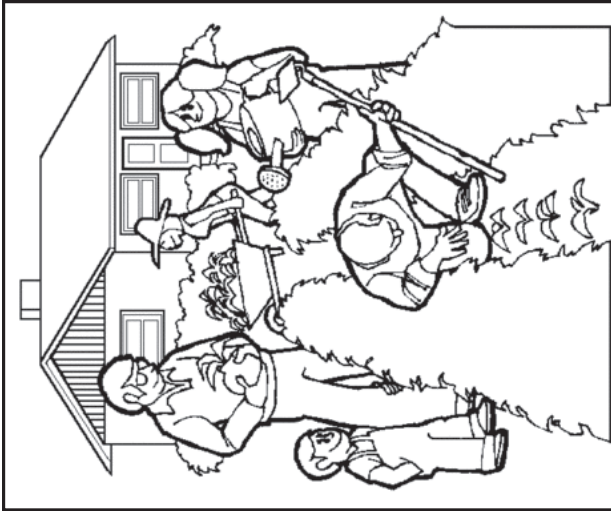
Paul said God does something very specific
when we need help

Use the musical note key to find out what God does.



God helps us by making our gardens grow.

Find and circle the seven changes in the picture below.



God helps us to be helpers, too.

First, write all the words numbered “1” in order. After you have completed all the “1” words, return to the beginning of the chart and write all the “2” words in order. Always return to the top of the chart to begin the next number.

1 God	3 those	2 troubles	1 comforts	5 God
2 so	1 us	4 comfort	3 in	2 that
1 in	4 ourselves	3 any	1 all	4 have
3 trouble	4 received	2 can	3 with	
1 our	2 comfort	4 from	3 the	



“

_____”