

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Journey

Deuteronomy 8:1-5

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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 the fall of 1621, pilgrims from Plymouth, MA, joined with the Wampanoag Indians for a three-day harvest celebration of feasting and prayer. In other words, they held the first Thanksgiving. Almost four hundred years later, it's something that we look back on and idealize, but sometimes I wonder if that time of celebration and thanksgiving must have felt a little odd to those first pilgrims.

They had set out from England in search of the New World—their Promised Land—a place where they could have freedom for themselves and their children. But less than a year after landing in Massachusetts, half of their original population was dead. They had arrived in America with low food supplies and had faced a harsh winter, where the colony was decimated by famine and disease.

But in the spring of 1621, the Wampanoag Indians took the pilgrim settlers under their wing. They showed them how to plant, harvest, and store food so that, hopefully, the coming winter wouldn't wipe out the rest of them. And as they harvested their fall crops and realized that there would be food for the harsh winter months ahead, Governor William Bradford decreed that a three-day feast be held.

By the time they sat down at that food-laden table to eat the first Thanksgiving feast, I'm sure those pilgrims felt like they had traveled through the wilderness. I'm sure they felt like they had a lot in common with the Israelites from our Scripture reading today. Maybe we do, too.

When Life is a Desert

Have you ever felt like life is a desert? Ever felt like you're wandering around in the wilderness? Maybe you have a vague idea of the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey . . . but instead of enjoying a vacation in a land of paradise, you feel like your days are filled with hard labor in a land of grit and dirt and heat? The fact is that our life on this earth is a journey. And many times, it feels like a journey in the wilderness.

But before we start feeling hopeless, let's look a little closer at the passage from Deuteronomy. What really happened in the wilderness? Looking at verses 3 and 4, we see that every day the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness, God provided for their needs. Can you imagine this huge group of people in the desert? Can you imagine the kinds of needs they would have?

They were hungry. And God rained down bread from the sky.

They were thirsty. And God caused fresh water to gush out from a rock.

The desert is an environment of extreme temperatures. During the day, they needed shade. And God lived with them as a cloud.

And when the sun went down and the temperature dropped, they needed warmth at night. And God became a pillar of fire.

We might think that the Israelites should be pitied for spending all this time in the wilderness. But what did they need that God did not provide? Every day, He cared for their needs. And that means that no matter what *your* needs are today, God is able and willing to provide for you too. He

has a million ways to provide for your needs . . . ways that you can't even imagine. Think that's a stretch? Well, I bet the Israelites never thought they'd see water come out of a rock. Our God works in wonderful and surprising ways. Give Him the chance to surprise you, by trusting Him to provide for your needs in a way you can't imagine.

God Stays Right Beside Us

Even more exciting to me than the fact that God provided for their needs is the fact that He stayed with them during the journey, right beside them all along the way. Verse two from our Scripture reading says, "Remember how the Lord God *led you all the way* in the desert these forty years." God didn't throw the Israelites out in the wilderness like naughty children who've been given a time-out. He didn't put them there and leave them. He was their constant companion. Cloud by day. Fire by night.

And He stays right beside us in this life, too. I'm glad He does, because it's not always easy. In our journey to God's Promised Land, there are lofty mountains and wilderness valleys. And when we find a great mountain peak, when we're at a high point, we want to stay right there. But *movement* is the defining characteristic of a journey. If we stay in one place for too long, we get stagnant. But with God, we're always on the move. That might be disappointing when we want to stay on the mountain, but it's *sooo* encouraging when we're in the valley. Because, when we're facing a crisis in

life, when we're facing one of life's dry times, it's easy to get swallowed up in it and think that things will never change. We quickly forget what the mountain felt like.

Mark Lowry, a popular Christian comedian, said once that one of his favorite Bible verses is, "And it came to pass . . ."

It came to pass. It didn't come to stay. It came to pass! No matter where you're at in your journey in life, hold on, and it will pass. Are you in the wilderness right now? Hold on, it'll pass. Are you on the mountain right now? *[Pause and smile.]* **Hold on, it'll pass!** The point is not where we are in life, but who is with us. And God is always right beside us, caring for us in this journey. He is the one part of our journey that will never change, no matter where we are, no matter what happens to us.

Remember the Destination

And the last thought I want to leave you with today is to remember where we're headed. If you feel like you're in the wilderness right now, even though God is there with you, you won't be there forever! Just as the Israelites were headed to the Promised Land, we're headed to the Promised Land as well. The land where there will be no more suffering, no more pain, and no more tears. That ultimate freedom in God's presence is the destination, and God knows just how to get us there. His map is perfect. We should never forget that.

I read a story once about a girl whose father had been diagnosed with Lou Gherig's disease, a disease that eventually leaves the afflicted person with no muscle control. The girl said that, one day, a few weeks after the diagnosis, she was sitting on the kitchen counter at her parent's house, watching her dad make a sandwich. And it occurred to her that it might not be very long before he couldn't hold a knife any more or even stand up. And before she knew what she was doing, she blurted out this question: "Dad, are you scared?"

She said that she immediately wished she could have taken it back because, she thought, *That was a dumb question! Are you scared?* But then, she said her dad looked right at her and, without missing a beat, said, "God knows what He's doing."

God knows what He's doing. The girl went on to say that that day has almost become like a dividing wall in her life, separating everything that came before and everything that came after. She said the idea that—even when we're facing something awful—we could have faith that "God knows what He's doing" has totally revolutionized her life.

God Knows What He's Doing

And I agree. We should *never* forget that God knows what He's doing. Even when we can't see it or understand it, we can *trust* it. The God who knows the end from the beginning is right beside us, and He knows what He's doing.

In Isaiah chapter 43, verse 2, God says this about the wilderness journey: “When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you**; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” Notice that we’re passing through. We may go through the rivers and the fire, but they will not destroy us. We’re passing through because God Himself is with us.

So no matter where you are in life today, remember that God provides for our needs in every situation—on the mountain and in the wilderness—and He is leading all of us to the ultimate Promised Land: a life spent forever in His presence. With such a wonderful Caregiver, we should be able to have Thanksgiving every day of the year.

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

God, our Perfect Provider, we welcome You into our church and our lives today. Descend on this place and fill it with Your Spirit. Bring the Spirit of peace, the Spirit of joy, the Spirit of love. You alone can provide for our every need. And our greatest need is to rest in Your presence this day.

Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Are you hungry? The Bread of Life is here. Are you thirsty? The Living Water is here. Are you living in darkness? The Sun of Righteousness is here. Are you lonely? The Comforter is here. Whatever your need, our God is able and willing to provide for you. Come, let us worship the One who journeys with us and meets our needs.

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

God of the journey, You are the Great Provider. You are the Source of Life and the Fountain of Goodness. You are patient, kind, merciful, and compassionate. Your love is everlasting and Your goodness stretches out into the heavens. Remind us of Your forgiveness. Refresh us with Your presence. Reveal Your gracious character once again, so we may reflect Your love. Amen.

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

The God of the journey has promised to be with us: on the mountain, in the valley; when we're nice, when we're naughty; when there is sorrow, when there is joy. There is nowhere we can go to get away from His Spirit. Let us return to Him, for He has forgiven all our sins. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Gifts for the journey. That's what the wise men brought to Mary and Joseph when they came to worship the newborn King. And God also calls us to participate in this great cycle of giving. As He gives us gifts for our journey, He also gives us the opportunity to give gifts to bless others on their journey. May we give generously today, as God has given to us. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for the assurance that You will provide for our every need. These gifts are but a small token of our appreciation for the many ways You care for us. Thank You for being concerned about every area of our lives. Thank You for making us ever more generous as You restore us in Your image. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Wayfaring God, who is like You? What other companion in life could be so true? So faithful? So steadfast? No matter the environment we encounter on the journey, You provide. You anticipate every need. You are familiar with every desire. Your gifts, we find, are far better than anything we can imagine. They meet our needs. They exceed our expectations.

You exceed every expectation we have for a “God of the universe.” A god made in our image could never live up to the truth about You we see in Jesus: You are gracious, compassionate, generous, funny, humble, merciful, passionate, and incredibly resourceful. Your goodness endures forever, and You are ablaze with beauty as You rule on the throne of the universe and the throne of our hearts.

Thank You for Your care and protection. Thank You for Your sympathetic ear that hears us even before we call out to You. Thank You for hearing us—each of us—this morning as we pray.

[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]

Because we know You, we trust that You are more than able to meet any need we have today and every need we have in the future. When we are in the valley, remind us of the mountain. And when we are on the mountain, strengthen us for the valley. No matter where we journey, our greatest comfort in this life is that You are right beside us. Thank You for being such a good God.

Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may You revel in the journey with your God! As you stand on the mountain with Him, enjoy the sweeping views and the breeze on your face. And as you head down into the valley with Him, enjoy the beautiful intimacy that comes from going through the fire together. And may God remind you that each day brings you closer to that time when you will finally meet face to face.

Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Conversation/ Illustration

Purpose: To help children understand that God provides for us on the journey of life.

Suggested Props: suitcase, bread, water, flashlight, sunscreen, matches

Good morning, boys and girls.

I brought a suitcase with me today. What do we use a suitcase for?

That's right, we use a suitcase when we're going to go on a trip. So, this morning, let's pretend that we're going on a long trip, a journey. I've brought some things in my suitcase that we might need.

[As you pull out each item, ask them what it is and why you need it for a long trip.]

Bread: We need this because if we're going to take a long trip, we will get hungry and we need something to eat.

Water: We need this because, if we're going to take a long trip, we will get thirsty and we need something to drink. Especially if we're going someplace where it's hot.

Sunscreen: Also, if we're going someplace where it's hot and we'll be out under the sun, this will protect our skin from getting burned. It's a way to shade us from the heat.

Matches: Have you ever gone camping? We use matches to help us get a fire started, so we can be warm at night. And also, we can use the fire to cook food.

Flashlight: When we go on a long journey, it will get dark at night. This can help us see where we're going.

In today's sermon, the pastor is going to talk about how all of us are on a journey. What kind of journey do you think we're on right now?

We're on a journey through life. Life is kind of like taking a journey, isn't it? And on our journey through life, we need all these things we've talked about this morning. Boys and girls, did you know the Bible says that God Himself becomes all these things we need on our journey?

[Hold up each item again as you explain.]

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." And when the Israelites were journeying through the wilderness, God made bread appear on the ground like dew every morning—just for them.

Jesus said, "I am the living water." And when the Israelites were travelling through the wilderness, God made water come out of the rocks—just for them.

Also, when the Israelites were in the desert, they had the sun beating down on their heads all day long. The desert is a very hot place! And the Bible says that God was a cloud that covered them during the day, to shelter them from the heat of the sun.

But at night in the desert, when the sun goes down, it gets very, *very* cold! So cold, in fact, that you could freeze to death if you didn't have the right clothing. So the Bible says that God was a pillar of fire at night, to keep them warm.

And Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." No matter *where* we are, boys and girls, we never have to be afraid, because Jesus will help us see where we are going.

So, we have everything we need for our long journey, right? Almost . . .

We're missing one thing. Do you know what it is?

How many of you would like to take a long, long trip all by yourself?

I wouldn't. It's always much more fun to go on a journey when you have someone to go with you, and do you know what? The Bible says that God is *also* our companion on this journey. He is always right beside us, no matter what. He loves us, and He loves to travel with us.

So, boys and girls, remember that no matter where you go in life, God is providing for everything you need, and He's also right beside you all the time.

Responsive Reading

based on Isaiah 43:1-5

This is what the Lord says—He who created and formed You: “Fear not.”

God, You are always calming our fears.

“I have called You by Your name. You are mine.”

How good it feels to belong to You, oh God.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”

You are the One who parted the Red Sea.

“When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.”

All the winds and the waves obey You!

“When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.”

You are the Sun of Righteousness, the fire we long to live in.

“You are precious in my sight.”

Your love is everlasting.

“You are honored in my sight.”

You are worthy to be praised!

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.”

God, You are always calming our fears. We can safely go anywhere with You!

Hymn

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

sung to the tune of *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* (Nettleton)

alternate tune: *Love Divine* (Beecher)

Come, O Fount of every blessing! Tune my heart to sing Your grace.
Streams of mercy, ever flowing, call for songs of loudest praise!
Teach me always to adore You, as the angels do above,
While the thought of endless glory fills my heart with joy and love!

Here I am to bow before You, at Your feet lay down my sin.
It's Your goodness that is calling me to come back home again.
Lord, You sought me when a stranger, wandering far from Your embrace,
And to rescue me from danger, came to show the Father's grace.

Oh, how much I owe to You, Lord, for the pain You have endured
To reveal the Truth of Heaven, which has all my sickness cured.
May I always sing Your praises! May I always speak Your love!
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it! Seal it for Your courts above!

Words by Robert Robinson and Kelley Lorencin
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Song Suggestions

Hymns

All the way (Lowry)

Words and music by Fanny J. Crosby and Robert Lowry

Anywhere with Jesus

Words and music by Jessie H. Brown and Daniel B. Towner

He hideth my soul

Words and music by Fanny J. Crosby and William J. Kirkpatrick

Praise Songs

Above all else

Words and music by Vicky Beeching

© 2001 Vineyard Songs

All that I need

Words and music by Vicky Beeching

© 2000 Vineyard Songs

Blessed be Your name

Words and music by Matt Redman and Beth Redman

© 2002 ThankYou Music

God will make a way

Words and music by Don Moen

© 1990 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

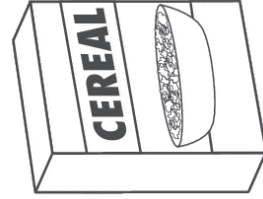
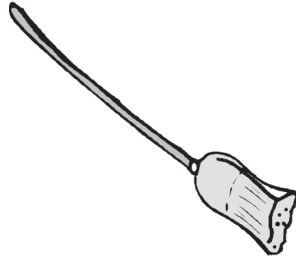
Jesus, lover of my soul

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

© 1992 Hillsong Publishing

God gives food to the hungry.

Circle the pictures of food below.



Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

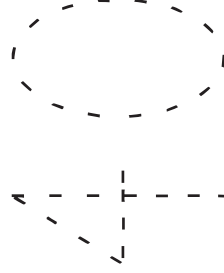
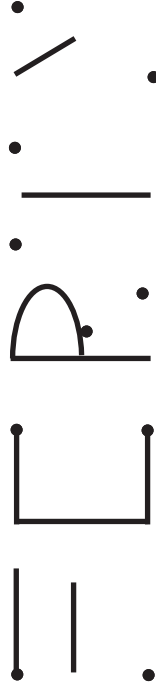
Deuteronomy 8:1-5



God Leads Us

God led the Israelites through the wilderness.

Connect the dots with straight lines to see how many years the Lord led the Israelites in the desert. Trace the numbers.



God takes care of us.

In the desert, the shoes of the Israelites never wore out. Circle the seven hidden shoes in the picture.

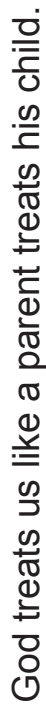


We are God's children.

The Bible says God disciplines His children just like a father disciplines his own son. Trace the picture and color.



God loves us



Find the set of letters that will complete each word.

raht sipisen uoy Ldr do

**Know then in your _ _ _ _ _
that as a man**

Index

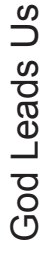
his son, so the _____ G _____ disciplines _____.



Worship

ages 7 to 12

Deuteronomy 8:1-5

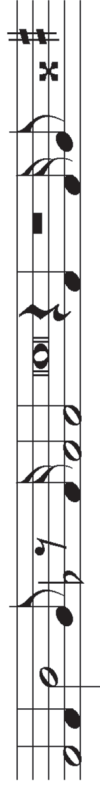


God asked the Israelites to do something specific that would help them obey Him in the future.

Use the musical note key to find out what God asked them to do.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



God takes care of us in every situation.

Find out how God took care of the Israelites in the desert. First, write all the words numbered “1” in order. After you have completed the “1” words, return to the top 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 Your | 3 feet | 2 wear | 1 clothes | 2 out |
| 1 did | 4 during | 3 did | 2 and | 4 these |
| 4 forty | 3 not | 4 years | 2 your | 3 swell |



“ _____

 _____ ”



Obedying God brings us blessings.

Find the correct path through the maze and read God’s words.



own.

today.

no

giving

you

wrong

I'm

Make

sure

you

follow

command

every

Then

when

right

law

you

land

the

and

burden

will

enter

you

so

hope

in

teach

understand

me

abide

blessed

want

I

in

carefully

your

as

take

it

