



compelling worship

A RESOURCE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST CORE VALUES

It is a joy to introduce a new worship resource centered around the **BIC Core Values**, created with intergenerational discipleship as both its foundation and its goal. This resource is meant to support our churches as we learn to worship together across generations—equipping pastors, ministry leaders, and congregations to integrate children, youth, adults, and elders into shared rhythms of spiritual formation.

What do we mean by “intergenerational”?

Intergenerational ministry is more than having people of different ages in the same room. It’s about cultivating a culture where generations are in relationship with one another, actively discipling and being disciplined through worship, conversation, shared stories, and mutual faith experiences.

It’s not a model or a program; it’s a posture of ministry—one that sees every person, from the youngest child to the eldest saint, as a full participant in the life of the church. Our churches thrive not when generations are siloed, but when they are woven together in love and faith.

We recognize that while we may greatly desire for these types of connections to be characteristic of our churches, the surrounding culture and the normalization of age segregation may not allow for that without our intentional steps to make it happen. Our hope is that this worship resource will give you the tools with which to build an intergenerational community that celebrates and experiences together the core values of the Brethren in Christ.

Since not every resource has explicit instructions for including all ages in worship, we also wanted to provide these practices that can be employed in a variety of contexts and allow for more inclusion and flexibility in the resources we’ve put together for your use.

The hope of this team is that these tools spark joy, provoke thought, and inspire relationship—that they become a starting point for worship that reflects the full beauty of the Body of Christ across all ages and stages.

Christina Embree
ReFocus Ministry

Practical Ways to Include All Ages in Worship

Each generation brings gifts and insights that strengthen the whole Body. Below are five practical ways to intentionally welcome each age group into meaningful participation:

Children

1. **Create a worship activity bin, bag, or bulletin** connected to the core value, with coloring sheets, word searches, or prayer prompts.
2. **Assign a worship role** (e.g., lighting a candle, helping with offering, passing out communion elements) for active participation in the worship service.
3. **Use concrete visuals or symbols** during sermons and liturgy that young children can identify and engage with.
4. **Have a “children’s table” in the sanctuary** with quiet art materials and guided questions related to the worship theme.
5. **Invite children to participate in prayer**—whether by offering a short prayer, repeating a line, or adding their thoughts in a shared time.

Youth

1. **Let youth lead worship songs or assist with tech/media support.** Teens are often more confident when given leadership behind the scenes or on stage.
2. **Use sermon-based small group discussions** with age-appropriate questions after the service or midweek.
3. **Pair youth with adult mentors** for service roles (ushering, greeting, praying, setup/cleanup) or community service roles (food bank, lawncare, community garden).
4. **Host intergenerational worship planning teams** where youth voices shape songs, visuals, and readings.
5. **Feature youth testimonies and Scripture readings** regularly in services to highlight their lived faith.

Elders / Older Adults

1. **Invite elders to share stories of faith** related to the core value as part of worship or group gatherings. BONUS: Have younger children interview these older saints and have the youth or young adults video and edit these interviews. Share clips on a regular basis before and after the service or as part of sermon illustrations.
2. **Include older adults in children and youth ministries** as mentors, prayer partners, or guest speakers.
3. **Honor life milestones publicly** (birthdays, anniversaries, new seasons) to celebrate their continued presence.
4. **Host prayer and encouragement teams** led by elders who write notes or call church members weekly. Take communion to anyone who is unable to attend in person.
5. **Invite elders to lead traditional hymns or prayers** that connect the church to its history and heritage.

Worship through *Prayer*

My desire for the prayer section of this resource is to be an invitation to journey together in prayer as one body, rooted in Christ and shaped by the values that define who we are. Prayer has always been central to our life as a church—not only as a personal discipline, but also as a shared practice that forms us into a unified, faithful community. This guide is designed to help individuals, leaders, and congregations of all shapes, ages, and sizes, pray with a common heart, aligning our voices with God's purposes and with one another.

As you use this guide, remember that unity does not mean uniformity. We come to prayer from different places, cultures, and experiences, yet we are bound together by our shared commitment to Jesus Christ. This guide encourages us to listen for God together, to intercede for one another, and to seek the Spirit's work among us as a people called to love, serve, witness, and worship.

Each section of the guide is grounded in the Brethren in Christ core values, which serve as both anchors and signposts for our prayers:

- **Christ-Centered:** We begin and end with Jesus, seeking to know Him more deeply and to reflect His character in our lives.
- **Bible-Centered:** Scripture shapes our prayers, teaching us to listen attentively and respond faithfully to God's Word.
- **Worship:** Our prayers are acts of praise, gratitude, and reverence, acknowledging God's holiness and grace.
- **Discipleship:** We ask God to form us into committed followers of Christ, growing in obedience and love.
- **Belonging to the Community of Faith:** We pray not in isolation, but as members of a shared body, carrying one another's joys and burdens.
- **Mission:** We intercede for God's work locally and globally, asking to be sent as faithful witnesses of the gospel.
- **Servanthood:** We pray to be shaped by Christ's humility, ready to serve others in love.
- **Peacemaking:** We lift up a broken world, praying for reconciliation, justice, and the courage to live as agents of peace.
- **Simplicity:** Our prayers invite us to trust God more deeply, loosening our grip on excess and distraction.
- **Integrity:** We seek lives of honesty and faithfulness, asking God to align our words, actions, and hearts.

My prayer is that you use this resource in many ways – whether you are just pulling ideas from it or are reading prayers that have already been written – I pray it draws you into deeper unity with God, with the Brethren in Christ family, and with the Kingdom of God. As we pray together, may we be transformed and may our shared prayers bear fruit in lives marked by love, peace, and faithful obedience.

Caleb Nowell

Paramount BIC, Allegheny Conference

Worship through *Music*

*“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts”
(Colossians 3:16)*

We all are being shaped from the places we live and work, the things we read, listen to and watch, to the people we spend time with. Our worship gatherings shape us, too. The prayers we pray, the Scripture we hear, and the songs we sing all form us in particular ways.

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly...

How are we currently being shaped in our worship services? Do our songs express the breadth, depth, and power of the message of Christ? The Brethren in Christ Church has identified ten core values that communicate the fullness of this message. Ought not our songs also reflect this fullness? This collection of songs is an effort to help congregations thoroughly express our core values in worship, giving space for the message of Christ to dwell richly in us. Some are already favorites in BIC U.S. churches, while others are newly composed for the BIC.

...as you teach and admonish one another...

We sing to the Lord, but we also teach and spur one another on in our faith through our worship songs. This teaching and correcting component of worship songs can be overlooked, but we can probably all agree that we remember far more song lyrics than any sermon we have heard in our lifetime. It is time that we add songs that teach us to serve compassionately, pursue peace, and live simply in addition to those that we are already singing.

...through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit...

Though we want to facilitate a shared identity among BIC U.S. congregations, we recognize that each congregational context is unique. Indeed, diverse expressions of worship are good because we see the glory of God in our diversity (Revelation 21:26). Therefore, effort was made to include a variety of song styles for each core value.¹ Naturally, this resource cannot cover all the wonderfully diverse worshipping Church, but it can provide a starting point. Not every song will fit your congregation, but they may serve as catalysts for creativity and imagination within your own context.

...singing to God with gratitude in your hearts”

What a good gift God has given us, that in worship we may lift our voices together in song! Thanks be to God, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

For application in worship services, each featured song includes:²

1. Song perspective: we/us language (corporate) or I/me language (personal)
2. Optimal key(s) for congregational use
3. Licensing coverage: churches may use songs in public domain or labeled “Used with permission” at any time. Other songs require an annually paid license from an appropriate licensing organization.
4. Lyrics, chords, and lead sheets
5. Recordings to provide ideas for use in various contexts

Bryan Leaman

Lancaster BIC, Atlantic Conference

¹We acknowledge that some congregations avoid certain songwriters or organizations with whom there are negative public associations. We hope that all church leaders use prayerful discernment in choosing material for their congregations.

²To access song recordings, visit the BIC US. webpage.

Worship through *Word*

The Scriptures at their core are God's revelation of his love to humanity. The act of reading Scripture together is itself an experience of God's love, through which we preach to our hearts the good news of Jesus, and reshape our experience of the world around this reality. Through sermons, teaching, and corporate study, our core values move from being abstract ideas to convictions written on the hearts of each one of us.

In *You Are What You Love*, James K.A. Smith reminds us that “we are what we worship,” emphasizing that our values and beliefs are ultimately shaped by the desires of our hearts more than the thoughts in our heads. John Mark Comer, in his book *Practicing the Way*, emphasizes that spiritual formation is not accidental—it's the result of intentional teaching and practice that shape who we are at the deepest level. Comer explains, “Teaching is not just about information but about transformation,” reminding us that what we repeatedly hear and meditate on reshapes our desires and convictions. Through regular teaching, the church acts as what Smith calls a “pedagogy of desire,” forming our hearts and habits so that our deepest values and beliefs reflect the love of God that orders all other loves rightly.

This collection of resources is designed to help equip churches with ideas for teaching and studying through our BIC core values. You will find suggested teaching texts, short and long-form sermon outlines, and discussion questions for various group contexts.¹ These resources are intended to be accessible to all ages and all stages, but are also simply to serve as foundational teaching and discussion elements upon which to build for your specific context. I hope these resources will be helpful, and pray that God would make our hearts good soil—that we would receive his word, and produce much fruit!

Nicolas Pine

The Meeting House (Dillsburg), Susquehanna Conference

¹Condensed, 1-page sermon outlines are found in this print resource. To access the long-form sermon outlines, visit the BIC U.S. webpage.

Worship through *Art*

Our great God is unimaginably creative! Look around this vast world filled with His varied and diverse creation. From tiny insects intricately designed to pollinate specific flowers to massive mammals that tower over the tallest human. From the lush hues of an evening sunset in the mountains to the bioluminescent displays in the deepest oceans. From the humming frequency of the honey bee to the melodious orchestration of a forest full of bird calls. From the velvety texture of the softest fur to the prickle of a pine needle. From the aroma of a fresh rainfall to the mouthwatering taste of a fruit fresh from the vine. Each element of creation is designed with magnificence to bring praise back to our Creator.

A survey of God's creation reveals works that engage all five of our senses. Yet, when we engage in corporate worship, we tend to rely on only one or two senses. We fall into familiar patterns and routines and in many settings we have limited the corporate worship experience to a narrow field of options. What if we broke out of the mold and engaged all five senses God has created? What if we tried something new? There is beauty and comfort in the familiar that should not be forgotten, but there is also a richness found in offering a new form of worship unto the Lord.

The following is a sampling of how the creative arts can be experienced in corporate worship while engaging the BIC core values. Some ideas will work better in smaller, less formal settings while others could be incorporated into a traditional Sunday morning worship setting. These ideas are meant to give you a starting place to explore new ways to worship. Use your creativity to adapt them to your specific setting and context. Involve all generations in exploring these ideas together. It may require extra planning and preparation, but the depth added to your worship gathering will be worth the effort.

I pray these resources will lead to engagement in worship in brand new ways as we all desire to bring honor and glory unto our magnificent God!

Joy Brown

Amherst BIC, Great Lakes Conference

Worship *Practices*

Worship practices can look quite different from one congregation to the next. Some in our Brethren in Christ family worship in homes and some worship online. Others have highly polished worship services and ministry programs while a church family down the street organizes their times of congregational worship like an informal family gathering. Whether we worship with other believers through a formal or informal approach, we know that God intends our worship to take place in the context of a community of faith.

There are many ways we can worship God in our individual lives, but finding creative ways to worship him together can sometimes become a challenge. We can fall into comfortable routines that do not allow space for diverse approaches to honoring our God. This resource aims to whet our spiritual appetites with many different practices that can help us to live lives of worship with our church families.

Many of these practices require flexibility as we explore new avenues of encouraging ALL generations to participate in making our worship rich. Some practices may seem out of your comfort zone as a congregation, but you may be surprised to observe the reactions that come from trying something unexpected in the life of the church. There is so much beauty in seeing a congregation transform from a group of spectators to active participants in meaningful worship.

Each BIC core value has multiple examples or suggestions of creative ways that your congregation can engage in worship together. Some of the examples work better in a retreat setting, with smaller groups, or going outside the walls of your place of worship. Other examples work better in the context of a larger worship service. Please use these examples in your unique context as a launching pad for creativity in worship. Ask the youngest in your congregation for feedback. Invite the oldest to share from their wisdom. Encourage all of your church family to contribute to your times of worshipping the Lord together.

We look forward to seeing how the Holy Spirit uses this resource to bless the Church and bless the name of our great God. Please share stories of how your church family is engaging all of your people in worship. May we help each other to grow in our capacity to worship God well!

Kara Kacmar

Fairview BIC, Great Lakes Conference

Love & Grace



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYER OF EXAMEN

This may be a helpful practice after a time of worship through song or after the message. Part of experiencing God's love and grace is slowing down enough to notice God, be present with God and remember God in our weekly life. Each movement of the prayer should contain at least 1 minute of silence for the congregation.

AWARENESS

Slow down. How is God with you in this moment? (Pause/Silence)

GRATITUDE

Think about what in this day brings you gratitude. (Pause/Silence)

REVIEW

Recall the week that has passed. Ask God what he wants you to notice as you review the week. Where did you feel his presence or his absence? (Pause/Silence)

PRAYER

Recall instances in the past week or current situations where you have needed God's forgiveness and grace. Offer these things to God in repentance. (Pause/Silence)

INTENTION

Look forward to the week ahead. How will you need God in the coming week? Commit these things to God. (Pause/Silence)

Lord Jesus, we commit ourselves and this week into your care. Amen.

(If the Spirit leads, there can be space made for people to share how God ministered to them during this time)



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Prayer*

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS IN SCRIPTURE

Psalm 103:8-12

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 53:1-5

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 55:6-9

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Joel 2:12-13

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Romans 5:1

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

We believe and although we fall short, we must persevere to the end. Hold tight to His Word.

1 John 1:4-7

And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Music*



SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

His Mercy is More M. Boswell/M. Papa

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: His Mercy is More (Matt Boswell); Spirit Rise (Travis Cottrell)

Living Hope/Mi Esperanza Está En Jesús B. Johnson/P. Wickham

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): A, Bb, C

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Living Hope (Cross Point Music), Mi Esperanza Está En Jesús (TWICE)

O Come to the Altar/Ven Ante Su Trono C. Brown/M. Brock/ S. Furtick/ W. Joye

Song Perspective: Personal/Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Acoustic Session (Elevation Worship), Lo Harás Otra Vez (Elevation)

Te Doy Gloria/I Give You Glory A. Spyker

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com

Recording(s): Illumina (Marco Barrientos); Comunción (Omar Rodriguez)

The Love Of God F.M. Lehman/B. Nehorai

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, Reawaken, #36 HPW*

Recording(s): Hymns (Eleven22 Worship); Abide With Me (Sara Groves), The Trinity Acoustic Session (N. Drake)

Additional Songs:

Amazing Grace (#62 HPW*), And Can it Be That I Should Gain? (#115 HPW*), Death Was Arrested (North Point Worship), Jesus Paid it All (#111 HPW*), Living Waters (K. Getty), Thirst No More (Sandra McCracken), When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (#182 HPW*), Wonderful Merciful Savior (Dawn Rodgers)

*Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press

The Love of God

F. M. Lehman, Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai

C C(sus4) C C(sus4) C VERSES C F/C

The love of God is greater
When years of time shall pass a-
Could we with ink the o-cean

C G C C(sus4) C F/C

far_ Than tongue or pen can e - ver tell It goes be-yond the high-est
way_ And earth - ly thrones and king - doms fall When men who here re - fuse to
fill_ And were the skies of parch - ment made Were e - very stalk on earth a

C G C F

star_ And rea - ches to the low - est hell The guil - ty pair bowed down with
pray_ On rocks and hills and moun - tains call God's love so sure shall still en -
quill_ And e - very man a scribe by trade To write the love of God a -

C G G/B C

care_ God gave His Son_ to win His er - ring
dure_ All mea - sure - less_ and strong Re - deem - ing
bove_ Would drain the o - cean dry Nor could the

F C G C

child He re - con - ciled_ And par - doned from_ his sin
grace to A - dam's race_ The saints and an - gels song
scroll con - tain the whole_ Though stretched from sky_ to sky

REFRAIN

F C G

O love of God how rich and pure_ How mea - sure - less_ and

C F C G C

strong It shall for - e - ver - more en - dure_ The saints and an - gels song

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Word*



Perfect Love – 1 John 4:7-21

I. The Source of Love: God Himself

1. Whoever loves has been born of God—love is the evidence of salvation.
2. Experiencing God's love is essential to truly knowing Him. It is not just knowledge, but a personal encounter with His grace.
3. Jesus is the ultimate proof of God's love and grace. God's love is active, not just words.

In the book Compelling Convictions, Antonio Gonzalez writes on page 22: "All experience of God comes not from human initiation, but through the initiation of God, who desires to make himself known."

II. Experiencing God's Love by Loving Others

1. Love is not just something we receive; it is something we give.
2. We experience God's love more deeply when we share it with others.
3. God's love casts out fear. Fear and love cannot coexist—God's love brings peace and security

III. Our Love is a Response to God's Love

1. We are incapable of true love without first experiencing God's love.
2. Loving God and hating others is a contradiction. Love for God is inseparable from love for others.
3. Love is not an option—it is a command for those who have received God's love.

IV. How to Experience God's Love and Grace Daily

1. Believe in God's Love for You – Stop striving to earn His love; receive it by faith (v. 9-10).
2. Abide in His Love – Stay connected to God through prayer, worship, and His Word (v. 16).
3. Let the Holy Spirit Fill You – He confirms God's love and helps us live it out (v. 13).
4. Love Others as a Response – Share God's love with others, even those who are difficult to love (v. 11).
5. Live in Freedom, Not Fear – Perfect love casts out fear and brings confidence in Christ (v. 18).



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through **Word**

Born From Above – John 3:1-21

I. The Necessity of Being Born Again: Entering God's Love

1. Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus as a teacher from God but does not yet understand His mission.
2. God's love is not just something to know about—it must be experienced through spiritual rebirth.
 - "Born again" (Greek: anōthen) means "born from above"—a new birth by the Holy Spirit.
3. Experiencing God's love requires the work of the Holy Spirit to transform us.

II. The Ultimate Expression of God's Love: Jesus' Sacrifice

1. Religious knowledge is not enough—we must personally encounter Jesus.
2. Jesus points to Himself as the source of eternal life (v. 13-15)
3. We do not experience His love through religious practice or good works, but by trusting in Jesus.

III. Walking in the Light: Living in God's Love

1. Those who live in the light (v. 21): Experience God's love and transformation.
2. Reject the darkness – Confess sin and turn to Jesus. Embrace the light – Live in truth and reflect God's love. Share the love – If we have experienced God's love, we must share it.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Antonio Gonzalez writes on page 24: "Grace's work of confrontation carries with it grace's offering of invitation to follow in a new direction. This is the work of repentance."*

IV. Conclusion

1. In John 7:50, Nicodemus defends Jesus.
2. In John 19:39, Nicodemus helps bury Jesus—evidence of his transformation.
3. Are you like Nicodemus—searching, but not yet transformed? Surrender to Christ, be born again, and walk in His love!

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Word*



Living in the Overflow – Romans 5:1-11

I. The Foundation of Experiencing God's Love

1. Justification = Being declared righteous before God through faith in Jesus.
2. We stand in grace – Grace is not just for salvation; it is for daily living.
3. Suffering is not a sign of God's absence; it is a way to experience His love more deeply.
4. Suffering → Endurance – Faith strengthens through trials.
5. Endurance → Character – Trials refine us to reflect Christ.
6. Character → Hope – A confident expectation in God's promises.

II. The Ultimate Proof of God's Love: Christ's Death for Sinners

1. God's love is not based on our performance but on His grace.
2. Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we can have restored relationship with God and with each other.
3. If God loved us while we were enemies, how much more does He love us now as His children?

III. Experiencing Joy in God's Love

1. True joy comes from experiencing the depth of God's love daily.

In the book Compelling Convictions, Antonio Gonzalez writes on page 29: "A life of enjoyment in which everything can be left behind is the very life of Jesus, which we can now live in our simple histories until the end."

IV. Conclusion: Experiencing God's Love and Grace Daily

- God's love is demonstrated in justification (v. 1-2).
- God's love is experienced in trials (v. 3-5).
- God's love is proven by Christ's sacrifice (v. 6-8).
- God's love secures our salvation (v. 9-10).
- God's love fills us with joy (v. 11).

Are you experiencing God's love and grace personally?



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Discussion Questions

Small Group Discussion:

- How did you first decide to follow Jesus, or what has that journey looked like?
- What are some challenges you face when trying to follow Jesus in today's world?
How can we keep our faith strong when it feels hard to follow Jesus?
- What does obedience to Jesus look like in everyday life? How do you stay connected to Jesus daily?
- What role does prayer and reading the Bible play in following Jesus?
- How important is it to follow Jesus in community with others? In what ways does a community of followers of Jesus help us as individuals?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What do you think it means to follow Jesus?
- What are some things Jesus did that we can do too? What is something Jesus taught that you want to remember every day?
- How can we show others that we are followers of Jesus?
- Can you think of a time you made a good choice because you were trying to follow Jesus?
- How do we learn more about Jesus so we can follow Him better? What's one thing you can do this week to follow Jesus more closely?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does it really mean to follow Jesus in your daily life?
- What are some challenges people your age face when trying to follow Jesus today?
How do your friends or school environment influence how you follow Jesus?
- What are some things in your life that help—or hurt—your walk with Jesus? How do you stay rooted and close to Jesus when you're busy or feeling distracted?
- Is there a difference between believing in Jesus and following Him? What do you think?
- Have you ever had to make a tough choice because you were trying to follow Jesus? How can we encourage each other as a group to follow Jesus more boldly?

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Art*



ART PROJECT: EXPRESSIONS OF GOD'S GRACE

Invite your congregation to use whatever artistic expression they enjoy to visually express God's grace at work in their lives. This could include drawing, painting, poetry, photography, or any other art form. Anchor the activity in scriptures such as Romans 10:9 "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." and Ephesians 2: 8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast." Allow the congregation to take this prompt and personalize it to whatever art form God has given them. Set up a display in the foyer or other public place so that each art piece can be viewed. Perhaps even offer time in the Sunday morning service for the contributors to describe what they've created and what it means to them.

VISUAL ARTS

BULLETIN BOARD

Print some coloring pages depicting scenes from scripture around Jesus' life and the work of the Holy Spirit. Invite all ages to participate in coloring and bringing these images to life. Then provide a place or bulletin board to hang these and display this portrayal of God's Love and Grace.

SLIDE BACKDROPS

Invite congregants to submit digital artwork on the theme of Experiencing God's Love and Grace. This can be scripture slides, background for sermon slides, thematic announcement slides, etc.



Mt. Pleasant BIC



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Art*

TABLE EXPERIENCES

These guided experiences are invitations to come spend time with God, much like the disciples spent regular time with Jesus at the dinner table. At the table we share, we receive, and we are nourished. Through providing this space, there is opportunity to experience God's love and grace and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the worshipping community.

ROCKS

Materials: Various small rocks

(Psalm 62:1-8; Phil. 4:6-7) scripture uses imagery of a rock to describe God as a refuge; a sure foundation; a source of rest for our souls.

Are there areas of unrest, stress, or anxiety that you would like to share with God?

Choose a rock. Name these areas to God. Take the rock with you as a reminder of God's faithfulness to you

COMPOST

Materials: A bin of dry compost (leaves, bits of peel, onion skins, soil); a tray of assorted onion skins, orange peels, leaves, small twigs

(Psalm 13; Revelation 21:5) A compost pile is where dead and decaying things are transformed into rich soil for new life to grow.

Are you experiencing pain and brokenness?

Take a skin, peel or leaf as a symbol of your pain, and in faith and trust for God's transforming work in your life, add these to the compost pile.

GRATITUDE WALL

Materials: A blank wall or board; sticky notes and pens

(Col. 2:6-7)
Use sticky notes or index cards to write down things for which you are thankful. Include both big and small things. Read other posts and rejoice in the good gifts the Lord has given others.

RENEWAL/REMEMBERING

Materials: Bowl of water

(Romans 6:3-4; John 4:7-13)
In scripture we read of water's role in renewal. Put your finger in the bowl. Dab water onto your cheek or the palm of your hand. Feel the water. Remember your baptism.

Do you need healing? Ask for it.

FORGIVENESS

ACTIVITY ONE

Materials: Paper banner, red markers/paint, pens scripture: 1 John 1:7 (last part)

Focus thoughts / questions: Do you have any unconfessed sin? What do you have trouble forgiving yourself for? Put it into one word. Write that word on the banner.

Actions: Cover your word with red paint, remembering Jesus blood payment for your sins.

ACTIVITY TWO

Materials: Alka Seltzer, Bowls, vases, water (Matthew 18:21-35)

Has someone done something which has annoyed you, hurt you or upset you?

Holding on to these feelings make you feel worse which is why forgiveness is important. The servant was forgiven his debts. As a sign of forgiveness, take a "coin" in your hand and think about the person who has hurt you. Drop the "coin" into the water. It takes a "coin" about 77 seconds to dissolve As you watch it dissolve, pray "God, give me strength to forgive from my heart". Let these words sink in as your "debt" dissolves.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship through *Art*



THE CROSS

Place a large wooden cross in the space where you worship together. Provide hammers, nails, and small papers for individuals to write down something they want Jesus to forgive (the practice of confession). As each one nails the folded piece of paper to the cross, provide space for quiet prayer and gratitude for God's forgiveness. A similar activity could encourage writing things in our lives that we need to lay at the cross to receive healing and freedom.

Display a cross in your worship space. Provide playdough or clay for each person to create a figure that represents where they find themselves in relation to the cross. Invite each person to place their figure someplace in the room that reflects where they find themselves with Jesus.

SING YOUR TESTIMONY

Host a "Sing Your Testimony" service. Prior to the service, invite the congregation to share songs that have been important on their journey with Jesus. The service can be organized so that before the congregation sings a song, individuals can share a short testimony about how that song was formational in their spiritual journey. Intentionally encourage people from varied ages to contribute.

PRAYING WITH MOVEMENT

Practice praying in positions that help the body reinforce what is happening spiritually. This may mean kneeling while praying, raising hands while calling out to God, walking around a space that is the theme of our prayers, or even moving to a prostrate posture. Since many churches are not accustomed to involving their physical bodies in prayer, it is helpful to take time to create a safe atmosphere for incorporating a new prayer practice.

CELEBRATIONS

Around **Valentine's Day**, organize a party with love notes from God (scripture) that everyone writes out for someone else. Share stories of when you fell in love with God and first remembered experiencing his love.

Celebrate anniversaries of when people began walking with God (or when they were baptized).

Celebrate baptisms in public bodies of water, or situate the baptismal area in such a way that the congregation can gather around the water and support the one being baptized. Before being baptized, invite each individual to share their faith journey with the church family. Encourage others who have walked closely with those being baptized to share about the new life they observe in their brothers and sisters.

During **Holy Week**, a powerful liturgical tradition is the Tenebrae service. In a Tenebrae service, scripture and songs lead people from a fully illuminated space representing the light coming into the world (John 1) to a gradual extinguishing of lights as the congregation follows Jesus to the cross. The service concludes with a final candle being extinguished at the moment of remembering Jesus's death. In darkness, those who attend leave in contemplative silence.

Incorporate moments in the life of the church that compare to the **traditional "altar call"**. By allowing space in your corporate worship gathering for a response to the Holy Spirit, there is more time for connection with God and others. God speaks to us today!



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship *Practices*

ANOINTING THE SICK

The Epistle of James, 5:13-16, presents a picture of anointing the sick with oil for the healing of the body. The church sees this as an invitation for our participation with faith in God's power and will to heal. The service of healing may be in a home, a health institution, or congregation with an appropriate invitation to those who wish to participate. The following rite may be observed or adapted for a private or public service of anointing for healing. Generally, anointing is in response to the initiative of the sick person (see James 5:14).

MINISTER: Words in the Epistle of James give you authority to call for the elders of the church to pray for you, that the Lord may raise you up. Hear the words of the Epistle, James 5:13-16:

"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

The scripture counsels that as we pray for healing, we should confess our sins that we may be forgiven. Are you aware of any sins that you would like to confess and put behind you?

(Here the individual may confess sins or give testimony to trust in the saving and cleansing merit of Christ. The minister should give assurance of forgiveness.)

MINISTER: Do you trust in Christ as your Savior and Healer? Are you ready to commit yourself to the hands of the Great Physician, trusting in his power to heal you?

APPLICANT: Yes.

Those participating in the rite draw near to pray and lay hands upon the sick as the minister prepares the vial of oil for the anointing

MINISTER: _____, upon your request and on the authority of God's Word for the strengthening of your faith and the healing of your body, I anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord. (The minister places oil on his finger and applies it to the forehead of the applicant—in the pattern of the cross, if he/she wishes.)

Fervent prayer is offered for the sick with the laying on of hands by those participating.

Thanks should be offered and trust expressed as the petition for healing is made on behalf of the sick. Let faith be expressed in the healing power and will of God and the sick encouraged to trust in Him. A blessing may be pronounced on the sick and those caring for him/her.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship *Practices*



FOOTWASHING & COMMUNION

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:10-12

The above passage is a wonderful reminder of God's demonstration of love toward us and how it is made complete by our love for one another. Experiencing God's love and grace not only involves receiving directly from God, but also receiving from others. This is demonstrated beautifully by the practices of footwashing and communion. The following is one suggestion of how they can be done together.

Groups of 6 - 12 – ideally intergenerational and gender specific. If desired, quiet music may be played in the background. One or two people may facilitate each group.

Materials: Footwashing station - tub, towels, soap. Handwashing station - towels, soap, tub. Candle, Grape Juice, Bread, Cups, Readings, Trays

Introductions (if needed)

Facilitator: In this group, today, we get to experience two practices of the church - two sacred rituals that Jesus shared with his disciples, footwashing and communion. If you haven't done either of these before, that is fine. We hope this time helps all of us learn how to practice and find meaning in both of these. Feel free to ask questions and if you want to only watch that is also ok.

Read John 13:1-17 (if desired, it may be read reader's theater style)

Narrator: It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

Simon Peter: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Narrator: Jesus replied,

Jesus: "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter: "No, you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

Peter: "Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus: "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean."

Narrator: When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.

Jesus: "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."



EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship *Practices*

FOOTWASHING & COMMUNION, CONT.

Facilitator: Now, take turns washing each other's feet or hands.

**While people are washing each other's feet or hands, ask the group:
When have people modeled Jesus' servant nature to you?**

When people are finished talking and washing, read the following:

Jesus was always the guest.

in the homes of Peter and Jarius, Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna, he was the guest.

At the meal tables of the wealthy where he pled the case of the poor he was always the guest.

Upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people, welcoming the stranger he was always the guest.

BUT, here at this table - He is the host.

Those who wish to serve him must first be served by him,

Those who want to follow him must first be fed by him,

Those who would wash his feet must first let him make them clean.

For this is the table where God intends us to be nourished;

this is the time when Christ can make us new

So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world.

Jesus Christ, who has sat at our tables, now invites us to be guests at his.

Invite people to silently pray and think about what they just heard. Afterwards, gather the communion elements and pass the cups and bread around to have people take to be ready.

Then have two readers read the following:

Facilitator: Please hold your bread and juice until we have read the scripture, then I will signal for us to eat and drink together. What we do here we do in imitation of what Christ first did. To his followers and every age, Jesus gave an example and command rooted in the experience he shared with his disciples in an upstairs room in Jerusalem.

Reader: On the night on which he was betrayed, and as they were sitting at a meal, Jesus took a piece of bread and broke it. He gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this to Remember Me." Later after they had eaten, he took the cup and said, "this cup is the new relationship with God made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you to Remember Me."

Facilitator: So now we do as Jesus did. Let us take this bread and the cup, the produce of the earth and fruit of human labor. In these, Jesus has promised to be present. Let us eat and drink. Give time for people to eat and drink. Then ask someone to pray for the group.

Facilitator: Both footwashing and communion show us the beautiful ways that Jesus cared for us while still on this earth. We will now take some time for anyone who would like to share about things that Jesus is doing for you in your life. How is God working in your life?

When people are done sharing, pray and end your time together.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Worship *Practices*



SHARING TESTIMONIES IN COMMUNITY

God calls us to grow in the context of a community of believers. The testimonies we share typically involve others who have been faithful to what God calls them to do. Create spaces in your faith community to celebrate all the people who have been part of a person's journey.

- When organizing times of sharing personal testimonies with the congregation, **invite pairs of people to come forward**. Instead of one individual sharing his or her story in front of the church, wouldn't it be beautiful to invite someone who has been part of a person's testimony (by praying for them, by sharing the gospel with them, by mentoring them, by supporting them, by forgiving them, etc.) to be the person interviewing the one sharing the testimony? Or make it a conversation between the two of them, but before all of the church.
- During a time of baptism, **have the person being baptized invite key people** in their journey of faith to pray for them, accompany them in the water, or share how they have seen that person be transformed.
- During the **time of foot-washing**, leave space for people to share short testimonies, pray for one another, and embrace. It is often helpful to separate men and women during this time.

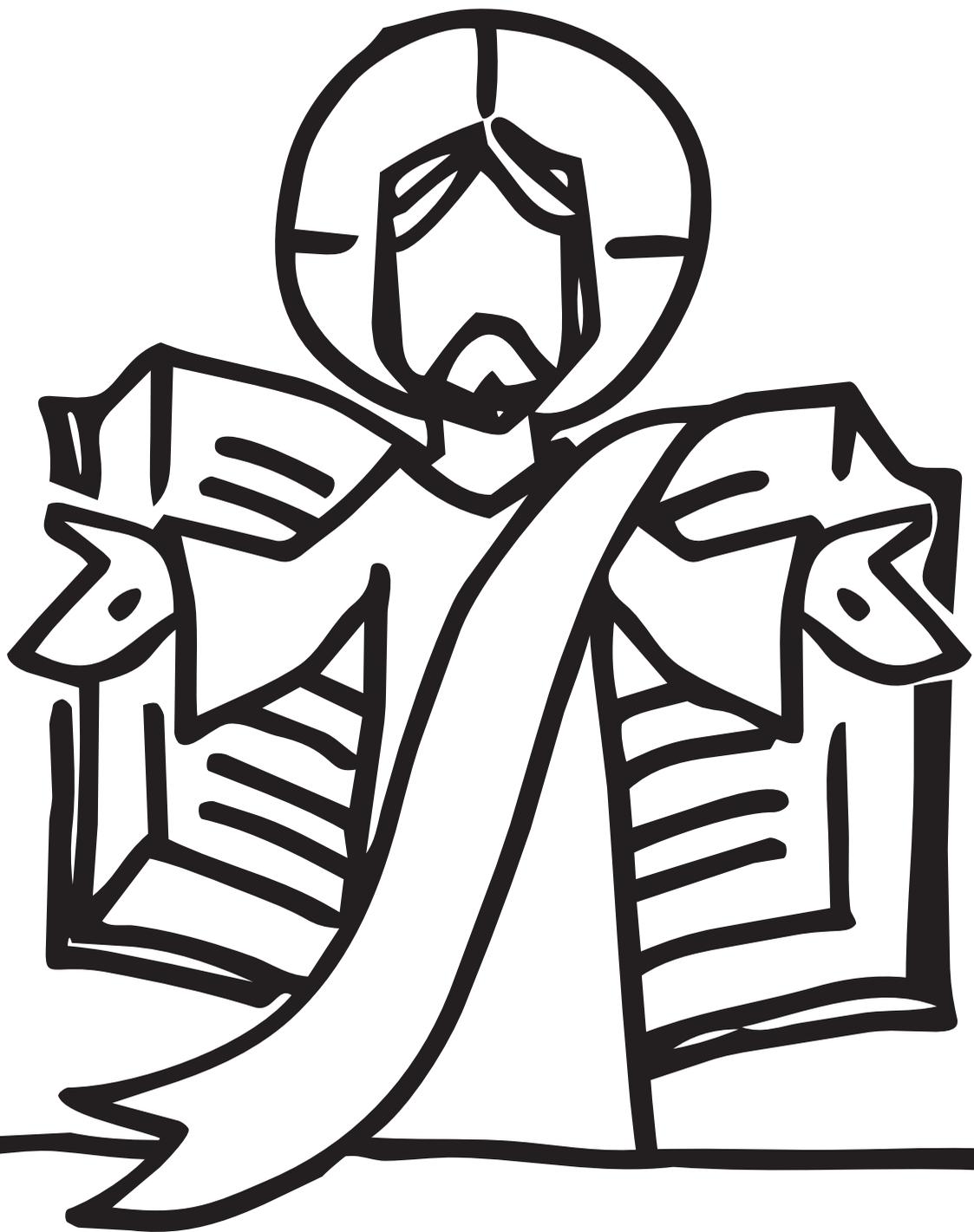
STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The "Stations of the Cross" experience is helpful for meditating on what Jesus has done for us. Visiting a church with paintings and sculptures focused on the day of Jesus's crucifixion provides an opportunity to slowly walk through the prepared "stations" and spend contemplative moments reflecting on Jesus's suffering and great love for us. While some churches already have accompanying resources available for the Stations of the Cross, Bible verses, written prayers, and question prompts prepared for the experience can be helpful in guiding individuals into a deeper connection with Jesus's sacrifice for us.

A variation of the "Stations of the Cross" practice can be prepared by creating stations focused on the five senses and the day of Jesus's crucifixion. Some examples:

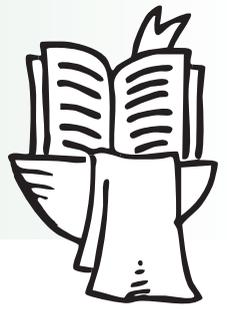
- *Place a stick with thorns on a table with verses from the Bible describing the crown of thorns.*
- *Research how much a cross may have weighed, and provide something made of wood of that weight.*
- *Encourage attempts to hold that weight on one's back, then include the verse about Jesus carrying our burdens and the passage describing Jesus carrying his own cross.*
- *Spray a cloth with perfume, and leave it at a station with verses describing the anointing with perfume that would most likely still be noticeable on Jesus even on the path to his crucifixion.*
- *Provide a sampling of wine vinegar to be reminded of the bitter drink offered to Jesus while he suffered. In contrast, encourage a taste of grape juice before the vinegar to remember Jesus's last drink with his disciples.*

Believing The Bible



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through *Prayer*



BELIEVING THE BIBLE PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
We are thankful and grateful for You and blessed by Your Word. We know that every word of scripture has been handcrafted and breathed out by You, for our direction, encouragement, guidance, and correction. Every word written has been given to us with sovereignty and authority by You as the Creator of all things. In Your Word we are given hope and understanding, and with it we build community in love with those who are near to You and far from You.

Thank you for the example that you have shown us through the lives of ordinary people like us. Thank You for the power it brings us as we draw nearer to You and share the gospel with those around us. Thank You, Lord, for giving us ears to hear and hearts that are willing to receive from You through Your Word.

We love you and we trust you in all things and for all things, and we are blessed by Your Word that still holds true today and throughout every generation.

We give You all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen

By Alesha Bender

A COLLECT (CALL TO WORSHIP)

Gracious God, whose pity is on all who cry out to you, and whose cleansing power is offered to all who are mired in sin, keep us from running aimlessly or hurting others. Help us to listen to your promises, respond to your Word, and learn to proclaim your good news for the healing of all humanity. Amen.

Baylor, Lavon. Led by Love:
Worship Resources for Year B. United
Church Press, 1996

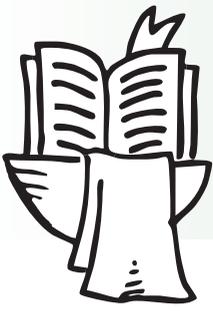
PRESENTATION OF BIBLES

May this book be a constant reminder of a worthy past, a past torn and mended by peoples' dreams and ambitions, and by hope fulfilled in God's continuing love. This book carries tremendous history, a history that is part of our identity as human beings, and part of who and what we are as the church. It is a history that gives meaning to our lives together. The biblical message can transform all of human history—past, present and future.

May this book enable you to dream today, and may your dreams challenge you to create a better tomorrow.

May this book create within you a spirit of courage, responsibility, and hope. And may you become a bearer of its message of hope and love that overcame all.

May the God of peace be with you always. Shalom and Amen.



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through *Prayer*

A PSALM TO BE READ ALOUD

A Psalm for All Who Keep God's Word

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 1: One thing alone does God require
And this do we seek to accomplish: to do justice, to love tenderly, to walk humbly with our God.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 2: Who heals the brokenhearted
And binds the wounds of the oppressed,
feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless,
sets the imprisoned free: These are God's disciples, God's family, God's friends.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 3: The Word of God is a two-edged sword that cuts through all hypocrisy, prunes the unsuspecting, strikes at the root of evil, pierces to the heart.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 4: The Word of God is a lamp to our feet, a lantern to our path, the light of the world crying out for a sign of hope and illumination.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 5: The Word of God is a spark of life living among the rubble, igniting a global consciousness to ways we are one world only, a beacon burning deep in the hearts of those who seek justice and peace.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 6: The Word of God is the Word made flesh in every generation, in the outcasts of the system, on the margins of prestige and power, on the downside of transition, on every face and every place where God's own Spirit dwells.

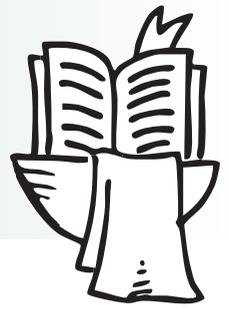
All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

Voice 7: Happy are all who love God's Word and live it to the full, for they are like trees by rippling streams, birds that soar high singing, prophets of a new age bringing the good Good News to all.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the Word, who hear God's Word and keep it.

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through *Prayer*



A PSALM TO BE READ ALOUD

Prayer of the Heart (Matthew)

“Repent, for the [realm] of heaven has come near.” - Matthew 3:2

O preparing God, send me this day, a messenger to prepare a way for you in me. Send me, this day, an angel for the covenant you expect me to honor.

Send me, this day, a voice calling me to repentance. Send me, this day, a friend to love me with the breath of your passion.

Call me out from self-justifying barriers. Call me down from self-promoting pedestals. Call me up from self-defeating prostrations. Call me into your wilderness

Where I may find your forgiveness. Return me to my center where you live. Set my senses firmly on your truth which is written on my heart and yet needs another to cry it out to me.

Ready my expectations that you will come—come to the meal of my wild honey, come to the bathing of my dark river, come to the harvest of threshed words with fork and fire and Spirit—when I trust you to prepare my impossibilities to receive you as being flesh. Amen.

Tirabassi, Maren C., and Joan Jordan Grant. An Improbable Gift of Blessing: Prayers and Affirmations to Nurture the Spirit. United Church Press, 1998.

Prayer of the Heart (Luke)

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.”
(Luke 1:37)*

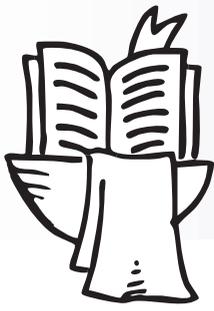
O Blessing God, I am immersed in your story. I am Mary and Elizabeth; I am prophet and singer, old mother, fetus and angel, and I know you.

You enter a woman and through her You enter the human hearts of all who eat the fruit of her womb. You come to those who cannot trust their own strength to live. You find your way to me through my most vulnerable need.

O Blessing God, may the sound of greeting this day cause the child within me to leap with expectation, and, as I ponder why I should be so honored by your gift, leap forth with joy from the ocean of birth within.

Incarnate me to you be your improbable gift of blessing to another, for you have believed in me, that I might bring to completion your promise of radical love to the whole world. Amen

Tirabassi, Maren C., and Joan Jordan Grant. An Improbable Gift of Blessing: Prayers and Affirmations to Nurture the Spirit. United Church Press, 1998.



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

King of Kings/Rey de Reyes B. Ligertwood/J. Ingram/S. Ligertwood

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: Awake (Hillsong Worship), Rey De Reyes (Hillsong en Español)

The Solid Rock (My Hope is Built) E. Mote/W.B. Bradbury

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: Public domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, #427 HPW*

Recording(s): My Hope and Stay: Hymns Project, Vol. II (Norton Hall Band)

Promises/Promesas A. Moses/D. Bowe/J. Barnes/K. Alvarado/L. Marin/P.C. Gaines

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Promises (Maverick City Music); Venga Tu Reino (Maverick City Musica)

Speak, O Lord K. Getty/S. Townend

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): In Christ Alone (Keith and Kristyn Getty)

We Come K. Leaman

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): C, D

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Additional Songs:

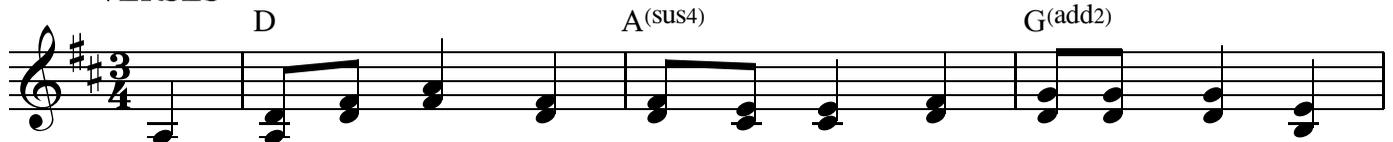
As For Me (Chris Tomlin), Tenemos Esperanza (F. Paguro), Thy Word/Where Else Could I Go? (Shane & Shane), We Will Remember (T. Walker), Word of God Speak (Bart Millard)

*Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press

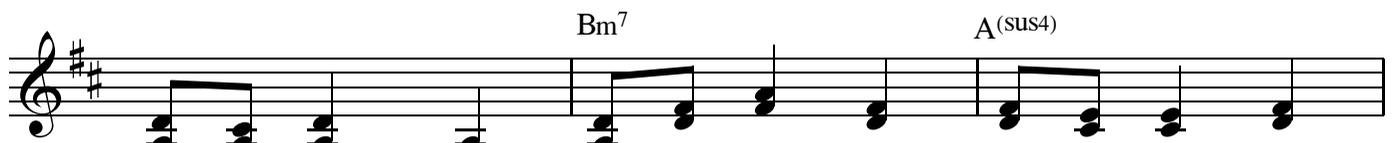
The Solid Rock (My Hope is Built)

Edward Mote
William Batchelder Bradbury

VERSES



My hope is built on noth - ing less than Je - sus' blood and
When dark-ness seems to hide His face, I rest on His un -
His oath, His co - ve - nant, His blood sup - port me in the
When He shall come with trum - pet sound, O may I then in



right-eous-ness. I dare not trust the sweet-est frame, but
chang-ing grace. In ev' - ry high and stor - my gale, my
whelm-ing flood. When all a - round my soul gives way, He
Him be found. Dressed in His right - eous - ness a - lone, fault -

CHORUS

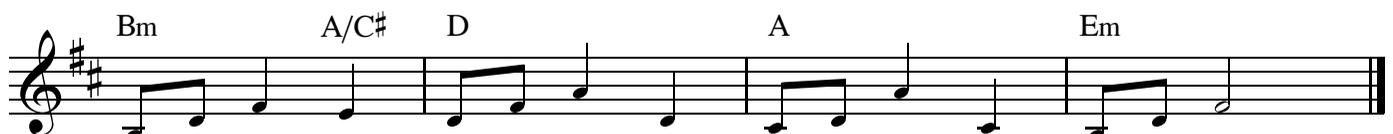


whol-ly lean on Je - sus' name. On Christ the so - lid Rock I stand; All
an-chor holds with - in the veil.
then is all my hope and stay.
less to stand be - fore the throne.



o-ther ground is sin-king sand, All o-ther ground is sin-king sand.

INTRO/TURNAROUND



We Come

Karah Leaman

C⁵ Am F G(sus4) G C G(sus4) Am⁷

We come we come to lis - ten_
 We come to learn to - ge - ther
 So give us ears to lis - ten_

F C/E G(sus4) G F

We come to learn at your feet_____ Je - sus
 To build our lives on your truth_____ Je - sus
 To hear your Word and o - bey_____ Spi - rit

C/E Am⁷ F G(sus4) G

you are the cen - ter_
 you're the foun - da - tion_
 make our hearts ten - der_
 On e - very page
 You are the head
 Help us be - lieve

C/E Am⁷ F G(sus4) G C⁵

Through e - very age. You are the God who speaks.
 Our li - ving bread. We hun - ger and thirst for you.
 To hear and re - ceive Your Word that is li - ving to - day.

Am F G(sus4) G C

We Come

Karah Leaman

Key - C | Tempo - 96 | Time - 3/4

INTRO C Am F Gsus G

C Am F Gsus

VERSE 1

C G Am7
We come, we come to listen
F C/E Gsus G
We come to learn at Your feet
F C/E Am7
Jesus, You are the center
F Gsus G
On every page
C/E Am7
Through every age
F Gsus G C
You are the God who speaks

VERSE 3

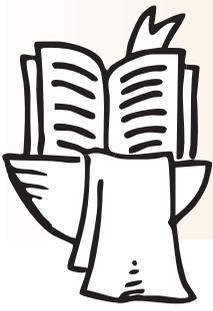
C G Am7
So give us ears to listen
F C/E Gsus G
To hear Your Word and obey
F C/E Am7
Spirit, make our hearts tender
F Gsus G
Help us believe
C/E AM7
To hear and receive
F Gsus G
Your Word that is living today

C Am F Gsus

C Am F Gsus G C

VERSE 2

C G Am7
We come to learn together
F C/E Gsus G
To build our lives on Your truth
F C/E Am7
Jesus, You're the foundation
F Gsus G
You are the head
C/E Am7
Our living bread
F Gsus G C
We hunger and thirst for You



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through **Word**

The Equipping Word – 2 Timothy 3:14-17

I. Continue in What You Have Learned

1. The Christian life is a lifelong walk of faithfulness, not a momentary decision.
2. True belief in the Bible moves from head knowledge to heart conviction.
3. Paul reminds Timothy of the reliable witnesses—his mother, grandmother, and Paul himself (2 Tim. 1:5).

II. All Scripture Is God-Breathed

1. The Bible isn't just a moral guide—it reveals the story of Jesus and how his work has bought redemption for the world.
2. Without scripture, we are spiritually blind; through it, we are made wise unto salvation.
3. Belief in the Bible requires receiving the whole counsel of God, not selectively accepting parts we like.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Christina Bosserman writes on page 49: “The authority of God’s words is not located in a rational argument for their origin, literalism, or their correspondence to our desires. The authority of God’s words is in their function: they teach us, they correct us, and they transform us into humans who reflect God’s image in the world.”*

III. The Bible Is Useful for Life Transformation

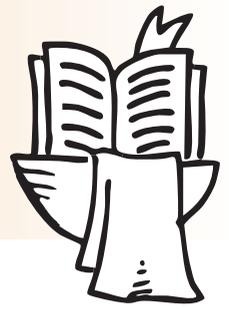
1. Teaching – scripture teaches truth, doctrine, and the character of God.
2. Rebuking – It confronts sin and falsehood in our lives.
3. Correcting – It redirects and heals, setting our lives back on course.
4. Training in Righteousness – the Bible shapes us into Christlike people.

IV. The Bible Equips Us for Every Good Work

1. Scripture is not just about information, but formation—shaping us to be mature servants of God.
 2. Believing the Bible doesn't lead to passivity—it empowers us to act in love, truth, and service.
- A life grounded in scripture is a life ready to fulfill God's purposes.

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through **Word**



Hearing and Doing – James 1:22-25

I. Be Doers of the Word

1. Many mistake hearing sermons, reading scripture, or attending Bible studies for genuine faith.
2. To hear God's Word and not act on it is spiritual self-deception. - True belief produces obedience (see John 14:15).
3. God's Word calls us to respond, not just reflect.

II. The Mirror Illustration: Reflecting on God's Word

1. The scriptures show us who we are in light of who God is—our flaws, needs, and identity.
2. A person who sees their reflection and forgets it is like a Christian who hears the Word but doesn't apply it.
3. Forgetting leads to unchanged lives. The result is spiritual stagnation—no growth, no transformation.

III. Look Intently and Live It Out

1. Look Intently – True belief takes time to meditate on and internalize God's truth.

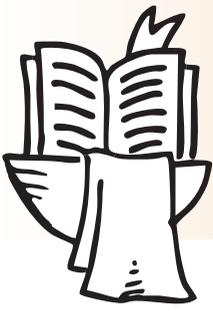
*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Christina Bosserman writes on page 45: "There is no other writing needed for humans to know God's love for the world and God's desire to restore wholeness to God's people, both in this life and in our eternal home."*

God's Word is not restrictive—it liberates us from sin, lies, and bondage.

2. Continue in It – Not a one-time act but a lifestyle of applying the Word daily. This is the fruit of genuine belief.
3. Blessing is not for hearers alone but for doers. God honors those who believe his Word enough to live it.

IV. Conclusion: The Test of True Faith

1. Many profess faith, but James challenges us to ask: Does my life reflect the Word I claim to believe?
2. Faith that works is faith that works—faith that moves from hearing to living.
3. Are you merely a hearer of the Word, or a doer who lives in the blessing of obedience?



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through *Word*

A Firm Foundation – Matthew 7 : 24 - 27

I. The Wise Builder: Hearing and Doing

1. True belief begins with hearing and listening to God's Word.

In the book Compelling Convictions, Christina Bosserman writes on page 43: "The Bible has the power to transform us when we read or listen to it in our native language with our hearts and minds eager to understand its message as a message from God."

2. Hearing isn't enough; the wise person acts on what they've heard.
3. A life built on scripture is stable, secure, and enduring, even in storms.
- Faith that works is faith that obeys. Believing the Bible leads to transformation and stability.

II. The Storm: The Test of True Faith

1. Jesus doesn't say "if" the storm comes, but when. Trials, temptations, suffering, and judgment will test our foundation.
2. The house (life) stands not because of its appearance, but because of its foundation.

III. The Foolish Builder: Hearing Without Obeying

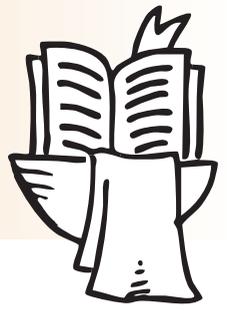
1. The foolish man also hears Jesus' Words—but does not act on them. Knowledge without obedience is spiritual foolishness.
2. A life built on anything other than obedience to God's Word will collapse under pressure.
3. "It fell with a great crash." Life's storms expose the true nature of our foundation.
4. Hearing the Bible without believing and obeying it leads to destruction.

IV. Conclusion: Believe by Building

1. This passage calls us to make a choice: wise builder or foolish builder?
2. Believing the Bible means not just knowing it, but building your entire life upon it.
3. Are you building your life on the solid rock of God's Word—or on shifting sand?

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

- How do you handle doubts or questions when you read difficult or confusing parts of scripture?
- How do you distinguish between cultural opinions and biblical truth? How do you respond when others question or challenge the authority of the Bible?
- How does the Bible's reliability strengthen your faith?
- Have you ever experienced a time when trusting the Bible changed the outcome of a situation? Share your story.
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us understand and believe scripture?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What do you think it means to believe the Bible?
- Why do you think the Bible is special?
- Can you share a favorite story from the Bible? What did you learn from it?
- How does the Bible help us know what God wants us to do?
- Who can you talk to if you have questions about the Bible?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does it mean to you to really believe the Bible is true?
- Have you ever struggled with doubts about something in the Bible? How did you deal with it?
- How do you know the Bible can be trusted more than other books or sources?
- How do you handle situations where culture or friends seem to disagree with what the Bible teaches?
- What roles do the Holy Spirit and prayer play in helping you believe and understand scripture?



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship through **Art**

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Scripture ABC's

Challenge the congregation or a smaller group within the congregation to work together to gather meaningful scriptures. The goal is to have one scripture for each letter of the alphabet. For example:

A = A friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17),

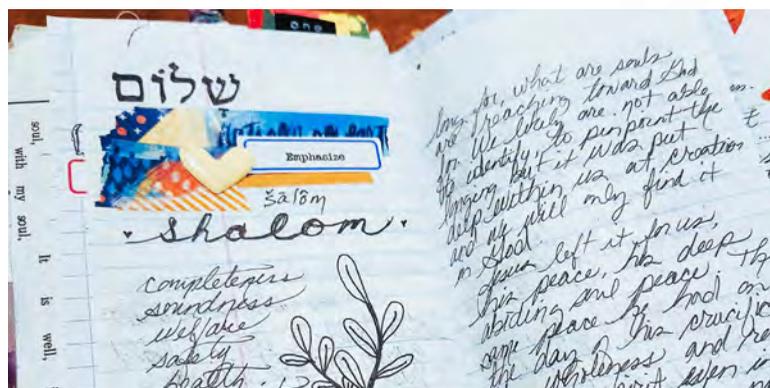
B = Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31), and

C = Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7, etc.

Bible Journaling

Gather a few simple supplies and invite a group to study a passage of scripture together. You might choose to meet regularly to reflect on a current sermon series or to go deeper into a study your group is already exploring.

Provide each participant with a printed copy of the selected reading, leaving wide margins for artwork and reflection. Encourage participants to prayerfully read through the passage and allow the Lord to draw out a verse or phrase that stands out to them. With a variety of art supplies, they can then illustrate or respond to that verse in a way that helps them slow down, listen, and engage more deeply with God's written Word.



Photos from Tess Crawford, New Life Community. Through her ministry, Recess With Jesus, Tess encourages people to take intentional, joy-filled pauses to meet with God through journaling.

SIGN LANGUAGE

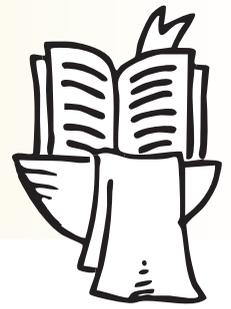
SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Use sign language to help memorize a particular scripture verse. This is an especially fun strategy for children. You could also have the children learn the verse first and then teach it to the adults on a Sunday morning. Or perhaps have children learn the main passage for the sermon ahead of time and deliver the passage together during the service.



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship *Practices*



SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY

During times of corporate worship, share Bible verses that have been part of individuals' faith journeys. Highlight a verse each week, and invite individuals to read (or recite) the verse, share how that particular verse or passage has impacted their lives, and then invite the congregation to read the verse together.

Since children often excel at memorizing Bible verses, allow the children to lead the congregation in this practice.

SCRIPTURE COME TO LIFE

Bring the Bible to life by acting out a passage of scripture. This is a helpful practice for engaging all generations in meditation over a specific passage. Assign people to different individuals in the story. One person serves as the "narrator" by reading anything that doesn't have dialogue, then others act out the scripture and participate in the dialogue found in the story.

SCRIPTURE AS ART

Artistically write scripture passages. Colors, varied fonts, word size, and small doodles or illustrations can help to highlight important ideas in passages of the Bible. Use art to enter more deeply into God's Word.

SCRIPTURE COME TO LIFE

When reading scripture as a group, ask questions that encourage putting God's Word into practice. These could be questions such as:

- What is something that you liked or did not like from this passage?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Was there an idea that was repeated throughout the passage?
- Do you feel God asking you to respond in some way? How?

SCRIPTURE HIGHLIGHTS

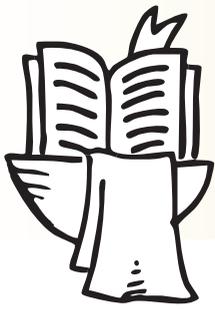
In John 1, we are reminded that Jesus is the Word of God in human form. Highlight Bible verses that speak about the Word of God, and meditate on how Jesus is that Word. An example of a verse that could be used is Psalm 119:105. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Talk about how Jesus is a lamp to our feet and light for our path.

Discerning scripture in the context of community is an important part of understanding God's Word. Provide varied opportunities for Bible studies, times of meditating on a passage individually, and times of reflecting as a community.

SCRIPTURE & SPIRIT

God reveals his Word through the interpretation that the Holy Spirit provides. Encourage active listening to God's voice through his Word by choosing a passage of scripture for everyone in the group to meditate on. Provide time for all to read through the same passage individually and ask God's Spirit to speak to each person.

As each one receives something from the Lord regarding the passage that was read, they write down what they felt God was speaking to them. Come back together and share the different ways that God revealed his Word to his people. Record each response in a place where all can see what is written and take time praying together over what God communicated to you through his Word.



BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship *Practices*

ENGAGING THE IMAGINATION

Invite your imagination into the reading of scripture. By engaging the imagination, God's Word can come alive and be made personal to each one of us. When we experience something with our senses, that moment often becomes memorable to us in ways that might not happen if we only read or listen to a text.

It is helpful to choose a passage that is an account of something that took place (instead of a theologically heavy passage) so that you can imagine yourself in the account. When reading a passage, take time to provide space for imagining the scene, placing yourself in the situation to hear, see, smell, touch, and even taste what someone in that situation may have experienced.

If Jesus is in the account that you are reading, take time to ask Jesus what he wants to say to you in that situation. Observe the surroundings described in the passage and imagine how others around you might affect you if you were there. How would you react? How do Jesus's Words make you feel? Is there something Jesus is asking you to do in this passage?

EXAMPLE: In the story of Jesus calming the storm, imagine you are one of the disciples on the boat. What kind of boat are you using? Can you imagine the smell of the water, the splash of the waves, the feel of other bodies crammed into a limited space? Can you imagine your stomach being upset by the constant turbulence and the rain slamming into your face as lightning flashes across the sky? Can you hear the thunder and the shouts of your fellow disciples? Can you imagine trying to hold down objects on the boat so they don't get swept overboard? Where is Jesus? What is he doing? How do you feel when you see Jesus sleeping? What do you do in that situation? Are you one of the people waking Jesus and asking how he can sleep in the middle of storm? What is your reaction when Jesus responds with calm and confusion as to your alarm? As Jesus demands the elements to obey his voice, how are your fellow disciples reacting? How do you feel as the storm calms in obedience to Jesus?

This exercise can be done individually, in small groups, or even with large groups. In smaller groups, it is helpful to have a time of reflection, and then space for people to share what the Holy Spirit revealed to them from God's Word through the exercise.

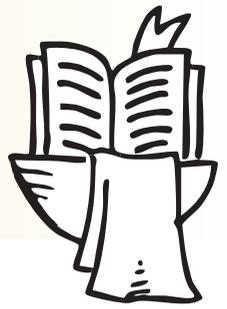
LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina (divine reading) is a structured approach to reading and reflecting on scripture, encouraging a deep listening and a response to God's message. There are many ways to do this but all involve the reading of a portion of scripture multiple times. Here's one way your community could do this!

Ask for three volunteers to read the scripture passage. Begin by inviting the group into prayer with a few moments of silence. Before the first reading, encourage everyone to listen for a particular word or phrase God may be speaking to them. Read slowly and leave space for silent reflection in between. During the second reading, people can listen for what God might want to say to them through that word or phrase. During the third reading, people can listen for what God might be calling us to act based on the word spoken to us. If there is time and space, people can share out loud with the group or with one or two people around them.

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Worship *Practices*



INTERPRETING GOD'S WORD TOGETHER

During a time of Bible study, assign small groups to focus on different aspects of the passage. Before dividing into groups, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal something new that God wants you to understand from His Word.

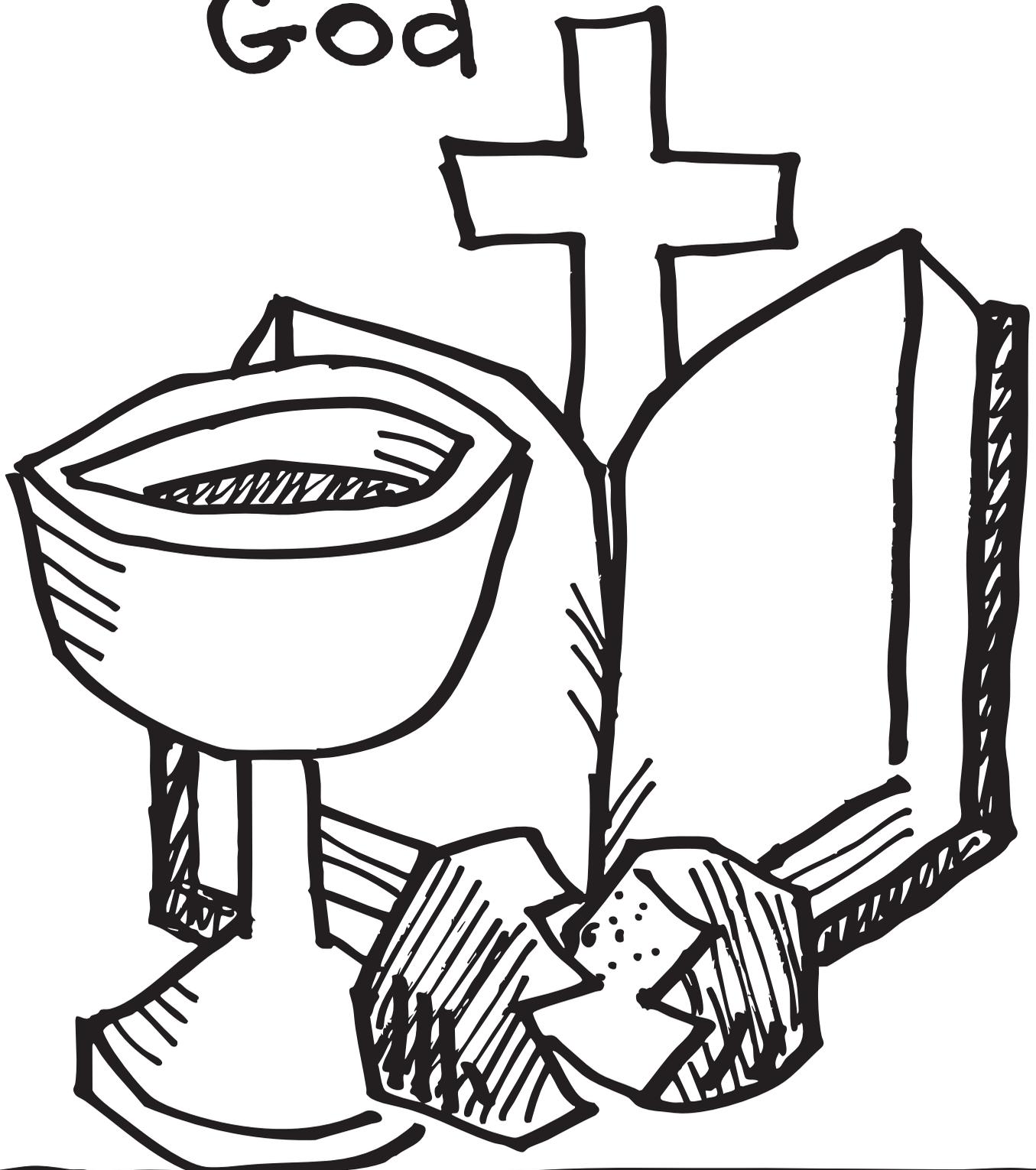
All ages can be involved in this process. Invite children to find repeated words or to read the passage out loud. Encourage youth to find good biblical resources online to share with the group. Ask mature believers to share how they dig deeper into scripture. Treat the process like a treasure hunt!

- Research the original Greek or Hebrew of the text.
- Find words or themes that are repeated in the text or that incorporate symbolism.
- Research the cultural and historical context of the time that the passage was recorded.
- Look at the context of the passage by reading what comes before and after the passage.
- Discover who wrote the passage and who the intended audience was.
- Determine whether the passage is narrative, allegorical, prophetic, poetry, law, wisdom, gospel, letters, or apocryphal.

After time is given for each group to prepare the information they have gathered, come back together and help one another to have a more complete understanding of the passage of scripture. Take time to pray together and ask God what he wants you to take from that passage.

Talk together about what God is asking you to do to apply what the Spirit has revealed. Interpreting God's Word in the context of community brings wisdom that can be missed when studying scripture independently.

Worshiping God



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYING THE NAMES OF GOD

In biblical times, names were considered to reveal a person's character or trait and were chosen with great care. The names of God reveal His character and nature. When we pray His different names, we meditate on who He is and see Him in a more personal way. It deepens our relationship with Him.

Elohim – God, Mighty Creator

Scripture Reading:

- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1
- The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19:1

Guided Prayer:

- Praise God for his power in creating the heavens and earth out of nothing, for creating all people, for creating you, in his image. Give thanks to God for the beauty of creation around you.

Yahweh Shalom – The Lord is Peace

Scripture Reading:

- Gideon built an altar and called it "The Lord Is Peace." Judges 6:24
- Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Guided Prayer:

- Thank God for the peace, the wholeness, that is possible through Jesus. Ask God to fill you with His peace that surpasses understanding and ask Him to give you rest.

Yahweh Yireh – The Lord will Provide

Scripture Reading:

- Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place "The Lord Will Provide." Genesis 22:13-14
- And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ. Philippians 4:19

Guided Prayer:

- Praise God for the provision of life he has given to all of us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Give thanks that He cares for you and supplies all your needs. Ask Him for anything you may lack and trust that He will provide.



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Prayer*

PRAYING THE NAMES OF GOD, CONT.

Yahweh Shammah – The Lord is There

Scripture Reading:

- “And the name of the city from that time on will be: The Lord is There.” Ezekiel 48:35
- Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Psalm 139:7-10
- 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. Isaiah 43:2

Guided Prayer:

- Give thanks to God for always being there with you in the good and difficult times; that you are never alone; He will never abandon you. Ask Him to give you a greater awareness of his presence in your life, and to experience Him like never before.

CLOSE: In a “summary” prayer.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER - CALL TO WORSHIP

Let’s affirm to our welcoming God why we have gathered . . . praying together as indicated.

One: Lord God, we gather in this place not because we are deserving of your love and not because we have faithfully followed your ways.

All: We gather here because in your grace you have called us to come, to come as a people who belong to you and to one another.

One: We gather here because of your unfailing love. You loved us before we could love you.

All: As we offer our worship, mold us in the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection give us life and hope. Through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Music*



SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Every Praise (Toda Alabanzas) H. Walker/J. D. Bratton

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F, G

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: Every Praise (Hezekiah Walker), Iglesia Jesus es el camino

O Praise the Name (Alabaré Al Señor) B. Hastings/D. Ussher/M. Sampson

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): A

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Open Heaven/River Wild (Hillsong Worship), El Eco De Su Voz (Hillsong en Español)

Only a Holy God D. Smith/J. Robinson/M. Farren/R. Thompson

Song Perspective: Corporate/Personal

Optimal key(s): C, D, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Only A Holy God (CityAlight)

Praise to the Lord the Almighty J. Neander/trans. C. Winkworth

Song Perspective: Personal/Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F, G

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, HPW #44*

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

This is My Father's World M. D. Babcock

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): C, D

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, HPW #41*

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Additional Songs:

Come Thou Fount (#14 HPW*), Eres Todopoderoso (Juan Salinas), Great Things (Phil Wickham), Holy Forever (Chris Tomlin), Holy, Holy Holy (#4 HPW*), Only You (Young Oceans), Revelation Song (Jennie Lee Riddle), Your Great Name (Christy Nockels).

*Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Joachim Neander, trans. Catherine Winkworth

LOBE DEN HERREN

arr. Paul Cohen

INTRO

E B/D# C#m B A B E E B/D# C#m B A

VERSE 1,2

E G#m A B E E(sus4)

Praise to the Lord, the Al-might-y, the King of cre - a - tion!
Praise to the Lord, a-bove all things so won-drou-sly reign - ing;

E G#m A B E E(sus4)

O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and sal - va - tion!
shel tering you un - der his wings, and so gent - ly sus - tain - ing!

E/G# A E/B A/C# D A/C# B E/G# A

Come, all who hear; now to his tem-ple draw near, join me in glad a - do -
Have you not seen all that is need-ful has been sent by his gra-cious or -

B E B/D# C#m B A B E E B/D# C#m B A

ra - tion. _____
dain - ing? _____

VERSE 3

E B/D# C#m B A B E E(sus4)

Praise to the Lord, who will pros-per your work and de - fend you;

E B/D# C#m B A B E E(sus4)

sure-ly his good-ness and mer-cy shall dai - ly at - tend you.

© Words: Public Domain | Music: Public Domain

Based on the 2026 Towel & Basin Worship Collective recording

Original Key: E-F

Praise to the Lord the Almighty

Words: Joachim Neander, Trans. Catherine Winkworth

Tune: LOBE DEN HERREN, arr. Paul Cohen

Key - E/F | Tempo - 80 | Time - 6/8 irregular

INTRO E B/D# C#m B A B E E B/D# C#m B A

E G#m A B E Esus
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of crea--tion!

E G#m A B E Esus
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!

E/G# A E/B A/C# D A/C# B
Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near,

E/G# A B E
Join me in glad adora--tion.

E G#m A B E Esus
Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;

E G#m A B E Esus
Sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!

E/G# A E/B A/C# D A/C# B
Have you not seen all that is needful has been

E/G# A B E
Sent by his gracious ordaining?

E B/D# C#m B AB E Esus
Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;

E B/D# C#m B AB E Esus
Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.

E/G# A E/B A/C# D A/C# B
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,

E/G# A B E B/D# C#m B A B E E B/D# C#m B A C
If with his love he befriends you.

F5 F/C F/A Bb
Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

F5 F/C F/A Bb
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.

F/A Bb F/C Bb/D Eb Bb/D C
Let the Amen sound from his people again;

F/A Bb C Dm F/A Bb C F
Gladly forever adore him. Gladly forever adore him!

OUTRO F C/E Dm C Bb C F F C/E Dm C Bb F

© Words: Public Domain | Music: Public Domain

Based on the 2026 Towel & Basin Worship Collective recording

Original Key: E-F

This is My Father's World

Maltbie D. Babcock
Trad. English Melody

INTRO: C G Am C/E F G C

♩ = 118 C G C F C G

This_ is my Fa-ther's world And_ to my lis - tening ears
This_ is my Fa-ther's world The_ birds their ca - rols raise
This_ is my Fa-ther's world O___ let me ne'er for - get

 C G E/G# Am F G C

All na - ture sings and_ round me rings The mu - sic of the_ spheres
The mor - ning light the_ li - ly white De - clare their Ma - ker's praise
That though the wrong seems oft so strong God is___ the Rul - er___ yet

 C F C C/E F (Em) C G

This is my Fa - ther's world I___ rest me in the thought
This is my Fa - ther's world He___ shines in all that's fair
This is my Fa - ther's world The_ bat - tle is not done
TAG: This is my Fa - ther's world Why_ should my heart be sad?

 C G E/G# Am

Of___ rocks and trees of___ skies and seas
In the rust - ling grass I___ hear Him pass
Je - sus who died shall be sa - tis - fied
The___ Lord is King let the hea - vens ring

 F G C

His hand___ the won - ders___ wrought.
He speaks___ to me e - very - where.
And earth___ and heaven be___ one.
God reigns let the earth be___ glad.

This is My Father's World

Words: Maltbie D. Babcock, Music: Trad. English Melody

Key - C | Tempo - 100 | Time - 4/4

INTRO C G Am C/E F G C

C G C F C G
This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears

C G E/G# Am F G C
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.

C F C F C G
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought

C G E/G# Am F G C
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas His hand the wonders wrought.

C G C F C G
This is my Father's world: The birds their carols raise,

C G E/G# Am F G C
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.

C F C F C G
This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;

C G E/G# Am F G C
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.

C G C F C G
This is my Father's world: O let me ne'er forget

C G E/G# Am F G C
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.

C F C F C G
This is my Father's world: The battle is not done.

C G E/G# Am F G C
Jesus who died shall be satisfied and earth and heaven be one!

C F C F Em G
This is my Father's world: Why should my heart be sad?

C G E/G# Am F G C
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

OUTRO C G Am C/E F G C



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Word*

Reverent Awe – 1 Chronicles 16:23-31

I. Worship Declares Who God Is

1. The call is for “all the earth” to worship. Worship is not limited by culture, nation, or style—it’s for everyone.
2. Worship tells the story of grace, rescue, and redemption.

In the book Compelling Convictions, Alan Claassen Thrush writes on page 69: “Jesus began removing the barriers between us and God, as evidenced with the tearing of the curtain separating the profane and the holy in the temple, torn in two at his death (Matthew 27:51), giving us access to a direct relationship with God.”

3. True worship communicates God’s worth—His nature, His actions, His power.

II. Worship Honors God Above All

1. Worship begins with right fear—a holy reverence of God’s greatness.
2. Worship puts God on the throne of our hearts, displacing every idol.
3. Worship is not just verbal—it’s sacrificial and tangible. We offer time, resources, talents, obedience, and our very lives.
4. We approach with humility, reverence, and joy.

III. Worship Fosters Holy Awe

1. To tremble is to stand in reverent fear of God’s majesty and authority. Worship balances joy and trembling, celebration and humility.
2. Worship is rooted in God’s unchanging nature and sovereignty. He holds the world together—we can trust Him and rest in Him.

IV. Worship Declares God as King

1. Declaring “The Lord reigns” is both an act of praise and a statement of allegiance.
2. Worship is not only duty—it’s delight in God’s kingship.
3. Worship is missional—we invite others to join in recognizing and responding to God’s rule.
4. Worship is both personal devotion and public proclamation of the Lord’s reign.

WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Word*



Greatest Commandment – Mark 12:28-34

I. The Question That Matters

1. In a world filled with religious rules and rituals, he asks: “What matters most?”
2. Jesus doesn’t dismiss the law—He distills it to its essence: love.
3. Worship begins when we rightly prioritize what God values most.

In the book Compelling Convictions, Alan Claassen Thrush writes on page 66: “Worship refers to the habits and rituals that we perform for the things we love... Everybody worships.”

II. Love the Lord Your God

1. Worship is not performance, but devotion. God desires relationship, not empty rituals.
2. With All Your Heart – Affection, desire, and emotional devotion.
3. With All Your Soul – The deepest part of who you are—your identity, your spirit.
4. With All Your Mind – Worship is not mindless—it’s thoughtful, informed, intentional.
5. With All Your Strength – Worship is lived out in how you serve, work, and give.

III. Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

1. Love for God cannot be separated from love for others. Loving others is a reflection of your love for God.
2. We worship God not only through songs and prayers, but through serving others, forgiving, being present, and showing compassion.
3. A single act of love can be more pleasing to God than a thousand offerings.

IV. You Are Not Far from the Kingdom

1. The scribe understood intellectually—worship is not just knowing truth—it’s living in surrender to it.
2. When we worship through love and surrender, we draw closer to the reign and presence of God.
3. Knowing what matters isn’t enough—worship moves us to live it out.



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through **Word**

True Worship – Romans 12:1-2

I. Worship Begins with God's Mercy

1. Worship is our response to what God has already done—not a way to earn His favor.
2. We worship not to gain mercy, but because we've received mercy. Worship is gratitude lived out because of what God has done.

II. Worship Is a Living Sacrifice

1. Not just spiritual devotion—our entire selves: actions, time, choices, work, relationships.
2. Worship is sacrifice – It's a continual act of giving ourselves over to God's purposes.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Alan Claassen Thrush writes on page 70: "God invites us to relate to God intentionally, with thought and planning that help us to prepare to experience the fullness of God and learn respectfully together as a community."*

III. Worship Involves Mind Renewal

1. The world pressures us to live for self, success, and sin. Following Christ means breaking free from those patterns.
2. Transformation (Greek: metamorphoō) is deep inner change—like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. This happens through renewing our minds by God's Word, Spirit, and truth.
3. Worship happens when our thinking changes to reflect the mind of Christ.

IV. Worship Discerns God's Will

1. A surrendered and renewed life leads to spiritual clarity. You will know what pleases God and walk in His direction.
2. God's ways are not burdensome—they are beautiful, satisfying, and complete.
3. Worship brings us into alignment with God's perfect purpose.

WORSHIPING GOD

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

- How do you define worship? What does it look like in your life? Have you experienced a time when worship brought you closer to God? Share your story.
- Why is worship important in our relationship with God? How does worship change your perspective or attitude during difficult times?
- What are some challenges you face in worshipping God consistently? How does worship change your perspective or attitude during difficult times?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in worship?
- Can worship be more than just singing songs? What are other ways to worship? How can we maintain a lifestyle of worship outside of church gatherings?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- Why do you think we worship God?
- Can we worship God anywhere, or only in church? What are some ways to show God we love Him besides singing?
- Can you share a time when you felt close to God while worshipping?
- How do you like to worship God—singing, praying, or helping others?
- How can our family worship God together at home?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- How do you usually express your worship—through music, actions, or something else? Can worship happen outside of church? Give examples.
- Why do you think worship is important in our relationship with God? How does worship change the way you feel or think about God?
- Have you ever struggled to worship God? What made it difficult?
- What are some ways we can worship God with our everyday lives, not just during church?
- How do you balance worshipping God with other activities or distractions in your life?



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship through *Art*

NATURE ART

Nature Prayer Garden

Gather some volunteers to create an outdoor space on your church property for worship, prayer, and reflection. Plant some flowers, hang some bird feeders, place a bench or create a space to sit and meditate, post some scriptures or worship lyrics, and consider adding a cross or other representation of Christ as a focal point of the garden.



Crest Community BIC Sanctuary

In the series Habitation, Grace Saunders collected and painted moments and places of home-like sanctuary. Found in sometimes overlooked and unusual places, like light coming through bedsheets, an empty nest, and the hands of a loved one. In *Loss of Time, Not of Heart*, she painted her mother's hands soon after her mother's terminal cancer diagnosis, as a reminder of the promise we are always in God's hands. *Habitation* is a reflection on seeking a dwelling place in the Lord throughout the seasons of life.



Grace Saunders
The Part that Stays, 2017
Oil on Canvas



Grace Saunders
Emanating Light, 2017
Oil on Canvas



Grace Saunders
Loss of Time, Not of Heart, 2017
Oil on Canvas

PHYSICAL/DIGITAL ART

Photography

Ask your congregation to submit photos of what it means to worship God. This could be something that inspires worship in them, a demonstration of worship, or a representation of true worship.

You could choose to have the photos submitted in physical form so they could be used in a physical display or submitted in digital form so they could be used in a slideshow or as backgrounds for your sermon slides, music slides and/or announcement slides.

Mural Art

Recruit artists in your congregation to work together to create a backdrop for a sermon series. You could use any medium that works for your group.

WORSHIPING GOD

Worship *Practices*



COME AS YOU ARE

The way we worship should reflect who we are. Instead of attempting to reproduce the worship formats and styles of other churches, embrace the people who are in your church family and work to incorporate the gifts and passions of those who worship together. Find ways to engage everyone in worship by highlighting the varied gifts of those in your church family. When everyone understands that they are not spectators, but actively contributing to worship, there is blessing for all.

Provide opportunities for those who are fluent in technology to share their knowledge in ways that bring blessing to the Lord and the church. Invite young people who are accustomed to using technology for school (and for fun) to contribute suggestions for how to enhance the technology your congregation uses for corporate worship and communication.

Invite those who write poetry to write or recite poetry to enhance worship. If your church plans themes and sermon series weeks before they happen, invite poets, artists, and musicians to meditate on the scriptures and themes being used so God can inspire new material to accompany other aspects of worship.

For artists, provide opportunities to share their art to enrich worship. Art exhibits around a theme can be organized for your congregation. Artistic additions to your worship space are another way to enhance the worship experience. Some individuals connect best with God through imagery and art. If you have someone gifted in this way, an artist can be invited to create art during the worship service as the Holy Spirit brings inspiration.

Invite dramatic recitations of scripture from those who have experience in theater. Sketches that help the church to go deeper in worship or the opportunity to prepare special performances outside of Sunday morning worship are other ways to encourage theatrical gifts in the life of the church. Liturgical dancing is an enriching addition to times of worship. When your congregation has trained dancers, invite them to choreograph a liturgical dance around a theme.

For those with a heart for prayer, provide space in times of worship for people to experience someone praying for them. It is also meaningful when people are invited to read prayers they have composed beforehand.

When you see **extroverted and friendly people in your congregation**, invite them to intentionally greet and welcome those who come through the doors of your place of worship.

If your congregation has **musicians that play instruments that are not typically used for your worship music**, provide opportunities for them to share their gifts to bless them and the church.

Incorporating different cultural styles and languages in worship is important when individuals in your congregations speak different languages or come from different cultures. Providing an opportunity for people to worship in their heart language is important. It is also helpful for those who do not speak other languages to be reminded that God is worshiped in every language.

When there are **children in your congregation, invite them to participate in big and small ways.** If they have learned Bible verses, invite them to teach the congregation. If they are learning instruments, provide opportunities for them to play their instruments for God's glory. Ask children to lead the congregation in songs that include motions or gestures. Provide opportunities for children and adults to lead the congregation in prayer, song, movement, reading, and drama. Children will often enthusiastically volunteer to help in any way they can. Embrace this enthusiasm by encouraging them to be "mic runners", helpers to pass the offering plate, greeters, food servers, or helpers in the nursery.



WORSHIPING GOD

Worship *Practices*

WORSHIP WITH YOUR SENSES

Sight: Invite artists to contribute visual art to the worship space. Those who sew can create banners that accompany seasons of the church calendar. Those who sculpt with clay, paper, wood, or varied materials can add pieces that draw the congregation into worship. Light and color can be used in different ways to draw the attention. Those gifted in arranging everyday objects or items from nature can assist in creating a space that invites people to worship God. Photographers can share images, and painters can lend a piece to be used in an art exhibition or as a companion to worship. Digital artists and graphic designers can develop slides, videos, and other media to assist the congregation in worship.

Hearing: Using music to engage people in worship is a natural way to engage the sense of hearing. Whether through congregational singing, music shared from soloists or smaller groups such as choirs, or instrumental music, there are many ways to use music as a vehicle for worship. Recorded music also has value for creating an inviting atmosphere for worship. Silence is powerful. In today's society, silence is so rare that when it is practiced in a corporate setting, it grabs the attention of those who experience it. By explaining the intention of silence in a gathering of believers, some of the stress is removed, and the group is invited to experience God's presence in a different way.

Touch: One way to introduce the church to the effects of using touch to enhance worship is by creating "stations" around a large space. On tables spread around the room, add objects with different textures that can assist in more intentional prayer. An example could be to provide a thorny vine that can be touched to remind us of the thorns on Christ's brow. For a different communion experience, use a large loaf of crusty bread that each person breaks in order to participate in communion. Foot washing is a tangible way to practice humility and serving one another, and the practice of laying hands on one another for concentrated prayer is meaningful. Although not typical in many of our congregations, kneeling is an effective way to physically reflect that Christ is our king.

Smell: The sense of smell is one that is often ignored in our worship experiences, yet this sense is one that makes immediate connections to memories. The smell of lilies can connect us to celebrating Jesus's resurrection. When looking at the story of the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume, perfume can be sprayed on a piece of fabric and passed around the room. For a powerful illustration of Jesus's humble welcome to the world, read the account of Jesus's birth during a trip to a barn where animal smells and sounds are difficult to ignore. In a small group setting, a candle with a distinct smell can be dedicated to times of prayer. Each time the group prays, the candle is lit to remind us that our prayers rise to heaven like incense before God. Another idea could be to bake a specific baked good for celebrations of baptisms. Whenever someone is baptized, the smell (and then taste!) of what is baking can be tied to your church family's celebration of publicly proclaiming new life in Christ.

Taste: Communion is a practice that involves all of our senses. We listen to the invitation to partake, we see, we smell, we touch, and we taste. Some BIC churches have traditionally made communion bread as a process for preparing hearts and praying for the church family. Each action of making the bread represents what happens in our hearts. Since the bread is slightly sweet, the taste reminds us that connection with Jesus is a precious thing. Savoring the grape juice connects us to the idea that we need to abide in Christ, just as a grape stem needs to connect to the vine for sustenance. Partaking in communion is one of the most obvious ways that taste is incorporated in worship, yet there are other creative ways that this sense can enhance our encounters with God.¹

¹To learn more about our traditional communion practices, visit the BIC U.S. webpage.

WORSHIPPING GOD

Worship *Practices*



WORSHIP STYLES

Incorporate varied styles of worship in your congregation. Most people have a preferred style of worship, and most congregations have as many preferences as there are people. Having a “different style” Sunday is one way to introduce that style of worship music to those who are not familiar with the style. This also allows those who connect with God best through that style of worship to enjoy a style that is comfortable for them. Introducing different styles of worship during a prelude or offertory is another way to gradually introduce the congregation to styles of music that are not as natural for them. If your church is limited in what can be done, invite others to visit and introduce different ways of worshipping together to your church family.

CHURCH CALENDAR

Incorporating the church calendar into the rhythm of your life provides structure and connection with the larger body of Christ. Encouraging reading and praying through a lectionary (devotional books that incorporate daily scripture, prayers, and a devotional text that follow the calendar that Christians around the world also follow) promotes connection with the Lord and with the Church. While this is typically a personal spiritual discipline, it can increase connection with other believers and feed times of corporate worship.

WORSHIP CHALLENGE

Practice devoting all of life to worship by setting a challenge for your church family. As a church, dedicate a day during a normal week to tune your minds to a constant attitude of worship. Provide suggestions of “landmarks” during the day that return thoughts to God. Some examples could be:

- When the alarm wakes you up, dedicate your day to God.
- When brushing your teeth, devote the words that leave your mouth to the Lord.
- When you get a drink, tell God how you want to thirst for him the way you do for water.
- When eating, think of God’s provision, and marvel at how he created our bodies to not only use food for the energy we need, but also for our enjoyment.
- Every time you stop at a stop sign or stop light, actively thank God for as many things as you can.
- Use school bells to remind you to turn your thoughts to God

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

Plan a celebration Sunday. The format of this gathering should be different than a typical worship gathering. Instead of a sermon, invite multiple people to share testimonies of how God has worked in their lives. Spread out the testimonies throughout the service with songs, scripture, prayers, and other aspects of worship incorporated throughout the time.

GRATITUDE JOURNAL

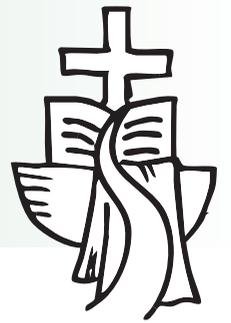
Maintain a gratitude journal. This practice inspires natural worship as each person learns to find ways to be grateful to God in the big stuff, as well as the small details of life. When gratitude becomes a normal way of viewing life, worship is a natural result. By encouraging this practice in the life of the church, there will be multiple opportunities to share accounts of God’s care and provision in times of corporate worship.

Following Jesus



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYER OF FOLLOWING

Gracious Father, out of the depths of your love and value for us, you sent your one and only Son into the world, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man. He came so that through his life, death and resurrection, our relationship with you may be restored. We may now live as you created us to live in oneness with you, not in our natural rebelliousness, hatred, and self-centeredness. Thank you for the new life we may have in union with you through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ.

Father, you have drawn us to Jesus, and we have received the call to follow Jesus. We admit we cannot do this by our own self-effort. Jesus only did what you, Father, wanted him to do. He only spoke what you wanted him to speak. We desire to do the same. Yet we are too weak. We need your Holy Spirit to guide us, direct us, and empower us. We need the infilling of the Holy Spirit of Jesus to live as Jesus did in oneness with you.

May your Holy Spirit so fill us that we may have:
The eyes of Christ to see as he would see,
The ears of Christ to hear as he would hear,
The lips of Christ to speak as he would speak,
The hands of Christ to serve as he would serve,
The feet of Christ to go where he would go,
The mind of Christ to think as he would think,
And the heart of Christ to love as he would love.

May we be full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit and walk by the power of the Holy Spirit, just like your Son Jesus Christ. May we live in oneness with you Father, in your kingdom, for you have made that possible through Jesus' reconciling work on the cross and in the power of his resurrection. Thank you for hearing our heart cry for you. We pray this according to the will of your Son. Amen.

By John Melhorn, Air Hill BIC

WESLEY COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,

Exalted for thee or brought low by thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

United Methodist Church, The United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989).



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Prayer*

PRAYING WITH ROMANS & COLOSSIANS

God's love and mercy is our motivation to live life in his ways. In the Bible, the letters of Colossians and Romans gives us a picture of how God desires us to live with one another. We are going to use selected verses and translations from Colossians and Romans to guide us in prayer this morning. Several verses will be read, then we will respond to God's Word for us as indicated on the screen. Let's pray: Holy Spirit, transform us as we embrace and respond to Your Word for us.

Romans 12:1-2 (TPT;MSG;VOICE)

One:

Brothers and sisters, in light of all I have shared with you about God's mercies, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, a sacred offering that brings Him pleasure; this becomes your genuine expression of worship.

One:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.

One:

Do not allow this world to mold you in its own image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills – and whatever God finds good, pleasing, and complete.

Our PRAYER – ALL :

Lord, in response to your love and mercy, we offer you our whole self. In your mercy, renew our mind and heart to follow you and live in your ways.

Romans 12:3-5 (NIV;NLT;MSG)

One:

Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

One:

The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

One:

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Our PRAYER – ALL:

Lord, we pray for a posture of humility. Help us to walk humbly with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYING WITH ROMANS & COLOSSIANS, CONT.

Romans 12:9-10 (TPT;NIV;VOICE;NLT)

One:

Let the inner movement of your heart always be to love one another, don't hide behind a mask; love authentically. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

Our PRAYER – ALL:

Jesus, we only know authentic love because of your great love for us. Help us to let go of everything that stops us from loving well. Help us to love each other as abundantly as you have loved us.

Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV)

One:

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

One:

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

One:

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

One:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

One:

And – be thankful!

Our PRAYER – ALL:

Merciful God, thank you for sending Jesus to be the ultimate example of how you would have us live. We need your Spirit to clothe us with Christ, for he is a garment of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness. Above all, as the body of Christ, clothe us with the love of Jesus; and may his peace rule in our hearts.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Build My Life/Construiré Mi Vida B. Younker/K. Martin/K. Kaple/ M. Redman/P. Barrett

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): C, D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: Yet Not I (CityAlight), Sing! Global (Getty)

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus Indian Folk/S. Marak

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): A, Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Somlandela/We Will Follow Zimbabwean traditional

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F, G, A

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Joyous Celebration 3 Live, InterVarsity Live! Worship, Vol. 1 (with Love is Calling Out)

We Will Follow (Gentle Shepherd) S. Crissman/G. Yoder/K. Leaman

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me J. Robinson/M. Farren/R. Thompson

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Yet Not I (CityAlight), Sing! Global (Getty)

Additional Songs:

Abide (Aaron Williams), Be Thou My Vision (#441 HPW*), Christ Be All Around Me (Leeland), Jesus All For Jesus (Robin Mark), Lead Me To The Cross (Brooke Ligertwood), Trust and Obey (#422 HPW*), Yeshua (Maverick City).

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Words attributed to Simon K. Marak
Indian folk melody, arr. Paul Cohen

Fmaj7 C Fmaj7 Amaj7 G C F/C

I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low
Though none go with me,_ still I will
The world be - hind me,_ the cross be -

C F G C/E Am7 G

Je - sus I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low Je - sus I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low
fol - low Though none go with me,_ still I will fol - low Though none go with me,_ still I will
fore me The world be - hind me,_ the cross be - fore me The world be - hind me,_ the cross be -

Fmaj7 C/G G 1.2. Fmaj7 3. C Am G/B

Je - sus No turn ing back,_ no turn - ing back_ back.
fol - low
fore me

C/E Am G/B Dm C F C/E F Am G C/E F G/B C

C/E F Am G C/E F Dm C F G/F G(sus4) G Am F/A G(sus4)/B

C F

I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low Je - sus I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low

C C/G G(sus4) G C

Je - sus I have de - ci - ded_ to fol - low Je - sus No turn - ing back,_ no turn - ing back.

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Words: Simon K. Marak, Music: Indian Folk Melody
arr. Paul Cohen

Key - C | Tempo - 70 | Time - 4/4

INTRO Fmaj7 C Fmaj7 Am7 G

C F/C C F G C/E
I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus

Am7 G Fmaj7 C/G G Fmaj7 C Fmaj7 Am7 G
I have decided to follow Jesus; No turning back, no turning back

C F/C C
Though none go with me, still I will follow

F G C/E
Though none go with me, still I will follow

Am7 G Fmaj7
Though none go with me, still I will follow

C/G G Fmaj7 C Fmaj7 Am7 G
No turning back, no turning back

C F/C C
The world behind me, the cross before me

F G C/E
The world behind me, the cross before me

Am7 G Fmaj7
The world behind me, the cross before me

C/G G C
No turning back, no turning back

INTERLUDE C Am G/B C/E Am G/B Dm C F

C/E F Am G C/E F G/B C C/E F Am G C/E F Dm C F

G/F Gsus G Am F/A Gsus/B

C F C
I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus

C/G Gsus G C
I have decided to follow Jesus; No turning back, no turn---ing back

Somlandela (We Will Follow)

Zimbabwean traditional

G C

Zulu: Som' - lan - de - la, som' - lan - del' u - Je - su.
English: We will fol - low, we will fol - low Je - sus.

G D

Som' - lan - de - la yo - nke in - da - wo.
We will fol - low ev - ery - where he goes.

G C

Som' - lan - de - la, som' - lan - del' u - Je - su.
We will fol - low, we will fol - low Je - sus.

G/D Em D C G

La - pho E - ya - kho - na som' - lan - de - la.
Ev - ery - where he goes we will fol - low.

Pronunciation: Sohmlahn-deh-lah, sohmlahn-dehl oo-Jeh-soo. Sohmlahn-deh-lah, yohn-keh een-dah-woh.
Sohmlahn-deh-lah, sohmlahn-dehl oo-Jeh-soo. Lah-poh Eh-yah-koh-nah sohmlahn-deh-lah

We Will Follow (Gentle Shepherd)

Seth Crissman, Greg Yoder, Karah Leaman

A A/C# D A E A D A/C#

Je-sus, teach us how to live; How to love and
 Je-sus, feed us liv - ing bread By Your bo - dy
 Je-sus, lead us Ser - vant King Lamb of God, Your
 Je-sus, give us work to do as we learn to
 Je-sus, help us bear Your name as You served we

1.3.
 A/E E F#m A/C# E F#m D E A A/C# D (E)

serve and give; How to pray and to for - give. Christ we fol - low You.
 we are fed. Christ be - hind and Christ a - head.
 suf - fer - ing con - quered death and con - quered sin.
 fol - low You. Old has gone, You make us new.
 do the same. For Your glo - ry and Your fame

2.4.
 A A/C# E A/C# D A/C# E F#m A/C#

You We will fol - low You, gen - tle Shep - herd You lead us. We will

E A/C# D A/C# E F#m D A/C# E A

fol - low You, We be - long to You Je - sus

5.
 F#m D E A A/C# E A/C# D A/C#

You That all may fol - low You We will fol - low You, gen - tle Shep - herd You

E F#m A/C# E C#/E# F#m D A/C# E F#m D A/C# E F#m

lead us. We will fol - low You, From our bur - dens You freed us, At Your tab - le You seat us,

D A/C# E F#m D A/C# E A A/C# D E A

In our hun - ger You feed us, We be - long to You Je - sus

We Will Follow (Gentle Shepherd)

Seth Crissman, Greg Yoder, Karah Leaman
Key - A | Tempo - 74 | Time - 3/4 irregular

INTRO A A/C# D

VERSE 1,2

A E A
Jesus, teach us how to live
D A/C# A/E E
How to love and serve and give
F#m A/C# E F#m
How to pray and to forgive
D E A A/C# D
Christ we follow you

A E A
Jesus, feed us living bread
D A/C#A/E E
By Your body we are fed
F#m A/C# E F#m
Christ behind and Christ ahead
D E A
Christ we follow You

CHORUS 1

A/C# E A/C#
We will follow You,
D A/C# E F#m
Gentle Shepherd You lead us
A/C# E F#m
We will follow You,
D A/C# E F#m D A/C# E A
We belong to You, Jesus

VERSE 3,4

A E A
Jesus, lead us Servant King
D A/C# A/E E
Lamb of God, Your suffering
F#m A/C# E F#m
Conquered death and conquered sin
D E A A/C# D E
Christ we follow You

A E A
Jesus, give us work to do
D A/C# A/E E
As we learn to follow You
F#m A/C# E F#m
Old has gone, You make us new
D E A
Christ we follow You

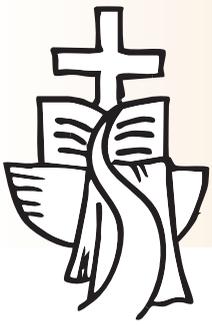
CHORUS 1

VERSE 5

A E A
Jesus Christ, we bear Your name
D A/C# A/E E
As You served we do the same
F#m A/C# E F#m
For Your glory and Your fame
D E F#m
Christ we follow You
D E A
That all may follow You

CHORUS 2

E A/C#
We will follow You,
D A/C# E F#m
Gentle Shepherd You lead us
A/C# E C#/E# F#m
We will follow You,
D A/C# E F#m
From our burdens You freed us
D A/C# E F#m
At Your table You seat us
D A/C# E F#m
In our hunger You feed us
D A/C# E A A/C# D E A
We belong to You, Jesus



Walk by the Spirit – Galatians 5:13-26

I. Called to Freedom, Not the Flesh

1. The gospel sets us free—true freedom is the power to love, not the permission to sin.
2. Following Jesus leads to humble service, not self-gratification. Freedom in Christ is an invitation to love, not license to sin.

II. Love Fulfills the Law

1. Jesus taught that His followers would be known by their love (John 13:35). Love reflects the heart of Jesus and fulfills the purpose of the law.
2. Biting and devouring (v. 15) shows what happens when we follow the flesh instead of Christ.
3. Following Jesus means building others up, not tearing them down.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Danisa Ndlovu writes on page 103: “One of the most difficult and challenging areas in following Christ is in recognizing the power of the gospel in bringing down the racial, tribal, class, and religious walls.”*

III. Walk by the Spirit, Not the Flesh

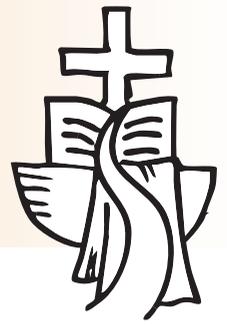
1. The “flesh” refers to our sinful nature—self-centered desires opposed to God. The Spirit leads us in the way of Jesus—toward holiness, humility, and love.
2. You can’t follow Jesus in your own strength. You need the Spirit to guide and empower you.

IV. The Works of the Flesh vs. the Fruit of the Spirit

1. These are obvious signs of living apart from Christ: sexual immorality, hatred, jealousy, selfish ambition, etc. Paul warns: “Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
2. These are not achievements, but evidence that Christ is alive in you. The fruit grows as we remain connected to Jesus and surrendered to His Spirit.
3. We must actively put to death the old way of living—daily surrender. Discipleship is costly—it involves choosing Jesus over self.
4. The Spirit doesn’t just live in us—He leads us. Following Jesus is not about perfection, but daily dependence on the Spirit.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through **Word**



Abide in Me – John 15:1-8

I. Jesus, the True Vine

1. The vine gives life to the branches. Without the vine, the branch dies. Jesus alone sustains, nourishes, and empowers us to live and grow.
2. Following Jesus begins with staying connected to Him as your source of life.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Danisa Ndlovu writes on page 95: “Listening for the voice of Jesus is not primarily about an answer. Sometimes God graces us with answers when we ask a question, but we must move past simply listening for answers if we are to move more deeply into Following Jesus.”*

II. The Purpose of Following Jesus: Bearing Fruit

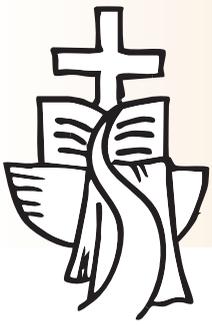
1. Fruit represents Christlike character, good works, and influence that glorifies God. Fruitbearing is the evidence of a real relationship with Jesus.
2. Sometimes God prunes comforts, habits, or distractions—not to hurt us, but to grow us. Following Jesus will change you—it always leads to transformation and fruit.

III. Abiding in Jesus: The Heart of Discipleship

1. Abiding means staying, dwelling, remaining—living in close relationship with Christ. It’s a continual dependence—through prayer, the Word, obedience, and trust.
2. We can be busy for Jesus but spiritually dry without Him. Power, wisdom, peace, and fruit come only from abiding.
3. Jesus wants us to remain. Abiding isn’t optional if we want a life that lasts.

IV. God’s Glory Is Revealed Through Our Fruit

1. When we abide in Jesus, our prayers align with His will. Fruitful prayer comes from a Word-filled, Christ-centered heart.
2. God delights to answer the prayers of those who stay close to His Son. The more you follow Jesus, the more you pray like Him—and see fruit like Him.
3. The goal of following Jesus isn’t just self-improvement—it’s God’s glory.
4. We don’t follow Jesus to earn salvation—but fruitfulness is the evidence that we are truly His.
5. The world sees Jesus when His people bear His fruit.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Word*

My Yoke – Matthew 11:25-30

I. The Humble Heart of God

1. The truths of the kingdom are not grasped by pride or intellect but received by child like trust.
2. The world exalts status, achievement, and self-sufficiency. Jesus calls us to dependence, not performance.

II. The Unique Invitation of Jesus

1. Following Jesus means trusting in His revelation of the Father—He is the Son who reveals the heart of God.
2. To follow Jesus is to know Him personally and walk with Him.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Danisa Ndlovu writes on page 98: “Being a follower of Christ requires a radical change of character and therefore a behavior which stands in direct contrast with the common attitudes and behaviors of the majority.”*

3. Jesus isn’t calling the strong and perfect—He’s calling the weary and worn-out.
4. “Burdened” refers to both life’s hardships and the oppressive weight of legalistic religion.

III. Take My Yoke: The Lifestyle of Following Jesus

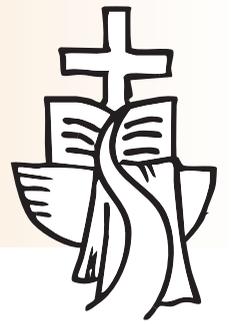
1. A yoke symbolizes submission and partnership. To take Jesus’ yoke is to align your life with His will, values, and pace.
2. Jesus is “gentle and humble in heart”—unlike the harsh demands of the world or religion. Following Him means walking closely, learning slowly, and growing deeply.
3. Jesus offers rest. This is not passive rest—it’s the deep rest of the soul that comes from knowing you’re loved, accepted, and sustained by Him. Jesus doesn’t add burdens—He lifts them.

IV. A New Kind of Rest

1. Jesus’ way is not always easy, but it is good, fitting, and freeing. He empowers what He commands—His Spirit enables us to walk in grace.
2. The “burden” of following Jesus is light because it comes from love, not law.
3. Following Him leads to peace, purpose, and rest even in the midst of pressure. The more closely we walk with Jesus, the lighter life becomes.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

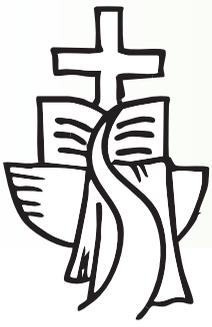
- How did you first decide to follow Jesus, or what has that journey looked like?
- What are some challenges you face when trying to follow Jesus in today's world? How can we keep our faith strong when it feels hard to follow Jesus?
- What does obedience to Jesus look like in everyday life? How do you stay connected to Jesus daily?
- What role does prayer and reading the Bible play in following Jesus?
- How important is it to follow Jesus in community with others? In what ways does a community of followers of Jesus help us as individuals?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What do you think it means to follow Jesus?
- What are some things Jesus did that we can do too? What is something Jesus taught that you want to remember every day?
- How can we show others that we are followers of Jesus?
- Can you think of a time you made a good choice because you were trying to follow Jesus?
- How do we learn more about Jesus so we can follow Him better? What's one thing you can do this week to follow Jesus more closely?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does it really mean to follow Jesus in your daily life?
- What are some challenges people your age face when trying to follow Jesus today? How do your friends or school environment influence how you follow Jesus?
- What are some things in your life that help—or hurt—your walk with Jesus? How do you stay rooted and close to Jesus when you're busy or feeling distracted?
- Is there a difference between believing in Jesus and following Him? What do you think?
- Have you ever had to make a tough choice because you were trying to follow Jesus? How can we encourage each other as a group to follow Jesus more boldly?



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship through *Art*

COMMUNAL COLLAGE

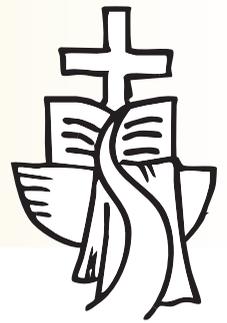
Invite a group to gather for a meal, Bible study, and/or special event. As an opening activity, have the group create placemat collages depicting what it means to follow Christ. Using a variety of materials such as magazine clippings, markers, and photos.

Ask each person to gather pictures, words and phrases that depict what it means to them to follow Christ. After a designated amount of time, invite each person to share and explain their collage to the group.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship *Practices*



ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Learning how to follow Jesus means we need to pay attention to where he goes and how he moves. A spiritual exercise we can do as we make decisions for our lives is to take a new look at the phrase, “what would Jesus do?”. Here are some ways to break down that question into more focused areas.

Who:

- Who did Jesus spend the most time with?
- Who received the harshest Words from Jesus?
- Who did Jesus heal?

What:

- What did Jesus do so that he could serve so many?
- What was Jesus’s goal during his 33 years of life on earth?

When:

- When did the Lord meet with his Father?
- When did Jesus respond to the needs around him?
- When did Jesus become angry?

Where:

- Where was Jesus’s home?
- Where was Jesus welcomed?

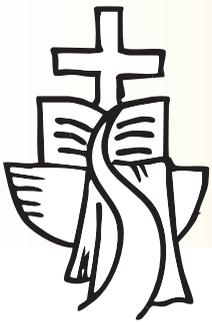
Why:

- Why did Jesus choose the disciples he chose?
- Why did Jesus upset those who were most religious?

How:

- How did Jesus heal people?
- How were Jesus’s teachings?
- How did religious individuals respond to Jesus, compared with those in need?

When we take time to ask these types of questions, we get to know Jesus. When we know who Jesus is, what he does, when he moves, where he goes, why he does what he does, and how he does it, it is easier to follow him as we walk through our lives. Without knowing Jesus intimately, it is difficult to follow him well.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship *Practices*

LEARNING TO LISTEN

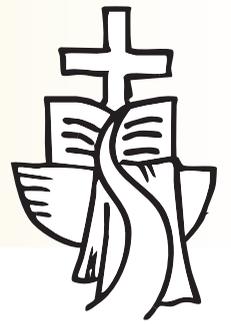
Listening to the voice of Jesus is foundational to following him. How do we learn to recognize Jesus's voice? Here are some ways to practice active listening to the Lord:

- **Dedicate a regular time to spend uninterrupted moments with God.** If this is not already a habit, begin with small increments of time. Begin by reading a verse or psalm that helps to quiet your mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Whenever your thoughts wander, ask the Lord to bring you back to a place of active listening. When a new thought comes to your mind, write it down in a journal so you can compare those words with God's voice in scripture. If what you hear in that quiet space does not align with the character of Jesus and with God's Word, then it is clear that what you heard was not Jesus.
- **An important way to discern Jesus's voice when actively listening to the Holy Spirit is through taking steps of faith and obedience.** The Holy Spirit sometimes speaks to our hearts and minds through new and unexpected thoughts. Those thoughts can require action that aligns with how God has moved in the past. If you feel led to show God's love to someone, yet that action would take risk, take that risk. When following that leading brings blessing, you can trust that God was moving your heart. Observe the way it felt when God spoke to you, and pay attention when it happens again. Acting on what you hear from the Lord and observing the effects of that obedience is one of the ways that you can learn to identify the voice of Jesus.
- **Listening to the voice of Jesus should always be paired with scripture.** When reading God's Word, invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate his truth to you. Ask the Lord to open your heart to receive whatever he has for you, and how you are to respond with action.
- **Learning to discern between your own thoughts and Jesus's voice is a process that should be shared with other believers.** By listening to God together, there is more opportunity to have a larger picture of how God's Word fits with what each individual has heard. There is peace in having something confirmed by what others have heard from the Lord.

It is important to intentionally listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, to test what you have heard in light of scripture and God's character, to process what you hear with others who are listening to the Lord, and to respond in obedience. The more this is practiced, the more natural it is to recognize the voice of Jesus.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Worship *Practices*



JESUS AS LORD

To follow Jesus well, it is important to identify other things in the world that we can be tempted to follow. Invite the group to make a list of some of those things. Some examples could be famous people, trends, financial success, family or cultural expectations, intellectual respect, or friends. Encourage young people to contribute. Use the song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” to actively choose Jesus over the things mentioned on the list. The words to the song can be adapted to include those ideas. It might look like this:

- We’ll serve others and love like Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.
- We’ll build peace instead of violence...
- We’ll choose humility, not popularity...

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Look at what Jesus did while on the earth. Are his followers doing the same things? If not, take some risks, allow the Holy Spirit to work through you, and begin to see how your life can better reflect the life that Jesus lives. Practice doing the things that you see Jesus doing in scripture. This is best done in community.

- **Miraculous healing**
- **Liberating people from spiritual bondage**
- **Eating with “sinners” and being their friend**
- **Proclaiming the good news**
- **Spending extended time with the Father**
- **Responding to the needs that the Holy Spirit identifies**

Following Jesus is done best when in relationship with other believers. Encourage discipleship and mentoring relationships between more mature believers and younger believers. Be companions to one another as you both follow Jesus.

THE LENS OF CHRIST

When reading God’s Word, interpret both New and Old Testaments through the lens of Jesus. In every part of the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s big picture plan, and how Jesus fulfills that plan. Read a passage together, then ask everyone how Jesus fits with that story.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Talk about what it means for us to “pick up our cross and follow him”. Invite everyone to share examples of what their current day “cross” would be. Distribute flat river rocks and provide paint so that each person can either draw or write what their “cross” would be. Decorate the rock, then carry it with you to remind you that Jesus is the one leading the way.

Jesus was able to do what he did on this earth because of the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit dwells in us today. Just like Jesus, we can constantly seek the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. That way of functioning will help us to look more and more like Jesus.

Belonging to the Community of Faith



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Prayer*



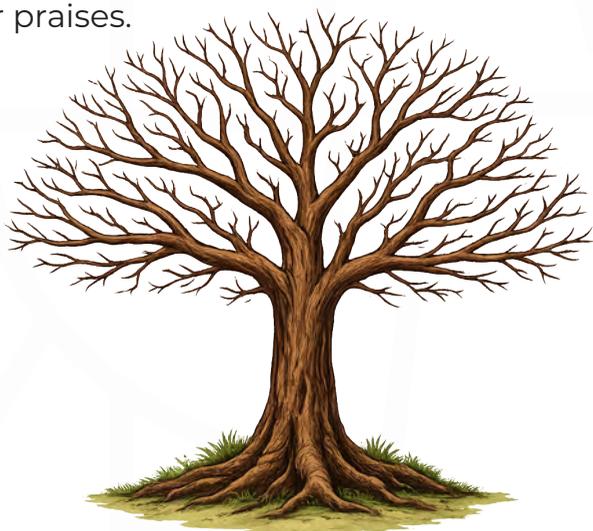
WALL OF PRAISE & PRAYER

Find a space in your church where multiple generations have access to a wall or a bulletin board. To create an interactive prayer space, first consider a theme where people will be able to add their prayer needs and praises to the wall.

For example, put up the trunk and branches of a tree and have green leaf cutouts for people to add their prayer needs and colored leaf cutouts to share praises.

Another example would be an illustration of a brick wall, with one color brick for prayer needs and another color for praises.

A simple example would be a bulletin board with cutouts shaped like hands, one color for prayer needs and another for praises.



PRAYING THROUGH HYMNS

If you're in a place where musically, some hymns might seem outdated to you or hard to sing, a good way to tap into our BIC church history might be to pray through some of the hymns.

Most of our hymns are theologically rich and beautifully written. Encourage your congregation to pray through a hymn or have a leader pray through a hymn aloud.

PRAYER CHAIN

Create a text thread or series of text threads that can be used to share prayer needs and communal praise.

Ensure that text threads are intergenerational (all ages, all stages) and are not just a copy of existing Sunday School threads or youth group threads.

Group text messages can hold up to 20 people - for each 20, assign one person as the "leader" to share any needs that come in to a "leader" text thread maintained by a staff member.



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Come All You Weary K. Bluett/P. Zach

Song Perspective: Corporate

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Recordings: Eternal Light (Paul Zach)

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Morning and Evening G. Bonifant/T. Green

Song Perspective: Corporate

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Optimal key(s): Bb, C

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Somos el Pueblo de Dios M. Witt

Song Perspective: Corporate

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Recording(s): Homenaje a Jesus (Marcos Witt)

Optimal key(s): E, F, G

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com

The Blessing/La Bendicion C. Brown/C. Carnes/K. Jobe/S. Furtick

Song Perspective: Corporate

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Recording(s): The Blessing (Kari Jobe)

Optimal key(s): E, F, G

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

The Lord's Prayer (It's Yours) B. Fowler/J. Scooter/M. Maher

Song Perspective: Corporate

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Recording(s): The Stories I Tell Myself (Matt Maher)

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Additional Songs:

Bind Us Together (Leslie Jordan), Come Christians Join to Sing (#1 HPW*), Leaning on the Everlasting Arms (E. A. Hoffman), Shout to the North (Martin Smith), They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love (Peter Scholtes), We Will Feast in the House of Zion (Sandra McCracken)

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

Come All You Weary

Kate Bluett, Paul Zach

C G Am F C G

Come all you wea - ry come all you dis - tressed
 Come all you right - eous come you who are strong
 Come all you woun - ded come all you be - trayed
 Come all you hope - ful come you who want more

Dm C G Am F G C

Come to his still - ness find in him your rest
 Come when you have fal - len come when you've Gonewrong
 Come to his sha - dow rest here from the fray
 Come dis - ap - poin - ted come a - ching and sore

Am G

Lay down your la - bors and lay down your works
 Lay down your stri - ving and thirst for ac - claim
 Come to his arms as the sa - vior draws near
 Why spend your mo - ney for what has to fail

F C G C

Take on your shoul - ders an ea - si - er yoke Come all you
 Drink of his com - fort and rest in his name Come all you
 Bring him the pain that you bear e - ven here Come all you
 Come to the one who a - lone can pre - vail Come all you

G Am F G C G Am F G C

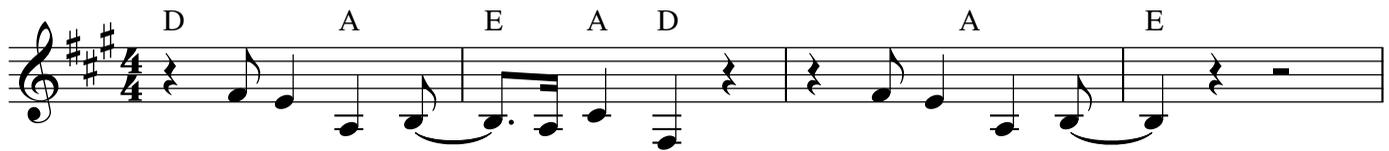
wea - ry find in him your rest
 wea - ry find in him your rest
 wea - ry find in him your rest
 wea - ry find in him your rest

Morning and Evening

Gabi Bonifant Green and Tristan Green

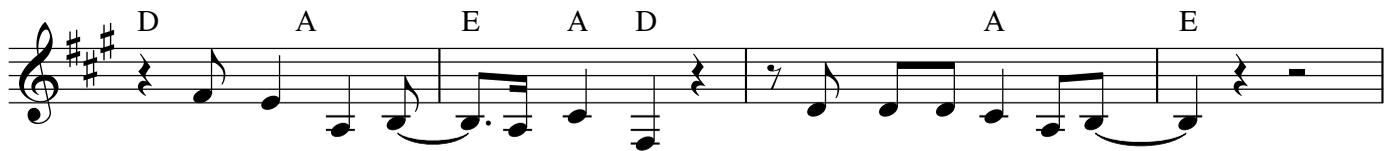
VERSE 1

D A E A D A E



We ga - ther here___ in this place to seek your face. ___

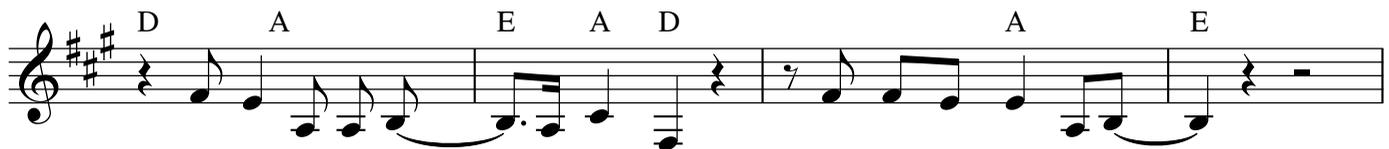
D A E A D A E



We bring our joy___ and our pain. Our hope in you sus tains. ___

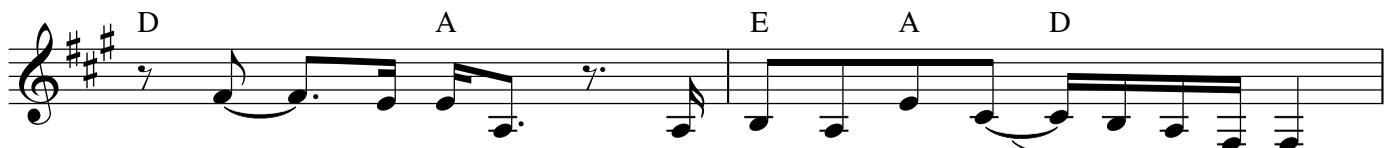
VERSE 2

D A E A D A E



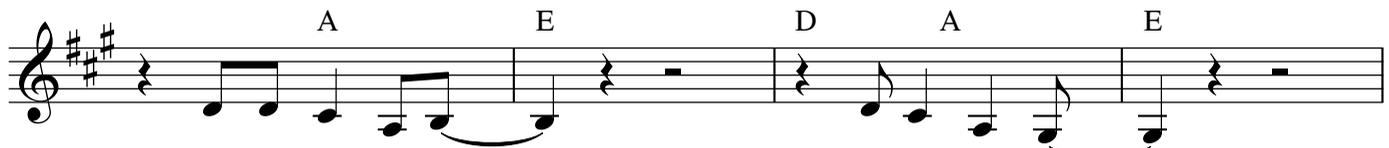
We car - ry the weight___ of our days. Oh how we strive in vain. ___

D A E A D



Lord,___ for give us and show us your way. ___

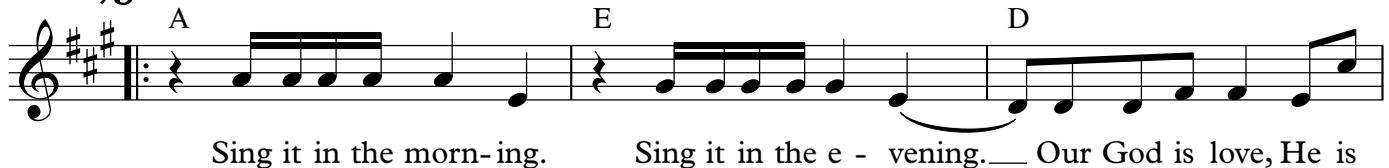
A E D A E



In your ho - ly name;___ in Je - sus' name. ___

CHORUS 1

A E D



Sing it in the morn - ing. Sing it in the e - vening. ___ Our God is love, He is

A E A E



love. ___ Sing it when we feel it. Sing it when we don't. ___

Morning and Evening

Gabi Bonifant and Tristan Green

Key - D | Tempo - 72 | Time - 4/4

VERSE 1

D A E A D A E
We gather here in this place to seek your face

D A E A D A E
We bring our joy and our pain; our hope in you sustains

VERSE 2

D A E A D A E
We carry the weight of our days; Oh how we strive in vain

D A E A D A E D A E
Lord, forgive us and show us your way. In your holy name; in Jesus' name

CHORUS 1

A E D A E
Sing it in the morning, sing it in the evening; Our God is love, He is love

A E Bm A/C# D
Sing it when we feel it, sing it when you don't; He is faithful and just

Bm A/C# D
It is Christ whom we trust

VERSE 3

D A E A D A E
You bring life to hearts that are numb; Your breath fills our lungs

D A E A D
Restore our vision to fulfill the mission

A E D A
Your kingdom come; Your will be done

CHORUS 2

A E D A E
Seek him in the morning, seek him in the evening; Our God is love, He is love

A E Bm A/C# D
Share it when we feel it, share it when we don't; He is faithful and just

Bm A/C# D
It is Christ whom we trust.



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Word*

Place of Belonging – Acts 2:42-47

I. Devotion to the Core of Community Life

1. Devoted to the Apostles' teaching—the community shared a common foundation in God's Word. Belonging means not just emotional connection but shared spiritual convictions.
2. Devoted to fellowship (*koinonia*)—not casual acquaintance, but deep partnership in mission. True community is more than proximity; it's about presence and participation.
3. Devoted to breaking bread—eating together builds trust, remembrance, and family-like bonds.
4. Devoted to prayer—prayer anchored their relationships with God and with one another.

II. Unity and Awe in God's Presence

1. A community centered on Christ is marked by reverence, not routine. Signs and wonders were a confirmation that God was among them.
2. The Spirit works powerfully where unity and devotion are present. Unity prepares us for awe.

III. Shared Lives and Radical Generosity

1. They didn't just worship together; they shared life—resources, time, and homes. Community life went beyond the sanctuary into everyday needs.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Rob Douglass and Naomi Smith write on page 128: "When we say that we belong to the body of Christ, we are declaring: I need you. You need me. We do not have the luxury of giving up on each other, and we are called to a deeper level of commitment to and dependence upon one another."*

2. They met daily—community was not a Sunday event but a way of life. Belonging means we show up—with our presence, attention, and care.

IV. A Witnessing and Growing Community

1. They worshiped together and found favor—the world saw something compelling.
2. The church grew not because of programs, but because it was a living, loving, Spirit-filled family. People want to belong to something real and redemptive.
3. A healthy, loving community is God's greatest evangelism tool. When people see us love well, they will want to know the source of that love.

BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Word*



Known by Love – John 13:31-35

I. The New Commandment: Love One Another

1. Jesus gives a new commandment that elevates the call to love beyond mere affection or kindness. It is self-sacrificial love, modeled after Jesus' own love for His disciples.
2. This love is not contingent on the worthiness of the other person; it is a love that chooses to serve and give even in the face of betrayal and suffering.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Rob Douglass and Naomi Smith write on page 121: "Discipleship for our spiritual ancestors was a deliberate following of Jesus within the context of a covenant community in order to be more Christlike and to reflect him more clearly to the world."*

3. The standard of this love is set by Jesus Himself: True love is not self-centered, but Christ-centered, demonstrated through sacrificial acts of service and forgiveness.

II. The Impact of Love: A Witness to the World

1. Jesus doesn't say the world will know we are His disciples by our doctrinal accuracy, church attendance, or even our morality, but by our love for one another.
2. The credibility of the gospel message hinges on the love we show to one another. How can we expect to witness to a world about God's love if we don't reflect that love within the church?

III. Our Love Speaks Louder Than Words

1. This love is not about simply tolerating one another but about genuinely loving and serving each other, which will be noticed by the watching world.
2. In a world marked by division and strife, love stands as the greatest testimony to the world.

IV. Living Out Jesus' Love in the World Today

1. The love of Christians should be a countercultural witness that displays a different way to relate to one another—rooted in humility, grace, and forgiveness.
2. When the world sees the selfless, sacrificial love of Christ demonstrated among believers, they are invited to experience the love that transcends their own brokenness.



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Word*

True Community – Romans 15:1-13

I. Belonging Requires Bearing With One Another in Love

1. Paul speaks to the “strong”—those mature in faith. Maturity is not a weapon for judgment, but a tool for support. In God’s family, strength is used to carry others, not elevate ourselves.
2. We’re called to build each other up, not tear down. Belonging means we show grace to those still growing. We don’t expect perfection—we offer patience.

II. Belonging Imitates the Example of Christ

1. He didn’t live to please Himself but laid His life down for us. Paul quotes Psalm 69:9 to show that Jesus accepted suffering for the sake of others.
2. Paul prays for a unified mindset—one marked by Christlikeness. Unity doesn’t mean agreement on everything, but agreement in heart and mission.
3. When diverse people worship with “one voice,” it’s a powerful witness.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Rob Douglass and Naomi Smith write on page 131: “As we live out our calling to be the covenant community, a people belonging to God, we become a symphony of praise. We proclaim his mighty acts and witness to the wonder of his marvelous light in our lives.”*

III. Belonging Includes All People

1. Welcoming others reflects the Gospel and honors God. Belonging grows when the church becomes a home, not a club.
2. Paul quotes multiple OT texts to show that God’s plan has always included the Gentiles. He emphasizes God’s desire for a multiethnic people.
3. The church is God’s beautiful mosaic of cultures, backgrounds, and stories. Belonging isn’t based on sameness—it’s rooted in shared redemption.

IV. Belonging Overflows With Hope

1. Paul ends with a benediction—a prayer that God would fill us with joy, peace, and hope.
2. We don’t hold on to hope alone—it overflows in the body of Christ.
3. The Holy Spirit fills us so that our community becomes a wellspring of life and light.

BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

- What does it mean to you to “belong” to the community of faith? Why do you think God designed us to live and grow in community rather than alone?
- How has being part of a church or small group impacted your spiritual journey? How can we better support one another as members of the body of Christ?
- What are some signs of a healthy and Christ-centered faith community? What role does vulnerability and authenticity play in building true Christian community?
- Have you ever felt disconnected from the community of faith? What helped you reconnect? What can we do—individually and together—to help others feel welcomed and valued in the church?
- In what ways can our group serve the broader church or local community together?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What is the church? Is it just a building, or something more? Why is it important for us to go to church or be part of a faith group?
- Who are some of your friends at church or in your faith community? What do you enjoy most about being part of our church or small group?
- What does it mean to be part of God’s family? How can our family serve others in our church or faith community?
- Can you think of someone in our church who has helped you or encouraged you? How can we help someone new feel welcome at church?
- How can we grow closer to God together as a family and as part of His church?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does a “community of faith” look like to you? Why do you think it’s important to belong to a group of believers?
- How has being part of a church or youth group helped you grow in your faith? Why is it important to worship, learn, and grow together instead of alone?
- What makes you feel like you truly belong in a faith community?
- Have you ever felt left out in a church setting? What helped (or could have helped)? How can we make others feel welcomed and included in our faith community?
- How can we be more intentional about building real friendships within the church? How can we truly be a “community of faith” outside of the church building?



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship through *Art*

STAINED GLASS

Traditionally Anabaptist buildings and sanctuaries are bare because of the value of simplicity, but in this project consider exploring how to bring art and physical beauty into the worship space. Stained glass design should be made up of a variety of smaller sections and pieces. Gather a group of congregants to work together to complete the project, possibly assigning smaller groups a certain color of glass or a certain quadrant of the project.

Lancaster BIC created four seven-foot-tall stained glass panels that fill the front of the sanctuary. The colors of the panels move through the colors of the Christian Year. Each piece of glass was cut and glued by members of the church, the wooden frames constructed by another member, and the backlighting developed by the youth. These panels add not just beauty, but an opportunity to teach the Christian Year to a church and a tradition that is new to following such a rhythm.



TEXTILE FIBER ART

Invite a group of congregants to gather and create with textiles to create murals, tapestries, and quilts.

One example is this textile art mural created for a Sermon on the Mount series at Grantham BIC. The visual arts ministry is important to Grantham because it helps the congregation connect to God in worship visually. Worship is more than just music! The visual arts ministry also helps to creatively inspire and support artists in the congregation, so they can integrate their creative identities into their Christian faith.



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship *Practices*



COMMUNION PRACTICES

Sharing in the Lord's Supper is an integral part of how we live out our faith in community. There are many creative ways that Communion can be shared by church families. Creating spaces for reconciliation between individuals and the Lord, as well as between individuals who have been in conflict, is extremely important.

Here are some ideas for approaching Communion with intention

Make it known the week before sharing in Communion that it will take place so that everyone can be intentional about inviting the Holy Spirit to search their hearts. By providing time, there is space for the work of confession and forgiveness before participating in Communion.

Emphasize the importance of the process of working through conflict in Matthew 18. **Practice forgiveness** in intentional ways in the life of the church (See Pursuing Peace Practices for more ideas on this)

Situate small tables around the room with the Communion elements. Spend time in meditation and reflection with music quietly played or sung before taking the bread or cup.

For smaller groups, **share the elements with one another** as you pray for one another.

Invite individuals to speak a designated phrase, then complete the phrase with their own short prayer. "A leader will provide a phrase such as this: Christ, as part of your Body, we choose to... Then individuals can respond with short answers such as...forgive, love, accept, reach out, surrender, reconcile, include, build bridges, share..."

Re-visit the practice of deacons or elders **making the traditional communion bread** by praying for the congregation through the repetitive action of mixing the dough, rolling it out, making patterns in the dough, and baking it.

Host a baking day and invite younger members of the community to learn how to make the bread with older members.

Create an atmosphere of meditation and contemplation before participating in the time of Communion. Play music that focuses thoughts on Christ's sacrifice and our response in the context of community. Leave space in the service for people to be reconciled to God and to one another.

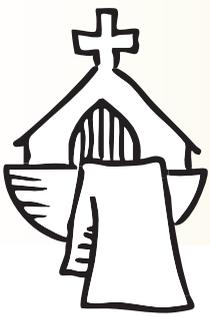
Incorporate physical reminders of what Communion signifies for God's people, such as a simple wooden cup with juice inside, a loaf of unleavened bread, a basin and towel, or a cross.

Adaptions for Young Children

Have sensory items such as cups, artificial bread, coloring pages, felt cutouts of communion elements for quiet play.

Adaptions for Older Individuals

Consider having elements that are easy to swallow or melt in the mouth such as wafers.



BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship *Practices*

FINDING WAYS TO WORSHIP TOGETHER OUTSIDE OF SUNDAYS

Sunday morning worship is the way that many people experience corporate worship, however there are many unique ways that the Body of Christ can worship in community apart from an organized Sunday service. Spend time as a family of faith to gather creative ideas for how the church can worship corporately. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Small group or life group gatherings in homes
- Worship around a bonfire
- Organize hymn sings at a park or in someone's backyard
- Host worship nights in the homes of those who have musical instruments on hand
- Create a space for sharing God-honoring poetry
- Serve others together
- Do a Bible or book study that helps in spiritual growth
- Share stories of God's goodness with a focus on combining generations
- Gather to artistically create something that draws hearts to God
- Attend a concert with others or larger worship gathering with others
- Share meals together with a focus on including people who are newer to the church
- Mentor or disciple someone
- Foot-washing service
- Concert of prayer
- Prayer walks
- Sharing in Communion
- Christmas caroling
- Spend time in nature, sharing songs or verses that highlight God's glory in his creation
- Participate in retreats or camps with others

BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Worship *Practices*



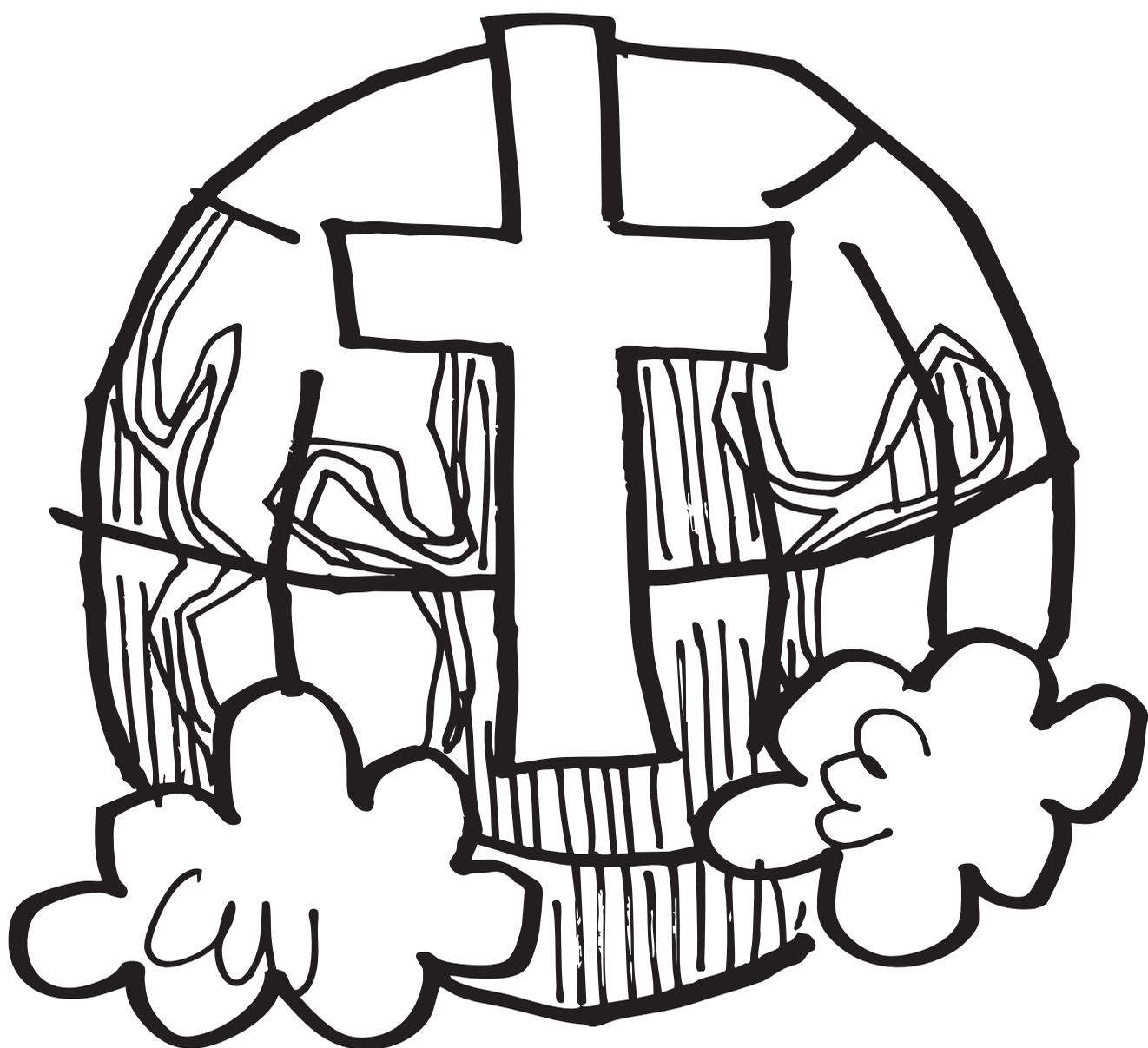
SHARING IN LIFE TOGETHER

What makes a church family a true community? The need to belong is a driving force that attracts many seekers to take a chance on church. Being intentional about sharing in life together as a church family is important. Here are some ways that churches can be family to one another:

- **Take pictures** of individuals and family units, and highlight different people on bulletin boards, on a slide during announcement times, or by making a wall of pictures of those who are part of the church. Including names with pictures helps people to learn names more intentionally.
- **Make birthdays known**, and invite people who enjoy writing notes of encouragement or making artistic greeting cards to send each person in the church a thoughtful card on their birthday.
- When someone is moving, **organize a moving party** for them and pray a blessing over their new home and neighborhood.
- **Celebrate new marriages and the arrival of babies** with a bridal or baby shower.
- When there is a funeral, **support those who are grieving** by accompanying them in the funeral and organizing a meal train for those who have lost a close family member.
- When someone is in **the hospital or ill, visit and pray** with them.
- **Invite people without family** to join your family for holidays.
- Organize a **“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”** event so that people who are not accustomed to spending time together outside of organized church activities have an opportunity to interact over a meal.
- Ask adults and families who do not typically work with the youth to **host a bonfire, a barbecue, or pool party for the youth** at their home.
- **Encourage hospitality** in your congregation: share meals together after a church service or host a themed meal with tacos, chili, fondue, charcuterie, breakfast for dinner, an international carry-in, or just have pizza. The point is to share together in natural ways over a meal.

All of these normal activities of life can be recognized as sacred moments. One way to do that is by creating songs or prayers as a community that can be part of your normal lives. Just as some people sing the Doxology as a blessing before sharing a meal with others, simple songs, prayers, or scriptures can be repeatedly paired with activities that are cyclical in the life of the church (such as a song of blessing for a new baby, songs that are always sung at baptisms, prayers that everyone learns and that are prayed together when someone loses a loved one, etc.). Be creative as a church family!

Witnessing to the World



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYER FOCUS - THE “WORLD”

Preparation:

When I say the word “world,” it often refers to my wife, my 5-year-old son, family, friends, colleagues, the culture I come from, and the places I’ve been — it is my world. But beyond that, there is the wider world — the real, vast world that exists beyond my experience: places I’ve never been, cultures I haven’t encountered, people groups I haven’t met, and countries I’ve only heard of.

As we prepare to reflect and pray with a focus on Witnessing to the World, let us lift up both our personal worlds and the world beyond. When we say the word “world” during our prayer, let’s pause — remembering our own world and also the whole world. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to pray specifically for a country or people group as He brings them to mind.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for choosing me — and us — to be witnesses to the world (pause).

We humbly acknowledge that this is Your mission, and that Your Spirit is already at work in the lives of people. Thank You for inviting us to participate in what You are already doing.

Holy Spirit, help me to be sensitive to Your gentle nudges — to see the needs of people in the world around me (pause).

Give me a burden to pray for the lost, and to practically take part in witnessing to the world (pause), in the ways and at the times You lead.

In Jesus’ precious name we pray,
Amen.

By Stephen Badiger, BIC U.S

PRAYER OF WITNESS

God of hope and courage, you call each of us to bear witness to your abundant love in a frightened world. All around us are signs the world is struggling and the future is unclear.

Strengthen our confidence in your unfailing grace and grant us the courage to move onward even when we cannot see the way, knowing that you will guide our every step. Amen.

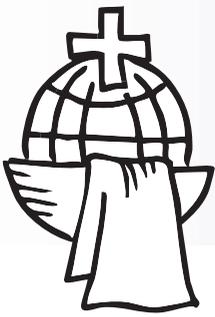
DISCIPLES’ PRAYER

Empowering God, you called your disciples to share the good news of your love to the ends of the earth. They were a motley crew, many from the margins of the society of their day.

Sometimes I feel on the margins of life, and I wonder if you can use me. Remind me that power comes from you and you alone.

Give me a courageous and willing spirit so that I may boldly go wherever and to whomever you send me.

Amen.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

God of Grace H.E. Fosdick/G. Yoder

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recordings: Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Let Us Be Known (Por la Gloria) M. Armstrong/M. Massey/N. Moore/R. Flanagan

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): F, G, A

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, Included

Recording(s): Crumbs (Liturgical Folk), Neighbor Songs (Porter's Gate)

Jesus Christ B. Lawley

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): E, F, G

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Encounter Church Worship)

This Little Light of Mine Traditional

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): E, F, G, A

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

You Are Good/Eres Fiel I. Houghton

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): G, A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Decades (New Breed), Cosas Poderosas (En Vivo)

Additional Songs:

Hear the Call of the Kingdom (Getty), Holy Ground (Joel Payne), I've Witnessed It (Passion), Jesus Shall Reign (#276 HPW*), On a Hill (Chris Moss), Psalm 126 (Isaac Wardell), Será Llena la Tierra (Juan Salinas), The Earth Shall Know (Porter's Gate).

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

God of Grace

Words: Harry Emerson Fosdick, Music: Greg Yoder
Key - D | Tempo - 118 | Time - 4/4

INTRO D G Bm Asus A

D G Bm Asus A
God of grace and God of glory, On Your people pour Your pow'r.

D G Bm Asus A
Crown Your ancient Church's story; Bring her bud to glorious flower.

G A Bm D
Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage, For the facing of this hour,

G D/F# A D
For the facing of this hour.

D G Bm Asus A
Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn our Savior and His ways!

D G Bm Asus A
Fears and doubts too long have bound us; Free our hearts to faith and praise.

G A Bm D
Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage, For the living of these days,

G D/F# A D
For the living of these days.

D G Bm Asus A
Cure Your children's warring madness, Bend our pride to Your control;

D G Bm Asus A
Turn us from our selfish gladness, Rich in things and poor in soul.

G A Bm D
Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage, Lest we miss Your kingdom's goal,

G D/F# A D
Lest we miss Your kingdom's goal.

D G Bm Asus A
Save us from weak resignation to the evils, we implore;

D G Bm Asus A
Let the search for Your salvation be our glory evermore.

G A Bm D
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving You whom we adore,

G D/F# A D
Serving You whom we adore.

LET US BE KNOWN

Matt Armstrong, Micah Massey,
Nate Moore, Ryan Flanigan

Transcribed by
Owen Stroud

VERSE

1. Que a - le - grí - a sea nues-tra mo - tor: en ca - da lu -
2. Let us be known by our love: let ev - ry

gar y co - ra - zón can-ta la el Se - ñor. Que de nues-tras vi - das
word and ev' - ry deed ho - nor the Son. Let our light shine

a-bun - dar en es - pe - ran - za. Que a - le - grí - a sea nues-tra mo - tor!
in ev' - ry eye. Let us be known by our love!

CHORUS

Por la glo - ria del Pa - dre, por la glo - ria del Je - sus,
For the glo - ry of the Fa - ther, for the glo - ry of the Son,

por la glo - ria del Es - pi - ri - tu, que a - le - grí - a sea nues-tra mo - tor!
for the glo - ry of the Spi - rit, let us be known by our love!

Jesus Christ

Brock Lawley

Key - G | Tempo - 66 | Time - 4/4

INTRO

C2 **G** **Dsus** **Em7**

VERSE 1

C
Come weary come broken

G
Come widow and orphan

D
This is true religion

Em
Jesus Christ

C
Sometimes He's a fire

G
Sometimes just a whisper

D
But always a savior

Em
Jesus Christ

CHORUS

C **G**
Hallelujah, hallelujah

D
Oh what a Savior

Em
Jesus Christ (2x)

VERSE 2

C
Spoke truth to the power

G
Showed grace to the leper

D
There has been no one other like

Em
Jesus Christ

C
We deserve condemnation

G
But He's a well of redemption

D
Come drink from the fountain

Em
Jesus Christ

Am **G/B** **C**

BRIDGE

Am **G/B**
Who is greater than all this fear?

C
You are You are

Am **G/B**
Who is faithful year after year

C
You are You are

Am
And when I falter

G/B
who's always there?

C **G**
You are, You are, You are

This Little Light of Mine

Traditional

G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/D

G C/G G C/G G C/G G G7

This lit-tle light of mine___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 Ev - ery - where I go___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 Je - sus_ gave it to me I'm gon-na let it shine.___

C G C/D

This lit-tle light of mine___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 E - very-where I go___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 Je - sus_ gave it to me I'm gon-na let it shine.___

G C/G G C/G G B7 Em

This lit-tle light of mine___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 E - very-where I go___ I'm gon-na let it shine.___
 Je - sus_ gave it to me I'm gon-na let it shine.___

Cm/Eb G/D D

1.2. G

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine_

3. G G/D D

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

G G/D D7 C G

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine_

This Little Light Of Mine

Traditional

Key - G | Tempo - 148 | Time - 4/4

INTRO G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/D

VERSE 1

G C/G G C/G G C/G G G7
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

C G C/D
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

G C/G G C/G G B Em
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

Cm/Eb G/D D G
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

VERSE 2

G C/G G C/G G C/G G G7
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine

C G C/D
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine

G C/G G C/G G B Em
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine

Cm/Eb G/D D G
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

VERSE 3

G C/G C/G G C/G G G7
Jesus gave it to me so I'm gonna let it shine

C G C/D
Jesus gave it to me so I'm gonna let it shine

G C/G G C/G G B Em
Jesus gave it to me so I'm gonna let it shine

Cm/Eb G/D D G
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

ENDING

G/D D G G/D
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

D C G
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

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Based on the 2026 Towel and Basin Worship Collective recording

Original key: G

WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through **Word**



Our Witnessing Mission – Acts 1:1-11

I. The Certainty of Christ's Mission

1. Acts continues what Jesus “began to do and teach”—His work isn’t finished. The Church continues Jesus’ mission by the Spirit.
2. The disciples witnessed the risen Jesus over 40 days—fueling their boldness.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Erica and Jonathan Lloyd write on page 150: “Into darkness, discouragement, fear, and all manner of oppressive things, we get to show up—not with a responsibility to understand and fix everything, but with the call to be a loving witness.”*

II. The Priority of God's Kingdom

1. The disciples were still thinking about earthly kingdoms (v. 6). Jesus encourages them to also consider a spiritual mission: witnessing to all people.
2. Jesus doesn't send them out alone—He tells them to wait for divine power. Witnessing is not done in human effort but Spirit-empowered obedience.

III. The Power for the Mission: The Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit gives us courage, clarity, and conviction to share Jesus boldly. He also enables us to live lives that reflect Christ.
2. The Spirit's primary purpose in Acts is to empower the Church for mission.

IV. The Pattern of Our Witness: Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth

1. The gospel—starts local: Jerusalem (home); spreads regional: Judea and Samaria (neighbors and outsiders); goes global: Ends of the earth
2. This is not just for apostles or pastors—it's for every Spirit-filled Christian. We are all called to be everyday witnesses of Jesus.
3. This is the age of witness—our time to shine as lights in a dark world., declaring that Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Word*

Global Mandate – Matthew 28:18-20

I. The Power Behind the Mission: Christ's Authority

1. Jesus is not speaking as a teacher or prophet—but as King and Lord. His authority spans heaven and earth—this gives us confidence and urgency.
2. We go into the world not in our own strength, but under the power of the risen Christ.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Erica and Jonathan Lloyd write on page 154: “The great commission, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations,’ (Matthew 28:19 NIV), was never intended to apply to only some of the people who follow Jesus.”*

II. The Scope of the Mission: All Nations

1. “Go” implies intentionality—whether across the street or across the globe.
2. This mission is global in scale, personal in application. It’s not just about decisions—it’s about discipleship.
3. This includes our neighbors, workplaces, schools, and unreached people groups.
Where is Jesus calling you to go—physically, digitally, relationally—to witness for Him?

III. The Heart of the Mission: Making Disciples

1. Baptism is an outward sign of inward transformation. Our witness should lead people to identify publicly with Jesus.
2. Discipleship isn’t just information—it’s life transformation. Witnessing means walking with people long enough to see them grow in obedience.
3. We are not just called to “get people saved” but to invest in them spiritually. True witnessing is long-term, relational, and obedience-focused.

IV. The Promise That Sustains the Mission: Christ's Presence

1. Jesus doesn’t send us alone—He promises to go with us. His Spirit empowers us to witness with boldness and compassion (Acts 1:8).
2. This mission will not end until Jesus returns. The Church’s role is not to retreat from the world, but to reach it until the end.

WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Word*



Christlike Witness – Philippians 2:1-11

I. The Foundation of Our Witness: Unity in Christ

1. Paul appeals to shared spiritual blessings: encouragement, comfort, love, and fellowship. These blessings become the basis for how we treat one another.
2. A unified Church reflects the reconciling power of the Gospel (John 17:21).
3. Disunity among Christians damages our witness.

II. The Heart of Our Witness: Humility and Love

1. The Gospel calls us to lay down ego and entitlement. Pride repels people—humility attracts.
2. True humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.
3. Compassionate love for others opens the door for Gospel conversations.

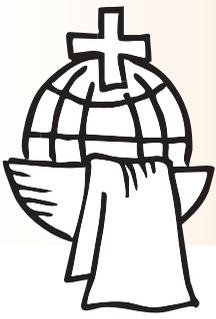
III. The Model for Our Witness: The Mindset of Christ

1. Witnessing doesn't start with a method—it starts with a mindset. Jesus chose the path of servanthood, not status.
2. He let go of His rights to reach us. As His followers, we must be willing to step into others' worlds, serve them, and sacrifice comfort.
3. His obedience brought salvation. Our obedience to Him gives credibility to our message.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Erica and Jonathan Lloyd write on page 146: "If we have a heartfelt desire that others would come to know and experience the love and grace of God, we must be intentional and active in seeking out ways to make him known to them outside of our church buildings and its programs."*

IV. The Message of Our Witness: Jesus is Lord

1. Jesus' humility and obedience led to His exaltation. Our message to the world is this: Jesus is Lord—He alone saves.
2. Our mission is to help people bow willingly now before they are compelled to later.
3. Our lives and words should point people to the lordship of Christ. Let your life lift up the name of Jesus so that others are drawn to confess Him as Lord.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Discussion Questions

Small Group Discussion:

- Why do you think Jesus calls all believers to share the Good News?
- Can you share a time when you had the opportunity to talk about your faith with someone? What happened?
- What fears or challenges do you face when it comes to sharing your faith? How can we be faithful witnesses even when we don't see immediate results?
- What are some practical ways we can witness in our neighborhoods, schools, or work places? How can our actions be a witness to those around us?
- What is one step you can take this week to be a more intentional witness for Christ? How can we support and encourage one another in sharing the gospel?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What does it mean to tell others about Jesus? Why do you think Jesus wants us to share His love with others?
- What are some Bible stories that show people telling others about God?
- Can you think of a time someone showed Jesus' love to you? What did they do? Why is it important to be kind and honest when we talk about our faith?
- Who are some people in your life who don't know about Jesus yet?
- What's one thing our family can do this week to help someone feel God's love?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does "witnessing" or "sharing your faith" mean? Why do you think Jesus calls His followers to tell others about Him?
- Have you ever had a chance to share your faith? What happened, and how did it feel?
- What fears or doubts do you have about witnessing to others? What makes it hard to talk about your faith at school, online, or with friends?
- How can your actions speak louder than words when it comes to sharing Jesus? What are some creative ways we can show God's love?
- What's one step you can take this week to be a light for Jesus where you are?

WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Art*



CREATIVE MOVEMENT

Gather four to six dancers of a variety of ages, a color of paint for each dancer and a large canvas. Ahead of time on the canvas, draw the outline of the continents so that it looks like a world map.

Have each dancer dip their feet in paint and stand at the four corners of the map.

This could get messy. If that is a concern, place a larger layer of plastic or tarp down under the surface you are intending to paint. You may also wish to have something ready to totally cover the dancers feet when they are finished to enable them to walk to an area where they can wash the paint off without getting it on the floor.

Ahead of time, choose a song and create choreography to go along with the theme of witnessing to the world. Some songs that might work well for this would be “Send Me Out,” “This Little Light of Mine”, or “Let Us Be Known By Our Love”. As the dancers move and interact with each other through the choreography of the song, they will be leaving their color paint on the canvas of the world under their feet. The intent is to have them move all around the canvas rather than stay in one area.

At the end of the dance, hold up the canvas to reveal the map of the world that has now been touched by every dancer’s color all over the globe.

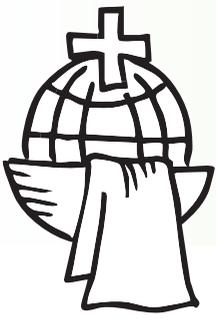
This can be used to demonstrate how our witness and our prayers impact God’s Kingdom all over the world. When we are part of God’s plan, He can magnify our efforts to bless people around the world for the sake of Christ!

COOKING AROUND THE WORLD

Invite families in the congregation to select a country from around the world to represent for this activity. Perhaps you would recommend countries where your church has missionaries currently serving or simply let them choose any country. They would then research some authentic and traditional recipes from that country to make for a special meal.

As you gather for the meal, each family may want to bring some of the raw spices for folks to smell and/or sample to give a sense of the aromas of the various cultures around the world. Then at mealtime, have sample size portions of the various meals available for everyone to sample.

As you are eating, consider having a mission presentation about how each country is responding to the Gospel and updates on your current missionaries. You can also include a devotional based on Matthew 5:13-16 where we are encouraged to be the salt and light.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship through *Art*

GUIDED GROUP PAINT BY NUMBER

To set up for this activity, you will need small canvases for each person participating, a simple digital image of the world with a scripture verse, paint supplies, and a projector or other such tool to project your image upon the canvases.

Ahead of time, you will need to spread your canvases out and project the image on the canvases so that you can trace the image. **Each of the individual canvases will only contain a small portion of the final image on it.** Each color used in the final painting will also need to be coded with a number.

As you trace the image on the individual canvases, you will also need to label the colors needed for each section. You have now created your paint-by-number canvases. Mix up the individual canvases and place one at every place setting prior to your event.

As your participants arrive, keep the final product a surprise. Each person will be painting a small section of the painting. By the end of the evening, as each canvas is finished, the participants can puzzle piece together the final product to finally see the whole picture.

This exercise demonstrates how each of us has a part to play in spreading the Good News of Jesus all around the world! It takes each of us doing our part to see the whole picture.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship *Practices*



CONCERT OF PRAYER

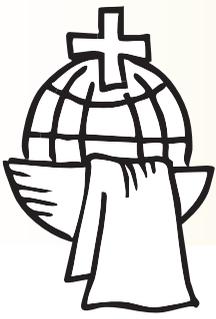
A concert of prayer is an intentional way to build a culture of intentional prayer for your congregation. By focusing on different areas for intercession, and moving from one space to another, an hour of prayer goes by very quickly.

Prepare a large room with “stations” spread around the space. Each station highlights a different area for intercession and prayer. Either play recorded worship music to signal the time to change from one station to another, or have someone play an instrument or lead everyone in song as groups move from one station to the next. An introductory meditation or explanation is helpful before beginning so that everyone knows what to expect.

This is an opportunity to incorporate creative ways of engaging in prayer, and all generations can participate in this exercise. You can provide art supplies and poster boards or white boards at each station so that people can add to lists for prayer or add art to represent ways to pray. Suggestions of topics for prayer can be provided. Props can be left at different stations that can be touched or held as people pray.

Here are some ideas to spark creativity:

- A woven basket from **Ecuador** can be held as someone prays for the person who made it and those who use that type of basket in their daily lives.
- The aroma from garlic cut up and soaking in olive oil can remind us to pray for **Spain**.
- Corn meal in a bowl can help us to join those in **Zambia** who pray for rain for their crops.
- Two mugs next to a pot of coffee can encourage praying for the **friends** we invite into our lives.
- Food stamps next to cheap, processed food can help us to pray for **neighbors** who struggle to feed their families.
- A collection of pill bottles can lead to prayer for **people** struggling with chronic illness.
- A bowl of uncooked rice can be touched to encourage prayer for parts of **Asia**.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship *Practices*

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

How can we witness to the world if we do not have relationships with those who are in the world? **Belonging to a community of faith is a gift that God has given us, and that gift is meant to be shared.** Many people outside of the church would be uncomfortable attending a formal activity in a church building, yet would enjoy interacting with you and your Christian friends in a natural setting for them.

Discipleship is a journey that begins even before someone chooses to walk with Jesus. Sometimes they need to observe God at work in his people before they choose to follow him. That requires the creation of spaces that are safe for people who are not yet walking with God to get to know the Body of Christ.

Hospitality is a natural way to introduce friends and neighbors to the kingdom of God. One example of this would be to invite an intentional mix of friends who are believers and friends who do not yet know Jesus over for a meal. In this context, friends who never choose to attend a church service can meet other likable people who know Jesus. While sharing a meal, laughing, and talking about challenges, seeker friends can observe the kingdom way of approaching life as it is lived out in natural community. Avoid preachy attitudes or putting people on the spot.

This setting is not about a conversion moment- it is about being church outside of the church building and authentically witnessing to our friends and neighbors alongside other believers. Here are some ways to worship God through our hospitality:

- Mix up groups of friends instead of segregating Christian friends from coworkers, neighbors, and other friends
- Reach out to local universities and build relationships with international students- invite them to share in life with your family
- Organize a language and cultural exchange in your home with immigrants
- Initiate a babysitting co-op with other families with young children.
- Coordinate a block party in your neighborhood, and invite friends from church to help serve.

WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship *Practices*



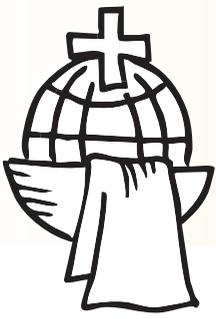
A TREASURE HUNT

In the early church in Acts, witnessing to the world was a very active practice that was a natural outpouring of what God was doing in his church. There were many examples of Christians traveling in pairs or small groups to go to the synagogue, meet in homes, or serve in their communities.

Many of the stories of God working miracles through his people came as a result of those people being available to have their plans interrupted so that God's Spirit could work through them. There was miraculous healing, there was much sharing of testimonies, and there were examples of the Holy Spirit providing a specific word for an individual that would then point them to Jesus.

The same Holy Spirit that was working through the early church is active in our lives today. A powerful way that we can be intentional as the church to witness to the world is by responding to God's Spirit through action. This is a skill that needs to be practiced, and that should be practiced in community. Here is one way to intentionally practice this:

- Gather together to spend time as a group asking the Holy Spirit for someone specific to bless.
- Spend time listening to God's Spirit for an image, a word, or an idea to serve as a "clue" for the treasure hunt.
- Share with the group what God impressed on your heart and in your mind, then take time as a group to discern what next steps should be. Send groups of 3-4 people to different areas on a treasure hunt to find the people that God wants to bless through you.
- Following the leading of the Holy Spirit, approach the people God brings to you, and offer to pray for them or just share God's love with them.
- After each person in the group has followed the leading of the Spirit to bless someone, return to your meeting place and celebrate what God has done with the rest of the group.



WITNESSING TO THE WORLD

Worship *Practices*

WE ARE ALL CALLED - CONFIRMING THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Witnessing to the world begins in our daily lives in our normal routines. We often have commissioning services for global workers who are being sent to another culture to serve. What would happen if we regularly commissioned one another to serve the Lord in our own communities?

Here are some ideas:

- **Display a map of your church's community** and invite people in the congregation to put a pin where they live, where they work, where they go to school, and where they practice sports or are involved in hobbies. Pray over the map as a congregation, and look for areas where there is overlap. Where is your church given natural open doors to witness to the community?



The Holy District

- Before school begins in the fall, invite students, teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and anyone else associated with the world of academics to come forward **for a prayer and blessing** as their church family sends them into their context to serve.
- When there are “secretary appreciation days”, “grandparent days”, or other less-known days dedicated to specific groups of people, **take the opportunity to encourage those people in their calling through their jobs or relationships with others.** Pray a blessing over them and send them out to serve the Lord and reflect his glory.
- **Highlight different groups of people** in the congregation who are witnessing to others in natural ways through a pre-recorded video interview, through an interview and sharing of stories during a service, or even on a bulletin board.

Serving Compassionately



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYER OF SERVICE

*We value serving others at their point of need,
following the example of our Lord Jesus.*

*But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord
think of me. Psalm 40:17(a)*

Lord, before we pray for those in need,
or for the ability to serve others at their point of need,
we confess together

Lord, we are poor and needy.

Lord, we give to you our motives to serve, which we
admit are conflicted.

At our best, we desire to serve in obedience to Jesus,
and we also realize that our desire to be obedient
is mixed with desires to feel worth,
or play the role of a savior.

And so again we confess,

Lord, we are poor and needy.

Jesus, we bring our mixed motives and our own
neediness to you as we seek to follow you in serving
the needs of others.

And so we pray together,

Jesus, help us to follow you to serve...

...those who are overlooked and forgotten

Jesus, help us to follow you to serve...

...those we judge because of their decisions

Jesus, help us to follow you to serve...

...those held in bondage

Jesus, help us to follow you to serve...

...our enemies.

Lord, give us compassion

to love and serve as you did,
selflessly and for the sake of the other.

We pray through Christ, our Crucified and Resurrected
Lord. Amen.

***Indicates participation of the congregation**

PRAYER WALK

**Host a monthly or weekly
prayer walk meeting in your
community or in a local park,
or mall.**

As the Spirit leads you may end
up praying for strangers, the
Church, your community, or
other ministries.

This event can be made
accessible to all ages and all
stages. In your invitation, be
sure to let everyone know they
are welcome to attend. Let
parents/caregivers know that
strollers are welcome and the
older generations that walkers/
wheelchairs are welcome and
make allowances for those who
move at a slower pace.

If appropriate, include stops
along the way for specific
prayer activities or ways for
children and youth to interact
with others. Make it fun.



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Prayer*

A PRAYER FOR SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Dear Heavenly Father,

Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” He showed us what that meant when he went around doing good and relieving the hardship and suffering of so many people. Jesus said, he came, not to be served but to serve. Jesus also told his disciples that he was sending them in to world in the same way, that you, Father, sent him into the world. We understand part of that to mean, we too should be about serving others with compassion, in ways that will help to alleviate their suffering and hardship.

So, Father, we ask that you would give us eyes that will notice and ‘see’ the hurting around us in the same way that Jesus ‘saw’ the hurting people around him. We confess that, so often we are focused on ourselves, and don’t notice the pain and hurt of others. Help us develop eyes that will constantly be looking around for opportunities to serve others. Give us ears that will listen attentively to the stories people tell us about how they are struggling, so we will be acutely aware of their needs.

Father, fill our hearts with empathy, so we even feel the hurts of others, as that will help us learn what our neighbors are pleading for. Fill our hearts with compassion for others, so we will love our neighbors enough to want to alleviate their suffering. Help us recognize the vast resources you have entrusted to us, not so we can live in luxury and comfort, but so we can generously share from our abundance, and give to help those around us.

Father, we understand that serving is often done when it is not convenient. We see that Jesus was regularly interrupted to serve others with compassion. So, give us the humility to let others interrupt us, to let our schedules be changed, in order to meet the needs of others, when they need the help, and not just when it is convenient for us. Forgive us for the times we have been selfish with our schedules and our time, and have failed to serve our neighbors compassionately.

Father, now we ask that you help us to have the same attitude as Jesus, and humbly consider others better than ourselves. Father, we confess that so often, when we see people in need, it is easy for us to think that we are better than they are. Perhaps we think that we have worked harder than they have worked, or we have been wiser than they have been in their stewardship of their resources. Forgive us for such arrogance. Change our hearts.

May we serve in such a way that we will hear from you, each day, well done, good and faithful servant. We ask this in Jesus Name – our example of what it really means to serve compassionately.

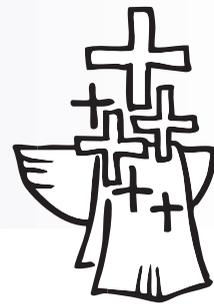
By Ray Kipe, Five Forks BIC

INTERGENERATIONAL SUGGESTION:

Print this prayer and hand it out to several different reads of different ages and stages of life. Or, create several intergenerational groups that read their part aloud in unison.

SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Music*



SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Christ Before and Christ Beneath S. Crissman/I. DuBose/B. Leaman

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recordings: Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Humble King/Alma Hambrienta B. Brown

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): D, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): A Christmas Celebration (Vineyard Worship) ; Alma Hambrienta (Adoración Viña)

Love That is True S. Crissman/G. Bonifant

Song Perspective: Personal/Corporate

Optimal key(s): G, A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

The Compassion Hymn K. Getty/K. Getty/S. Townend

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Live At The Gospel Coalition (Keith and Kristen Getty)

The Servant Song R. Gillard

Song Perspective: Personal/Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, OneLicense

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, onelicense.net

Recording(s): Cornerstone (John Niven)

Additional Songs:

Dame Tus Ojos (Marcela Gandera), God of Justice (Tim Hughes), Less Like Me (Zach Williams), Make Me a Servant (Kelly Willard), Multiply Your Love (Andy Park), Make Us O God a Church That Shares (#296 HPW*), Send Me (Brandon Lake), This is Our God (Chris Tomlin).

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

Christ Before and Christ Beneath

Seth Crissman, Ivana DuBose,
Bryan Leaman

C Fmaj7 C F C F C

Christ be-fore and Christ be- neath Move our hearts and move our feet

Detailed description: This system contains the first two lines of music. The treble staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 6/8 time signature. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Christ be-fore and Christ be- neath Move our hearts and move our feet". Chord symbols C, Fmaj7, C, F, C, F, C are placed above the treble staff.

F C C/E G C

Fill the hun - gry, bless the meek and lead us in - to peace Christ be-fore and

Detailed description: This system contains the third and fourth lines of music. The treble staff continues the melody. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Fill the hun - gry, bless the meek and lead us in - to peace Christ be-fore and". Chord symbols F, C, C/E, G, C are placed above the treble staff.

F C F C F

Christ be- neath Move our hearts_ and move our_ feet Fill the hun-gry,

Detailed description: This system contains the fifth and sixth lines of music. The treble staff continues the melody. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Christ be- neath Move our hearts_ and move our_ feet Fill the hun-gry,". Chord symbols F, C, F, C, F are placed above the treble staff.

C Am G F Am G F C

bless the meek and lead us in - to peace_ and lead us in - to peace

Detailed description: This system contains the seventh and eighth lines of music. The treble staff continues the melody. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. The lyrics are: "bless the meek and lead us in - to peace_ and lead us in - to peace". Chord symbols C, Am, G, F, Am, G, F, C are placed above the treble staff.

Christ Before and Christ Beneath

Seth Crissman, Ivana DuBose, Bryan Leaman

Key - C | Tempo - 108 | Time - 6/8

Intro C FMaj7

C F C
Christ before and Christ beneath

F C
Move our hearts and move our feet

F C
Fill the hungry, bless the meek, and

C/E G
Lead us into peace.

C F C
Christ before and Christ beneath

F C
Move our hearts and move our feet

F C
Fill the hungry, bless the meek, and

Am G F
Lead us into peace, and

Am G F C
Lead us into peace.

C G G/F C/E
A - men, A - men

F C/G G C
A - men, A - men

C G G/F C/E
A - men, A - men

F C/G G Am
A - men, A - men

F C/G G C
A - men, A - men

Love That is True

Seth Crissman, Gabi Bonifant

VERSE

Musical notation for the Verse of "Love That is True". The key signature is A major (three sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: A, F#m, D, A, F#m, D, A, E/G# in the first line; A, F#m, D, E(sus4), E, F#m in the second line; A, D, E, F#m in the third line; A, F#m, A/E, E, A, A/C# in the fourth line. The lyrics are: "God take my hands_ and give them work to do_ God take my feet_ and send them where you choose_ God take my heart_ and turn it back_ to you_ May my life_ be an e - cho_ of Your love that is true_".

CHORUS 1

Musical notation for Chorus 1 of "Love That is True". The key signature is A major (three sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: D, A, A/C# D in the first line; A, E, D, A, E/G# F#m in the second line; A, F#m, A/E, E, A in the third line; A, F#m, A/E, E, A in the fourth line. The lyrics are: "Teach me to serve_ with com- pas - sion_ Light a fire_ in- side my heart_ to burn for you_ Turn my words_ in - to ac - tion_ From a life_ that is changed;_ By a love that is true_ May my life_ be an e - cho_ of Your love that is true_".

Love That is True

Seth Crissman, Gabi Bonifant
Key - A | Tempo - 72 | Time - 4/4

Intro A F#m D

VERSE

A F#m
God take my hands
D A E/G#
And give them work to do
A F#m
God take my feet
D Esus E
And send them where you choose
F#m A
God take my heart
D E F#m
And turn it back to you
A F#m
May my life be an echo
A/E E A A/C#
Of Your love that is true

CHORUS 1

D A A/C#
Teach me to serve with compassion
D A
Light a fire inside my heart
E
To burn for you
D A E/G# F#m
Turn my words into action
A F#m
From a life that is changed
A/E E A
By a love that is true
A F#m
May my life be an echo
A/E E A
Of Your love that is true.

Interlude Bm7 E7 A D

BRIDGE

Bm7 E7
Open our eyes to see,
A DMaj7
In You we are one family
Bm7 E7
Give us Your work to do;
A DMaj7
Full healing only comes from You
Bm7 E7
Send us all out from here;
A D
Spirit make our calling clear

CHORUS 2

D A A/C#
Teach us to serve with compassion
D A
Light a fire inside our hearts
E
To burn for you
D A E/G# F#m
Turn our words into action
A F#m
From a life that is changed
A/E E A
By a love that is true
A F#m
May our lives be an echo
A/E E A
Of Your love that is true.



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Word*

Towel and Basin – John 13:1-17

I. Jesus' Identity Fuels His Humility

1. Jesus is fully aware that He is on the brink of betrayal and crucifixion. Yet His focus is on loving His disciples: “He loved them to the end” (v. 1b).
2. Jesus, fully secure in His identity, takes the role of a servant. Humility in service isn't weakness—it flows from strength and security in God.

II. Jesus Takes the Position of a Servant

1. Symbolically laying aside His status to take the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). He physically lowers Himself to meet a need no one else wanted to touch.
2. Foot washing was reserved for the lowest servants. No task is beneath us if love is our motive.
3. To serve compassionately, we must first let Jesus serve and cleanse us. Jesus isn't just teaching humility—He's offering spiritual cleansing (v. 10).

III. The Call to Follow His Example

1. He asks, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” (v. 12). The answer is not merely intellectual—it's transformational.
2. The directive is clear: go and do likewise. Serving compassionately is not optional for disciples—it's our calling.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Lynda Gephart and Hank Johnson write on page 166: “Just as Jesus washed his disciples' feet, stooping to serve, he has called us to follow his example.”*

IV. A Promise of Blessing

1. The blessing doesn't come from knowing about compassion—it comes from living it.
2. Compassionate service brings joy—to those who receive and to those who give.

SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Word*



Serving the Least – Matthew 25:31-46

I. The Scene of Judgment: Christ the King

1. Compassion isn't just a "nice option"—it's a kingdom priority.
2. People are separated not by religious affiliation or appearance, but by how they responded to human need.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Lynda Gephart and Hank Johnson write on page 169: "Just as Jesus was grieved by the pain and suffering of people, just as he reached out with compassionate love, touching people no one else would touch, weeping over people's lostness, healing people, feeding people, sharing people's grief, so we are called to do the same as his followers."*

II. The Sheep: Those Who Served Compassionately

1. The surprise of the righteous—they didn't even realize they were serving Jesus—they were simply responding to need.
2. Serving compassionately is not about recognition—it's about reflecting the heart of Christ in everyday life.

III. The Principle: Serving the Least is Serving the Lord

1. Jesus identifies with the vulnerable, marginalized, and overlooked. When we serve the hurting, we are ministering directly to Christ Himself.
2. The "goats" failed to see Jesus in the face of the poor, the sick, the imprisoned. They lived lives of religious detachment, not gospel-driven compassion.
3. Ignoring the needs of others is ignoring Christ. Inaction is not neutral—it's rejection.

IV. The Eternal Consequence

1. The sheep go into eternal life; the goats into eternal punishment. Compassionate service is evidence of genuine faith, not a replacement for it.
2. Every act of mercy echoes far beyond the moment—it matters to God and lasts forever. What you do in love today has eternal significance tomorrow.



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Word*

Love in Action – Romans 12:9-21

I. Love Must Be Sincere

1. Compassionate service flows from genuine love, not obligation.
2. Compassion also involves moral discernment—loving what reflects God's heart.
3. Don't serve out of guilt or for attention. Serve from a transformed heart.

II. Serve with Honor, Passion, and Joy

1. Put others first—not just in action but in attitude.
2. Don't let compassion grow cold—stay fueled by the Holy Spirit.
3. Compassionate service thrives when we stay connected to God's power, not just our own strength.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Lynda Gephart and Hank Johnson write on page 174: "In every place, in every age, serving the needs of others with compassion has been a choice that followers of Christ have been called to make..."*

III. Share with Those in Need

1. Hospitality isn't just opening your home—it's opening your life.
2. Serving compassionately means being available, generous, and openhearted, especially toward strangers.
3. Compassionate service flourishes in humility and unity—it stoops to wash feet.

IV. Respond to Evil with Good

1. Our compassion must extend even to those who treat us unfairly.
2. Trust God to make things right; don't take revenge.
3. Serving compassionately is a form of spiritual resistance—it resists hate, cruelty, and indifference.

SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

- What does it look like to serve with true compassion rather than just out of obligation? How did Jesus model compassionate service in His life and ministry?
- What is the difference between serving someone and serving them with compassion?
- What are some barriers that keep us from serving others with a compassionate heart? How can we guard against burnout or bitterness while serving others?
- How does compassionate service help others see the love of Christ?
- How can we use our time, gifts, or resources to serve others more intentionally? Who in our community or church might be in need of compassionate service right now?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What does it mean to help someone with a kind and caring heart? Why does Jesus want us to help people who are sad, sick, or in need?
- Have you ever helped someone before? How did it make you feel?
- Why is it important to serve even when no one is watching or saying “thank you”?
- What would Jesus do if He saw someone who needed help?
- How can we show love to someone who is having a hard day? How can we help someone at school, church, or in our neighborhood?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- Why do you think Jesus emphasized serving others so much in His teachings? What does it mean to serve others with compassion, not just duty?
- Have you ever been on the receiving end of compassionate service? How did it affect you?
- How can you tell the difference between serving out of love and serving just to look good? How can you serve even when you're tired, busy, or unsure how to help?
- How do you think compassionate service can help someone feel seen and valued? What role does listening play in serving people well?
- What are some real needs you see around you at school, home, or in your community? What's one compassionate act of service you can commit to this week?



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Art*

TEXTILE ARTS

No-Sew Blankets

Invite congregants to join in a blanket making day! One that all ages and skill levels can participate in is creating no-sew blankets. These require two identical size pieces of fabric (often fleece or other warm material). You lay the pieces on top of each other and cut strips along the edges at regular intervals. Then, tie the top and bottom pieces together.

A quick Google or Pinterest search will generate lots of tutorials on this project. The finished blankets can be donated to homeless shelters, natural disaster relief efforts, or perhaps even police/fire departments to be given to people who have suffered house fires or other traumas.

Hats/Scarves/Mittens

Invite your congregants who know how to knit or crochet to work together to create hat, scarf, mitten sets to donate to those in need. This is an excellent opportunity to invite the experienced knitters/crocheters to teach those who would like to learn the art.

One idea is to partner with a local retirement center or nursing home. Many elderly have years of experience with this craft and would be happy to teach younger generations. Not only would the finished product serve the needy community, but the time spent with elderly would be an extremely valuable service to a group of people who often feel lonely and isolated.

CULINARY ARTS

Prepare Meals for New Moms and/or the Sick

Invite congregants to work together to prepare freezer meals in advance for new and expectant mothers, those with upcoming surgeries, and/or those experiencing long-term illness.

Fresh/hot meals can also be taken to those with an immediate need, but consider doing the prep-work together as a community.

Meal Ministry

Consider gathering a group to volunteer with a local soup kitchen or meal ministry to provide meals to those in need. Another expression of this idea might be to have your church host a meal for a given holiday and invite those with nowhere to go. Perhaps Thanksgiving or Christmas.

Yet another opportunity could be to take a meal into a hospital setting, perhaps to serve all of the nurses in a given department or to serve the parents of families in the NICU or other critical care units. Call your local hospital to learn of needs and requirements to make this happen.

SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Art*



SPOKEN SCRIPTURE

Gather scripture about the topic of serving one another and compile into a reading.

Written for eight readers but can easily be updated to include more or less people. This is a good opportunity to use a variety of ages as some of the passages are short and easy to read for even young readers. Consider having the readers spread throughout the room rather than all lined up along the front. My favorite experience has been when there are “surprise” readers sitting in the pews who suddenly stand and join the presentation from where they are. This creates a “pop-corn” type feel. Depending on the size of your sanctuary, you may or may not need microphones or amplification for these readers. Use your judgement.

Reader 1: Be devoted to one another

Reader 5: in love.

Reader 1: Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)

Reader 2: For I was hungry and you gave me food,

Reader 3: I was thirsty and you gave me drink,

Reader 4: I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

Reader 5: I was naked and you clothed me,

Reader 6: I was sick and you visited me,

Reader 7: I was in prison and you came to me.

Reader 8: Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25:35-40)

Reader 1: Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

Reader 2: If anyone speaks,

Reader 1: they should do so as one who speaks the very Words of God.

Reader 3: If anyone serves,

Reader 1: they should do so with the strength God provides,



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship through *Art*

SPOKEN SCRIPTURE, CONT.

Reader 4: so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Reader 5: For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

Reader 6: For you were called to freedom. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,

Reader 6 & 7: but through love

Reader 6: serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)

Reader 8: Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done. (Proverbs 19:17)

Reader 1: In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the Words the Lord Jesus himself said:

Reader 2: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35)

Reader 3: In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Reader 4: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather,

Reader 4 & 5: in humility

Reader 4: value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Reader 6: God is not unjust; he will not forget your work

Reader 7: and the love you have shown him

Reader 6: as you have helped his people and continue to help them. (Hebrews 6:10)

Reader 8: Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:13)

Reader 1: Above all,

ALL READERS: love each other deeply. (1 Peter 4:8a)

SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship *Practices*



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Organize a ministry “fair” similar to a college or job fair. Set up tables after a Sunday service and have each ministry promote what they do and how people can get involved.

Send people from the church to meet with school counselors, school administrators, police, firemen, local government, food banks, and area social workers to find out what the needs are in your church’s immediate community. Dedicate a time for the church to come together in prayer about these needs. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal which areas would be a good focus for your church family to serve, or adopt multiple community needs as ministries in your church.

Send people out two by two to research local organizations and churches that are reaching needs in your church’s community. Learn about how those organizations are being effective, and find out if there are ways you can partner with what they are already doing well. Ask if there are needs that your church family might be able to meet.

Create a database of these organizations and ministries so that when people in need come to your church for help, your church can serve as a connector to resources that you know are available. This builds relationships with the people who come to you as you introduce them to those who can help them at their point of need.

Adopt a mile of a road or a block in your church’s neighborhood to keep free of litter. Organize rotating groups to pick up litter with bright vests with the name of your church printed on them. This is a way to be in your community and opening the door for conversation with those who live near your church family.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

The practice of washing one another’s feet during a Maundy Thursday service is a powerful way to remind us of Jesus’s example of humbling himself and becoming a servant. While this practice is quite counter-cultural, it is also very meaningful to many people as the physical connection of getting on one’s knees to wash the feet of another requires vulnerability, love, and a servant’s heart.



SERVING COMPASSIONATELY

Worship *Practices*

CONGREGATIONAL VISION & MISSION

- Dedicate time as a church family to dream about new ways of serving others. **Make an inventory of the gifts, abilities, and passions of those in your church, and see how those can be combined to serve by meeting the needs in your community well.**
 - Do you have retired teachers in your church, and youth in the community struggling in school? Maybe providing free tutoring could be a way to minister to that need.
 - Do you have bilingual people in your congregation? Connecting with a refugee community or providing English as a Second Language classes could be a good way to serve.
 - Are there many lonely senior citizens in your community? Offering activities in your church building organized by youth working with your church's senior citizens is a good way to cross generational gaps and to bless others.
- Identify individuals in the church who do not have family nearby and are not able to care for their lawn or home due to sickness, injury, or advanced age. **Organize a rotation of people willing to help and to visit with the person who is not easily able to get out.** A food train or an occasional meal provided for someone who is struggling is another way to serve compassionately.
- **Set a goal to provide opportunities to serve others in your church family, to serve in your own community, to serve in another part of the country, and to serve internationally.** Providing information about these service opportunities is an important part of the life of the church. Regional bishops, global workers, and BIC U.S. World Missions staff are available to share with congregations about the opportunities that are available.

COMPASSION KITS/BLESSINGS BAGS

Create "compassion" kits that are available for individuals to keep in their vehicles/backpacks or handbags to share with people they encounter in their daily lives who are in need. These kits could include pre-packaged snack items such as trail mix, granola bars, or crackers, individual applesauce, a bottle of water, bus tokens, and a laminated card with helpful information about local NGO's or ministries that provide for physical needs. On the back of these cards could be contact information for your church, and a verse of blessing about God taking care of our needs.

Everyone can be invited to donate items that will be included in the kit, and assembly lines can be used to build the kits. All ages can participate in the collection of materials and assembly of the bags.

These kits could be stored at the church, but everyone would be encouraged to keep a kit nearby for people they encounter through their daily lives (those who beg at intersections, a classmate who seems hungry, etc.).

Pursuing Peace



PURSUING PEACE

Worship through *Prayer*



REMEMBER THE CHAINS

Materials: World Map or Globe, List of unchurched or unreached countries and/or countries where Christians suffer persecution, Construction paper, Scissors, Tape or staples

World Map – Praying around the Globe

Leader: “Sometimes we use prayer called “intercession.” Intercession is when we pray for others who may need prayer or may not be able to pray themselves because they don’t know God yet. Today we are going to pray for countries where the peace and light of God’s love has not yet been experienced or causes danger to followers of Jesus who live there.”



BIC U.S. World Missions



BIC U.S. World Missions

PRAYING REMEMBRANCES:

LEADER: “Taking the time to remember others is a good way for a family to gather in prayer. Paul says we should “remember those who are in prison as if we were with them.” (Heb 13:3).”

Have the participants gather as families or in small groups of 4-6. Give each group a few pieces of construction paper, scissors, and tape. Instruct them to cut their construction paper into 2 inch strips (Have one cut for demonstration). On each strip, write a name of someone or someplace where that person may be in chains. Take each strip and tape or staple it into a circle and loop the others through to create a chain as you pray (Have a chain ready for demonstration).

After praying for these people and places in groups, have everyone stand up in a circle and hold their chains together. Talk about how when we pray, we can connect with every believer all over the world just like this. Even though we may not see each other, we can join a chain of prayer that is bigger than we could imagine. This is one way we can pursue peace even if we cannot be physically present,

FOLLOW UP

Designate a place in the church to hang up the chain. Have parents/caregivers discuss with children how the chain makes them feel and how we can be peace pursuers in a world that isn’t always kind.

Some other ideas for “remembering” at home could be having pictures of missionaries or countries to send home so they can continue to pray at home or having each family create their own chain for their home.

SERENITY PRAYER

O God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference; living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; and the endurance to accept the consequences of holding on to what we believe to be right. May we put our trust in the power of good to overcome evil and the power of love to overcome hatred. We pray for the vision to see and the faith to believe in a world emancipated from violence, a new world where fear shall no longer lead men or women to commit injustice, nor selfishness make them bring suffering to others. Help us to devote our whole life and thought and energy to the task of making peace, praying always for the inspiration and the power to fulfill the destiny for which we and all men and women were created.



PURSuing PEACE

Worship through *Prayer*

TAKE OUR MOMENTS AND OUR DAYS

The leader's words are in regular text, while the corporate response is in ***bold italics***. "Open prayers" means a pause for silent reflection/prayers. "***Our Father...***" indicates where the Lord's prayer is prayed aloud corporately.

Ask, and it will be given you;
Search, and you will find;
Knock, and the door will be opened for you.

The heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Merciful God, we bring our prayers to you with confidence, in the name of our Lord Jesus.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer.

You wipe away our offenses. We pray for ourselves and those dear to us.
(*open prayers*)

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

You speak your word of forgiveness. We pray for our community and for our neighbors.
(*open prayers*)

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

You have forgiven your people, and you call us to forgive. We pray for the church in all places, that we may bear witness to your reign of justice, peace, and joy.
(*open prayers*)

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

You have reconciled the world to yourself in Christ. We pray for the world, for all who are ensnared in greed, violence, and oppression.
(*open prayers*)

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

We offer you other concerns we carry in our hearts.
(*open prayers*)

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

God of grace and glory, you keep our souls, satisfying us with living bread and holy work. Renew us through forgiveness and restore us in rest, that we may look for the coming of your reign on earth as in heaven. Secure in your love, we pray with humility and joy:

Our Father...

Now may the Lord of peace give us peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with us. Amen.

PURSuing PEACE

Worship through *Prayer*



TAKE OUR MOMENTS AND OUR DAYS

The leader's words are in regular text, while the corporate response is in ***bold italics***. "Open prayers" means a pause for silent reflection/prayers. "***Our Father...***" indicates where the Lord's prayer is prayed aloud corporately.

Rejoice in the Lord always.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

God, breaker of dividing walls, we bring our prayers to you as acts of love for you and for our neighbors.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer.

You are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call. We pray for ourselves and those dear to us.

(open prayers)

You bless the peacemakers;

They will be called your children.

Your generosity is impartial. We pray for our community and for our neighbors. *(open prayers)*

You bless the peacemakers;

They will be called your children.

You proclaim peace to those who turn to you in their hearts. We pray for the church in all places, that we may speak boldly for Christ.

(open prayers)

You bless the peacemakers;

They will be called your children.

Your justice will march, and peace will follow the way. We pray for the world, for all who do justice and love mercy.

(open prayers)

You bless the peacemakers;

They will be called your children.

We offer you other concerns we carry in our hearts.

(open prayers)

You bless the peacemakers;

They will be called your children.

God whose justice shines like the sun, you bless all who seek first your kingdom and righteousness. Fill our hearts with the spirit of the Beatitudes, that we may live this day in simplicity, mercy, and joy. Through Jesus, who taught us to do so, we pray for the coming of your reign:

Our Father...

May the God of peace sanctify us entirely; and may our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls us is faithful and will do this.

Amen



PURSUING PEACE

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Drive Out the Darkness D. Marotta/I. Wardell/J. Swinton/P. Zach

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): C, D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recordings: Lament Songs (Porter's Gate)

Father Let Your Kingdom Come B. Cooper/I. Wardell/L. Alattas/L. Vice/M. Cunningham

Song Perspective: Personal/Corporate

Optimal key(s): F, G

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Work Songs (Porter's Gate), Declared (Hope College)

He Reigns DJay Martin

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): He Reigns (DJay Martin), Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

Peace You Bought D. Trout/H. Niesley

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Used with permission

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Peace You Bought (Trout/Niesley), Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

The Kingdom is Yours A. Keyes/B. Spencer/M. Massey/T. Wilson

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F, G

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, commonhymnal.com

Recording(s): Common Hymnal (Massey/Flanigan)

Additional Songs:

Instrument of Peace (Porter's Gate), Kingdom of Jesus (Jon Guerra), Let Us Be Known By Our Love (M. Massey), Reign of Mercy (Porter's Gate), World Needs Jesus (River Valley Worship), Your Peace Will Make Us One (Audrey Assad)

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

DRIVE OUT THE DARKNESS

Paul Zach, Isaac Wardell,
Dan Marotta, John Swinton

Transcribed by
Owen Stroud

REFRAIN

C E m F C G F G C

Come, O — come, be our light, drive out the dark - ness; come, Je - sus, come.

VERSE

7 C E m F F m

1. Ev' - ry year un - der the thorn, ev' - ry wrong that we have known,
2. Ev' - ry wea - pon made for war, ev' - ry gun, and ev' - ry sword
3. In the emp - ti - ness of grief, through the night of suf - fer - ing,

11 C E m F F m

ev' - ry val - ley will be raised, the an - cient ru - ins will be re - made.
will be mel - ted in the flame to be used — for gar - den - ing.
ev' - ry loss and in the tears, God our com - fort: O be near!

CODA

C E m F C G

Come, O — come, be our light, drive out the dark - ness,

19 F C G F C G

come and end all the vio - lence; come, and do not be si - lent;

23 F C G F C G F G C

come, we cling to Your pro - mise; come, You'll break all in - jus - tice. Come, Je - sus, come.

FATHER, LET YOUR KINGDOM COME

Orlando Palmer, Paul Zach,
Isaac Wardell, Liz Vice,
Latifah Phillips

Transcribed by
Owen Stroud

CHORUS

G C D G

Hal - le - lu, hal - le - lu - jah! Fa - ther, let Your king - dom come.

VERSE

G D/G G

1. May the works — of my hands bring You — joy. May the works
2. May the words — from my mouth speak Your — peace. May the words

6 D G D/G

— of my hands bring You joy. May the works — of my hands bring You
— from my mouth speak Your peace. May the words — from my mouth speak Your

9 G G D G

— joy. May the works — of my hands bring You joy.
— peace. May the words — from my mouth speak Your peace.

BRIDGE

12 G C G/B Am D G C G/B Am D

You make all things new — You make all things new — in

20 G C G/B Am D G C G/B Am D

pla - ces we don't choose. — You make all things new. —

FATHER, LET YOUR KINGDOM COME

By Ben Cooper, Latifah Alattas, Liz Vice, Paul Zach, Madison Cunningham, Orlando Palmer, and Isaac Wardell.
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Songbook design/transcriptions by Owen Stroud (owen@owenstroudmusic.com). CCLI #7097862

He Reigns

D. Jay Martin

VERSES

C C/E F Am G



Come, let us wor - ship the King in His glo - ry and
Come, let us cry out for jus - tice and mer - cy. His
Come, let us cry out for heal - ing and mend - ing of

C C/E F Am G



come, bow be - fore Him pro - claim he is wor - thy.
king - dom is com - ing, the sha - dows are flee - ing.
fa - milies and friend - ships and tribes re - con - cil - ing.

CHORUS 1

C C/E F Am G



Let's sing, "Hal - le - lu - jah, He reigns!"__ Let's

C C/E F Am G Am G



1.2. 3.
Am G Am G

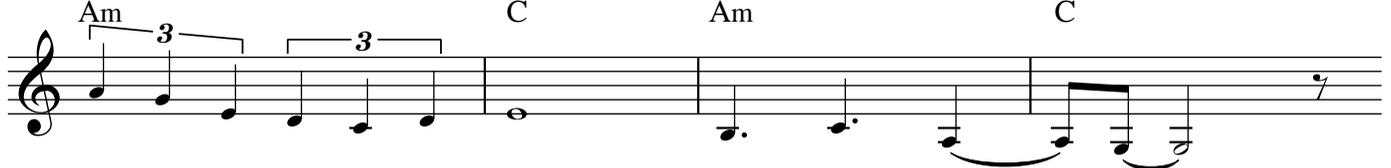
sing, "Hal - le - lu - jah, He reigns!"__

INTERLUDE

Am 3 C Am 3 C



Am 3 C Am C



He Reigns

DJay Martin

Key - C | Tempo - 120 | Time - 4/4

VERSE 1

C **C/E**
Come, let us worship
F **Am G**
The King in His glory
C **C/E**
And come, bow before Him
F **Am G**
Proclaim he is worthy

CHORUS

C **C/E** **F Am G**
Let's sing, "Hallelujah, He reigns!"
C **C/E** **F Am G**
Let's sing, "Hallelujah, He reigns!"

VERSE 2

C **C/E**
Come, let us cry out
F **Am G**
For justice and mercy
C **C/E**
His kingdom is coming
F **Am G**
The shadows are fleeing

VERSE 3

C **C/E**
Come, let us cry out
F **Am G**
For healing and mending
C **C/E**
Of families and friendships
F **Am G**
And tribes reconciling

INTERLUDE

Am C Am C Am C Am C

BRIDGE

Am
Til all is made right
C
For all of His children
Am
We will keep crying
C
And praying and longing
Am
For the day when His kingdom
C/G
Is fully established
F
And all is made right
C/E
all is made whole
F **C/E**
All is submitted under His throne
F
Power is established
C/E
Through His name a-lone
F **C/E**
Every child welcomed into His home
F C/E **F**
To sing, then we'll sing: (CHORUS)

Peace You Bought

Diana Trout, Hannah Niesley

C F⁵/D C/E F(add2) C F⁵/D C/E F G(sus4)

VERSES

F C G(sus4) G

When there's an - ger in__ the at - mos - phere a - round__ us__
When our hands__ are gras - ping des - perate for__ pro - tec - tion__

F C G(sus4) G

When the poi - son of__ re - sent - ment fills__ our veins.
and we're too__ a - fraid__ to lay__ our wea - pons down,

F C G(sus4) G

When we'd ra - ther burn our brid - ges down than mend__ them.
When we'd ra - ther run__ a - lone__ than walk__ to - ge - ther__

PRE-CHORUS

Dm⁷ C/E G(sus4) G

Show__ us__ a bet - ter way.__

Dm⁷ C/E G(sus4) G

Show__ us__ the bet - ter way.__

CHORUS $\text{\textcircled{C}}$

C G(sus4) Am⁷ F(add2)

You laid__ down your crown and you took__ up the cross, sur - ren -
down our crowns and we'll take__ up the cross, sur - ren -

Peace You Bought

Diana Trout, Hannah Niesley

Key - C | Tempo - 72 | Time - 4/4

INTRO C Dm7 C/E F C Dm C/E F Gsus

VERSE 1

F C Gsus G
When there's anger in the atmosphere around us

F C Gsus G
When the poison of resentment fills our veins

F C Gsus G
When we'd rather burn our bridges down than mend them

Dm7 C/E Gsus G
Show us a better way

Dm7 C/E Gsus G
Show us the better way

CHORUS 1

C Gsus Am7 F2
You laid down your crown and you took up the cross

C Gsus Am7 F2
Surrendered to love unafraid of the cost

C Gsus Am7 F2
You showed us the path and we're choosing to walk

F Fm C
In the way of the peace you bought

INTERLUDE C Dm C/E F C Dm7C/E F G

VERSE 2

F C Gsus G
When our hands are grasping desperate for protection

F C Gsus G
And we're too afraid to lay our weapons down

F C Gsus G
When we'd rather run alone than walk together

Dm7 C/E GsusG
Show us a better way

Dm7 C/E GsusG
Show us the better way

PURSUING PEACE

Worship through **Word**



The Harmony of Christ – Colossians 3:12-17

I. Our Identity Shapes Our Peace

1. “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” Paul starts with who we are—not what we must do. Peace begins with knowing that we are chosen, set apart, and loved by God.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, José Otamendi writes on page 195: “Shalom, the divine gift of peace, then, is an intimate state and a social situation that we can experience in the here and now where the contradictions between our attitudes, emotions and thoughts have dissolved, becoming coherent with God’s will, in such a way that we cannot desire violence and revenge.”*

II. Clothe Yourself with Christlike Virtues

1. Put on: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These are relational virtues that actively create and preserve peace.
2. While each virtue matters, love binds them all together—the outer garment that completes the outfit. Love is the fuel that makes peace sustainable.
3. Let Christ’s peace decide how you react, how you speak, when to stay silent, and when to reconcile.

III. Let Christ’s Word and Worship Fill You

1. As we saturate ourselves with scripture, we’re shaped to live more like Christ—peaceful, wise, and gracious.
2. Let God’s Word and worship dwell in you richly, so peace overflows naturally.
3. The world needs more than people who talk peace—it needs people who walk peace.

IV. Pursue Peace Like Christ

1. True peace is not found in retreat, control, or silence—it’s found in Christ and actively lived.
2. You were chosen, loved, and called to wear peace like a garment, held together by love, ruled by Christ.
3. Ask yourself: *What area of my life needs Christ’s peace to rule?*



PURSUING PEACE

Worship through *Word*

Christ Our Peace – Ephesians 2:11-22

I. Remember Who You Were Without Christ

1. Deep hostility existed between Jew and Gentile—barriers of race, religion, and law.
2. Before peace can be pursued, it must be understood: we were all once outsiders.
3. The blood of Christ breaks the distance—between us and God, and between each other.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, José Otamendi writes on page 204: “The only way we can maintain the spiritual dimension of seeking peace, and also the reconciliation in troubled times, is by keeping a profound awareness of God’s presence in our lives, in our words, in compassion.”*

II. Christ Is Our Peace, Who Destroys Hostility

1. Peace is more than just a concept—it is embodied in a person. Jesus embodied peace and made it possible.
2. The cross reconciles us to God and to each other—you cannot have one without the other.
3. In Christ, we are no longer outsiders—but citizens of a new kingdom and members of God’s household. The peace of Christ builds a unified structure. We are built together.

III. Practical Ways to Pursue Peace

1. Tear down dividing walls—racial, denominational, political, relational.
2. Forgive those who hurt you—peace begins with grace.
3. Build bridges with outsiders—welcome the lonely, the forgotten, and the marginalized.
4. Speak peace into conflict—in your workplace, home, church.
5. Live as a reconciler—your life should reflect the message of the Cross.

IV. Become What You’ve Received

1. Peace is rooted in the person and work of Jesus.
2. If Christ has made peace, let your life be a temple where peace is practiced and proclaimed.
3. We live in a world desperate for healing. The Church must show what true peace looks like: forgiveness, unity, and love across every barrier.

PURSUING PEACE

Worship through **Word**



Peace in a Hostile World – Luke 6:27-36

I. Peace That Goes Beyond Comfort

1. Jesus calls us to live in a countercultural peace that reaches even our enemies.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, José Otamendi writes on page 212: “When a Christian has accepted Christ, they begin to experience spiritual peace alongside a sense in which we look forward to eternal peace with God. Through this transformation we embrace God’s gift of shalom in our individual relationships and in our villages.”*

II. Love Your Enemies

1. Pursuing peace starts with a change in posture—from defense and offense to grace and intercession.
2. Jesus is not endorsing being passive or compliant, but resisting the temptation to retaliate.
3. Peace is pursued not by mirroring others, but by modeling Christ—treating others as He does.

III. A Distinctive Love That Defines God’s People

1. Loving the lovable or giving to those who repay you is easy—even unbelievers do that.
2. Our peace-filled responses reveal our true spiritual identity—and point others to the Gospel.

IV. Practical Steps for Pursuing Peace

1. Pray daily for those who offend or hurt you—prayer softens both hearts.
2. Practice radical generosity—time, attention, forgiveness, possessions.
3. Trust God for justice—He sees, knows, and will reward what is done in love.

V. A Peace That Looks Like Jesus

1. Jesus didn’t just preach this message—He lived it.
2. On the cross, He loved His enemies, forgave those who hurt Him, and offered peace to the world.
3. When we pursue peace in this way, we become living testimonies of His mercy.



PURSUING PEACE

Discussion Questions

Small Group Discussion:

- How do you personally define “pursuing peace”? How did Jesus model peace and peacemaking in His interactions with others?
- Why is pursuing peace sometimes challenging, especially in conflicts or disagreements?
- What is the difference between avoiding conflict and actively pursuing peace? How can we pursue peace in environments that seem chaotic or hostile?
- How can forgiveness play a role in pursuing peace within relationships? What role does humility play in being a peacemaker?
- What are some practical steps we can take to foster peace in our church, school, or community?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What does it mean to be peaceful with others? Can you think of a time when you helped stop an argument or solve a problem kindly?
- Why do you think Jesus wants us to be peacemakers? What does the Bible say about living in peace with others?
- What should we do when someone is being unkind or unfair? How can we make peace at home when we disagree or get upset?
- Who do you know that is really good at keeping peace? What do they do? What are some words we can use to help calm down a situation?
- How can we show God’s love by choosing peace instead of fighting? What is one thing our family can do this week to bring peace to someone else?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- Why do you think peace is so important in our relationships with others?
- What situations or people make it hard for you to stay peaceful or be a peacemaker? How did Jesus show peace in the way He treated others—even His enemies?
- What’s the difference between keeping the peace and making peace? Have you ever helped bring peace to a tense or difficult situation? What happened?
- What role does forgiveness play in living peacefully with others?
- What are some ways we can pursue peace at school, in our families, or on social media?
- What is one step you can take this week to be a peacemaker in your world?

PURSUING PEACE

Worship through *Art*



GOOD SAMARITAN SKIT

Gather a group of about seven or eight young people. You can either rehearse this ahead of time or just allow the Spirit to move in the moment as the students respond to the story.

Create name tags for each character in the story or assign a certain costume/prop for each character. Either way, assign the parts so that everyone understands their role.

Read through the Parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke chapter 10. Pause along the way to allow the participants to act out each phase of the story. Continue in this fashion of reading a line and pausing for the children to act out the action until you finish the story.

This can be effective as a sermon illustration or children's message in a community worship gathering.

ART COLLAGE: PURSUING PEACE

Set up a large poster board, bulletin board, or canvas of some kind. Invite the congregation to write, draw, paint, etc directly on the surface or bring in smaller works of art from home to attach to the collage surface.

Each participant should consider what pursuing peace means to them and respond how the Holy Spirit leads them. They might contribute an image that stirs peace in their heart, write a scripture or words that speak of valuing all life, draw a picture of forgiveness, create an artistic representation of reconciliation or use scrapbooking techniques to display non-violent resolution to conflict.

Together, your finished collage will be a picture of God's work of peace in your congregation.



SHORT STORY

Invite your congregation to write a short story or narrative about a time when they experienced God working to bring about a peaceful resolution to a situation. This could be a situation in their own heart and mind or a situation involving other people. Create a space to display the stories for others to read, host a story-telling event where the authors can read their stories followed by discussion, or share the stories over the course of several weeks in the Sunday morning/main gathering time for your church.

For an example of a short story, read Pastor Zach Spidel's Response Essay (pg. 213) in *Compelling Convictions: Finding Our Future in a Modern World*



PURSuing PEACE

Worship *Practices*

CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Focus on creating an atmosphere of reconciliation in your congregation. Allow space for individuals to ask for forgiveness and forgive one another. This can happen during preparation for communion in a corporate service, through prolonged times of meditation and active listening to the Lord during a workshop or retreat, or during a foot washing service. Putting forgiveness into practice in the community of faith is where we practice God's command to forgive one another. This helps us to be more prepared to ask for forgiveness and forgive those who do not know the Lord.
- Create bridges across denominations by partnering with other (non-BIC) congregations in your community. This can happen through joint worship services in public places, prayer walks in communities, and serving together. It is valuable to be in relationship with other believers who can help us grow in areas where we are weak, and who can benefit from learning from us in the areas where God has helped us to grow. When the world sees diverse churches doing the work of serving the Lord together, there is positive impact.
- Host a panel discussion and invite Christians with differing views to present their perspectives on varied issues. Use the listening tools established in conflict resolution training to hear what each side is saying without attempting to argue or win. For example, "I heard you say _____. Am I re-stating your thoughts accurately?"...or... "When you said _____, I felt _____." After those on the panel have shared, invite a Q&A time with an emphasis on the process of healthy listening.
- Offer marriage retreats and workshops to reinforce good relationships. Provide parenting courses with an emphasis on how parenting changes with different stages of child development. During the course, offer free childcare for parents of young children. For parents of teenagers, one part of the course can be offered to teens, another to parents, and then give an opportunity for parents and teenagers to learn together in the same workshop.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Highlight different sub-cultures in your community with a focus on educating the church about cultural practices that have a tendency to be misunderstood or cause conflict. Invite guests who may not be part of your church family, but who are friends of someone in your church to share from their experiences and put a face on the "other". An example: in many cultures from the global south, it is typical for young people to socialize in large groups outside of their homes. They may walk down the street with a large group of friends, or sit on a corner to talk and relax. In the American suburbs, that type of socializing would be viewed as "loitering" or "gang-like activity", and considered suspicious. However, in the cultures of many countries in the world, it is viewed positively. Young people in those cultures are inclusive in their friend groups, and do not need an activity to be the center of their socializing. They are happy just being together.
- Provide training in family conflict resolution for the community through workshops, or dedicate a Sunday School series or discipleship focus series on being peace builders.
- Build a support network for families of incarcerated individuals, families involved in foster care, and those escaping domestic violence. Partnering with organizations already active in these areas will facilitate participation in this network.

PURSUING PEACE

Worship *Practices*

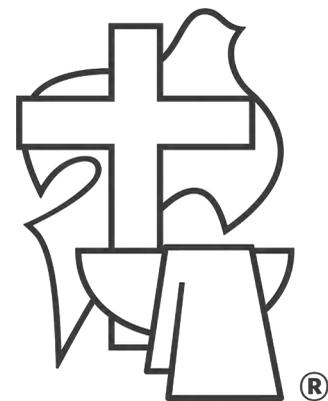


PEACE PRACTICES

- Equip and support children and youth in forming peace clubs in their schools. Peace clubs were developed in Zambia (See article by Enock Shamapani in *Compelling Convictions*) to equip children and youth to mediate conflict in their schools. As young people learned how to work through conflict, they applied those skills to conflicts in their families and neighborhoods, and entire communities experienced transformation. MCC, in partnership with those in countries where peace clubs are thriving, is developing resources to help with this process.
- Introduce the practice of “peace feasts”, in which meals are organized for conversation about faith between Muslims and Christians. Information about how to organize peace feasts is available through contact with Intersociety Christian Fellowship.
- Do research into the areas in your church’s community that have the most violence and conflict. Local law enforcement, school counselors and psychologists, and paramedic teams are good sources of information. Once your congregation has identified areas of need in your community, organize informal events in those neighborhoods that can bring the love and light of Christ to a dark place. Some ideas could be prayer walks, a worship night in a park, sending a food truck (with food provided by the church) to a corner of a neighborhood and sharing a meal with those who live there, organizing kids’ clubs that can easily be set up and engage local families, organize a trash pick-up in that community, or partner with other churches or organizations to provide free tutoring for young people.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR PURSUING PEACE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Host AA and other addiction 12-step program meetings in your church building to create a safe place for the community to seek help.
- Incorporate creativity through skits, artwork, and poetry to help the church family to recognize who our modern-day “enemies” are. Spend time praying for blessing for those who are difficult to love or for give.
- Form a team of trained mediators that can be peace builders in the church and in the community.
- Educate the community in themes of racial reconciliation, and highlight the stories of marginalized people in your community to help open people’s eyes to how the “least of these” experience life.





PURSuing PEACE

Worship *Practices*

AN EXERCISE IN FORGIVENESS

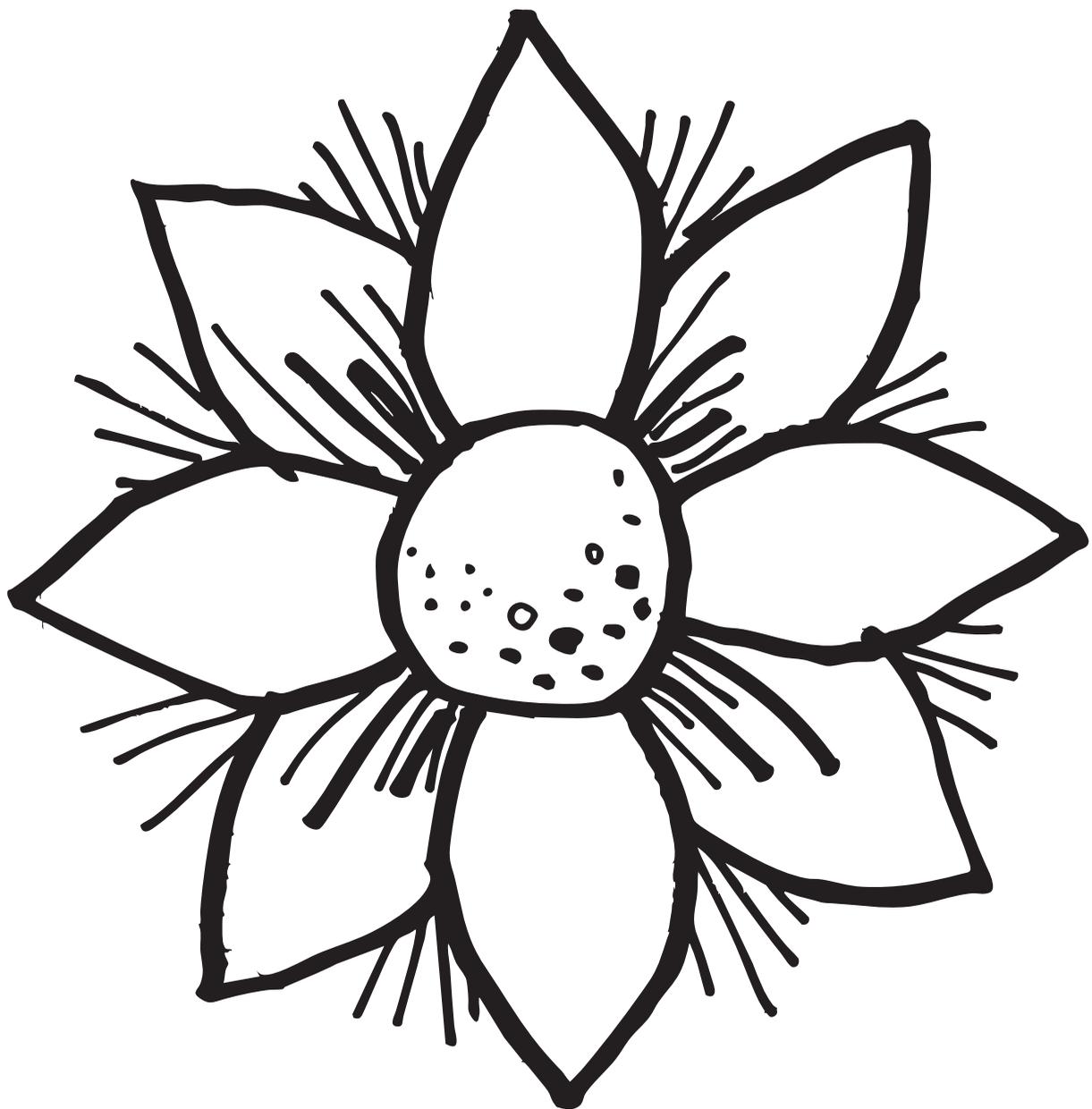
Forgiving those who offend and wound us is foundational to the Gospel. Radical forgiveness was clearly modeled by Jesus, and is one of the commands that He has left us, yet it is an area that is rarely practiced in corporate worship. Below are some practices that encourage our faith communities to walk in the freedom of forgiveness.

For discipleship times, retreats, or focused prayer gatherings:

- Invite each individual to ask God's Spirit to reveal any wound or offense that has not been forgiven. A way to identify these areas is to pay attention to feelings that come to the surface when remembering times of pain or offense. If the memory comes to mind and is accompanied by peace, forgiveness has most likely already taken place. If the memory is accompanied by an unpleasant feeling such as anger, bitterness, guilt, numbness, or dread, there may still be a need for forgiveness.
 - Encourage each individual to make a list of any person that comes to mind who has not been fully forgiven. Go back as far into memory as possible, and include even seemingly insignificant moments on the list. Ask the Holy Spirit to help each person to forgive and to prepare each heart to follow Jesus's example.
- God's Word tells us that as far as the east is from the west, that is how far our sins have been removed from God's thoughts. God commands us to forgive as He forgives.
 - Demonstrate this by having each person extend both hands in front of them with palms open. One hand represents our sin, the other represents each of us. Clasp the hands together to show that before forgiveness, our sin is tied to us in the eye of the one who we have sinned against. When God forgives us, the hands are separated through forgiveness. The hand with sin is stretched as far as possible to one side, while the hand that represents the person who sinned is stretched as far as possible in the other direction (the shape of the arms imitates the shape of Jesus on the cross). God the Father sees us through the lens of Jesus. He does not see us through the lens of our sin. With our arms outstretched, we remember that our sin is not tied to us once God forgives us.
- The next step in this process is to work through the list of people that need to be forgiven.
 - Have each person repeat the process of holding out their arms with palms up. In one hand, they should say the offense or hurt against them. In the other hand, say the person's name. Bring the hands together to represent how those two are tied together without forgiveness. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to forgive that person and separate the offense or hurt from the person. Out loud, say, "In the name of Jesus, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, I forgive _____". In that moment of living out forgiveness, the hands are separated, and just as God forgives us, we spread out our arms and keep the offense as far as possible from the person who had offended us. Look at the hand that represents the person who had caused the offense, and pray a blessing over that person. Repeat this process for every offense that has not been forgiven.

Many thanks to Antonio Gonzalez and the Ananias Discipleship for the inspiration for these practices.

Living Simply



LIVING SIMPLY

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYERS OF SIMPLICITY

A Corporate Prayer - Simplicity

God of grace,
You have always called Your Church to live differently—
To reject the idols of wealth and hurry,
To bear witness through contentment and compassion.
May our community be known not for abundance of things,
But for abundance of love.
Not for polished appearances,
But for deep, joyful service.
Shape in us the spirit of the early Church:
Faithful in little,
United in heart,
Freely giving because You are enough.
Teach us that in releasing what we cling to,
We are freed to hold one another more tenderly.
Help us to love boldly, not safely.
Help us to give generously, not sparingly.
Help us to serve joyfully, not dutifully.
May our lives be a quiet testimony to Your abundance.
Let the simplicity of our lives preach a different witness
In a world burdened by simultaneous excess and want.
Through Christ, our sufficiency and peace,
Amen.

By Ryan Stockton, Marsh Creek BIC

Personal Prayer - Simplicity

Lord of plenty and Spirit of peace,
Let me not be owned by what I own.
Help me to choose less,
So that I can offer more—
Help me love with courage,
Give with joy,
And serve without fear.
In the all-sufficient grace of Christ,
Amen

By Ryan Stockton, Marsh Creek BIC

WESLEY COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with
whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside
for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy
pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on
earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

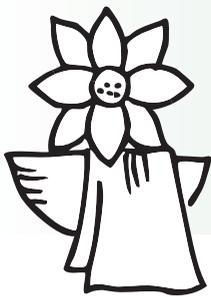
United Methodist Church, The United Methodist
Hymnal (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing
House, 1989).

LIVING SIMPLY PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, to you who, through
your Son, invite us to pray simply for our
daily bread, to you who clothe the lilies of
the field and feed the birds of the air, we
pray: help us to trust you.

Free us from bondage to love of wealth
and satisfy us in your presence. Enable us
to give generously, remembering that a
cheerful giver delights you. Let us hunger
for your righteousness, and your kingdom,
that we may be satisfied fully in you. Amen.

By Jacob Harrison, Paramount BIC



LAY YOUR BURDENS DOWN PRAYER ACTIVITY

This activity is designed to help participants experience the act of releasing their burdens to God through prayer and symbolic action. It exemplifies the BIC Core Value of Living Simply by having uncluttered lives. It can be adapted for various group settings and ages.

Materials:

Large cross (can be wooden, paper, or taped on the floor)
Post-it notes or small slips of paper, Pens or markers

Instructions:

Start with a brief reflection or scripture reading about God's willingness to carry our burdens. Examples include Matthew 11:28 ("Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.") or 1 Peter 5:7 ("Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."). Explain the activity's purpose: to create a space for individuals to consciously acknowledge their burdens and release them to God.

Individual Reflection & Prayer (10-15 minutes):

Invite participants to silently reflect on the burdens they carry—worries, fears, anxieties, relationship difficulties, or anything weighing them down. Encourage private prayer, acknowledging these burdens to God.

Writing & Symbolic Action (10-15 minutes):

Distribute post-it notes/paper and pens. Ask participants to write down their burdens (or represent them with a word, symbol, or drawing) on the paper. Invite participants to come forward and place their burdens at the foot of the cross (or inside the cross if it's on the floor).

Group Prayer & Closing (5-10 minutes):

Gather the group for a concluding prayer. This could be a prayer of thanksgiving for God's willingness to carry burdens, for strength and peace, or for the group's collective needs. End with a blessing or a reminder of God's love and presence.

Optional Adaptations:

- Have crayons and pre-printed coloring pages for younger children.
- Invite the youth or young adults to build the cross that will be used for the prayer time.
- Using a Basket/Container: Use a basket or container instead of placing burdens at the foot of the cross.
- Musical Accompaniment: Play soft instrumental music or worship songs during the reflection and writing time.
- Visual Aids: Display images or verses related to burdens and rest.
- Sharing (Optional): Allow participants to briefly share their experiences or prayers after placing their burdens at the cross, if appropriate for the group.

A BLESSING FOR SIMPLICITY

This is a blessing from the God of the simple things, An invitation to delight in the beauty already before us. This is a blessing for the margins, pauses, and spaces between.

This is a hug from an old friend, a tambourine calling in the distance, a fresh raspberry plucked off a bush. This is the pure laughter of sprinting, tumbling, barreling down a mountainside. This is a blessing for the realization that the grass is growing. Indeed, the grass has already grown.

This is Christ.

LIVING SIMPLY

Worship through *Music*



SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Give Me Jesus Traditional

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): A, Bb, C

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: Beyond Measure (Jeremy Camp); Home (Fernando Ortega)

Great is Thy Faithfulness T. O. Chisholm/W. Runyan

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, #24 HPW*

Recording(s): Worship Circle Hymns (Christy Nockels)

I Surrender All J.W. Van Deventer/W.S. Weeden

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): Bb, C, D

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: reawakenhymns.com, #382 HPW*

Recording(s): Hymns of the Spirit (Reawaken Hymns); Family Nights, Vol. 2: Day for Singing (Mission House)

My Worth Is Not In What I Own G. Kendrick/K. Getty/K. Getty

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): C, D

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Facing a Task Unfinished (Getty)

Slow Me Down K. Bluett/L.A. Jordan/M. Kaemingk/S. McCracken/W. Kimbrough

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): C, D, Eb, E

Licensing Coverage: CCLI

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included

Recording(s): Worship for Workers (Porter's Gate)

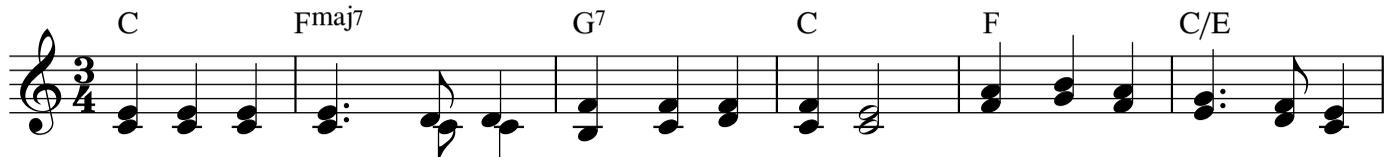
Additional Songs:

Centering Prayer (Porter's Gate), I Surrender (Hillsong), Morning by Morning (Pat Barrett), Not in a Hurry (Will Reagan), Nada Te Turbe (Taize)

**Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press*

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas O. Chisholm
William M. Runyan



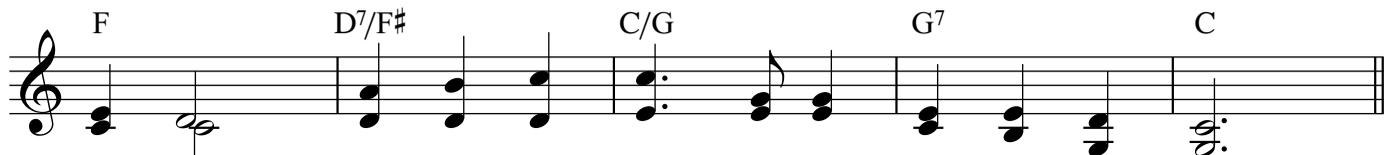
C Fmaj7 G7 C F C/E

Great is Thy faith - ful-ness, O God my Fa-ther; There is no sha - dow of
Sum-mer and win - ter and spring-time and harv est, Sun, moon and stars in their
Par-don for sin and a peace that en - dur-eth Thine own dear pre - sence to



D7 G G7 C

tur - ning with Thee; Thou chang - est not, Thy com - pas - sions, they
cour - ses a - bove Join with all na - ture in ma - ni - fold
cheer and to guide; Strength for to - day and bright hope for to -



F D7/F# C/G G7 C

fail not; As Thou hast been, Thou for - e - ver will be.
wit - ness To Thy great faith - ful-ness, mer - cy and love.
mor - row, Bles - sings all mine, with ten thou - sand be - side!



G C A7 Dm G7 C

Great is Thy faith-ful-ness! Great is Thy faith-ful-ness! Mor-ning by mor-ning new



D7 G G7 C

mer - cies I see. All I have need - ed Thy hand hath pro -



F D7/F# C/G G7 C

vi - ded; Great is Thy faith - ful-ness, Lord, un - to me!

SLOW ME DOWN

Leslie Jordan, Sandra McCracken,
Matthew Kaemingk,
Wendell Kimbrough, Kate Bluett

♩ = 65

Verse



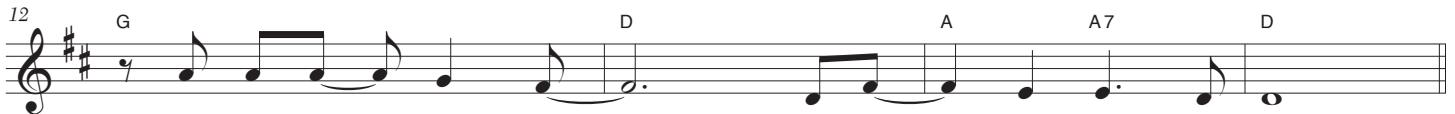
1. O good Shep-herd, would You teach me how to rest?
2. From my an-xious drive to la-bor on and on,
3. When my ta-ble's bent with on-ly greed and gold,



I'm rush-ing on: will You make me to lie down?
from the rest-less grind that has put my mind to sleep,
and my grasp-ing hands are a-fraid You won't pro-vide,



Will You build a fold by the wat-ers that re-fresh?
will You call me back and gent-ly slow me down?
will You pour the wine that loos-ens up my hold?



Will You call my name and lead me safe-ly out?
Will You show me now what to lose and what to keep?
Set Your ta-ble here with what tru-ly sa-tis-fies.

Chorus



O Good Shep-herd, O Good Friend, slow me down, slow me down. O Good Shep-herd,



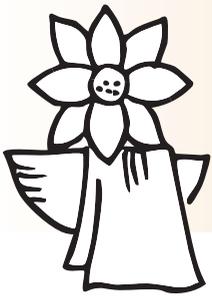
O Good Friend, slow me down, slow me down. From the bu-sy streets tryin' to



make my-self a name. If the work is Yours, there is no-thing I can claim. Will You



lead me home to the pastures of Your peace? The house is Yours, I'm sit-ting at Your feet!



Freedom of Living Simply – Timothy 6:6-10

I. Godliness with Contentment is True Gain

1. The world says gain = more possessions; Paul says gain = godly character + inner peace.
2. Godliness without contentment leads to frustration; contentment without godliness can lead to complacency.
3. Contentment is being satisfied with what God provides and trusting Him for what you don't have. Real wealth is measured by your spiritual peace and moral integrity.

III. You Can't Take It With You

1. Knowing we leave everything behind, we're free to live simply and invest in eternal things.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Scott MacFeat and Ryan Stockton write on page 233: "[Jesus] was on a mission and had purpose, yet was unhurried. He was never distracted from loving people in whatever ways they needed to be loved. That is what this value is ultimately about: Being free to love people better."*

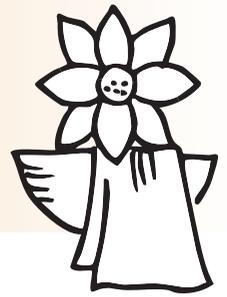
2. Paul sets a surprisingly low bar for contentment: basic needs. Simplicity begins with gratitude for the essentials.
3. Simplicity is about appreciating and using what you do have wisely.

V. The Danger of the Desire to Get Rich

1. Paul is not condemning wealth itself but the desire to be rich—a consuming craving that drives people to ruin.
2. Temptation → trap → harmful desires → ruin and destruction.
3. A heart focused on riches is a heart distracted from righteousness. Simplicity requires guarding your desires.

VI. The Love of Money and Its Consequences

1. Love of money is a root—it silently nourishes pride, greed, dishonesty, and selfishness.
2. When money becomes your master, sorrow becomes your companion. Simplicity sets your soul free.



What You Treasure – Matthew 6:19-24

I. Store Up Treasures in Heaven

1. Accumulating more often leads to stress, fear, and protectionism, not peace. The more you own, the more your heart is tied to things that can disappear.
2. Acts of generosity, love, compassion, service, obedience, and faithfulness to God. These are investments that never decay and are secured for eternity.
3. Living simply is about investing in what lasts, not in what glitters. When you live for eternity, you need far less for today.

II. Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be Also

1. Jesus draws a direct line from your valuables to your values. Whatever you treasure most will guide your decisions, emotions, and direction.

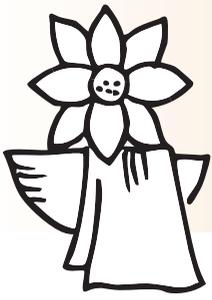
*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Scott MacFeat and Ryan Stockton write on page 229: “An uncluttered faith could look like holding tightly to things like the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the trinitarian understanding of the Godhead, the purpose of the church, loving God and our neighbors, making disciples who make disciples, etc... This posture of Living Simply in our faith is what frees us to love others boldly even when we disagree.”*

III. The Eye Is the Lamp of the Body

1. A “healthy” eye (clear, singular focus) leads to a body full of light—clarity, peace, purpose.
2. A “bad” eye (greedy, envious) fills the soul with darkness—confusion, anxiety, dissatisfaction.
3. Simplicity comes when your spiritual vision is focused on God, not the glitter of the world.

IV. You Cannot Serve Both God and Money

1. The word “serve” implies devotion, worship, and surrender. You cannot give your heart to both a consuming love for wealth and a love for God.
2. The simple life puts God first, and money in its rightful place: a resource, not a ruler. Living simply is about choosing your master: God or greed.



The Secret of Simplicity – Philippians 4:10-13

I. Paul's Joy Is in the Lord, Not in Things

1. Paul thanks the Philippians for their renewed support, but his joy is ultimately in the Lord.
2. Paul's gratitude isn't rooted in finally getting help—but in God's faithfulness through others.
3. Live simply by rejoicing in the Giver, not just the gifts. God should be the source of our joy.

II. Contentment Is Learned, Not Automatic

1. "I have learned..." — Contentment is a spiritual skill, not a natural trait. He didn't get it instantly—it was developed through trials, seasons, and experience.
2. "Whatever situation I am..." – Paul had been both in lack and in abundance. Whether living with much or little, Paul had found a constant peace.
3. "I have learned the secret..." – True simplicity begins when your circumstances no longer control your contentment.

III. Christ Is the Source of Strength

1. It takes supernatural strength to be content in a culture that constantly tells you "you need more." Christ empowers us to live freely from comparison, materialism, and anxiety.
2. Paul is not dependent on a fluctuating economy or human generosity—his source is unchanging.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Scott MacFeat and Ryan Stockton write on page 212:*

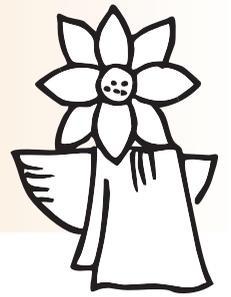
"Today, as we rely on God and root ourselves in abundance, we are free to give generously because we know that the Lord will use our gifts for his glory, no matter the size."

IV. Principles of Simple Living from Paul's Example

1. Gratitude Over Greed – Rejoice in what you have, not in what you lack.
2. Contentment Over Consumption – Learn to live within your means and be content.
3. Trust Over Tension – Rely on God's provision instead of striving for more.
4. Strength Over Stuff – Rely on Christ for internal strength instead of external possessions.

LIVING SIMPLY

Discussion Questions



Small Group Discussion:

- What does it mean to “live simply?”
- How can living simply impact our relationship with God? How can living simply help us be more generous and compassionate toward others?
- What does the Bible say about contentment and simplicity?
- What are some things in today’s culture that make it hard to live simply? How does materialism affect our priorities and happiness?
- What are practical ways we can live more simply in our daily routines? How can we encourage each other to resist the pressure to always want more?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What do you think it means to live simply?
- Why do you think it’s important not to always want more toys or things? Why do you think God wants us to be happy with what we have?
- What’s your favorite simple thing to do that makes you feel happy? Can you think of something you have that makes you really happy without being expensive?
- How can we remember to be content even when we see others with lots of things? How can we be thankful for what we already have?
- How can living simply help us share with others who don’t have as much?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does living simply mean to you in today’s busy and material-focused world?
- Have you ever felt stressed or overwhelmed by trying to keep up with what others have? How do social media and peer pressure affect our desires for more things?
- How do you handle feelings of envy or comparison with others? How can our faith help us resist the pressure to always want more?
- How can living simply help us focus more on what really matters in life? In what ways can living simply free us to serve others and grow spiritually?
- What are some practical ways teens can live simply without feeling left out? What’s one area in your life where you could simplify right now?



LIVING SIMPLY

Worship through **Art**

VISUAL ARTS

Flower Arrangement

Invite congregants to pick flowers around their yard and/or church property to create beautiful arrangements. As they are picking, recommend they meditate on God's beauty and care in creation. Scriptures such as Matthew 6:25-34, Psalm 103:13-18, and Isaiah 61:10-11 might be used to enhance the experience.

Flower arrangements could then be placed around the sanctuary, gathering areas, and/or used on tables for a meal gathering. Bouquets could also be taken to senior living facilities and given as gifts to cheer another's day!

Alternate idea would be to invite a florist to come and teach about flower arranging. Often flowers and colors are symbolic in their meaning so you might be able to work together to create bouquets out of flowers that represent contentment, peace, hope, joy, or any other topic that seems fitting for your gathering.

Slide Backdrops

Work together to gather supplies such as bottle lids, cans, buttons, or any other medium you would like. Often you would choose one medium such as bottle caps and collect them in a variety of colors rather than gathering a lot of different items.

Then, create a template for an image or mural you would like to recreate. Perhaps a peaceful country-side scene or a graceful tree. Fill in the image with the correct color to create a 3D version of the image. Display your mural with a scripture reflection encouraging others to rest in God's peace (or whatever the focus of your mural was).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Invite congregants to take a walk through their neighborhood, the park, or anywhere that brings a sense of calm to their souls. Invite them to pray and ask God to open their eyes to see His beauty around them as they walk.

Then, invite them to take photos of "God Sightings" around them. Maybe they notice the beauty of a delicate flower or the color of the changing leaves. Maybe they see God's love being expressed through a grandparent playing with a child or a couple holding hands.

These photos could then be submitted and turned into a slideshow set to music, or possibly used as backgrounds for scripture, music, or sermon slides. Scripture could be overlaid on the images and used on bulletin boards or in announcement reels.

Opportunities are endless!



SENSORY SCRIPTURE READING

Invite the congregation to close their eyes and use their senses to visualize in their mind's eye the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of a scripture passage as it is read aloud. As we think about simplicity, Psalm 23 is a great passage to use.

Take a few minutes to set the scene before you begin reading. Here is an example that you can use as is or as inspiration for creating your own version.

See the example included

SENSORY READING OF PSALM 23

Begin with prayer, asking the Lord to cleanse and sanctify your imagination as you seek to experience scripture with your senses. God created our imaginations and our five senses so ask God to use them to draw you closer to the heart of God now.

Read as an introduction:

Take a moment to quiet your mind and your heart. Close your eyes and feel the warmth of the sun gently kissing your face. There is an airy breeze blowing across the meadow wafting the sweet scents of blooming wildflowers past your nose. You breathe deeply and allow your body to relax, letting go of the pressures of the day you have been carrying. Past the meadow, you can see the shimmer of the sun glinting off of the sparkling water and recognize the soft babbling sound of the flowing stream. In the distance, you notice the bleating of sheep and begin to see soft dots of white making their way toward you. They draw closer and you recognize the ambling gait of a flock being led through the sweet grasses. In their midst, is the shepherd, his skin bronzed by the sun. He carries a wooden staff and encourages the sheep to follow him along the meadow and down toward the stream. He leads them to a shady spot where he pulls out a stringed instrument and settles down to watch over the sheep as they graze. You lean in to hear the melodic plucking and notice he is humming a tune along as he plays. The wind shifts slightly and you are able to hear his words as he softly sings unto the Lord.

By Joy Brown, Amherst BIC

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.

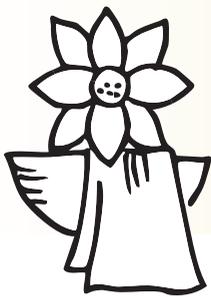
2 He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.

3 He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.

4 Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

5 You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head
with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love
will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.



LIVING SIMPLY

Worship *Practices*

MORE WITH LESS TESTIMONIES

Create an opportunity for your church family to share ways that they have learned how to make “more with less”. Share personal stories of how living a simpler life opens the door for dramatic generosity.

Encourage a time of brainstorming about ways to limit unnecessary spending, save money, and live with margin in budgets (as well as schedules) that allows for generosity.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Plant a community garden on your church property. This is a way to engage with your church's neighbors in natural ways. Experienced gardeners can train youth and children in the care of the garden. The harvest from the garden can provide fresh vegetables for church community meals, or for sharing from your food pantry or other local food banks.

This could also be a way to demonstrate how families that are struggling with grocery bills can learn how to plant their own gardens.

A church community garden would be a wonderful place to invite older people from the church community to share their expertise and to mentor struggling younger generations in practical ways to care for their families' needs



East Dayton Fellowship

SHARING LIFE SKILLS

Consider offering basic cooking classes for young people and parents who were never taught to cook from scratch. A cookbook with step-by-step simple instructions for cooking affordable and tasty meals could be created and shared with cooking students from the community and church.

Identify unique skills from those in your church family that could be taught to others in a workshop setting: sewing, canning, gardening, cooking, baking bread, changing a tire, changing oil in the car, basic computer skills, etc.

Host co-ops for people in the community: a babysitting coop, a vegetable co-op from local farmers, a seed sharing and plant sharing co-op, etc.

GENEROSITY LIST

This is a personal exercise that could be made available to all members.

Make a list of ways you would like to be generous. Now ask yourself, “What is keeping me from being generous?”

Choose something in your budget that is optional, and fast that activity with the intention of saving what you would have spent and dedicating it to one of the things on your “generosity list”.

An example of this could be cutting out a streaming service for a time, choosing not to buy any new clothes for a month, or foregoing coffee shop coffee, and donating what you would have spent toward something on your “generosity list”.

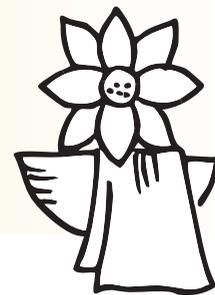
GROCERY CHALLENGE

For a month, challenge your church to limit their grocery budgets to that of someone earning minimum wage. The money that you save, compared to your normal grocery bill, would go toward a ministry dedicated to those struggling with food insecurity.

Create a space in your church building for people to bring items or food that they no longer need that could be of use to someone else.

LIVING SIMPLY

Worship *Practices*



PERSONAL SIMPLE LIVING DISCIPLINES

Practice observing a simpler form of Sabbath each week. Limit screen time, invest in stillness, value relationships, meditate on scripture, worship, rest, and appreciate God's creation.

Determine a space in the home for electronic devices to be "parked" in order to avoid the tendency to be attached to our devices and technology.

Practice saying, "no" to a full and overflowing calendar, and communicate the reasons for this change to those around you.

During the 40 days of Lent, remove practices that distract from your walk with the Lord, and carefully add simple practices that draw your eyes to Jesus.

Commit to increasing the amount you tithe, and ask God to direct you each month in how to share the "extra" amount above and beyond your normal tithe.

Keep a gratitude journal and continually add new reasons to give thanks to God.

NOTE: One way to do this as a church family could be to have a gratitude board with pins and small pieces of paper. Individuals can write a short gratitude post and pin it to the board. In this way, the church family can practice gratitude as a community of faith.

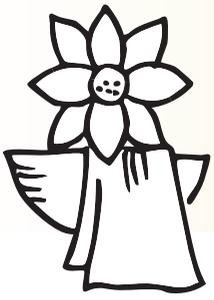
COMMUNAL SIMPLE LIVING PRACTICES

In smaller church communities in which most people in the church live physically close to the church building, the church could invest in large tools that can be signed out and shared among people in the church (lawnmower, weed whacker, snow blower, chainsaw, garden tools, wheelbarrow, drills, sanders, etc.)

Encourage your congregation to do a 30 day bag challenge. Each day of the challenge, the goal is to fill a bag (of any size) with items in your home that can be gifted to someone, donated, or tossed. This challenge helps individuals and families make intentional choices about what they have accumulated and what is actually helpful to have in their lives. Working through this process allows others to be blessed through our abundance as we discern what is necessary in life and what has become a distraction.

Offer a free course on getting out of debt and managing limited resources. Provide free childcare for parents in the community who would benefit from the course.

Teach about the value of the spiritual discipline of fasting. Whether one is fasting food, screen time, or other activities, the space that is created through denying ourselves is a holy space as we meet more intentionally with God.



LIVING SIMPLY

Worship *Practices*

SIMPLE LIVING SERVICE

In preparation for this core value of simple living, ask the Holy Spirit to guide how the congregational service can be simplified. Perhaps this practice could happen every fifth Sunday of the year to develop a rhythm of incorporation of this core value into your local congregation.

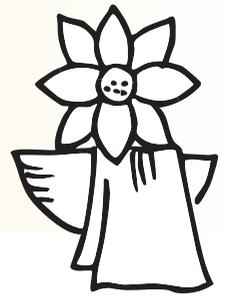
The week prior, communicate with all staff, those who lead in songs and contribute in the service, ushers/greeters, tech team, all who co-labor on a Sunday morning, that this upcoming Sunday would be a Sabbath rest for all as much as possible. Seek the Lord in this discipline.

Ideas to consider:

- A service with only songs, scripture, testimony, and prayer.
- A cappella singing or one acoustic guitar leading perhaps with songs chosen ahead of time
- Congregational members (if manageable) can recommend songs from the BIC hymnal to sing.
- Scripture for simple living is included for quick reference. Once a scripture is read, allow for silence before a prayer, song, testimony or another scripture is read.
- Prayers can be offered by one or various voices within the congregation. Prayers can be led by the Holy Spirit in the moment or pre-written prayers that are included in this resource.
- A time of sharing testimony to the goodness or faithfulness of the Lord could be opened and closed by leader/s and sharing could include all in the congregation.

LIVING SIMPLY

Worship *Practices*

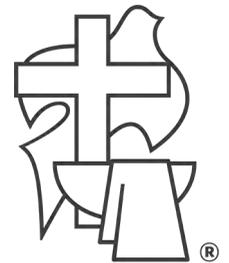


CROSS AND BOWL

We are all called to love our neighbor and enemy and bless those who persecute us. We are called to hold on to truth and cast off all that entangles. In our culture and in our own persons, we face challenges to obedience in these commands. This practice is intended to draw our attentions to those things we must hold onto and those things we must relinquish, as well as some we are to offer in obedience. In this practice we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to how we respond to the questions. *(This practice will incorporate 3 elements of the BIC Logo.)*

Step 1: Open with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to bring clarity.

Step 2: Consider the path before you today. What conflicts are present and how do you respond to them while walking the path of peace? As you consider these things, how do you know what is true? What is loving? What are lies? What is emotionally confusing?



Read scripture on peace or living simply depending on the focus:

Step 3: What are you called to do or truth you are to hold onto? What are you called to cast off so as not to be entangled by anything? What are lies? What are unloving responses you reject and offer as sacrifice though perhaps you could do them?

Write down your responses to step 3 questions. Put each response on a separate slip of paper.

Step 4: Take the things you are needing to cast off and get rid of them right away. Nail them to the cross. Releasing the things that entangle us, distract us and lead to bitterness and anger – laying them down pleases God. God came that we might have life to the full and to release those in bondage - this can be one part of that process.

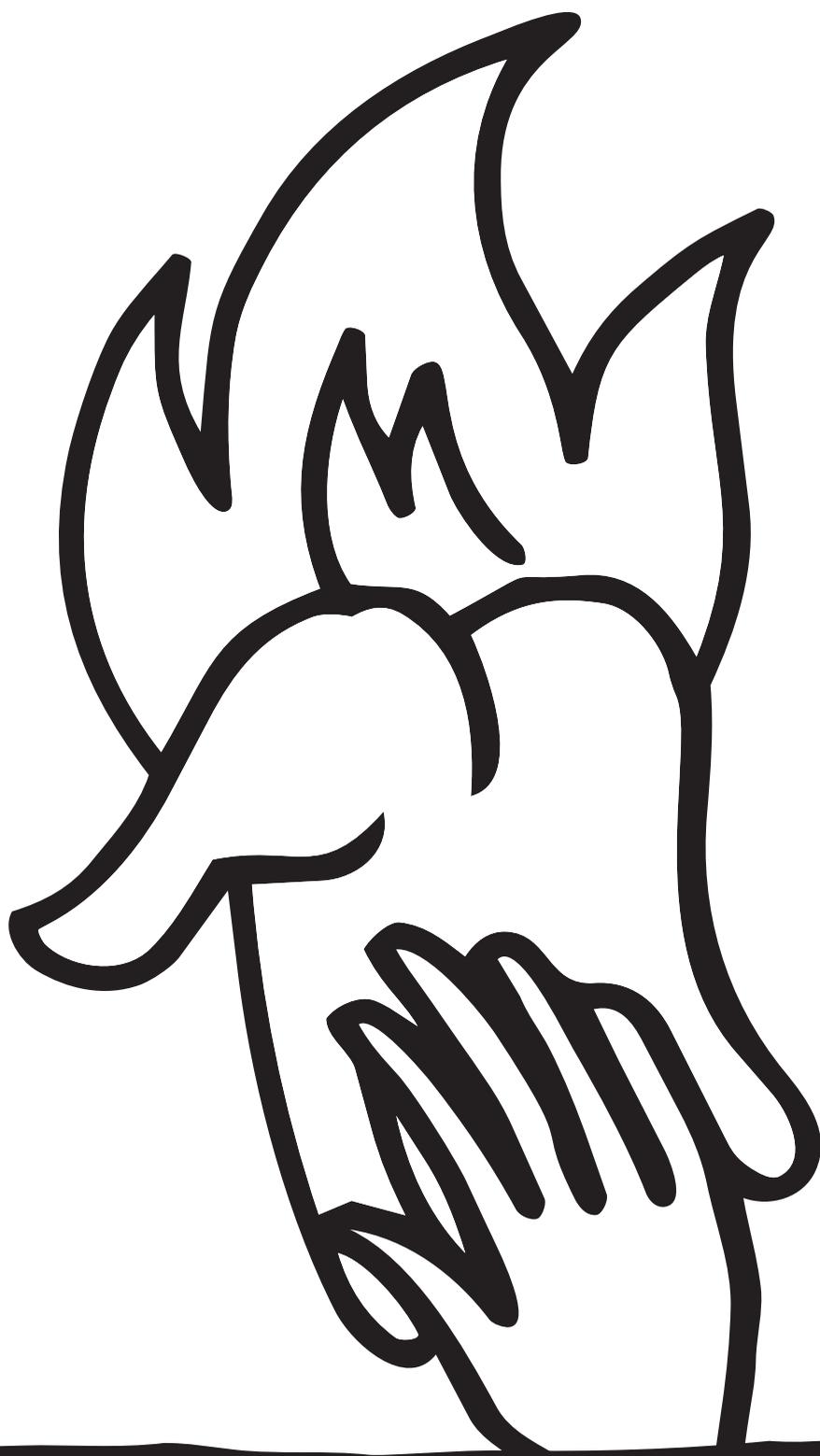
Step 5: Take the things you could do but see that you have a path of peace that moves forward in a different way. Take those things and lay them at the foot of the cross. This is an offering of letting things go – pleasing to the Lord!

Step 6: Take the slips of things to hold onto or things to do and place them in the bowl. This is another offering to God – these are the things that offer a pleasing aroma to the Lord – obedience, faithfulness, worship, love... Everyone will add these slips together into the bowl. The leader of this exercise will place this offering bowl on an **altar or special place for the Lord.**

Step 7: What are your thoughts about this process? What did it feel like seeing the nail pierce the lies and letting go of the unloving and unpeaceful responses you have considered? What are your thoughts about seeing the bowl of pleasing offerings to the Lord? How do you feel about your ingredients in that “sweet smelling incense”?

By Drew Strayer, Peace City Church

Relying on God



RELYING ON GOD

Worship through *Prayer*



PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

This prayer connects with the multitude of ways we miss receiving and living as God's children. Confession is good because it is an honest assessment of the ways we sin and miss the mark.

Pastor:
"Let us pray together..."

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Pastor (praying and pronouncing over the congregation):

Almighty God have mercy on you,
forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,
strengthen you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

From Book of Common Prayer

A PRAYER OF RECEPTION

Begin with silence and an invitation to invite people to become aware of what they're bringing with them into worship. After this invitation, lead them through the 3-movements of this prayer, which are all done in silence.

Movement One: Naming

Invite them to picture Jesus. Invite them to share with Jesus the things they are bringing with them today.
(Pause/Silence)

Movement Two: Being Human

Invite them to tell Jesus how they've experienced what they're bringing. What emotions have they stirred up? What impacts has it had on them? This is a time to be honest with God.
(Pause/Silence)

Movement Three: Receiving

Invite them to ask Jesus to enter into what they're bringing. How might Jesus tend to them in the midst of what they bring?
(Pause/Silence)

Lord Jesus, we commit ourselves and what we have brought into your care.

BE STILL AND KNOW

Based on Psalm 46:10

This prayer is to be read slowly, one line at a time, with a significant pause (Selah) for prayerful meditation at the end of each line.

Be still and know that I am God
(Selah)

Be still and know that I am
(Selah)

Be still and know
(Selah)

Be still

(Selah)

Be

(Selah)

ST. PATRICK'S PRAYER

This prayer connects with the idea of Incarnational Spirituality and prayer as returning to God in surrender.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks to me,

Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of the Christ. May your salvation, Lord, be ever with us.



RELYING ON GOD

Worship through *Music*

SONGS & SUGGESTED KEYS

Abide A. Keyes/A. Williams/J. Fauber

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): F, G, A

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recordings: Dwell Songs (Aaron Williams); Abide (Christy Nockels)

Goodness of God/La Bondad de Dios B. Fielding/B&J Johnson/E. Cash/J. Ingram

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): G, A, Bb

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Believe For It (CeCe Winans); La Bondad de Dios (Essential Worship)

Lord, I Need You/Señor, te Necesito C. Nockels/D. Carson/J. Reeves/K. Stanfill

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): D, E, F

Licensing Coverage: CCLI, Multitracks.com

Chart/Lead Sheet: ccli.com, praisecharts.com

Recording(s): Hallelujah (HeartSong); All the People Said Amen (Matt Maher), Señor, te Necesito (Blanca)

'Tis So Sweet L.M.R. Stead/W.J. Kirkpatrick

Song Perspective: Personal

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F, G

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: Included, #420 HPW*

Recording(s): Compelling Worship (Towel and Basin Worship Collective)

What A Friend We Have in Jesus C. Converse/J. Scriven

Song Perspective: Corporate

Optimal key(s): D, Eb, E, F

Licensing Coverage: Public Domain

Chart/Lead Sheet: reawakenhymns, #452 HPW*

Recording(s): Oh! Great Is Our God! (The Sing Team), What a Friend We Have in Jesus (The Worship Initiative)

Additional Songs:

All Things Together (Aaron Williams), El Espiritu De Dios Esta En Este Lugar (Martin Azurdia), Firm Foundation (Cody Carnes), Hungry (Kathryn Scott), How Long? (Porter's Gate), Living Hope (Phil Wickham), Take My Life and Let it Be (#359 HPW*).

*Hymns for Praise and Worship © 1984 Evangel Press

'Tis So Sweet

Louisa M. R. Stead
William J. Kirkpatrick

E A E/B E/G# A(add2)

E A E/B E/G# A B(add4)

E A/E E A/C# B/D#

'Tis so sweet to trust in Je - sus Just to take Him at His Word
Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Je - sus Just from sin and self to cease
I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee, pre-cious Je - sus, Sa - vior Friend

E A/E E/G# A B(sus4) B A/C# B/D#

Just to rest up - on His pro-mise and to know, "Thus saith the Lord"
Just from Je - sus sim - ply ta - king life and rest, and joy and peace
And I know that Thou art with me, will be with me to the end

E A/C# B E F# B

Je - sus, Je - sus, how I trust Him How I've proved Him o'er and o'er

E/G# A E(sus4) E E/G# A B(sus4) B E

Je - sus, Je - sus, pre-cious Je - sus Oh, for grace to trust Him more

A/C# E/B E/G# A(add2) E

A/C# E/B E/G# A(add2) B(add4) E

'Tis So Sweet

Words by Louisa M. R. Stead, Music by William James Kirkpatrick

Key - E | Tempo - 86 | Time - 4/4

INTRO E A E/B E/G# A2

E A/C# E/B E/G# A2 Bsus

VERSE 1

E A/E
'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus
E A/C# B/D#
Just to take Him at His word
E A/E
Just to rest upon His promise
E/G# A Bsus B A/C# B/D#
And to know, "Thus saith the Lord"

CHORUS

E A/C# B
Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him
E F#m B
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er
E/G# A Esus E
Jesus, Jesus, precious Je - sus
E/G# A Bsus B E
Oh, for grace to trust Him more

E A/C# E/B E/G# A2

VERSE 2

E A/E
Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus
E A/C# B/D#
Just from sin and self to cease
E A/E
Just from Jesus simply taking
E/G# A Bsus B A/C# B/D#
Life and rest, and joy and peace

VERSE 3

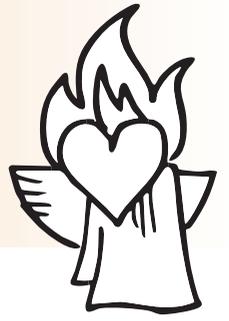
E A/E
I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee
E A/C# B/D#
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend
E A/E
And I know that Thou art with me
E/G# A Bsus B A/C# B/D#
Will be with me to the end

OUTRO E A/C# E/B E/G# A2

E A/C# E/B E/G# A2 Bsus E

RELYING ON GOD

Worship through **Word**



Trusting the Source – Jeremiah 17:5–8

I. The Curse of Misplaced Trust

1. “Cursed is the man who trusts in man”: Reliance on human wisdom, power, or institutions. “Makes flesh his strength”: Seeking self-sufficiency, turning to human strength.
2. “Whose heart turns away from the Lord”: Trusting man inevitably leads us away from God.
 - “Like a shrub in the desert”: Rootless, dry, vulnerable.
 - “Shall not see any good come”: Spiritually blind to God’s blessings.
 - “Parched places... salt land”: Symbol of lifelessness and barrenness.
3. Trusting in wealth, popularity, technology, or even our own plans. No matter how strong or gifted we are, without God, we are barren.

II. The Blessing of Trusting in God

1. “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord”—true blessing flows from divine reliance.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Joshua Nolt writes on page 248: “A Transactional Spirituality gives the appearance of faith, but it is actually the absence of faith because it depends on us... A Transactional Spirituality shows us that we, like the brothers, have not yet learned what it is to be children of God.”*

2. A life rooted in God is:
 - Stable – “Planted by water”
 - Nourished – “Roots by the stream”
 - Fearless – “Does not fear when heat comes”
 - Peaceful – “Not anxious in drought”
 - Fruitful – “Does not cease to bear fruit”
3. Life rooted in prayer, scripture, and God’s presence. Even in trials (“heat,” “drought”), the person who trusts in God remains strong and productive.

III. Where Are You Planted?

1. God calls us to root ourselves deeply in Him, not the shifting sands of human strength.
2. When you trust in the Lord, you will not wither, you will not fear, and you will bear fruit in every season.



Calm in the Chaos – Mark 4:35–41

I. Jesus Sends Them into the Storm

1. “Let us go across to the other side” — The disciples obeyed—and still encountered a storm. Following Jesus doesn’t mean life will always be smooth.
2. The presence of storms doesn’t mean the absence of God. Even when we walk into trials while obeying God, we must remember He goes with us.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Joshua Nolt writes on page 254: “God desires to give good gifts to his children, and part of *Relying on God* is learning to receive those gifts as God’s children.”*

II. The Storm Rises, But Jesus Sleeps

1. “A great windstorm arose” — The Greek implies a violent storm, like a hurricane. These were experienced fishermen — but even they were terrified.
2. “He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion” — A symbol of His peace and divine rest. To the disciples, it felt like He didn’t care: “Teacher, do you not care...?”
3. Relying on God means trusting His heart, even when we don’t understand His timing.

III. Jesus Speaks: “Peace, Be Still!”

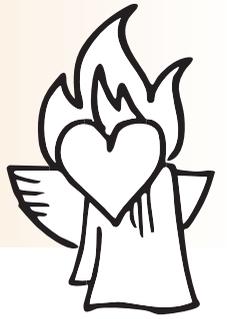
1. Jesus rebukes the wind and sea like a parent silencing a child. Instantly, the wind ceased, and there was “a great calm.”
2. The storm outside calmed only when the Lord inside the boat spoke. The key to peace is not in controlling the storm, but in knowing the One who can.

IV. Jesus Questions Their Fear and Faith

1. Fear is natural—but Jesus challenges fear that overrides faith. Their fear came not just from the storm, but from forgetting who was in the boat.
2. After all they had seen—healings, miracles—they still doubted His care and power.
3. Relying on God is not the absence of fear, but the presence of faith in the face of fear. Sometimes, God allows storms to reveal His true identity to us more clearly.

RELYING ON GOD

Worship through **Word**



Do Not Worry – Matthew 6:25-34

I. Jesus' Call to Freedom from Worry

1. Jesus begins with “Therefore,” linking back to the previous teaching about serving God over money (v. 24). Worry questions God’s provision, His goodness, and His priorities.
2. Jesus is not downplaying real needs but challenging misplaced fear and distrust.
3. Worry changes nothing (v. 27)—except to steal your peace and drain your strength. God does not call us to ignore life’s responsibilities, but to face them with trust, not anxiety.

II. Trusting in God’s Care and Character

1. Birds don’t farm, but God feeds them (v. 26). Lilies don’t sew, yet they are beautifully clothed (v. 28–29). “Are you not of more value than they?” – You are precious to God.
2. Jesus rebukes anxiety by reminding us of God’s loving nature.

*In the book *Compelling Convictions*, Joshua Nolt writes on page 252: “Relying on God means responding to what God has done and continues to do. Relying does not come from trying hard to rely. It is a posture of responsiveness to the covenantal fidelity of God expressed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.”*

III. Seek God, Not Just Security

1. As children of God, our security comes from knowing our Father knows our needs.
2. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” Make God’s will, reign, and righteousness your top priority.
3. When we put God first, He takes care of the rest. When we rely on God, we are freed from the tyranny of worry.

IV. Living One Day at a Time

1. Most of our worry is about what hasn’t happened yet. Jesus calls us to live in the present, trusting that God is already in our tomorrow.
2. Each day has enough challenges—and enough grace. God gives daily bread, not tomorrow’s bread today.



RELYING ON GOD

Discussion Questions

Small Group Discussion:

- What does it practically look like to rely on God in your daily decisions and challenges?
- What are some common obstacles that make it hard to fully trust God? How do you balance taking responsibility for your actions while still trusting God's guidance?
- How does relying on God change the way you handle stress, fear, or uncertainty? In what ways can prayer and scripture help deepen our reliance on God?
- What role does community and fellowship play in helping us rely on God? How can you encourage others in your group to trust God more deeply?
- What's one practical step you can take this week to grow in your dependence on God?

Kids & Family Discussion:

- What does it mean to trust or rely on God? Why do you think God wants us to come to Him when we need help?
- Can you think of a time when you felt scared or worried? How could you ask God to help you?
- How does it feel when you remember God is watching over you? What are some ways we can remember God is always with us?
- How does praying help us rely on God? What is something you can pray to God about this week?
- What can our family do together to trust God more?

Youth & Teen Discussion:

- What does it mean to you to rely on God in your daily life? Can you share a time when you felt like you had to handle something on your own? How did that go?
- What are some things that make it hard to fully depend on God?
- How do you know when God is guiding or helping you? How can prayer help us rely more on God?
- What role does faith play in trusting God during tough times? How can trusting God change the way you face challenges or fears?
- What's one way you can practice relying on God more this week?

RELYING ON GOD

Worship through *Art*



MODERN PARABLE OF A FARMER

There once was a man who needed to provide for his family. He had lost his job and soon the rent would be due. He was unsure how to make his dwindling funds stretch far enough to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. In his desperation, he turned to God in prayer. He cried out to the Lord to provide a way for him to take care of his family.

The next day, an old farmer approached the man. He was retiring and needed someone to take over the farm. He offered to train and teach the man everything he needed to know to grow enough crops for the man to not only feed his family, but to sell the excess in order to pay his bills. The man muttered a quick prayer of “thanks” to the Lord and wholeheartedly accepted the man’s offer.

For the next few months, the man worked side-by-side with the old farmer. He learned how to work the soil and raise the crops. Pretty soon, the old farmer felt the man was ready and he left town for his retirement.

The next few years were good for the man. He tended the farm, fed his family well, sold the excess crops and paid all his bills. He occasionally remembered to thank the Lord for providing this opportunity, but mostly went along his way. One day led into another and before long, the man had become accustomed to this new life. He felt comfortable and happy.

Then one day, storm clouds formed overhead. A torrential and unseasonably late rain tore through his farm. He had recently planted his crop and the young plants could not hold their ground against the torrents of water. Much of his crop and even the top layers of soil were washed away. With despair, the man went to his supply shed to look for more seed to replant his fields. Finding only a small supply, he chose the best remaining field and started over. Doing some quick calculations in his head, he supposed he would still have enough crops to feed his family and a few left over to sell. It would be tight, but he thought he could make it.

As the weeks wore on, a shift in the weather took him by surprise. Rain had not fallen on the land since the great storm. He labored daily to stretch hoses across his fields and tried to run sprinklers, but his hoses only reached so far and his well was in danger of running dry. With dismay, he watched his small crop struggle to grow.

With a month still to go until harvest time, the man evaluated his dwindling crop. What remained would barely feed his family. There was no longer enough to sell in town and he began to realize he would not be able to pay his bills. Worry consumed him as he would daily check the weather reports and anxiously walk his fields. Then, the day he feared arrived. His well went dry. He could no longer draw drops of water to keep his precious few crops alive in the scorching heat.

With complete desperation, the man finally fell to his knees and cried out to the Lord for help.

What will become of the man and his family?

Why do we wait to seek the Lord until we are desperate? Why do we only communicate with God when we have a great and overwhelming need in our lives? Why do we take for granted all the Lord has done for us when our days are good? Is God any less capable of meeting our needs when we are in the valley versus when we are on the mountaintop? Why do we depend on ourselves instead of fully relying on God? Are we in control of our circumstances or is all of life held in the hand of Almighty God? Why do we take God's past answers to prayer and turn them into a path of self-reliance? Do we need God less on good days?

Let us examine our own hearts.

By Joy Brown, Amherst BIC



RELYING ON GOD

Worship through *Art*

GUIDED ART

Utilize an artist in your congregation or seek out an artist from your community. Organize a guided art experience. This is often done with painting. Traditional experiences like this involve an art instructor displaying a finished painting and giving step-by-step instructions about how to recreate the work of art.

For this theme (Relying on God) consider working with the instructor to have the final product be a surprise. Do not show the final painting or finished product. The instructor will simply give step-by-step instructions along the way that the individual artists will need to interpret and trust that the instructor has an end goal in mind. This is an exercise in trust. Without seeing and knowing what the final product is supposed to look like, the individual artists may struggle to understand and follow the instructions. However, if they lean into the experience and trust the instructor, they will get to the end of the exercise with a final product that is similar to the instructor's intended goal. This is representative of our reliance upon God. We don't know what God's end goal is for our lives, yet we are called to trust Him for every step along the way. If we rely on God and trust that He has our good in mind, we can step out in faith and follow His guidance. It would be appropriate for this event to be combined with teaching on this topic in whatever way serves your group best.



Open Door BIC

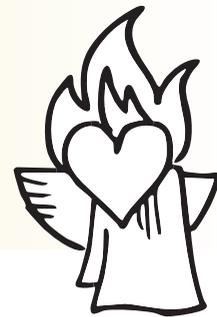
WRITTEN WORD

Invite your congregation to write and submit parables and poetry about what “relying on God” means to them.

You can then select some to read in services or at other opportunities you deem appropriate. You could use these as springboards for conversation starters in small group settings as well.

RELYING ON GOD

Worship *Practices*



CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

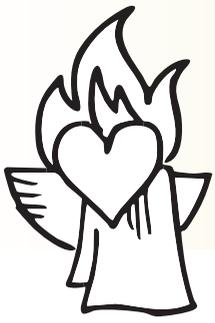
- Practice a routine of “praying at all times” by building new routines in the daily nothings of life that direct our hearts and minds to God. Following the pattern of St. Patrick when he taught the pagan people of Ireland about God with prayers and songs attached to washing their hands, milking their cows, or working in the fields, we can do the same. We can compose simple songs or spoken prayers that root us in our walk with Jesus as we pause at a stoplight, wash our hands, pull weeds, or chop vegetables. By repeating these prayers, we continually remind our hearts to turn to God.
- Encourage scripture memorization in the life of the church. By committing God’s Word to our hearts, we can more quickly identify his voice when he speaks to us through his Spirit. When the difficulties of life come, we can draw encouragement from the Word of God instead of other sources. Church-wide scripture memorization challenges would be a good way to meditate on and memorize scripture as a community. Choose a scripture for the week (or month), and set a date for it to be committed to memory. Invite musicians in the church to attach the words to a tune to help in the memorization. Sing and say scriptures together as a church family.
- Artistic writing of scripture is a creative way to engage the imagination with truths in God’s Word. By incorporating images and different sizes or fonts for different words in scriptural texts, God can often speak to our hearts in new ways that will stay with us longer than through simply reading a text.
- Practicing fasting is a spiritual discipline that reminds us of our need for God. Fasting of food is a way to engage our bodies by representing our spiritual hunger. Every time we feel a hunger pang or the desire to eat, we can direct our thoughts and hearts to the Lord. There are many ways to incorporate fasting into our faith practices. By abstaining from food or certain types of drink, as well as other activities that can distract us from turning our eyes to Jesus, we are choosing to create space for regular encounters with God throughout our days.

PRACTICING COMMUNION

Partaking in communion is a way that the body of Christ can come together in a unified recognition of our reliance on God. To avoid communion becoming a ritual in the life of the church, congregations can find new ways of sharing in communion that encourage thoughtfulness, meditation, and true reconciliation.

- Inviting the church to respond with simple phrases, such as, “we remember you” during the time of communion can be helpful.
- Creating a dedicated space where you gather to worship (such as a large rugged cross placed in a corner) for people to move to in order to participate in communion is another way to nudge people out of normal routines.
- When partaking in communion with a smaller group, the congregation can be encouraged to give the bread they have been given to the person next to them saying, “this is the body of Christ, broken for you.”

These shifts in the normal routines of sharing in communion are ways to newly awaken the church to the wonder of what communion represents.



RELYING ON GOD

Worship *Practices*

CONGREGATIONAL LAMENT

Provide each member of the congregation with a small, blank slip of paper. Invite them to write a sentence or two about something they are lamenting. This could be something in their personal life or in the world at large. These are to be written anonymously – and not everyone has to participate if they don't want to.

After giving the congregation a few minutes to thoughtfully write a sentence or two, collect the slips of paper and bring them to the front.

Take time to read the laments aloud. For smaller congregations, you could read 1-3 at a time. For larger congregations, perhaps 5-7 at a time. After each grouping (of 1-3 or 5-7), pause and invite the congregation to respond together:

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers

Continue this until each prayer is read, and then close by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

This kind of activity provides a needed space within the church – the space to name that everything is not ok (the psalms regularly do this!). It also has the potential to build deeper community as the congregation hears the hearts of one another and the things each person is carrying.

To access a PDF copy of this notebook and to find online-exclusive resources, such as links to songs, full sermon outlines, and additional ideas for art and practices, visit:

bicus.org/compelling-worship

Or Scan in QR code:



