

Together We Worship

~A Curriculum for 4th–6th Grade~

ROBERT AND LAURA KEELEY



Cover image © istockphoto.com/Dean Millar

Copyright © 2008 by Robert and Laura Keeley

ISBN 978-0-7575-5110-9

Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company has the exclusive rights to reproduce this work, to prepare derivative works from this work, to publicly distribute this work, to publicly perform this work and to publicly display this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 12 11 10 09 08

Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	vii
SESSION 1	
God Calls, We Respond—Call to Worship	1
SESSION 2	
Freedom in Christ—Confession and Forgiveness.....	21
SESSION 3	
Shaped by God—The Word	31
SESSION 4	
God with Us—The Blessing	45
SESSION 5	
Putting It Together.....	55
Appendix	67
Sample Letter to Parents.....	67
Song Book References.....	68

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to:

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship:

John Witvliet

Betty Grit

Anne Zaki

Kristen Verhulst

Betsy Steele Halstead

Marv Hofman, for help with the pastor interview.

The following teachers who used this curriculum and provided valuable feedback:

Liz Kingma

Matt Tegtmeier

Wayne Clousing

Judy Robinson

Bill Haagsma

Greta Clousing

Becky Cole

Julie Schnell

Joy Tjoelker

Connie Kooi

Lisa Gossman

Lora DeVries

Karla Engbers

Annette VandenBrink

Introduction

Christians are called to worship. Your students may represent only one or two congregations or they may represent a wide variety of churches with a number of different worship styles. Regardless of how many churches or worship styles your classroom represents, there are certain things that we all do when we gather to worship. Many of these have been passed down to us for centuries. When we worship, we are connected to Christians from around the world and across the ages.

This unit is meant to be taught in five sessions. This is not a complete study of worship; there is much that we won't have time to consider. We have chosen to focus on four elements of worship:

- God Calls, We Respond—Call to Worship
- Freedom in Christ —Confession and Forgiveness
- Shaped by God—The Word
- God with Us—The Blessing

In the fifth session the students will have an opportunity to put together the four elements of worship and design a worship service that we hope you will actually be able to use in your school. We've chosen a theme for the service—Living Water—and have included notes for a brief sermon or devotional to help your students prepare this service. A teacher can read the devotional, or ask a pastor or another adult to lead this section of the service.

As with any subject area worship has a particular vocabulary. In the first four lessons, the teacher and students will make a display of words used in worship. Knowing the words on this list will help the students feel more comfortable with the language of worship and better able to discuss ideas about worship.

Worship is enhanced by art, music and drama. Music is listed in the optional activities for each session. This list includes traditional and contemporary titles. (Many contemporary songs are available on a number of CDs. We have listed only one CD for each song.) We encourage you to expand this study of worship to include the arts as much as possible and to reflect the creativity of your students in the worship service they design at the end of the unit.

Teaching Tip

The first three lessons might take more than one class session each to complete.

The Appendix includes a sample letter to parents about this unit. In this letter, children are encouraged to bring one of their church bulletins to class with arrows drawn on it indicating the direction of the dialogue.

It is not our intention to promote any one style of worship. The aspects of worship that we address in this unit are not bound to any particular style of music or type of worship. There will be times when you as the teacher will help the students see that the differences between churches are often differences in style and that these stylistic differences reflect the character and creativity of the members and leaders of the church. We are all called to praise God in ways that are uniquely “us,” and so some differences in the way we worship are not only to be expected, they are to be cherished.

There are some things, however, that God calls us to do in worship that reflect that we are part of a much larger Christian community—things that go far beyond the walls of our sanctuary and even the borders of our countries. Part of your task will be to show how the different churches represented by your students do the same thing in different ways. We can’t write these into a curriculum—only someone who is with your students can do this. You will find it useful to visit a few of the churches that your students attend.

Above all, we want this unit to be a blessing to you and to your students as you worship together as a class or school and also as you worship in your individual churches. To worship God side by side with His people is a wonderful thing. The more we learn about worship, the more we understand the joy of gathering in His presence. It is our prayer that the time you spend in these lessons will help your students to appreciate these aspects of corporate worship and to worship more thoughtfully.

~ Robert and Laura Keeley

Session 1

GOD CALLS, WE RESPOND— CALL TO WORSHIP

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Goals:

Students will study pictures of churches and congregations from around the world, and discuss why people gather for worship.

The students will be able to tell the story of Samuel's call and explain how that story is connected to God's call in our lives.

The students will identify who voices the words they hear in worship—God talking to us, us talking to God, or us talking to each other.

The students will be able to appropriately use words that are connected with the call to worship.

Session Overview

Learning Activity

1. Worship Words
2. Worshipping Around the World
3. Discussion: *Why Do We Gather?*
4. Bible Story: *Samuel, Called by God*
5. Worship as Dialogue
6. Worship Words Dialogue

Materials

- Bulletin board or white board space
Markers
- PowerPoint® presentation—*Worshipping Around the World*, downloaded from <http://www.calvin.edu/~rkeeley/together>
- Worship Words List
- Bible
Reading from 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (page 9)
- Bulletin board or white board space
Worship Dialogue Cards (pages 10–12)
Scissors (one for each group)
Dialogue Worksheets (pages 13–18)
- Worship Words List

Background

Worship has a long history. King David wrote in the Psalms, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to house of the Lord.’” Since that time—and even before—people have gathered for the worship of the Lord in churches and in homes. Centuries of wisdom have informed what we do when we gather to worship. Through this brief study we hope to give students a better understanding of what is happening when they go to church and why worship is the way it is.

In this first lesson the students look at the question “What is worship?” Many students will not have much to say in response to this question. (For that matter, many adults have never had to articulate what worship is.) So for some of your students, this is brand new material. During this lesson, we will begin to build a vocabulary relating to worship. This will help students to be better able to articulate what worship is and to discuss ideas that relate to worship.

Your students probably know that the Church is *people*, not the building. But the building is perhaps the first mental image that many of them have when you mention the word “church.” A PowerPoint® presentation will show many different church buildings from around the world. More importantly, though, students will see that people from many places around the world gather to worship. What we hope the students will see are both differences and similarities.

There are some striking differences. The buildings can look quite different. The art, the furniture, the hymn books, the musical instruments all reflect the culture of the people who designed and built the worship space shown in the pictures. If we could hear them, we’d notice that the languages are different, the music is different, and even the noises that go along with worship—the sounds that occur in the background, things that we have become so used to in our worship—are different and reflect the particular place and people who worship there.

But look closer and you will see that the people, many of whom come from places that most of us will never visit, all worship the same God. We also worship this God in much the same way. Even though the places look different, we all gather for the same purpose. Even though we come from different cultures, we have the same needs: we need to gather together for worship; we need to confess our sins and receive God’s forgiveness; we need to hear God’s word proclaimed; and we need to receive God’s blessing as we leave our corporate worship and go out to serve and bless others.

No matter where we live, we are all called to worship God. We are called in the same way that God called Moses, Abraham, and Samuel. God calls us, and we respond to Him. God calls us as individuals; He also calls us as a community of believers to come to Him in worship. The word “church” literally means “called-out ones.” Of course, we come to God as individuals; but it is in the context of the Church that God calls us to worship Him. When we gather together something wonderful happens. *We become the Church.* It is this *community worship* that is our focus in this unit. What should worship look like? What does it mean when we get together to worship God?

The first part of worship is not merely throat-clearing. We do not open with a song or some words of welcome to give everyone a chance to settle down or to allow latecomers a chance to file in without disturbing others. We gather together deliberately to speak to God, to hear His words, and to enjoy fellowship together in His presence. John Witvliet, in his essay in *A More Profound Alleluia*, writes that “the first words spoken in worship are crucial for establishing the purpose of the event, for making clear how the lines of communication in a worship service go.” (p 12)

We will also look at the bigger question of what worship is. A number of writers have suggested that worship is like a drama where God is the audience and the congregation the actors. This emphasizes that the congregation is actively worshipping, not just observing. The role of the worship leader in this scenario is that of prompter—one who stands just off the stage and helps the actors with their lines. While this is a helpful metaphor, it can lead us to neglect the idea that we also *hear* God in worship. If we focus too much on worship as “performance,” we might ignore the part of worship that involves listening.

The view of worship that we will use with the students is that worship is a dialogue—a time when we gather together to talk to God, where God talks to us, and where we talk to each other. Just as we spend time in dialogue with our friends and our family, we want to be in dialogue with God. In order for any dialogue to work, of course, all of the participants need to speak, and they also need to listen. This reinforces the idea that, in worship, God speaks to us and we listen, but we also come to speak to God who is listening to us.

While this view of worship is helpful, it has been misunderstood in two ways. First, this view can be taken too literally. We actually run the risk of this in the lesson by asking students to identify who is talking to whom. It can be difficult to figure out exactly who is speaking when. Sometimes the pastor speaks for God and sometimes for the people. Sometimes the people speak God’s words. To avoid this misunderstanding, some have preferred the term “engagement” to “dialogue.” We think that for elementary students “engagement” is probably not helpful, so we’ll use “dialogue” or “conversation.” The teacher needs to remember, though, that even as we ask students to think about who is talking at various points in worship, the answer is not always clear-cut.

A second way this view of worship tends to lead to a misunderstanding is that the horizontal perspective—God’s people talking to each other—is left out. This is an important part of the act of worship. The joy we find in worshipping together is not a distraction from worship. Rather, it is an integral part of worship, and we should not minimize its importance. That is why we have included horizontal arrows in our work with students—to remind them that it is good for us to talk to each other in worship. We talk to each other about our joys, our sorrows, our concerns, our struggles and our love for the Lord.

This lesson is just one step in a journey that you and your students have already been on—a journey to understand the call of the Lord to worship Him. The experiences of you and your students will enrich this study. Build in time to hear from your students about their life of worship and share with them what moves your heart as you come to God with His people in worship. It is God who calls, and we respond. Praise the Lord!

Teaching Tip

Before you begin this unit, ask your students to bring a bulletin from their church to class. Together you can look at the order of worship (if it is listed) and note similarities and differences.

Leading the Session

Teaching Tip

If you put your list of worship words on the wall of your classroom, you can refer to it as your *Worship Word Wall*.

1. Worship Words

Materials: Bulletin board or white board space

Markers

Before class, prepare a large board or paper where a list of worship words can be written. This list will be added to in the next three lessons in this unit. The words should also be available for review between lessons. This will be called the Worship Words List.

Begin with something like this:

Today we will begin a unit about worship. What do you think of when you think of the word worship? (Note: Boldfaced questions and discussion points throughout this study are examples; do not feel that you need to use these verbatim.) Title the board “Worship Words.” Write the responses on the board. There may be very few answers; that is all right. Hopefully, one of the responses will be “church.” As we study worship, more words will be added.

2. Worshipping Around the World

Materials: PowerPoint® presentation—Worshipping Around the World, downloaded from <http://www.calvin.edu/~rkeeley/together>

Show the PowerPoint® program of photos of many different churches from around the world. In the PowerPoint® program file you will find a notes section for each slide, including information about where each church is located and other notes of interest. Take a moment to look at each picture with your class and focus on these questions:

- **Where do you think this photo comes from?**
- **Do you notice anything in this photo that is a lot like your church?**
- **Do you notice anything that is different?**
- **What makes a particular building a church?**
- **Do churches all have to look the same?**
- **How many church communities are represented in our classroom?**

3. Discussion: Why Do We Gather?

Materials: Worship Words List

After viewing the pictures, ask:

If we asked the people in the pictures to come up with a list of what they think of when they hear the word “worship,” would the list be the same as ours or different? Answers will vary. Emphasize that people have built many churches in many different styles and in many different places, but the churches are all built for one purpose—to worship God. You may want to add some of the words your students come up with to the Worship Words List.

Teaching Tip

Acts 2:42 and Hebrews 10:25 contain more information about how the early Church was called to worship.

Does God live at church? If he doesn't live at church, why do we go there to worship him? Responses will vary, but after the students have a chance to suggest reasons, you should suggest that God calls us to worship Him, and He calls us to worship Him with other believers.

4. **Bible Story: Samuel, Called by God**

Materials: Bible

Reading from 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (page 9)

Hold up a Bible:

The Bible tells us about people called by God. Can you think of any of those people? Today we are going to look at the story of Samuel.

Hand out the reading from 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Characters:

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Samuel—We suggest that all the students except the Readers 1, 2 and 3 read the part of Samuel together in chorus.

Assign the parts and read the passage.

5. **Worship as Dialogue. God calls us. We respond.**

Who's talking?

Materials: Bulletin board or white board space

Worship Dialogue Cards (pages 10–12)

Scissors (one for each group)

Dialogue Worksheets (page 13–18)

Before class, copy the Worship Dialogue Cards (pages 10–12) and place them on a large sheet of paper, a bulletin board or white board so the students can clearly see them. You will need space for the students to add words and phrases under each card. This space will be called the Worship Dialogue Board.

How did Samuel respond to the call from God? “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” Add Samuel’s response to the list of worship words.

How do you think you would respond to God’s call? Would you respond as Samuel did? Some of your students will quickly answer “yes” because they love the Lord and know that they want to serve him. But don’t be too eager to accept quick answers here. This is a big question. Use this opportunity to talk about their response to God’s call. If your students already know the story of the call of Samuel, talk about how Samuel’s message from God was not a happy one. Just because God calls us doesn’t mean it’s going to be something we like doing.

Introduce the Worship Dialogue Board:

In worship, God calls us. Point to the Worship Dialogue Card with the arrow pointing from the word “God” to the word “Us.”

And like Samuel we respond. Point to the Worship Dialogue Card with the arrow pointing from the word “Us” to the word “God.”

Sometimes in worship, we talk to each other. Point to the Worship Dialogue Card with the arrows between “Us” and “Us.”

These arrows will help us think about who is talking when we worship. Even though Samuel wasn’t in a worship service when he heard God, let’s listen to the story of Samuel again to see if it can help us think about who is talking to whom in worship. This time, if God is talking to Samuel use your hand and point down (↓). If Samuel is talking to God, point up (↑). If Samuel is talking to Eli, point to your classmates (↔).

↓ God calls Samuel.

↔ Samuel says to Eli, “Here am I, you called me.”

↓ God calls “Samuel!”

↔ Samuel says to Eli, “Here am I, you called me.”

↓ God calls Samuel a third time.

↔ Samuel says to Eli, “Here am I, you called me” to Eli.

↓ God calls “Samuel! Samuel!”

↑ Samuel says “Speak for your servant is listening.”

Split the class into six groups. Give each group one of the three worksheets found at the end of this session. Each worksheet has three Bible verses, songs or worship phrases on it. The group should cut the sheet into the three parts. Each group will place one paper under each of the Worship Dialogue Arrows.

Review the work of the groups with the whole class.

Teaching Tip

You may wish to split the class into five groups and go through one of the worksheets together as a class.

6. Worship Words

Materials: Worship Words List

Ask:

Are there any other words or phrases we should add to this Worship Words List? Does your church use any of these phrases?

Add the words and phrases the children have learned. Examples:

- ▲ God
- ▲ Church
- ▲ people
- ▲ calling
- ▲ Here I am
- ▲ response
- ▲ gather
- ▲ dialogue

Teaching Tip

By adding these phrases we are making a vocabulary of faith that the children can then use to build on in their own church worship services.

Optional Activities

- Chalk Talk. Before the lesson, write a question on the board and invite your students to write responses under it, beginning a dialogue with each other before you discuss the lesson together. Encourage the students to write, but not talk, about the issue until the time comes for the lesson. Today's question is: Why do we go to church?
- In the Old Testament, Israel was also called to worship; a trumpet was used to gather the people. We also use music today to gather the congregation. We have listed songs that are used to gather people for worship. Play a recording of the songs or sing them with your class; talk about how they call us to worship. Feel free to add songs that are used in your students' churches. (Note: songs that are on CD are usually available on a large number of CDs performed by a number of different artists. We've given one example of each.)
 - "All Creatures of Our God and King" *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1987 #431.
 - "Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #11.
 - "Come into His Presence" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #3.
 - "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship" performed by Noel Richards written by Brian Doerksen on the CD *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: 25 Modern Worship Songs for a New Generation (Worship Together, 2000)*.
 - "Gather Us In" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #8.
 - "Here I am to Worship" written and performed by Tim Hughes on the CD *Worship Together: I Could Sing of Our Love Forever (Worship Together, 2002)*.
 - "I Love You, Lord" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #16.
 - "O Worship the King" *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1987 #428.
 - "We Bring a Sacrifice of Praise" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #12.
- Church Buildings:
 - Add pictures of churches in your community to the PowerPoint® presentation.
 - Before you show any of the pictures invite the students to draw a picture of their own church. Discuss the similarities and differences in the drawings.

Teaching Tip

Choose only one or two songs from this list, or songs that you bring to the class, to help your students better focus on the subject.

- Look at the book *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction* by David Macaulay (Houghton Mifflin/Walter Lorraine Books, 1981).
- Discuss: “**What are some ways the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to worship?**” There are many good responses, including an invitation from a friend, an ad in a newspaper, or a sense of obligation because this is what we “should” do. Use this time to think with your students about the varied ways the Holy Spirit calls us. Perhaps the students’ parent gets them up in the morning—that could also be a way the Spirit is calling them to worship.

Reading from I Samuel 3:1-10

- Reader 1:** The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.
- Reader 2:** One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place.
- Reader 1:** The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel.
- Reader 3:** Samuel answered,
- Samuel:** “Here I am.”
- Reader 3:** And he ran to Eli and said,
- Samuel:** “Here I am; you called me.”
- Reader 2:** But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.
- Reader 1:** Again the LORD called, “Samuel!”
- Reader 3:** And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said,
- Samuel:** “Here I am; you called me.”
- Reader 2:** “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”
- Reader 1:** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel a third time.
- Reader 3:** Samuel got up and went to Eli and said,
- Samuel:** “Here I am; you called me.”
- Reader 2:** Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”
- Reader 3:** So Samuel went and lay down in his place.
- Reader 2:** The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”
- Reader 3:** Then Samuel said,
- Samuel:** “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Worship Dialogue Cards

God



Us

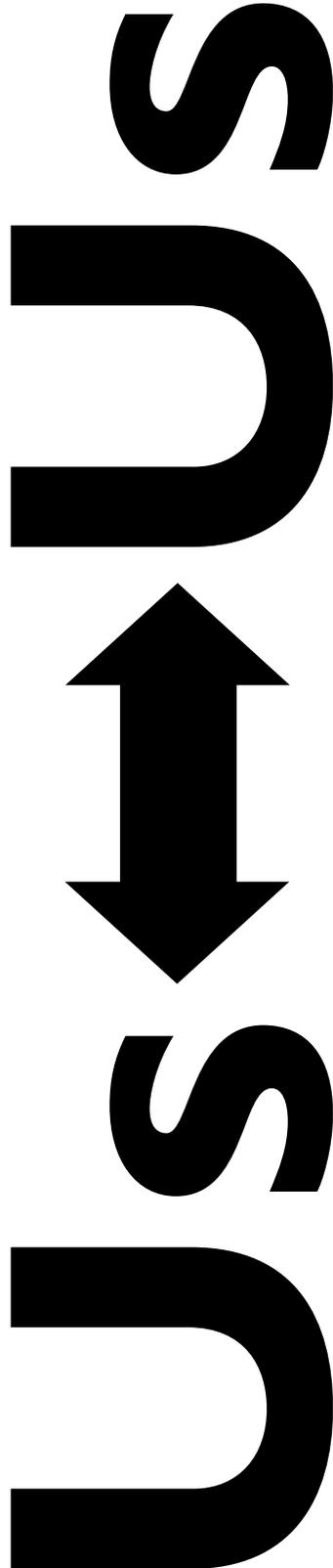
Worship Dialogue Cards

God



Us

Worship Dialogue Cards



Dialogue Worksheet

Group 1:

**“I am the Lord your God who
brought you out of the land of
Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”
Exodus 20:2**

The song “*Here I Am to Worship*”

**“Let us exalt God’s name together!”
Psalm 34:3**

Dialogue Worksheet

Group 2:

“Sing to the Lord a new song.”

Psalm 96:1

“I am the Lord; that is my name!”

Isaiah 42:8

**“Great and marvelous are your
deeds, Lord God Almighty!”**

Revelations 15:3-4

Dialogue Worksheet

Group 3:

“The Lord God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with his love, He will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17

The song “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship”

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.” Psalm 95:6-7

Dialogue Worksheet

Group 4:

**“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name;
you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1-3**

**“Great and marvelous are your
deeds, Lord God Almighty.”
Revelation 15:3**

**“Shout to the Lord, all the earth,
sing out your joy.” Psalm 98:4**

Dialogue Worksheet

Group 5:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:2

“You are the source of all life, And in your light, we see light.” Based on Psalm 36:9

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:24

Dialogue Worksheet

Group 6:

**“Glorify the Lord with me.
Let us exalt God’s name together!”
Psalm 34:3**

**“All the earth worships you; they
sing praises to you, sing praises to
your name.” Psalm 66:4**

**“So do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your
God.” Isaiah 41:10**

Answers for Dialogue Worksheet

Group 1:

- ↓ “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Exodus 20:2
- ↑ The song “*Here I Am to Worship*”
- ↔ “Let us exalt God’s name together!” Psalm 34:3

Group 2:

- ↔ “Sing to the Lord a new song.” Psalm 96:1
- ↓ “I am the Lord; that is my name!” Isaiah 42:8
- ↑ “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty!” Revelations 15:3-4

Group 3:

- ↓ “The Lord God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17
- ↑ The song “*Come, Now Is the Time to Worship*”
- ↔ “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” Psalm 95:6-7

Group 4:

- ↓ “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1-3
- ↑ “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.” Revelations 15:3
- ↔ “Shout to the Lord, all the earth sing out your joy.” Based on Psalm 98:4

Group 5:

- ↓ “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:2
- ↑ “You are the source of all life, And in your light, we see light.” Based on Psalm 36:9
- ↔ “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:24

Group 6:

- ↔ “Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt God’s name together!” Psalm 34:3
- ↑ “All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name.” Psalm 66:4
- ↓ “So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God.” Isaiah 41:10

Session 2

FREEDOM IN CHRIST— CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Scripture: Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-7; 4:1-8; 6:11-9:17; Genesis 11:1-9
John 3:16

Goals: The students will be able to explain how one of the stories from Genesis, Chapters 1-11 shows people making bad choices.

The students will be able to explain that we are forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection.

The students will identify who voices the words they hear in worship—God talking to us, us talking to God or us talking to each other.

The students will be able to appropriately use words that are connected with confession and forgiveness.

Session Overview

Learning Activity

1. Bible Stories: Choices
2. Forgiveness: John 3:16
3. Words from Psalm 51
4. Worship Words
5. Worship as Dialogue
6. Taking Out the Garbage

Materials

- 8½" × 11" paper (one sheet per student)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Bible
- Strips of cloth or paper 1" × 10"—red or brown (one per student)
- Strips of cloth or paper 1" × 7½"—red or brown (one per student)
- Glue
- Psalm 51:1-10 (page 30)
- Worship Words List (from Session 1)
- Worship Dialogue Boards (from Session 1)
- Garbage can

Background

Sin is a problem. The Bible and today's headlines show many examples of how sin has a profound impact on the world and on us all. In giving us the story of His people in the Bible, God does not shy away from showing us both the good and the bad. He also shows us that even those of His people who are held in high regard struggle with sin. David, a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), had a number of incidents in his life which showed that he struggled with sin. We see how David responded to God when he was reminded of his sin. Psalm 51 lets us see David's heart as he turns to God in shame asking for forgiveness for his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (for the story, see II Sam. 11). In the Psalms passage we read "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." David reminds us that there is more to confession and forgiveness than saying "I'm sorry." There needs to be restoration and renewal. David's Psalm serves as an excellent example for us as we turn to God to ask forgiveness.

Sin isn't restricted to just one story in the Bible. There are many examples in both the Old and New Testaments of God calling his people to confess their sin. In James 5:16, for example, we read "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." God's call for confession and his desire to restore the joy of his salvation to us is an important part of worship.

But confession is not is easy. People are uncomfortable when they focus on their sin. Even those who know that it is an important part of our relationship to God don't quite know how to treat this part of the worship service. Your students may be unsure how to feel during that part of the service. They perhaps feel that they should be sad for a while because they know that they have done wrong. They also know, however, that forgiveness and the assurance of pardon is coming. Should they feel sad for just a minute or two until they can feel happy again? It is possible, of course, to deeply regret what you've done wrong and still feel the joy of knowing that you are forgiven. We often have more than one emotion in us at any given time, and the service of confession and forgiveness is one of those times. We *should* feel bad for the things we have done wrong, and we should also feel great joy in God's abiding love for us.

Because confession and forgiveness is an important part of worship, many churches include a specific time for this in worship. Others have a time of confession as part of one of their prayers. Because people are uncomfortable with the idea of being reminded of sin, some congregations leave it to individuals and do not directly address confession in congregational worship. Especially for churches that are making a special effort to attract people who are not Christians, the service of confession can reinforce the notion that Christians are all about blaming and scolding when they really want to communicate that the Christian life isn't negative.

One of the *benefits* of addressing sin in our corporate worship, though, is that it also allows us to be reminded of the forgiveness that comes from God and the assurance that we have been pardoned through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In some churches, the congregation is invited, after the declaration

of assurance, to share the unity and love that God brings. This passing of the peace is a wonderful opportunity to say to each other that, just as we can be reconciled to God, we can be reconciled to each other. In his essay in *A More Profound Alleluia*, William Dyrness writes that when this time turns merely into a time to say “good morning” it is a missed opportunity—this is a time in which we can embrace each other on behalf of God. This emphasis on the corporate nature of confession and forgiveness is important if we are to understand why it belongs in congregational worship. This service is a celebration of our new life in Christ and of the peace that we share as those freed from the bondage of sin.

Leading the Session

I. Bible Stories: Choices

Materials: 8½" × 11" paper (one sheet per student.)
Markers, crayons, colored pencils

Take a plain sheet of 8½" × 11" paper and fold the paper in half. Fold the paper in half again. When you open it up, there are four parts. Read or tell the following four stories from Genesis. Tell the students to draw or write words from each of the stories in one section of the paper.

The following set of stories from Genesis have been written in a way that emphasizes that people have made bad choices from at the very beginning of history. Feel free to tell the stories rather than read them—this version is included here so that you can see what the authors had in mind in putting these stories together.

(Picture 1: The Fall—Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-7)

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. He created a man and a woman and placed them in a beautiful garden where they could spend time with each other and with God.

One day the serpent came to the woman and said “Is it true that you are not allowed to eat the fruit of any of the trees in this garden?” The woman answered, “That’s not true at all. God said that we may eat from any tree in the garden except for one tree, the tree that is in the middle of the garden. If we eat from that tree, God said we will die.”

“You won’t die!” said the serpent. “God knows that if you eat from that tree, your eyes will be open and you’ll be like God.” So the woman ate the fruit and her husband did too. After eating this fruit they realized that they had sinned. They tried to hide but God found them. The man and woman had to leave the garden. They would no longer be able to spend time with God in the garden. The man and the woman were given a choice—a choice to obey God—but they chose not to obey. Even though they had to leave the garden, God still remained with them. They had children and their children were taught about who God is.

(Picture 2: Abel and Cain—Genesis 4:1-8)

These children knew that God expected them to offer some of their best crops or flocks to Him. Cain was a farmer and raised crops. Abel

took care of animals. One day both Cain and Abel brought an offering to God. Abel brought some of his very best animals to offer to God. But Cain only brought some of his ordinary crops to give to God. God knew that Cain really didn't want to give his best and rejected Cain's offering. God knew that Abel had given Him his best animals, so He accepted Abel's offering.

When Cain found out that God had rejected his offering and accepted Abel's he became angry with his brother. He tricked his brother into going into the fields with him and, while they were alone there, Cain killed Abel.

God called to Cain and asked him where his brother was. Cain tried to lie but God knew exactly what Cain had done. God knew that Abel was dead. Cain had a choice—a choice to give God his best crops—but Cain chose not to do that. Cain chose to murder his brother and to lie to God about it. God sent Cain away from his family to live in a different part of the world; a place where crops didn't grow as well as they did in the land where his family lived. Cain turned his back on God and had to live with the results of his sin for the rest of his life.

(Picture 3: Noah —Genesis 6:5—9:17)

It turned out that Cain was not the only person to turn his back on God. As more and more people were on the earth there were more and more people who did not live the way God wanted them to. God looked at the beautiful world that he had created and at the terrible way that people were behaving, and God was sad. God knew that there was a man named Noah who was trying to live the way God wanted him to. But Noah lived in this world with all these wicked people. I wonder if it was hard for Noah to live the right way with all of this evil around him?

God decided that it was time to save Noah from all this wickedness. God called on Noah and told him that He was going to send a flood. The waters would be so high that everyone would die except Noah and his family. God told Noah that He would tell him how to build a boat—an ark—that would keep them safe. Noah did what God said and built the ark. It took many years for Noah to build this boat, and other people made fun of him. One day, God told Noah to get on the ark. When Noah, his family, and two animals of every kind were safe on the ark, it began to rain. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Imagine how much water there would be if it rained for more than five weeks without stopping! All the animals and people were destroyed—except for Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark.

The water washed away all the wickedness in the world and left a new world for Noah and his family to live in. The people who lived in Noah's time knew what God wanted them to do, but they made a choice to live in a way that did not make God happy. God cleared the earth of such wicked people, but He protected Noah and his family. The ark landed safely, and God's people started a new life. God sent a rainbow as a reminder of a promise He made never to destroy the whole world with a flood again.

(Picture 4: Babel—Genesis 11:1-9)

Many years went by and Noah's family grew and grew until there were again many people in the world. God had commanded them to spread over all the earth. But the people chose to stay together. The people said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." They wanted to build a tower so high that people would know how great they were. They forgot about God and wanted all people to remember them instead. So they began to build the tower.

As the tower grew toward the heavens, something amazing happened. The people building the tower began to speak different languages. They could no longer understand each other. They were so confused and frustrated that they stopped building. Finally, because they couldn't understand each other, they moved to different places and settled with people who spoke the same language they did. These people chose not to honor God with their work, but God remained faithful to them. These people got so focused on themselves and on their accomplishments that they couldn't see that they needed to remember God. God stopped their work, but he also gave them a gift—the gift of many languages.

After the story:

Look at the pictures you have drawn. (Invite students to share their drawings.) **What is the same in these stories?** The people in these stories had a choice to obey God and to do what God wanted them to or to continue to live like God didn't matter to them. In these four stories, we see that men and women made the wrong choices. They chose to ignore God.

What would have been a better choice? In all four of these stories people did not do what God wanted them to do—and they knew it. They should have stopped, thought about their decisions, and asked God to forgive them.

How are we like the people in these stories? We also make bad choices in our lives. We speak rudely to our parents. We want things we shouldn't have. We cheat and lie. We are just like the people in these stories—a lot more than we would like to admit.

2. Forgiveness: John 3:16

Materials: Bible

Strips of cloth or paper 1" × 10"—red or brown (one per student)

Strips of cloth or paper 1" × 7½"—red or brown (one per student)

Glue

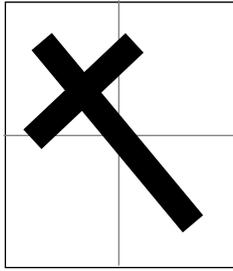
Continue:

The good news is that this isn't how the story ends.

Ask a student to read John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

We don't have to die for our bad choices—for our sins. Jesus died for us.

Look at the four pictures you drew. Because of Jesus, we are forgiven for our sins.



Hand out the strips of paper. Make a cross from the two strips and glue it on an angle over the four pictures. (See the diagram on the left.)

Jesus' death and resurrection provides forgiveness for us. His death covers these bad choices made by the people in Bible. His death also covers our sins. Let's think about this forgiveness we receive from Jesus.

Teaching Tip

You might want to use a dark colored pencil, pen or marker for the words that say "I'm sorry" and a red pen, pencil or marker for the words that say "I am forgiven."

3. Words from Psalm 51

Materials: Psalm 51:1-10 (page 30)

Hand each student the worksheet. You may wish to have the students work in groups.

Ask the students to highlight or circle the words that say "I am sorry" or words that say "I am forgiven."

Review the Psalm with the students. Use the words "confession" and "forgiveness" in your discussion.

4. Worship Words

Materials: Worship Words List (from Session 1)

Explain: **An important part of the relationship we have with our God is to acknowledge our sins and ask forgiveness. Let's add some of the words we highlighted to our Worship Words List.**

Add the following words:

- ▲ confess (confession)
- ▲ mercy
- ▲ pardon
- ▲ forgive (forgiveness)
- ▲ sorry
- ▲ sin (sinner)

5. Worship as Dialogue

Materials: Worship Dialogue Boards (from Session 1)

Refer to the words you added to the Worship Words List. Place them in the appropriate area on the Worship Dialogue Board.

Ask:

Which words show God talking to us?

Which words do we use to show us talking to God?

Are any of these words showing us talking to each other?

Do we need to ask forgiveness of other people?

6. Take Out the Garbage

Materials: Garbage can

Place the garbage can in the center of the classroom and explain:

Why do we have to confess our sin every week? In some ways sin is like garbage. Think about the garbage can in your kitchen or bathroom. Just going about your daily life adds things to the garbage can. And every so often you have to take out the garbage. But soon the can is full again. It seems to always be there. We have to empty the garbage again and again. That's because we keep creating more garbage.

That's what sin is like—we ask God to forgive us and He does. But we keep on sinning. So confession is like taking out the garbage—it's a job that needs to be done over and over.

In some churches, there is a time during the worship service for confession and forgiveness when we hear how God wants us to live our lives. Then there is a time we together think about how we have not done what God wanted us to. We don't stop there, however. We know that God forgives us and that we can live in peace with Him and with each other.

What are some of the ways that we do these things in the church you go to? (Answers will vary but may include prayers, songs, reading scripture, talking about sins, and reading the Ten Commandments.)

How do you think people feel during this time of asking for forgiveness? (Again, answers will vary, but students may say that people feel sad because they're sorry for their sin.)

Sometimes we can be both happy and sad at the same time. When someone we love dies, we are very sad; but we also can rejoice because he or she is in heaven. Especially when someone is very sick, we feel both happy and sad when that person dies and is released from suffering. That's the way it is when we confess our sin—we're sad that we've disobeyed God again, but we're glad that He has promised to forgive us. We're both happy and sad. But the service of confession and forgiveness isn't about how we feel—it's about being obedient to God and doing what He wants us to do.

Optional Activities

- Chalk Talk. Before the lesson, write a question on the board and invite your students to write responses under it, beginning a dialogue with each other before you discuss the lesson together. Encourage the students to write, but not talk, about the issue until time for the lesson. Today's question is: How do you think sin affects us and the world?
- Encourage your students to look up different ways that people have represented the cross over the ages. One source of a few of these designs is *Visuals for Worship* by Betsy Steele Halstead, 2006, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Have your students use a concordance to find scripture passages related to confession and forgiveness. Another place your students can look is in the topical index of many hymnals.
- A great way to get at this concept of forgiveness is to think about washing your hands. Germs can get on your hands from everywhere, from anything you touch. It's the same with sin. Just like germs, sin is all around us and "gets on us" without our even realizing it. We are guilty of sins we have committed and sins that we aren't even aware of. We wash our hands regularly to stay healthy and get rid of the germs. That's a lot like confession: we need to ask God to forgive our sins so that we can stay healthy.

If you think your class can handle this and take it seriously enough, ask the students to wash each others' hands. You can set up a basin and have them come forward in pairs or triads and wash their classmates' hands. Or you, as the teacher, could wash their hands for them. You can say "God forgives sins. He washes sin away," or you can read from Psalm 103:8-12. The following passage is from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*.

"GOD is sheer mercy and grace;
not easily angered, he's rich in love.
He doesn't endlessly nag and scold,
nor hold grudges forever.
He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve,
nor pay us back in full for our wrongs.
As high as heaven is over the earth,
so strong is his love to those who fear him.
And as far as sunrise is from sunset,
he has separated us from our sins."

- Songs you can use with this lesson:
 - "Beautiful Savior" (All My Days) performed and written by Stuart Townsend on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
 - "Create in Me a Clean Heart" This song is taken from *Psalm 51:10* by Keith Green on the CD *Make My Life A Prayer to You: Songs of Devotion*, (Sparrow Records, 1998).
 - "Create in Me a Clean Heart" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 # 49.
 - "Give Us Clean Hands" written and performed by Charlie Hall on the CD *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever 2:25 Modern Worship Songs for a New Generation*, (Worship Together, 2001).

- “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” performed by Sarah Sadler with music and lyrics by Stuart Townsend on the CD *Worship Together Be Glorified*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Grace Flows Down” performed by Passion Band music and lyrics by David Bell, Louie Giglio and Rod Padgett on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Kindness” performed and written by Chris Tomlin on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Kyrie” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #52–54.
- “O Christ, the Lamb of God” *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1987 #257.
- “Sweet Mercies” performed by Passion Band with music and lyrics by David Ruis on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Thank You for Saving Me” performed by Delirious with music and lyrics by Martin Smith on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Trading My Sorrows” performed and written by Darrell Evans on the CD *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: 25 Modern Worship Song for a New Generation* (Worship Together, 2000).
- “You Are My King” (I’m forgiven) performed by Passion with music and lyrics by Billy James Foote on the CD *Worship Together Be Glorified*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Your Mercy Flows” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #68.

Psalm 51:1-10 (NIV) written by David

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Session 3

SHAPED BY GOD— THE WORD

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8
II Kings 22:1-23:30

- Goals:**
- While working with clay, the students will think about how the potter shapes it.
 - The students will be able to explain how Josiah's life was changed by the Word.
 - While interviewing a pastor, the students will understand how the pastor prepares to preach and lead worship.
 - The student will write a cinquain expressing thoughts about worship.
 - The students will add to the Worship Dialogue Board and the Worship Words List.

Session Overview

Learning Activity

1. Stories Shape Us
2. Bible Story: Josiah
3. Interview with a Pastor
4. Worship as Dialogue
5. Write a Cinquain
6. Worship Words

Materials

- 2 pieces of clay or Play Doh
- Object Cards (from page 38)
- The play, "Josiah—Changed by God's Word" (pages 39–41)
- Pastor
- (Optional) Sample Pastor Interview Sheet (pages 42–44)
- Worship Dialogue Board (from previous sessions)
- Paper and pencil
- Worship Words List (from previous sessions)

Background

The sermon or the message is what many people think about when they first think about church. People seldom ask what the service of confession was like, nor do they often ask about the collection or the blessing. When people miss church, the most likely question is “What was the sermon about?” The sermon is that part of worship that appears to change the most from week to week. The sermon is what we sometimes find ourselves talking about over dinner. It is also the most critiqued part of worship partly because of its length. To listen to someone speak for 20 minutes (or longer) is a challenge. To keep our attention, the preacher needs to be a good speaker and ought to have something worthwhile to say!

The good news is that often the preachers that we listen to are very good. The stereotypical self-righteous minister who drones on and on is, thankfully, found more often in fiction than in real life. Many pastors are skilled orators who keep us interested with their words and their stories. The even better news is that they most certainly have something worthwhile to say—the Word of the Lord! The sermon is nothing less than God’s Word to us. Don’t let that last sentence go by without thinking about it. *The sermon is nothing less than God’s Word to us.* How remarkable! In her book, *A More Profound Alleluia*, Leanne Van Dyk reminds us that a sixteenth century confession of faith states clearly that “the preaching of the word of God is the word of God.” How is it possible, if sermons are the Word of God, that some of them seem dull, repetitive and uninspired?

One of the mysteries of how God works in our world is that He often chooses to use fallible and ordinary people to do His work here on Earth. Preaching is no exception. God’s Word is preached by people who don’t do it perfectly. Yet, in spite of their shortcomings, God’s word comes to His people through these imperfect people. That is one of the wonderful things about God’s word to us. He used *people* as inspired authors when He gave us the Bible many years ago. He also uses people today to preach His Word in worship.

In this lesson, the students begin by working with clay. What they actually *make* with the clay isn’t terribly important in this lesson; the process of *shaping* the clay is more important than the product. The point is that the clay is being shaped much like we are shaped by the Word of God. In our story, we will see how Josiah’s life was changed by the reading of the Law. God’s Word had the power to change Josiah’s life, and it has that same power today.

We will also think about preaching and try to understand what a preacher thinks about when he or she is preparing to preach on a passage. In this way, we hope that your students will be better prepared to listen when God’s servant delivers His Word to His people.

In preparing this lesson, the authors were struck by how many times a pastor has to make some sort of decision about what he or she is going to preach about on a given Sunday. The pastor first makes a decision on which passage to preach about. That decision can be guided by a number of things. Some pastors listen to what’s in their heart and preach about that; others listen to what the

congregation is asking to hear and preach on that. Still others find that in order to make sure that the whole council of God is preached in their church, the preacher uses a prepared list, a lectionary, to help him or her choose the passage for the day. Preachers who do this depend on the work of the Holy Spirit in setting up that list (sometimes years ahead of time) so that the people hear the Word of God that they need to hear on a given Sunday.

Once the Bible passage is selected, the pastor has to decide what to say about that passage. There are a number of things that can be said about many passages, especially when it comes to applying the Word to today's world. Add to that the special circumstances or needs of a particular congregation and we realize that the preacher has a lot to think about in preparing a sermon. It is comforting for preachers and listeners alike that these decision points all represent times for the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of the preacher to prepare him or her to speak to God's people—some of whom haven't even decided to attend the service yet!

There is much that is mysterious here. The preacher is only human, yet God uses this person to deliver the Word of God. The spirit works in the preacher's heart to accomplish this, but there is even more to it than that. The spirit also works in the hearts of the people who prepare the lectionary texts ahead of time. The spirit works in the hearts of those who select the music and who plan the worship service. The Holy Spirit is also at work in the hearts of those of us who listen. All of this helps us hear God's eternal word in fresh new ways. As we sit in church, we are part of the wonder of God's revelation. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

Leading the Session

I. Stories Shape Us

Materials: 2 pieces of clay or Play Doh
Object Cards (from page 38)

Before class, cut out the object cards. Divide the class into two teams.

Today we are going to play the game "Shape Up!" The first player from each team takes an object card. The player returns to his team and, without talking, shapes the clay into the object on the card. When a teammate says the object's name, the next player takes an object card. Play continues in this manner until all object cards have been drawn. The team to guess the most objects wins.

Following the game, read this verse:

**We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand. Isaiah 64:8**

Say: We took this piece of clay and shaped it into something. Sometimes we are shaped just like the clay was. We are shaped by the people we know and by what happens to us. We are shaped by what we hear and see. We are shaped by the stories we hear about the lives of others. We are shaped

by God's Word, both by what we read in the Bible and by what we hear from preachers and teachers. I wonder how that happens. Let's look at the story of Josiah and see what caused him to do what he did.

Teaching Tip

This play could be presented as a reader's theater.

2. Bible Story: Josiah

Materials: The play, "Josiah—Changed by God's Word" (pages 39–41)

For this part of the lesson your students can either perform or watch the play about Josiah. You can choose to assign the parts ahead of time and have a few students present this to the rest of the class. You could also have the preparation for and presentation for this play be part of your class work. Perhaps you could present it to a younger class. The important part is that, somehow, your students get to interact with the story of Josiah.

To perform this play you will need two stage areas: one for the king's throne room and one for the temple. The throne room will need a throne. Almost any chair will do for a throne. The king will also need a robe that can be torn, or the king could pretend to tear his robe and someone offstage could tear a piece of cloth or paper for the sound effect. There should be a book in the temple. Objects that could represent offerings to Baal or Asherah (such as statues, trophies, or dinnerware) should be placed around the room. Strips of red, orange and yellow paper could be used to represent the fire. A table with chairs will also be needed for celebrating the Passover.

After presenting the play, discuss:

- **Did this story show someone being changed?** Yes, Josiah and the people of Israel.
- **What changes did he make?** He followed what was said in the book. He burned the statues and celebrated the Passover.
- **What changed him?** The reading of the Book of the Law
- **What is the Book of the Law?** The Bible—specifically, it is the first five books of the Bible.
- **Does this book still have the power to change lives?** Yes!!
- **Can you think of any examples of people whose lives were changed by the Bible?** Answer will vary—share your own experiences or those of others about how you or they have been changed by God's Word. It doesn't have to be dramatic "Damascus Road" type change. The changes can be more subtle and reflect, for example, how you came to care more about the poor or how hearing God's Word made you want to be a teacher.

3. Interview with a Pastor

Materials: Pastor

(Optional) Sample Pastor Interview Sheet (pages 42–44)

Invite a pastor to your classroom. Choose a pastor who is good at talking to children. Talk with the students ahead of time about the purpose for the special guest—to find out what it's like to prepare a

sermon and to preach. Brainstorm a list of questions with your students. Here are some sample questions:

1. What was your church like when you were growing up?
2. What made you want to be a pastor?
3. How old were you when you knew you were going to be a pastor?
4. Did you need to memorize a lot of the Bible before you could become a pastor?
5. What is the best part about being a pastor?
6. What is the easiest part about being a pastor?
7. What is the hardest part about being a pastor?
8. How do you choose the sermon topics?
9. How do you make sure you don't repeat a passage or topic too often?
10. What makes the sermon so important?
11. What makes you so special that you can preach?
12. What do you hope will happen when you preach?
13. If I have a favorite Bible story and I want you to preach about it, would you?
14. How do you deliver your sermons? (Stay behind the pulpit, move around, etc.)
15. Do you pick the songs that get used in the service?
16. How do you keep the congregation from getting bored?
17. Would you like church members to say "Amen" and "Praise the Lord" when you preach?
18. How do you practice giving a sermon?
19. Do you enjoy preaching?
20. Do you sometimes wish you could just listen to sermons rather than give them?
21. How do you end sermons? Do you say "Amen," or is there some other closing phrase you use?

When the pastor visits, encourage your students to ask the questions. Be prepared to follow-up, to clarify, or to reword the question so that the pastor frames his or her answer in a way that is more appropriate for the children in your class.

A sample interview with a pastor is found on pages 42–44. These questions and responses might be helpful as you prepare for your visitor. If you are unable to schedule a pastor, use the sample interview instead, having one of the children or another adult read the pastor's answers.

4. **Worship as Dialogue**

Materials: Worship Dialogue Board (from previous sessions)

Refer to the Worship Dialogue Board. **Where would the message (or sermon) part of the worship service fit?** The natural place is

with the arrow from God to Us. But the children may see the message as a time when one person, the pastor, is talking to another person, the congregation. And yet, the message is broader than that. The Holy Spirit is working in our hearts, making the words that we hear shape us to be hearers of God's message.

5. Write a Cinquain

Materials: Paper and pencil

The modern cinquain is a poem used to express brief thoughts and statements. It is based on a word count of certain types of words. Cinquains can be useful poetic tools for children; the form is easy for them to use and, at the same time, it encourages them to choose words carefully and with beautiful results.

Ask the students to write a cinquain about the hearing of the Word, worship (in general), or the Bible. The cinquain form is given below.

Line 1: A single word (a noun)

Line 2: Two words describing the noun

Line 3: Three "ing" words about the noun

Line 4: Four feelings about the noun

Line 5: Another word that means the same thing as the first word

Example:

Bible
Life changing
Leading, guiding, blessing
Love, faith, joy gratitude
God's Word

Some children may want to illustrate their poem. Invite the children to share their completed poems. Point out the variety in the poems, even though they all had the same assignment. Compare the similarities and differences.

(Adapted from *God's People Worship* by Carolyn Brown from *Faith for Life*, published by The Logos System Associates, 1989, Course 4, Session 10:4)

6. Worship Words

Materials: Worship Words List (from previous session)

Ask: **Are there any new words we need to add to this list?**

Add the following words:

- ▲ message
- ▲ sermon
- ▲ The Word

Optional Activities

- Chalk Talk. Before the lesson, write a question on the board and invite your students to write responses under it, beginning a dialogue with each other before you discuss the lesson together. Encourage the students to write, but not talk, about the issue until the time for the lesson. Today's question is: *How does reading the Bible change people's lives?*
- During the sermon, have the students fold a sheet of paper into four or six parts. Have them fill each part of the paper with a drawing or words that the pastor says during the sermon. This practice will get the student into a pattern of tuning back into the sermon. You might want to share how, even as an adult, you also sometimes have to remind yourself to focus on the sermon again. Sharing what you do during a sermon to help you "tune back in" might be helpful to the students.
- Often music used at this time in the worship service reflects the specific content of the Bible passage and the message. You might want to take a couple of specific examples from your church over the past few weeks to serve as an example of that. Sometimes, especially just before the reading of the Word, we sing about God's Word in general. Below is list of songs with that focus. Play a recording or sing them with your class. Feel free to add additional songs that are used in your students' churches.
 - "Open the Eyes of My Heart" performed by Praise Band with words and lyrics by Paul Baloche on the CD *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: 25 Modern Worship Songs for a New Generation* (Worship Together, 2000).
 - "Thy Word" *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #86.

Additional songs that reflect the message that God shapes us and molds us:

- "Have Thine Own Way, Lord!" *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1987 #287.
- "The Potter's Hand," Darlene Zschech. Hillsong Publishing: Integrity Music, 1997.

Object Cards

clock	iron	shoe
hat	calculator	guitar
tree	bicycle wheel	hammer
trumpet	snowman	fish
telephone	mitten	butterfly
hanger	door knob	spider web
globe	ear	leaf
light bulb	snowflake	rake
umbrella	tennis racket	hair dryer
flag	truck	star
stamp	belt	apple

Josiah—Changed by God’s Word

A play taken from II Kings 22:1-23:30

Characters: Shaphan, the king’s secretary
King Josiah
Hilkiah, the high priest
Narrator
People (3 or 4)

Scene 1: The Throne Room

(Shaphan stands next to the king’s throne.)

Narrator: Josiah was eight years old when he became king.

(Josiah enters and sits on his throne.)

Narrator: He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

Shaphan: Congratulations, King Josiah!

Josiah: What are you congratulating me for?

Shaphan: This is your eighteenth year as King!

Josiah: Has it been 18 years already? That’s amazing. Time certainly flies, doesn’t it? Thank you, Shaphan.

Shaphan: You’re welcome, Your Majesty.

Josiah: Shaphan, go up to Hilkiah, the high priest, and have him get ready to pay the people who worked on the temple. Tell him to give the money to the supervisors, and they can pay the workers. I trust them to do it right.

Shaphan: Yes, sir. I’ll go at once.

(Shaphan exits.)

Scene 2: The Temple

(Shaphan enter the temple where Hilkiah is working.)

Hilkiah: Hello, Shaphan. What brings you to the temple?

Shaphan: Hello, Hilkiah. King Josiah has sent me to have you get ready the money so the workers can be paid.

Hilkiah: That’s good to hear. I’ll do it right away! Please also tell the king that I have found the Book of the Law here in the temple of the LORD. Better yet, let me give it to you. You can bring it to him.

(Shaphan takes the book and begins to read it.)

Narrator: Shaphan read the Book of the Law and then returned to the king.

(Shaphan exits.)

Scene 3: The Throne Room

(Shaphan enters the throne room.)

Shaphan: Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD.

Josiah: Excellent! People who work hard deserve to be paid. But Shaphan, you seem to have something else on your mind? Is there something else you wish to tell me?

Shaphan: Yes, King Josiah. Hilkiyah, the priest, has given me a book. I read it and thought that you should hear what is in it.

Josiah: A book? How interesting! What book is it?

Shaphan: It is the Book of the Law. It is the Word of God.

Narrator: And Shaphan read the book of the law to the king. The king listened. The book contained the stories of the people of Israel. The King heard how God turned the children of Abraham into a great nation. He heard about how the people were slaves in Egypt and how God delivered them. He heard the Ten Commandments. There were other laws and celebrations the people were supposed to follow. This was brand new to Josiah. He had not heard much of this before.

As he listened, his eyes filled with tears. The people of Israel had forgotten about God. The more Josiah thought about this, the sadder he became. He soon did what people did in those days when they were very sad—he tore his robes.

(Josiah tears his robe.)

Josiah: God must be very angry with us because we have not obeyed the words of this book. We've done many things we were not supposed to do. We even built statues to other gods. Look around—they're everywhere. We are not living the way God wants us to live. We're not doing the things He commanded us to.

Narrator: Josiah thought about this for a while. Finally, he made a decision.

Josiah: We have to make this right!

(Josiah and Shaphan exit.)

Scene 4: The Temple

(Josiah and Shaphan enter the temple.)

Narrator: The king called together all the people to the temple.

(The people enter and stand near Josiah.)

Josiah: A special book was found in the temple of the LORD. I would like you to hear what it says. This is the Word of the LORD!

Narrator: So the priests read the Book of the Law to the people of Israel. After the book was read, King Josiah stood up in front of all the people and promised to obey God and keep His commands. He promised to do what was commanded in the Book.

(The king places his hand over his heart.)

Josiah: I will keep the commands in the Book of the Law.

Narrator: Then all the people joined him in that pledge:

People: We will keep the commands in the Book of the Law.

Josiah: We have to get rid of all those things in the temple that were made for Baal and Asherah. Take them out of the temple and burn them. Do it quickly—God must be very angry with us. We have to make this right!

Narrator: The people did as the king said.

(The people gather the articles and place them in a pile on the floor. Red, yellow and orange paper is waved to represent a fire.)

Josiah: Now, let us have a celebration—but not just any celebration—this needs to be a special celebration. We are going to celebrate the Passover, the special meal that God told us to eat to remember how He saved us from slavery in Egypt.

(The people sit down at a table to celebrate the Passover.)

Narrator: So, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the Passover was celebrated in Israel. It was the first time in many years the people celebrated the Passover. Josiah helped his people—God’s people—learn to hear God’s voice again. Here is what we read in the Bible about Josiah:

“Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.”

(The actors exit.)

Sample Pastor Interview Sheet

How do you decide what to preach about?

I want to preach about God. I want to make sure I preach about *all* of what God tells us in His Word. I want to preach about how God made everything. People were made perfect, and then we sinned. Sin separates people from God, and yet God calls people and says “I will be your God. I want to have a relationship with you.” Then Jesus came, the Son of God. He came so we can have a relationship with God. It was making Creation good again after our sin hurt it.

How do you decide what to preach Sunday?

I want to make sure that I preach all of the parts of the Bible, not just my favorite parts. That’s a danger for me, and I think for all preachers, so I have a three-year plan of Bible passages that goes through the entire Bible. I try to stick to that.

Who makes this plan?

I make it, but I have some help. I start by looking at a book called the Lectionary. This book has mapped out how to study the whole Bible in three years. This plan has been used for many years by churches around the world. Next, I take the plan to the elders and the worship committee in my church to help me make sure that I’m preaching about the things I need to preach about. I think that God uses those people to help guide me, too.

How do you decide what to say about a passage in the Bible?

- First, I read the passage as often as I can. I want to know the story or the passage so well that I’m thinking about it even when I’m not actually working on my sermon.
- Then I ask “What does this say about God?” “What is this saying about God’s plan?” I understand that in your class you just talked about Josiah. If I was preaching about that story, I would ask “What is the story saying about Josiah and God?”
- Next I look at books that describe how people lived at that time. For example: What was it like to live in Josiah’s day? What was going on in history? How did people live? Did those people worship other gods? What were they like? I’d look at other books in the Bible to see if they say anything about this story. What were the prophets saying at that time that I should be thinking about too?

Teaching Tip

In general, the Baptist tradition does not use the lectionary. The Catholic Church lectionary is slightly different from the reformed lectionary because the Catholic Bible includes more books.

- I also try to think about the very first people who heard this story. These Bible books were originally written for specific people many years ago. What did they think when they heard this story? For example, Matthew's gospel was first heard during a time of persecution. The stories of Jesus were meant to be very encouraging to the people—that's why they were written the way they were. I need to think about that, too.
- Finally, I ask what this passage could be saying to me and my congregation today because even though these books were written a long time ago for another people, God also wrote them for us to read, and I need to think what He is saying to us today with these words.

Suppose I have a favorite story and I want you to preach about it. Would you do it?

No, I wouldn't. I'd stick to the three-year plan. I may make reference to the story or mention the conversation we had in my message, but preaching comes from the full message of the Bible rather than what is popular at the time. I'm not just picking on you. It's not just *your* favorite story that I don't choose. I also don't choose *my* favorite story. If I did preach on your favorite story, I might ignore other good stories and miss part of what God wants my congregation to hear. I'll get to your passage or your story as I go through the Bible.

What makes the sermon special?

The sermon is special because both what I say and what people hear are guided by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit even makes up for mistakes that I make in preaching. I might say something in a way that isn't very good, but the Spirit can even use that to touch people's hearts. It is a special time when the pastor preaches the gospel, but it is special because it is preached and because it is listened to. It's a "Holy Spirit moment."

What makes you so special that you can preach?

I'm not that special. I'm just a person who loves Jesus like all the other people in my church. But I have a special job to do. Here's how I got that job:

- First, I am convinced that I have been called to do this. God called me. He used other people to encourage me to do this.
- I also went to school and took classes on how to read the Bible. I practiced working in churches. The more I studied and the more I learned, the more convinced I became that God wanted me to do this work.
- Finally, church leaders had a meeting where they interviewed me and asked me questions. They listened to me preach, and they said that I could be a pastor.

Teaching Tip

You might want to talk about these three things in greater detail with your class.

- How do we hear God's will for our lives?
- What kind of special training do pastors have?
- Which church leaders made this decision? In this case, it was the Synod and Classis of a particular denomination. How is that different from other churches?

What do you wear when you preach?

Most of the time, I wear a black robe. It reminds the congregation that this person who is standing in front of them has a special job that is shared by all kinds of pastors. Pastors have worn robes for many, many years. It is good. It is special. It reminds me that I'm doing a special job when I put it on. Then I add color, in the stole that I wear. I like to put the colors on the robe for the seasons. I wear green for most of the year but purple for lent and advent, white for Christmas and Epiphany and bright red for Pentecost. Just putting on those colors reminds me that we are entering a special time in our church. It helps me think more about what we're doing when we worship.

What do you hope will happen when you preach?

I hope that people are more in awe of God than they were before I started. I hope that people will want to love God more and serve him. When I finish a sermon I sometimes think about how God is mysterious. It is hard to figure this out. God is so great that my sermons sometimes accomplish things way beyond what I could do on my own.

(The authors would like to thank our pastor, Rev. Marv Hofman, for helping us with this interview.)

Session 4

GOD WITH US— THE BLESSING

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4; Numbers 6:22-27

- Goals:**
- The students will hear how Abram was blessed by God.
 - The students will add words of blessing and sending out to the Worship Words List.
 - After reading some of the blessings from the Bible, the students will write a blessing.
 - The teacher will bless the students.

Session Overview

Learning Activity

1. Blessing in Worship
2. Bible Story: Abram
3. Worship as Dialogue
4. Blessings from the Bible
5. Worship Words
6. Bless the Students

Materials

- Responsive Reading about Abram (page 51)
- Worship Dialogue Board
- Copy of the Responsive Reading about Abram
- Blessing Worksheet (pages 52–53)
- Worship Words List

Background

In many churches, as we close our time of worship, the pastor raises his or her hands and speaks familiar words: “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” These words, known as the Aaronic blessing, were given to Moses in Numbers 6. God told Moses that these were the words Aaron was to use to bless the people of Israel.

We read about blessings a number of times in the Bible, and we see them given by a number of people. In Genesis 27, for example, Jacob tricked Isaac to get the blessing meant for Jacob’s brother Esau. When Esau discovered this, he asked his father, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?” Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?” In a similar instance today, we’d just say we didn’t really mean it, or we’d say “I thought I was promising these things to Esau.” There was something special about the power of the blessing that Isaac gave Jacob. There was something else happening here as well. It is clear that blessings have a weight to them that goes beyond just mere words.

David Stubbs writes that a blessing is “a calling for the Holy Spirit to come and transform us.” Being blessed by God means that we become holy, reflective of God and the purposes of God.” There is clearly something more to a blessing than just a word of encouragement. The power of the blessing seems to have been diluted somewhat over the years; we don’t really expect God to transform us because someone spoke certain words over us. But blessings given in the Bible suggest that these words are powerful. These words have the power to transform us and to make us holy and reflective of God. What actually happens when we are blessed is mysterious. It’s hard to put our finger exactly on what it is, but God is working in our lives to transform us into His servants. He is preparing us to do His work, to be His agents in the world. We aren’t blessed just so we’ll be happier. We are blessed so that we can bless others. Because being blessed carries with it a responsibility, the words of blessing at the end of our worship are often coupled with a charge, calling us to go out into the world as God’s servants. God commands us to “Go out into the world, but know that I go with you.” Just as God calls us and welcomes us into worship, He also sends us forth ready and able to do His work.

Many of the blessings that we hear in worship come from the final verses of Paul’s letters. These letters were about a variety of topics, usually in response to specific needs and issues related to the people to whom Paul was writing. In the same way, his words of blessing to them have the effect of saying “OK, now that I’ve told you about this, you need to go and do it.” Just like the believers of Corinth or Philippi, we are given God’s blessing and sent out to do God’s work.

In this lesson we look at the blessing and the charge as the way that God sends us out of worship. You will have the opportunity to emphasize the power of words and reinforce the notion that God blesses us in order to bless others.

Leading the Session

1. Blessing in Worship

Materials: None

Today we are going to talk about the end of the worship service. Have you ever seen the pastor raise his or her arms? The pastor may also say something like “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:28) What is happening? The pastor is blessing the people.

Ask follow-up questions such as:

Why does the pastor raise his hands?

Can anyone give a blessing?

Is it important?

Let’s see what we can learn about a blessing from the Bible.

2. Bible Story: Abram

Materials: *Responsive Reading about Abram (page 51)*

Before class, copy the responsive reading about Abram (one per student).

Split the class into four groups. Hand out the responsive reading. Three of these groups will read the responsive reading, and one group will count how many times they hear the word “bless” or “blessed.” Tell the class that this reading is from the book of Genesis.

Group 1: The LORD had said to Abram,

Group 2: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

Group 3: I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

Group 2: I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Group 3: I will bless those who bless you,

Group 2: and whoever curses you I will curse;

Group 3: and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Group 1: Through Abram we are blessed, and so we are blessed and can go out reflecting God’s light.

Discuss:

How many times did this passage use the word “bless” or “blessed”? Eight times

In our reading, who was giving the blessing? God

In church, when we hear a blessing at the end of the service, who is giving that blessing? God is giving that one, too. Even though the pastor is saying the words of the blessing, the blessing is usually taken from God’s Word, the Bible, and the pastor is speaking on behalf of God at that point.

In the passage that we read together, who received the blessing? Abram

In church, who receives the blessing? We do—all God’s people.

God blessed Abram. God also blesses us. What does that mean? This is similar to the question asked earlier; it is still a question with a number of possible answers. Emphasize that the blessing means that God will be with us in a very real way as we live our lives throughout the week.

3. **Worship as Dialogue**

Materials: *Worship Dialogue Board*
Copy of the Responsive Reading about Abram

Ask: **Under which category on the Worship Dialogue Board does the blessing belong?** Place a copy of the responsive reading under the diagram with the arrow from God to Us.

Can we bless each other? Yes, we can—and we should! But the blessing at the end of the worship service is a blessing from God to us. That's why we have the arrows pointing from God to us in this case.

4. **Blessings from the Bible**

Materials: *Blessing Worksheet (pages 52–53)*

Before class, make copies of the Blessing Worksheet (one per student).

At the end of the services the pastor delivers a blessing from God to the congregation. This blessing is often taken directly from the Bible. Let's look at some of those blessings.

Hand out the Blessings Worksheet. Ask the students to form pairs or triads and read the blessings out loud to each other. As the students hear the blessings, tell them to circle words in the blessings that are used often; these are words that they might want to use when they write their own blessings.

Ask each group to write two blessings. It may be helpful to look at the words that the students circled. The worksheet suggests groups of people to write a blessing for. Feel free to add to the list groups of people from your community for whom a particular blessing might be appropriate. You might also make reference to current events (e.g., people who have lost their homes in natural disasters like a hurricane, tornado or tsunami).

Sample blessings:

What would be a good blessing for a baby? *May God be with you as you grow.*

What would be good blessing for grandparents? *May the God of peace give you the strength to do His work this day and this week. May your children and grandchildren see God's work in your life.*

What would be a good blessing for a student? *May God give you the strength to learn, the patience to listen, and the ability to discern what is right for your life. May others see that God lives in you.*

What would be a good blessing for a soldier? *May God give you good judgment as you make decisions each day, and grant you peace.*

What would be a good blessing for a parent? For their parents? *May God be with you as you follow Him and as you teach your children to walk in His ways.*

What would be a good blessing for a teacher? *May God grant you wisdom as you work with the children He has put in your care.*

Keep these blessings sheets for use in Session 5, in which your class prepares a worship service.

5. Worship Words List

Materials: Worship Words List

Add the following words:

- ▲ blessing
- ▲ grace
- ▲ God with us

6. Bless the Students

Materials: None

End the lesson by blessing the children. This can be done very simply by saying, “May God be with you on the playground today.” You could read the words of a very old blessing from the liturgy of the Byzantine Catholic Church (or others): “The blessing of the Lord be upon you, through His grace and compassions and love for mankind, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.”

As an alternative, the teacher can bless each child individually. Place your hand on each student’s shoulder, and give a blessing such as “May God use your strength and ability to get along with other people this day and this week.” Another simple blessing is to put one arm around the shoulders of the child, speak his or her name, and simply say, “May God be with you.”

Optional Activities

- Chalk Talk. Before the lesson, write a question on the board and invite your students to write responses under it, beginning a dialogue with each other before you discussing the lesson together. Encourage the students to write, but not talk, about the issue until time for the lesson. Today’s question is: *Have you ever been blessed by anyone? What was it like?*
- Songs of blessing:
 - “Step by Step” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #17.
 - “Go My Children, With My Blessing” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #284.
 - “My Friends, May You Grow in Grace” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #288.

- You may wish to give the students trail mix as they leave. Trail mix is a mixture of pretzels, cereal, candy-coated chocolate pieces, peanuts, chocolate chips, raisins, etc. Trail mix provides for physical nourishment throughout the day while the blessing gives us spiritual nourishment throughout the day. (Be aware of any allergies or special dietary needs that your students may have.)
- Spend some time discussing the last line of the Bible reading for today, “Through Abram we are blessed, and so we are blessed and can go out reflecting God’s light.” This passage summarizes the end of a worship time and the idea that we are blessed and then we go out reflecting God’s light. Ask the students what this might look like in their daily lives.

Responsive Reading about Abram

- Group 1:** The LORD had said to Abram,
- Group 2:** “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.
- Group 3:** I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;
- Group 2:** I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
- Group 3:** I will bless those who bless you,
- Group 2:** and whoever curses you I will curse;
- Group 3:** and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”
- Group 1:** Through Abram we are blessed, and so we are blessed and can go out reflecting God’s light.

Blessing Worksheet

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:22-27

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. I Corinthians 16:23

And the God of love and peace will be with you. II Corinthians 13:11

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. II Corinthians 13:14

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Ephesians 6:24

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I Thessalonians 5:28

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. II Thessalonians 3:16

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

What would be a good blessing for a baby?

What would be good blessing for grandparents?

What would be a good blessing for a student?

What would be a good blessing for a soldier?

What would be a good blessing for a parent? For your parents?

What would be a good blessing for a teacher?

Session 5

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4; Numbers 6:22-27

Goals: The students will work in groups, each contributing part of the worship service.

The students will worship using a service they designed.

Session Overview

Learning Activity

1. Group Work

- Call to Worship
- Confessions and Forgiveness

- Hearing the Word
- Blessing

2. Look Again

3. Worship

Materials

Worksheet: Call to Worship (page 60)

Worksheet: Confession and Forgiveness (page 61)

Psalm 51 (page 30)

Worksheet: Shaped by God—the Word (page 62)

Worksheet: God with Us—Blessing (page 63)

Blessing Worksheets (from Session 4, pages 52–53)

(Optional) Invite a worship leader

Invite a pastor or other speaker

Background

Today's lesson gives you an opportunity to put together all the parts of worship into a worship service. There are many good ways to do this. The important thing is that the students actually get a chance to turn the ideas that they've been discussing into action. By building a worship service, the students will realize that a lot of thought goes into the worship services that they attend—they don't just happen. It will also help them to think about what their worship community does when it gathers to worship God.

Many decisions are made in planning a worship service. These decisions are often made by the pastor, worship coordinator, or a worship committee. In this lesson, the students will make these decisions about their own worship service. We suggest that you divide your class into four groups and let each group work on one part of the service. First the groups will decide on the words to be used. Then they will decide who will say them. We have included handouts to help guide this work.

Each of the handouts asks the students to select a song for their portion of the service. Each of the previous sessions has song suggestions at the end of the teacher's notes. These might not be the best songs for you to use in your worship service. Your community may have other songs that the students know well and use often in worship. It is fine to use those songs. Work with your students to think about what these songs say and how they best fit into this worship service.

The groups will then bring their completed work together. They should check to see if the pieces fit together well. Do you, for example, have two songs sung one right after the other? Should there be some words said between the songs such as "Let us sing a song of forgiveness, 'You are my King.'" You also need to think about some small but important items like when the worshippers stand or sit. How will the congregation know that they should stand or sit? (You may want to invite a worship leader to your class to talk about how he or she plans a worship service.)

We have chosen a theme for this service: Living Water, John 4:4-14. The story is one that the students can understand and provides a great opportunity for the use of visual media from the World Wide Web or students' drawings. (You may use any theme you'd like for the service—we supplied a theme to make your life easier, not to be restrictive.)

Because we make a point of the special work that an ordained pastor does in bringing the word to God's people, it would be especially good to have a guest pastor come in to give the message. Otherwise, you may ask another teacher or the school principal to deliver the message. In a pinch, you could even do it yourself. We have included an outline for a message that could be given on this passage of scripture. Your speaker might want to do something other than what is in the notes. That's fine. Giving the notes to the speaker might cut down on preparation time.

We have tried to design this lesson in such a way that the children will do much of the work. Nonetheless, there are plenty of things for the teacher to do! Think about singing and who will accompany the singing. You also want to make sure that students know who does what in the service. Practicing the “in-between’s”—the words that are spoken between one section and the next—is important and can make a service run well.

You might want to schedule this worship service for the entire school—perhaps as part of a regularly scheduled chapel. You might want to invite parents, or you might want to just have it for your class or your grade level. The important thing here is that your students plan and carry out a worship service.

Other suggestions:

Our worship can be greatly enriched with drawing, readings, dance, songs, art work, pictures, visual presentations, dramas, etc. Once you have the basics, you can use other resources to enrich your worship.

Most classrooms have 20 or more children. This lesson suggests forming four groups. Some children can work well in groups of five or more, but many need smaller groups to be productive. You may wish to put the class into eight groups—two groups to talk about Call to Worship, two groups for Confession and Forgiveness, two groups about the Word, and two groups for the Blessing. This will give you more input into the final worship service, and you can use some of the materials from each group for the final worship service.

You might want to choose a different theme than the one we suggest, one that will work better for your class. Some suggestions:

- The Good Shepherd, using the parable and Psalm 23.
- Jesus teaching his disciples to pray—the Lord’s Prayer.
- Jesus blesses the children.—Mark 10:13-16.

Leading the Session

I. Group Work

Materials: Worksheet: Call to Worship (page 60)
Worksheet: Confession and Forgiveness (page 61)
Psalm 51 (page 30)
Worksheet: Shaped by God—the Word (page 62)
Worksheet: God With Us—Blessing (page 63)
Blessing Worksheet (from Session 4, pages 52–53)

Today we are going to put the worship service together. So far in our work together we have learned about four parts of worship. What are these parts? (Call to Worship, Confession and Forgiveness, the Word, and the Blessing)

Teaching Tip

If your class chooses a different theme for the worship service, you will need to create an alternate worksheet for Group 3, which has no “living water” references.

Today we will work in groups. Each group will be working on one part of the worship service. As you select pieces for the worship service, you will want to connect them to the theme of the service. The theme for our worship service is John 4:4-14 in which Jesus talks about Living Water.

Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group to work on one part of the worship service. Give each group the worksheet from the end of this unit that matches the part of worship they will be working on. The groups that are working with the Call to Worship, Confession and Forgiveness, and the Blessing can also use the worksheets used in those sessions (listed above). The *Worship Dialogue Board* and the *Worship Words List* are also good resources for the groups.

Each group will choose the words to be spoken or read for that section of the worship service. In addition, the group must decide the order of the service. The basic order of this worship service is:

Call to Worship

Confession and Forgiveness

The Word

The Blessing

The groups need to decide whether there will be readings or songs in each section. Which songs or readings will there be? Where do each of the pieces fit? There are no right answers here, although some plans will make a lot more sense than others. The groups will also decide who will say the words in the service, who will introduce the songs, and whether the congregation will be standing or sitting.

Other things to consider:

- Will the words be on the overhead or on paper?
- Does the worship service reflect the theme throughout and flow well from one section to the next?
- Since worship is a dialogue between God and His People, does your worship service include opportunities for everyone to talk or sing?

2. Look Again

Materials: (Optional) Invite a Worship Leader

Assemble the worship service. Take the pieces that your class has designed and combine them into a worship service that makes sense. Check for time and transitions, and then share the complete service with your class while looking for any trouble spots.

3. Worship

Materials: Invite a pastor or other speaker

Do not look at this time as a time to *teach* worship. That was done earlier. This is a time for you and the children coming together as God’s children for one purpose—to worship the God we love.

Optional Activities

- Make a worship folder for the service. The worship folder should include the order of worship, titles of songs, readings, and Bible passages, as well as student art work.
- Songs you can use with this lesson:
 - “There Is a Redeemer” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #145.
 - “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1988 #486.
 - “Grace Flows Down” performed by Passion Band music and lyrics by David Bell, Louie Giglio and Rod Padgett on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
 - “Shine, Jesus, Shine” *Sing a New Creation*, CRC Publications, 2001 #128.
 - “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” *Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1988 #488.

Worksheet: Call to Worship

Worship Service Theme: _____

Choose three statements for the opening of the worship service. Use some of the words that we learned in our first lesson on worship (check the Worship Dialogue Board), or write your own.

- ↑ From Us to God

- ↓ From God to Us

- ↔ From us to us

Choose a song: _____

Why did you choose this song? _____

In what order should these four things happen?

Who will say these things?

Who will introduce the song?

Will the people be standing or sitting?

Worksheet: Confession and Forgiveness

Worship Service Theme: _____

Choose the words that you will use for a time of confession. Use words from Psalm 51, or write your own words. Sometimes words from a song are appropriate.

- ↑ From Us to God

Choose words of forgiveness. Use words from Psalm 103, or write your own. Words from a song may also be used.

- ↓ From God to Us

Choose a song:

Does the song express forgiveness or confession or both? Why did you choose it?

Who will say the words that you chose?

Who will introduce the song?

Will the people be standing or sitting?

Worksheet: Shaped by God—The Word

Worship Service Theme: _____

Write a prayer asking God to help you to listen to His Word. Also, pray for the person who is giving the message.

- ↑ From Us to God

- ↓ From God to Us The Bible passage is John 4:4-14. Who will read this passage?

Who will present the message? _____

The message today is about “living water.” Choose a song that will go with this message.

Some possible songs are listed here:

- “There Is a Redeemer” *Sing a New Creation* #145
- “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” *Psalter Hymnal* #486
- “Grace Flows Down” on the CD *Worship Together the Heart of Worship*, (Worship Together, 2003).
- “Shine, Jesus, Shine” *Sing a New Creation* #128
- “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” *Psalter Hymnal* #488

Who will read the prayer? _____

Who will introduce the song? _____

How will the events be ordered? _____

Will the people be standing or sitting? _____

How might we *visually* represent this theme of “living water”? Should we have some art or pictures of water, fountains, or lakes on display? You can get some of these from books or the World Wide Web. They could be scanned and displayed or shown on a screen. Perhaps you could put together a collection to be shown as the song is sung or after the message. Ask your teacher for suggestions.

Worksheet: God with Us—The Blessing

Worship Service Theme: _____

Write a closing prayer that will encourage the worship participants to go out into the rest of the school day, knowing that God is with them.

Choose a blessing from the list used in your fourth lesson about worship, or write your own blessing.

Choose a closing song:

In what order will these three things happen?

Who will say the prayer? _____

Who will say the blessing? _____

How will announce the closing song? _____

Will the people be standing or sitting? _____

Notes on the Message

John 4:4-14 (NIV)

JN 4:4 Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

JN 4:7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

JN 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

JN 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

JN 4:11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

JN 4:13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

1. Jews and Samaritans didn't mix at all
 - a. A "good Israelite" would not ask a Samaritan woman for a drink.
 - b. The Jews believed that the Samaritans were "unclean" and if they drank water from a cup handled by a Samaritan they would have to go through a special ceremony to become clean again.
 - c. The woman is surprised at Jesus' request because she knew that Jews and Samaritans didn't talk or ask for drinks from each other.

2. Jesus responds to her question and tells her about "living water."
 - a. What do you think he means by this?
 - b. The woman is confused because she doesn't really know what it means either.
 - c. Later (in John 7:38) Jesus says "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." Then, the gospel writer explains (John 7:39a) by saying "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."
 - i. The living water in our passage could mean "the Holy Spirit."
 - ii. The living water could mean "eternal life."
 - iii. It could mean "the Holy Spirit who brings eternal life."
 - d. Eternal life does not just mean when we are in heaven. This life begins here on earth—our life is better if we commit ourselves to serving Jesus.

3. Jesus' words to the woman at the well are words to us also.
 - a. Later in this story, in a part we didn't read, Jesus tells the woman many things about her life. Jesus *knows* this woman inside and out.
 - b. Jesus knows us the same way.
 - c. Even though this woman was a Samaritan—the type of person a good Jew wouldn't talk to—Jesus talked to her. It doesn't matter what we've done or who we are—Jesus comes to us in the same way he came to the woman, offering us living water.
 - d. If we ask him, he will fill us with his spirit and will give us eternal life.

Appendix

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents:

The fifth-grade general music class has begun a unit, “Together We Worship,” which focuses on four elements of Christian worship that have been passed down through the centuries:

- Call to Worship—God Calls, We Respond
- Confession and Forgiveness—Freedom in Christ
- The Word—Shaped by God
- The Blessing—God with Us

We are using the image of “dialogue” for the Church worshipping together. The students will learn how some elements of worship reflect God speaking to us, others show us speaking to God, and sometimes we worshippers speak to each other. After studying the four elements listed above, the students will plan a worship service for chapel.

As we work through this unit, I’d like to encourage you to have your children participate in your own church service and perhaps even visit other churches that may have a different worship style. The students will learn to identify how dialogue is taking place in the various parts of the worship service. If there is a bulletin or order of worship, your child could draw arrows on it to indicate the direction of the dialogue. Your child can then bring these to school to share with our class.

I am confident that God will use this unit to draw these students closer to Him as they continue their journey to understand His call to worship Him.

Song Book References

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, CRC Publications, Reformed Church Press. *Sing! A New Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001.

CRC Publications. *Psalter Hymnal*. Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1988.

Faith Alive Christian resources, *Sing with Me*. Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006.