

Gather

LUKE 24:13–35

GOAL

Adults explore ways God's people gather to worship in community, and they identify four movements of corporate worship.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

God of life and providence,
I worship you with all my
heart, soul, and strength.
Glory to you! Amen.

THIS SESSION

We worship God in community, gathering with others along life's journey. Scattered throughout the Bible are accounts of God's people worshipping with others. Noah and his sons bowed down to worship God when they returned to dry land after the flood. Moses called together the Israelites to worship God in thanksgiving for God's help in crossing the sea, and each time God provided for them in the wilderness. Upon the people's return from exile, Ezra led the people in worshipping God in a communal celebration. Jesus worshiped with others in the synagogue when he stood before them to read from the book of Isaiah. In Acts, early Christians gathered in one another's households to break bread and pray. These examples show ongoing practices of gathering in community to worship God.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 24:13–35 recounts Jesus' walk to Emmaus with two of his disciples. Distraught over the death of Jesus, they do not recognize him as he joins them on the road. He walks with them, explaining the Scriptures until they reach their destination. They invite him in and, as he breaks bread with them, they become aware of who he is. They hurry back to tell the other disciples what has happened.

Within this story, we see the four parts of worship in action. The three gather on the road; they hear and interpret Scripture; they respond by eating together; and they go into the world to share the good news. Here is scriptural witness to the fourfold pattern of worship practiced across the centuries, around the globe: gathering, word, meal, and sending. These actions in the Emmaus story are core to worshipping God.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Movements of Worship” (p. 6): Write the four movements of worship on a sheet of newsprint.
- “Elements of Worship” (p. 6): Obtain the *Worship God* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 3 Set), and provide copies of worship bulletins.

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and engage in gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Review the *Worship God* Unit Overview on pages 4–5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 45 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next four sessions.

PRAISE GOD!

Direct participants to Psalm 150 in their Bibles. Choose one of the following ways to read the psalm with your group. Use a different way of reading the psalm for each session of this practice.

- Read it aloud in unison.
- Read it aloud, alternating between a leader and the group.
- Lead it, inviting the group to echo each line.
- Form two or four groups and have each group take turns reading aloud the lines.
- Form two or four groups and have each group take turns reading aloud the lines and acting them out with motions and sounds.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEOS

Show the “*Worship God* Overview” video and the “*Worship God* Session 1” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel (bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the practice.

WHERE HAVE YOU WORSHIPED?

Read aloud the first paragraph in the “Unit Overview” on page 4 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Refer participants to the questions in bubbles on page 5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Use the questions for group discussion.

COME, ALL YOU PEOPLE

Invite participants to identify feelings and expectations they bring to worship. Assure them that there are no right or wrong responses.

Show the YouTube video “Come All You People (Uyai Mose)” (bit.ly/FMUyaiMose, 0:56). Discuss the emotions and message expressed in this gathering song. How would your feelings and expectations about worship be affected if this song was sung regularly to begin your weekly services?

This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

Bibles

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FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

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- Bibles

TRAVELING IN COMPANY

Explain that the Emmaus Road story includes two disciples' encounter with Jesus after his death and resurrection. Like their companions, these two recently witnessed the devastating crucifixion of their Lord. Invite participants to imagine being present at Jesus' crucifixion. Discuss how they may have felt and responded after the event. What support may you find in the company of others?

Invite three volunteers to read the parts of narrator, Cleopas, and Jesus in Luke 24:13–35. Discuss how these two disciples responded following the crucifixion event. What support did they find in the company of one another?

Refer participants to “Finding the Practice in the Bible” on page 8 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the paragraph that begins “This Emmaus experience of Cleopas.” Use the reflection questions on page 9 for further discussion.

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- Bibles
 - Prepared newsprint
 - Marker



Write the four movements of worship on a sheet of newsprint. Leave space between each movement to write participants' responses.

MOVEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Explain Luke 24:13–35 includes the disciples' encounter with Jesus after his death and resurrection. Their interaction embodies a four-part movement that we continue to practice in worship services in our congregations. These four parts are: Gather, Hear, Respond, and Go Out.

Read aloud the verses and have participants identify each of the four movements within the story. Invite participants to reflect on your faith community's worship and identify elements that lead worshipers through the four movements. Record these on the prepared newsprint. Discuss insights they discover about congregational worship from this activity.

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- Bibles

WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Direct participants to “Finding the Practice Then and Now” on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read the first paragraph. Explain that we read in Scripture about different ways God's people worship. Form four groups and assign one Scripture passage to each group: Luke 4:16–22; Nehemiah 8:1–8; Acts 2:42–47; 1 Corinthians 14:26–33.

Groups read their assigned Scripture and identify the place where the community is gathering. Invite them to think about why the people gathered there, who gathered there, and how the place is similar to and different from our gathering places. Bring the small groups together to discuss their texts and the gathering places. What insights do they gain about worship from these passages?

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

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- Worship God* infographic poster
 - Copies of worship bulletins or orders of service

ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Display the *Worship God* infographic poster. Remind participants of the four-part movement of worship discussed from the Emmaus Road story: gather, hear, respond, and go out. Have them identify similar movements in

the flow of worship displayed on the poster. Invite volunteers to read aloud the worship activities listed under each heading on the poster. Explain that this is a selection of worship activities. Some congregations include other activities.

Distribute copies of bulletins or orders of service used in your congregation's worship. Compare activities of your community's worship with activities on the poster. Discuss which activities are engaged in weekly and which are done less frequently. What activities would participants like to add or remove from the congregation's regular worship services? Why?

WHY SUNDAY?

Explain that worship in the Jewish tradition is part of marking Sabbath, a day each week set aside for rest from work. Christians follow the tradition of observing a day of rest, but most worship on Sunday. Invite participants to discuss which day they would prefer to worship and observe Sabbath.

Refer them to "Why Sunday?" on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read the paragraph. Discuss insights they learn about worshipping on Sunday. With this insight, which day would they prefer to worship and observe Sabbath? Why?

GLOBAL WORSHIP

Direct participants to "Elements of Worship" on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read the first paragraph. Have volunteers take turns reading aloud this section. Encourage participants to discuss the tools and traditions used in your congregation's worship. Invite those who have experienced worship in different traditions to talk about what they experienced there. What similarities and what differences in worship activities and styles did they notice?

Show the YouTube video "Worship around the World" ([bit.ly /FMWorldWorship](https://bit.ly/FMWorldWorship), 8:51). Plan to show at least three minutes of the video. Have participants identify similarities and differences among the various worship services and compare with your congregation's worship. Discuss insights they discover about communal worship from observing others worshipping together.

PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

PREPARING TO WASTE TIME

Direct participants to "Prepare to Waste Time" on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite volunteers to read aloud the two paragraphs while others follow along. Invite them to talk about their reactions to the sentence "In the world's logic, [worship] is a huge waste of time."

Have participants work independently to list their activities in the two sets of lists on page 13. Then invite volunteers to discuss what they can do to enjoy gathering with others for regular congregational worship. Challenge them to try attending to at least one activity on each list.

VARIOUS STYLES AND PLACES

Refer participants to "Worship in Various Styles" and "Worship in Various Places" on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read or summarize

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the first paragraph and discuss with the group their interest in visiting another place of worship together. Consider selecting a congregation whose worship style differs from services that you are familiar with. Use a smartphone to find information about worship in churches you will potentially visit. Make concrete plans regarding date, time, and transportation arrangements for the visit. You may also contact a leader of that faith community to discuss your group's joining them for worship.

During your visit, encourage participants to notice these details about your congregation's worship as well as the place you visit:

- ➔ How large is the worship space and how high are the ceilings?
- ➔ Is the worship space dark or light? How does this affect the feel of the service?
- ➔ Does the worship space feel crowded, intimate, open, formal, informal? How do these affect worship?
- ➔ What religious symbols are present? Why might these be important to worship?
- ➔ In what ways do you feel God's presence as you worship?

FOLLOWING JESUS

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

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Review the session by reading or summarizing the first two paragraphs in "Following Jesus" on page 14 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Remind them that during the COVID-19 pandemic, congregations were pressed to create new ways to worship together with social distancing and remote worship. Explain that you will show a video featuring one congregation's church choir gathering remotely to sing a hymn that invites people to worship God.

Show the YouTube video "Hymn—Blessed Jesus, at Your Word" (bit.ly/FMBlessedJesus, 2:28). Discuss the song's lyrics and how we are encouraged to worship God together.

In unison, say the closing prayer from page 14 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*.