



Created for Joyful Worship

In this lesson we'll explore worship as a way to express joy and gratitude.

ENHANCER OF JOY

Communal Worship

DURATION

60 minutes

LESSON DEVELOPED BY

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GOAL

Created for Joyful Worship: But Which God Shall We Praise?

TIPS TO PREPARE

- Leaders should review this chapter, especially the section on cultural liturgies. They also may wish to read Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom*. Smith's writing is fascinating and accessible. His case study on the cultural liturgy of shopping at the mall is hilarious and illustrative (pp. 19-22). Leaders should also do their own reflecting on their community's worship along the lines of this session before leading students through it.
- Leaders should ponder the extent to which their communal worship is characterized by joy. Joy does not look the same in every worshipping community. It may be restrained and elegant or bursting through the rafters. The session may offer the occasion to discuss the similarities and differences between joy and happiness.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- Whiteboard or similar
- Markers or chalk
- Bibles

Purpose

This session seeks to heighten students' appreciation for how Christian worship invites them to be transformed through participation in divine joy.

Objectives

In this session, youth will:

1. Participate in worshipful expressions of joy.
2. Be challenged to notice how their culture promotes many opportunities for worship in the effort to solicit their deepest love, joy, and praise
3. Discover a basic pattern for Christian Worship that leads to joy.

Further Study

Edie, Fred P. *Book, Bath, Table and Time: Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007. An exploration of the formational potential of Christian worship for youth and how to promote it.

Edie, Fred P. "Pedagogies of Worship and Wonder." In *How Youth Ministry Can Change*

Theological Education-If We Let It. Edited by Kenda Dean and Christine Hearlson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 2016.

Edie, Fred P., editor. "Liturgy and Adolescents." *Liturgy* 29, no.1: 2014. The entire issue is devoted to involving youth more deeply in the worship of God as well as what is at stake if we do not.

Hardesty, Brian, editor. *Holy Things for Youth Ministry: Thirteen Practical Lessons*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2010. Teaching Sessions for youth exploring the connections between worship and faithful Christian living.

Introduction for Leaders

This session could easily be extended into multiple sessions or a retreat. Many examples of cultural liturgies from Nazi propaganda spectacles to American state ceremonies to the Senior Prom are captured on film and await critical analysis by students. Individual pieces of the basic pattern may be explored more deeply. Students could utilize the pattern to plan and lead a service of worship, then reflect together on their practice.

Gather

Gather (5 minutes)

Opening Prayer: Psalm 100

Light the candle. Invite all participants to pray the Psalm aloud together. Leaders should teach the group how to read the passage so as to emphasize the joy it expresses. Artistically inclined leaders may also wish to provide simple gestures, rhythm, and/or musical accompaniment so that Psalm may be enacted, chanted, or sung.

Introduction of Session

Say: In this session we consider how Christian worship invites us to participate in the joy of

God and then consider why that matters.

Greeting One Another

Teach students to exchange Christ's peace using the hug and release method.

Practice in pairs:

Partner 1: "The Peace of Christ be with you!"

Partner 2: "And also with you!"

Together: Hug then Release

Repeat until all or most youth have had the opportunity to exchange peace with one another and with adult leaders.

Engage

Engage (40 minutes)

Activity 1: Recreating a Cultural Liturgy

If your group is large, divide students into small groups of 6 to 8. Give them the following assignment:

With your group, create a short skit resembling a highlights reel of a Friday night high school football game featuring all participants—band, cheerleaders, fans, and players. Your reel should include pregame and postgame activities in addition to the game itself. As a help in your planning, think about all the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and actions that make up the event. Your highlight reel is limited to 60 seconds. Each of you will need to play multiple roles.

Allow the group(s) 10 or so minutes to create and practice then ask them to perform their skit(s) for the larger group or for the adult leaders

Activity 2: Liturgy "Mapping"

On white board or chart paper, create a chart like this:

Friday night football

Pre-Game
First Half
Second Half
Post-game
Leaders
Love and Loyalty
Desired Result

Ask the students to refer to their skits in order to fill in the game-related events in the Friday night football column with the corresponding sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and activities. For example, the Pre-Game might include announcing the players' names, the national anthem, teams running onto the field, a school fight song, a coin toss.

Once the first four rows are filled, say:

You have just mapped the "liturgy" of Friday night football. Liturgy is the term many Christian churches use to describe their communal worship of God. "Liturgy" means regularly repeated communal actions often employing rituals and symbols directed toward a transcendent value or goal. Under that definition Friday night football is a liturgy too. Like Christian worship, this "cultural liturgy" uses rituals and symbols that seek to recruit and shape its participants' loves and loyalties toward a transcendent value.

Use these questions to fill out remaining columns on the chart:

Look back at the boxes we filled in for the rituals and symbols of Friday night football.

Who are the leaders at a Friday night football game?

Whom does Friday night football inspire us to love or to give our loyalty? How does it do this? (Look back at the list of rituals and symbols and invite students to speculate on how these actions impact their minds, bodies, hearts and imaginations.)

What is the desired result?

What is/are the source(s) of joy in this liturgy?

How is Friday night football like a Sunday worship service? Do these ever conflict with each other?

Activity 3: Discover the Biblical Pattern for Christian Liturgy

Supplies: Three Bibles (same version) or copies of the text

Invite students with a dramatic flair or who enjoy reading aloud to perform Luke 24:13-35 as Readers' Theatre. You will need a narrator, Jesus, and two disciples (who will split their speaking parts or read them in unison). Encourage each performer to read slowly and

expressively.

Next add the following “Christian worship” items to the chart:

	Friday night football	Christian Worship
Pre-Game		Gathering
First Half		Word: Proclamation and Response
Second Half		Table
Post-game		Sending Forth
Leaders		Worship Leaders
Love and Loyalty		Love and Loyalty
Desired Result		Desired Result

Explain to students that biblical scholars perceive a pattern of worship in Luke’s church in the background of this story: Gathering, Proclaiming and Responding to the Word, Thanksgiving and Holy Communion, and Sending Forth. Have them look back over the text to identify where and how this pattern appears in the story.

Ask:

What are the disciples feeling as they gather with the stranger on the road?

How have their feelings changed as they go forth from sharing the meal with their guest?

What factors contribute to transforming their grief into joy [being invited to pour out their hearts in honest lament, scriptures interpreted in hope, meal revealing the living presence of Christ crucified and risen]

Summarize by saying: Notice how this patterning of Christian worship seeks to gather us even when we are suffering yet invite us to participate in divine joy by renewing our minds through the biblical Word and feeding our souls at the Communion Table- which in turn sends us out to the world in joyful service.

Activity 4: Mapping Your Church’s Liturgy

Ask the students to fill in the fourth column of the chart with the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and activities of each of the four movements of Christian worship in your community.

[Note: This may require some prompting from you. Your community may not follow the charted worship pattern exactly or it may emphasize some parts of the pattern over others. (For example, some congregations do not regularly participate in Holy Communion. Some communities gather for worship through a half hour of songs of praise, others gather with the simple declaration: “Grace and peace to you in the Lord Jesus Christ.” You may also need to help students understand ritual actions like the offering or an affirmation of faith through a creed or the pastoral prayer as “responses to God’s Word in Christ” regardless of their location in the service.)]

Then ask:

What are the rituals of our worship?

Who are the leaders in Christian worship?

How and to Whom does Christian worship inspire us to love or to give our loyalty? (Look back at the list of actions and invite students to speculate on how these actions impact their minds, bodies, hearts and imaginations.)

What is the desired result of Christian worship?

What is/are the source(s) of joy in this event? Are there elements missing in our worship that could contribute more joy?

How is this Christian worship like a football game?

Reflect

Reflect (10 minutes)

Does worship in our community lead out toward joy? In light of your own experience and what you have learned in this session, what could make our worship more joyous? In light of other cultural liturgies, why is sharing in Christian joy so important?

Send Forth

Send Forth (5 minutes)

- Sum-It-Up: Christian worship gathers us together, even the hurting and suffering among us, then through participation in Word and Sacrament it invites our sharing in the joy of the Triune God. Transformed by joy we are sent forth to loving service.
- Closing Prayer: Go forth to serve the Lord! Amen.