

Semicontinuous

**2 Sam. 6:1–5, 12b–19**

**Ps. 24**

Complementary

**Amos 7:7–15**

**Ps. 85:8–13**

**Eph. 1:3–14**

**Mark 6:14–29**

# Cause for Dancing

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Adults will affirm the role of joyful abandon in worship and service by practicing David's joining of dance and justice.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on 2 Samuel 6:1–5, 12b–19

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Carol J. Dempsey

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#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Miguel A. De La Torre

The text tells us that once the rejoicing ended, King David distributed among the people a roll of bread, a portion of dates (or meat), and a raisin cake. Worship—no matter how exuberant it may be—absent praxis (action) is worthless. King David, the richest and most powerful man in the land, understood he had an obligation to those around him. Like Jesus centuries later, he fed the multitudes. While not everyone in the crowd was poor, no doubt many were. The food provided needed nourishment.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” David G. Forney

Liturgically, this passage invites us to think about the ways in which we praise God with joyful abandon. The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, which many traditions say at the Lord's Table, tells of God's salvation story for humanity and points to the glad feast that is to come. Even though we are not there yet, we do have seasons of rejoicing when we can dance as if no one is watching. We might be surprised by how contagious it might be. So, as Hafiz, the great Sufi poet, counsels, “Cast all your votes for dancing.”

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

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Dancing before God may provide space for a deep spiritual connection with the Author of the universe; but true worship is to seek justice, to physically—not solely spiritually—feed the hungry. There is something theologically wrong with those who ignore the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the alien, the incarcerated, and the infirm. Creative worship expressions may provide a sense of being close to God; but only when we touch the oppressed and dispossessed do we actually touch God. That which we do to the very least of these, we do unto God. Dancing is always fun; nevertheless, it is in the doing of justice that we get to enter into God's presence. Then we have something to dance about.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**2 Samuel 6:1–5,  
12b–19**

## Focus on Your Teaching

How many adults in your group, yourself included, have engaged in worship whose expression bordered on joyful abandon? Consider the same question, only substitute “service” or “mission” for “worship.” Today’s focus scripture recounts an extraordinary narrative of religious ecstasy that results in an act of food justice. The passage may trouble some adults who are reluctant to link emotion with liturgical expression, or those who feel it is enough to feed folks spiritual food and nothing more. This would be an excellent session to incorporate physical movement or liturgical dance into Exploring and/or Responding.

*Move inside me, O God, as I move toward the leading of this session.  
Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- processional or other celebratory music, music player
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheets 1 and 2
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 for July 19, 2015

For Responding

- option 2: Resource Sheet 1

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, decide how you will provide joyful, processional music to play during Exploring. You may have someone play quietly on a piano or use taped music. Have it ready to go.

Welcome participants and have them close their eyes, relax, and take several deep breaths. Lead them in the following meditation. *Recall the most joyful experience you have ever had in your faith journey.* (pause) *Imagine you are back in that moment and place.* (pause) *What brought you this joy?* (pause) *Remember how that experience felt.* (pause) *Looking back, how has that moment of utter joy affected your faith and life?* (pause) Invite adults to taken another deep breath or two and open their eyes. Without telling the particular experiences, invite several volunteers to relate briefly the effect that experience of joy has had on them.

Affirm that today’s session will explore an experience in the life of King David that also was marked by great joy.

Offer this or similar words for prayer:

*We are grateful for this opportunity to gather, O God. Please lead our time together. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Explain that this week and next week’s focus scriptures are about King David. Some background information will be helpful to read before exploring the text. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (2 Samuel and David: An Overview), and allow a few minutes for participants to read it in silence.



# FEASTING on the WORD

## CURRICULUM

### Cause for Dancing

*Cherubim* is the plural of *cherub*, a winged angelic being. A *linen ephod* was a light ceremonial garment that covered the front of the body, like an apron.

Distribute Bibles and have two volunteers prepare to read 2 Samuel 6:1–5 and 2 Samuel 6:12b–19. Explain there will be two “accompaniments” to the readings. The first will be music playing in the background. The second will be this: every time the name “David” is spoken in the readings, the group will cheer (e.g., “Long live the king,” “Hip-hip-hooray,” and so forth). Have the group practice their cheers once or twice to prepare.

Begin the music, and proceed with the reading and cheering.

Invite participants to offer comments or questions about this experience of the text. Identify what joys contributed to this extravagant expression on David’s part and those who danced with him.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on 2 Samuel 6:1–5, 12b–19), and read the “What?” excerpt. Discuss how this information, combined with the background on how long the ark had been in northern Israel’s possession, might have played into the drama of this procession—and the excerpt’s insight into the role it played in establishing David’s new regime.

Recall the information from Resource Sheet 2 about David as shepherd and the double meaning of the Hebrew word for “shepherd” and “one who feeds.” Discuss how David’s feeding the people at the end of the procession affects how 2 Samuel seeks to envision David’s reign. If you have time, read Ezekiel 34:1–10. Contrast its critique of the injustice of Israel’s later kings with David’s practice of food sharing in 2 Samuel 6:18–19.

Tell the group that it is helpful to read two Scriptures that help explain the focus text’s wider story, verses 6–11 and 20–22. These Scriptures bring a nuanced perspective to the story’s sense of “joyful abandon” and insight into the complicated nature of David and his reign. Read these texts and discuss how they might deepen our understanding of what underlies the seeming unalloyed joy and justice in this narrative.

Read both the “Where?” and “So What?” excerpts on Resource Sheet 1. Ask adults how joy holds together these two seemingly disparate elements of ecstatic dance (“Cast all your votes for dancing”) and food justice (“Worship—no matter how exuberant it may be—absent praxis [action] is worthless”) in today’s focus scripture. To transition into Responding, invite participants to consider: how might we, in our lives, joyfully blend worship and service—dance and justice—as David did?

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the length of your session.

1. **Embodying Faith** The joyful example of David’s dancing and food justice reminds us the joy of faith cries out for embodied expression in our spiritual life and in our missional engagements. Have participants form two groups based on their interest. The first group will identify and discuss ways in which your congregation’s worship incorporates physical movement on the part of worshipers—and new ways that might be considered. The second group will identify and discuss ways in which your congregation’s missional

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life relies on actions taken by members, and not simply money sent somewhere. Name missional engagements that might involve more of our hands and feet in addition to our wallets. In the coming week, encourage individuals to bring those ideas to people responsible for those areas of congregational life.

- 2. Something to Dance About** Do we consider engaging in justice ministries more of a duty than a joy? Read the “Now What?” excerpt on Resource Sheet 1. Invite reactions to the excerpt. Encourage adults to discuss the consequences of prioritizing worship over service, or vice versa, for congregations and for individual Christians. Read aloud the opening question of this paragraph. Challenge adults to identify ways in which your congregation might help members rediscover joy as the basis for engaging in the justice ministries, present and potential, of your congregation. Urge your adults in the coming week to work intentionally on their participation in some act of justice with a greater sense of joy.
- 3. Moving with the Spirit** David’s ecstatic dance as a form of rejoicing in God underscores that liturgical and devotional practices may be deepened by coupling them with movement. Form six small groups. Give each group one of the verses from one of today’s other lections, Psalm 85:8–13. Have each group create a simple movement or even gesture that will express that verse’s import. When ready, have each group in order of verses perform their movement. The first time through, do this strictly with movements. The second time, read each verse aloud and have that group engage in its movement. (If your whole group catches on quickly, have each group lead the others in their movement.) In the coming week, encourage adults to create such movements for their favorite psalm or Bible story, and use those movements as a devotional exercise.

Younger adults may be more open to such an activity than others. But some older adults may appreciate it, especially any who have been positively exposed to liturgical dance.

## CLOSING

Gather adults in a line. If some have mobility problems, ask if they would be willing to be assisted as you “process” around the room. If not, assure them they need not do so. Ask the adults to follow you as you walk around your meeting space. As you walk, invite participants to call out some joy they will carry from this session. After each joy is offered, lead the group in the response: “We rejoice in God!”

When everyone has had an opportunity (including any who remained seated) to offer a joy, bring the procession to a halt. Form a circle, join hands, and invite everyone to lift their arms as high into the air as possible without letting go of the person next to them. Offer this or a similar blessing:

*As we have gathered in joy, let us go in joy: worshiping God, serving neighbor, seeking justice. And let the people say: Amen! AMEN!*

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for July 19, 2015, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Encourage participants to read the focus scripture and Resource Sheet 1 before the next session. Keep a copy of Resource Sheet 2 from July 12, 2015, for yourself and bring it to the next session.

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## 2 Samuel and David: An Overview



David

The focus scriptures for today and for next Sunday come from the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel. The books of Samuel are named after (not written by) the last judge—and in some considerations, the first prophet—of Israel. Though Samuel initially opposed the desire of the Israelite tribes to have a king (1 Samuel 8:4–6), he went on to anoint Saul (9:27–10:1). Samuel would later anoint a young shepherd named David (1 Samuel 16), which was a bit problematic, seeing as how the current King Saul still reigned. First Samuel 25:1 offers a terse report of Samuel’s death, clinching the truth that someone other than Samuel compiled these materials.

The book of 2 Samuel begins with David grieving the death of Saul and his son Jonathan in chapter 1. In chapters 2–4, David’s story becomes complicated. One complication has to do with royal succession. While David was anointed king of Judah in the south, one of Saul’s sons named Ishbaal had been anointed by the tribes of Israel in the north. Another complication, related to this first one, is that one of David’s wives, Michal, was a daughter of Saul and thus sister of the rival king. Chapter 4 ends with the assassination of Ishbaal and David’s execution of the assassins for acting without his consent. Even so, the rift between David and the family of Saul (including David’s wife, Michal) had been sealed.

Second Samuel 5 begins with David’s anointing in Hebron, the northern city that had been Israel’s capital under Saul and Ishbaal. Verse 5 of this chapter indicates that David reigned from Hebron for seven years before making a decisive move to seize a Jebusite stronghold named Jerusalem (5:6ff). It should be noted that the ark, which David now undertakes to bring to his new capital of Jerusalem, had actually been in northern Israel’s possession for twenty years without being moved (1 Samuel 7:1).

One final note regards the Hebrew word *bayith*. Most often translated “house,” it also has broader meanings. In 2 Samuel 7:16, *bayith* references not only the household but suggests the dynasty of David. In 1 and 2 Kings, *bayith* signifies “temple”—in particular, the temple in Jerusalem. So when you encounter “house” in these focus scriptures, be mindful of the broader religious and political connotations of this word.