

Semicontinuous

2 Sam. 7:1–14a

Ps. 89:20–37

Complementary

Jer. 23:1–6

Ps. 23

Eph. 2:11–22

Mark 6:30–34, 53–56

Home Bound

Goal for the Session

Hearing God's response to David's offer in 2 Samuel 7, adults will embrace ways to find a home in God for self and others.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on 2 Samuel 7:1–14a

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Patricia K. Tull

It will not be David who establishes God, but God who will establish David—and this is not for David's sake. Rather, God has given him peaceful sovereignty for the sake of the nation, to “plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly” (v. 10). In other words, God has been with David, not because of the virtues he brings to leadership, but so that God's hopes for the people, great and small, might come to fruition.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Rebecca Button Prichard

“See, the home of God is among mortals” (Rev. 21:3). Ultimately, God promises to make a home in our midst, with us, within us. Transcendence cannot be tamed, nor can it be exiled from faithful sojourners. Divinity chooses to dwell (*shakan*) with God's people; we are the tabernacle (*mishkan*) of God. David wanted to build God a house, but God dwells in a tent or a tabernacle, a mobile home that moves with wanderers, exiles, and sojourners. God does not settle down, but neither does God desert the wayward pilgrims.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Steven A. Peay

What David learns is what many of us need to learn as we walk our spiritual journey: our plan for home and God's plan are often quite different. To put it rather bluntly, it is not about us. David wants to do something for God, to demonstrate to God just how much gratitude he has for what has been done. All well and good, but that is not what is important. God seeks bigger, better things, so that David's house will become a home encompassing all of humanity. God does not desire a house, but a heart. God does not want a dwelling, but David's obedience. When the heart and actions are aligned, then they find their fit, and one is, finally, at home.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Patrick J. Willson

We celebrate the deep truth of the Lord's promise to David not only on Christmas Eve but every time we gather for worship. We trust the promise to David because we trust in the faithfulness of the One who promises; and because we trust in the faithfulness of the One who promises, we know how the story comes out. Hear the last thing Jesus says in the Bible—“It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). That signals a new dawn and a reign of wisdom, justice, and righteousness.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
2 Samuel 7:1–14a

Focus on Your Teaching

Adults bring a mix of experiences and understandings of the meaning of “home.” Cherished memories. Vital relationships. A place of sanctuary—or, for some, a setting for abuse. Today’s focus scripture narrates an episode involving King David that raises the question of exactly who makes a home for whom when it comes to us and God. Adults who strongly identify church with building may find this story unsettling. Some adults may wrestle with the fact that the scriptural promises to David of a “throne forever” have not come to pass historically. Encourage participants to be open to the ways in which this story might challenge long-held assumptions.

Open my spirit to your leading, so that I may lead. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- work table(s)
- construction paper
- colored markers
- pins or masking tape
- Resource Sheet 2
from July 12, 2015
- Bibles
- copies of Resource
Sheet 1
- copies of Resource
Sheet 1 for July 26,
2015

For Responding

- option 2: Resource
Sheet 1, paper, pens
- option 3: copies of
Resource Sheet 2

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, set out art material on table(s) where adults can work.

Welcome participants as they arrive. Introduce any guests or newcomers.

Direct adults to the art materials and work table. Have each participant draw an image of what symbolizes home for them. Encourage adults to be creative and not simply write down words.

Have each person show his or her creation to one or two other people and briefly speak about its meaning.

Gather as a whole group, and have participants post their artwork around the room using pins or masking tape. Invite people to identify various elements of home held in common among those in the group.

Say that today’s session explores the issue of God’s home and how we are related to it. Use these or similar words for an opening prayer.

We are grateful, O God, for this place to gather with one another and with you. Amen.

EXPLORING

Set the context for today’s focus scripture by inviting participants to recall what they remember learning from the focus scripture from 2 Samuel in the last session. As needed, provide insights from the last session’s Resource Sheet 2 (2 Samuel and David: An Overview), particularly the final paragraph on the multiple meanings of the Hebrew word *bayith*.

Form three groups. Assign one group the identity of David, another the identity of the prophet Nathan, and the other the people of Israel. Explain that each group is to listen through the ears and experience of that character as you read aloud 2 Samuel 7:1–14a. Then ask each group to discuss the following:

- ✿ What initial responses might your character have had to this exchange?
- ✿ What questions do you have for God?

Gather the whole group together. Have each of the small groups identify their character and report on their discussions. Compare and contrast the perspectives.

Invite adults to imagine the following: *You are on a temple building committee that David commissioned after Nathan said, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.” David tells you that your first task is to develop talking points for use in securing support in the kingdom as to why it is important to build a home (temple) to house the ark.* Have adults brainstorm ideas about what talking points would “sell” this idea to the people of Israel and its religious leaders. Next, invite participants to identify what Nathan—and God—might reply to each of those ideas, based on verses 6–13.

David has mostly been misbehaving so far in the stories in 2 Samuel. After lamenting the death of his predecessor Saul and best friend Jonathan in chapter 1, he proceeded to persecute Saul’s family and was ruthless with the northern tribes.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on 2 Samuel 7:1–14a), and have participants read the “What?” excerpt in silence. Read the information in the sidebar about David’s misbehavior. Have participants consider David’s likely desire to imitate surrounding countries that all had a king, a palace, and a temple to their God. How odd it would be to be a king and have your God in a tent. Ask:

- ✿ What was God trying to teach David about God’s character?

Have participants read the “Where?” excerpt. Remind participants that God’s promises to establish a throne forever has never come true. A temple was eventually built but later destroyed and the kingdom lasted a very short while. Ask:

- ✿ How would later readers of this focus scripture find hope in the idea that God dwells with faithful sojourners?

Transition to Responding by reflecting on this question:

- ✿ What is 2 Samuel 7:1–14a telling the church today about where God is to be found and the importance of a church building?

RESPONDING

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

- 1. Finding Our Home in God** We can find our home in God in a variety of experiences as well as places. Form pairs and say: *I will ask a question, then give two minutes for one person to offer a response to his or her partner. At the end of two minutes, I will then ask the same question, and then give two minutes for the other partner to offer a response. The question is: “In what ways have you found a home in God?”* Carry out the exercise. Gather the group. Have each person relate one of their partner’s responses of finding home in God that they found most helpful. Encourage participants in the

EASY
PREP

coming week to be mindful of ways and spiritual practices that might deepen their sense of home in God.

- 2. Changing Our Plans** God's message to David through Nathan reminds us that our understanding of and plans for home in God may need re-visioning. Read the "So What?" excerpt on Resource Sheet 1. Distribute paper and pens. Direct participants to reflect on one aspect of their spiritual journey that might be in need of changing, in the excerpts' terms of "it is not about us." Ask:

✠ Where have you wanted to direct or control matters that leave you in charge, rather than opening yourself to the direction and control of God?

Encourage adults to write down that aspect of their journey, and begin to identify ways that they might be more open to the leading of God—and the home God would make for us in that part of our journey. Have adults return to this sheet each day in the coming week and note ways they have moved toward that leading.

- 3. A Home for All** God's response of making a home is not just for David, but for the whole people of Israel who need God's gift of home and sanctuary. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (In Search of a Home). Use its information and resources to discuss how your congregation might partner with God in providing the gift of home for those most in need of it. Encourage adults, individually or working with others in the group, to commit to at least one action in the coming week that seeks to extend the gift of home God might provide.

If you choose this option, consider having someone from your church committees dealing with mission and/or evangelism to respond to any questions about what the church does in these areas.

CLOSING

Have adults look at the artwork they created in Gathering. Have participants recall the meanings of home for them that went into their creation. Ask adults to imagine they were asked to create another artistic depiction: our home in God, based on today's passage and discussions. Invite participants to call out words or phrases of what they would draw in response.

Depending on which option you chose in Responding, encourage adults to follow through in the coming week with the action called for.

Explain the closing benediction. Beginning with you, each person one at a time will turn to the person on their right and offer this blessing: *(Name), you will always have a home in God. Be at peace.* Practice the response once or twice so participants are comfortable. Carry out the blessing, starting with you.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for July 26, 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.

Focus on 2 Samuel 7:1–14a

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In Search of a Home



“Our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in Thee.” These words attributed to St. Augustine remind us of the universal longing for home in God. But while the gift of home stands at the core of God’s promise to David, the needs for such a gift vary widely. Consider the following individuals and groups in your immediate community and beyond who are in search of a home—and how you might be God’s servant in helping them find that gift.

The Homeless

Statistics on the homeless in the United States range from 750,000 to 1 million people living on the street. Many are veterans and children. Who, and where, are the homeless in your community? What are the programs your congregation participates in to address this problem—and in what other ways might you work together to help such persons find a home? For more information:

http://justiceunbound.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Homelessness_Creating-Just-Sustainable-Communities.pdf

Refugees

The unaccompanied children at our Southern border. The tribal peoples and religious minorities in northern Iraq fleeing persecution. The victims of natural disasters. The flow of refugees may rise or fall, but it never stops. We have deep connections in our faith stories with such persons. The brothers of Joseph seeking food in Egypt. The exiles driven from their homes. Joseph and Mary fleeing from the wrath of Herod. The never-ending stream of refugees is also a never-ending opportunity to help such persons find home and place. How might you and others in your congregation partner to address such needs? For more information: www.cwsglobal.org/what-we-do/refugees/irp-offices.html

The Unchurched

Some have never experienced a home in God in faith community. Others have experienced rejection or hypocrisy there, and left. Who are the unchurched among your neighbors, from your friends, within your family? How might you help them find a home in God in such community?