

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**

# Dancing Before the Lord

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Youth will reflect on celebrations in worship and seek ways to express exuberance and joy in their lives.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on 2 Samuel 6:1–5, 12b–19

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Carol J. Dempsey

The ark of God was a box made of acacia wood, with dimensions of approximately 4 by 2½ by 2½ feet (Exod. 25:10–22; 37:1–9), that was built by the Israelites during the wilderness period. Closely associated with God’s presence, the ark traditionally contained the tables of the law given to Moses, although the function of the ark may have changed more than once throughout Israel’s history. Eventually, it would reside in the Holy of Holies within the Jerusalem temple. The founding of a new shrine around the ark (v. 17) symbolizes a new regime and a new time in Israel’s history. David is now recognized as the legitimate king.

#### 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?

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

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**

**YOU WILL NEED**

- newsprint
- markers
- Bibles
- pens
- copies of Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: paper, pens
- option 2: paper, pens, copies of recent worship bulletins, upbeat music, music player
- option 3: markers, copies of Resource Sheet 2, upbeat music, music player, tape

For Music Connection

- lyrics to the song “Undignified” by the David Crowder Band

Ark literally means “box” or “chest.” Deuteronomy 10:1–8 includes God’s instructions to Moses to put the tablets containing the Ten Commandments in an ark to be carried by the priestly Levite tribe. It was also considered the throne of God.

## Focus on Your Teaching

Many teenagers lead carefully curated lives. Rather than show their true joy or excitement, they wear masks of cool. Gone is the exuberant joy of a girl on Christmas morning or the thrill of a boy running to hug his grandmother. They think more about how others view them than about how they really feel. Today’s story about David’s wild dancing before the Lord offers a refreshing alternative to the curated life. When teenagers stop worrying what other people think, they can approach the Christian life with unfettered exuberance.

*Creator God, unleash in me this week a new passion for sharing my love for you without limits. Amen.*

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

As participants arrive, invite them to describe the most exciting things they’ve done this summer. Talk about whether summer activities are more worthy of celebration than things that happen during the school year and, if so, why. Invite them to recall ways they have celebrated special moments in their lives.

As a warm-up, invite volunteers to act out one of these moments of celebration:

- ✿ a young child receiving the birthday gift of his or her dreams
- ✿ a TV game show contestant winning a big prize
- ✿ an athlete or team winning a national championship
- ✿ a family welcoming home a long-absent soldier at an airport
- ✿ a high school senior opening an acceptance letter from his or her dream college

Encourage the participants to outdo themselves in depicting over-the-top celebrations. (You might even challenge them to be so exuberant that they draw attention from other classes meeting nearby.) When all have finished, discuss what made the performances exuberant. Tell the group that today’s Bible story relates an especially exuberant celebration. Pray:

*God of limitless love, teach us to be unlimited in our praise of you. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Ask the participants what they know about the Ark of the Covenant. Note what they say on the newsprint. Read Exodus 25:10–22 and say something like this:

*God instructed Moses to have the ark constructed to hold the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The ark would also serve as the place where Moses and future leaders could consult with God. It held a place of prominence in the tabernacle, the moveable sanctuary the Israelites carried with them during their 40 years in the wilderness. Fast-forward 400 years, to today’s story, in which King David is preparing to move the ark into Jerusalem, his capital city.*

Explain that today's story covers two stages of the ark's journey to Jerusalem. Distribute Bibles, pens, and copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Party on Parade). Form two groups. Assign one group 2 Samuel 6:1–5 and the other 2 Samuel 6:12b–15. Have each group read its assigned passage and respond to the questions on the resource sheet. When both groups have finished their work, have them report. To add variety, have the first group report its answer to the first question and then have the second group explain how its answer is different, if at all. For the second question, start with the second group and have the first group respond. Continue alternating in this way through all five questions.

Discuss:

- ✧ How do you think bystanders reacted to what they were seeing?

Say something like this:

*David's unbridled celebration looks like something you might see at a rock concert, after the home team wins a sports championship, or at some of the moments you acted out earlier. But David would probably argue that he had something more important to celebrate.*

David danced before the ark in an ephod, a priestly garment that various Bible translations refer to as a vest, an apron, or a cloth or define in footnotes as a sleeveless robe. The implication, especially in light of verse 20, is that David was half naked.

Discuss:

- ✧ Do you think David's level of exuberance was appropriate? Explain your answer.
- ✧ Celebrations like David's can't go on forever. What might be the next appropriate action David and the others could take?

Read 2 Samuel 6:17–19 aloud, then read this reflection on the passage by Miguel A. De La Torre:

*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 need nourishment.*

Discuss:

- ✧ Do you agree that worship without action is worthless?
- ✧ How can exuberant worship lead to action?
- ✧ How can boring worship lead to inaction?
- ✧ How might our faith community create worship that is both exuberant and that leads to action?

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Songs of Praise** Youth will explore ways to express exuberance and joy in their lives by writing songs of praise. Form small groups of participants. Have each group select a familiar, upbeat song and write new lyrics for it that reflect the feeling of joyful worship depicted in this week's story. After all have completed their work, have each group perform its song for the larger group. Discuss:

**EASY  
PREP**

- ✪ How accurately does your song reflect your true feelings?
- ✪ If you aren't as joyful as your song, what could you do to become more joyful?

**2. Service of Joy** Youth will explore ways to make worship more joyful by reviewing and amending a recent worship bulletin. Distribute paper, pens, and copies of recent worship bulletins. Form groups to review different sections of the bulletin and look for ways to add elements of joy. Play upbeat music as they work. Discuss:

- ✪ How do the changes you've made reflect joy?
- ✪ What could you do to the worship space to create a feeling of joy?
- ✪ How could our church use elements of your work in regular Sunday worship?

**3. Wall of Joy** Youth will seek ways to express exuberance and joy in their lives by creating a wall of joy. Distribute markers and copies of Resource Sheet 2 (I Sing Because . . .), giving participants as many copies of the resource sheet as they want. Have students write reasons for praising God on the resource sheets and decorate them. Play upbeat music as they work. When all are finished, tape the resource sheets on a wall of your youth area or church building. Challenge students to add to the wall of joy in the weeks to come and to invite other students to do the same. Say something like this:

*Joy is less about your circumstances than how you deal with your circumstances.  
May this activity remind you to always look for joy.*

If possible, put blank copies of the resource sheet on a table near the wall you decorate and encourage other youth and church members to add their own ideas.

## CLOSING

Form a conga line with a few participants you know will play along, and then gradually add the rest of the participants. Move through the church building, trying to get in the spirit of David's dance before the ark—without knocking anyone down or disturbing other groups. When you return to your classroom, say something like this:

*Psalms 100 says that we are to enter gates with thanksgiving and courts with praise. That's what David so exuberantly did and what we've just done. The challenge for each of us is to carry that attitude of joy out into the world.*

Conclude by praying:

*God, we have so much to be joyful for. Help us this week to live with unabashed exuberance. Amen.*

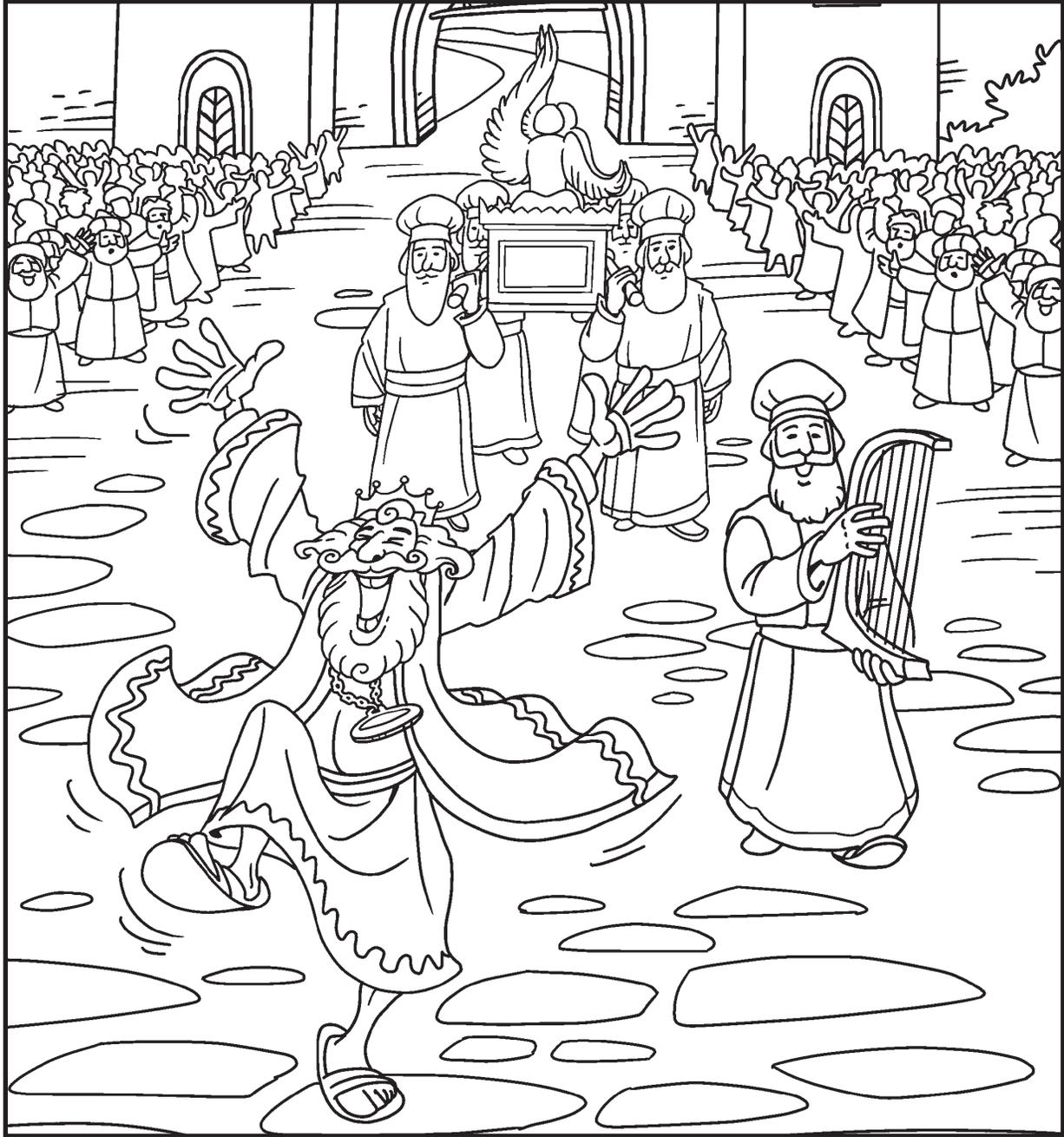
## ■ ENHANCEMENT

### MUSIC CONNECTION

Display lyrics (available through Internet searches) to the song "Undignified" by the David Crowder Band. Play a recording or video of the song. Discuss:

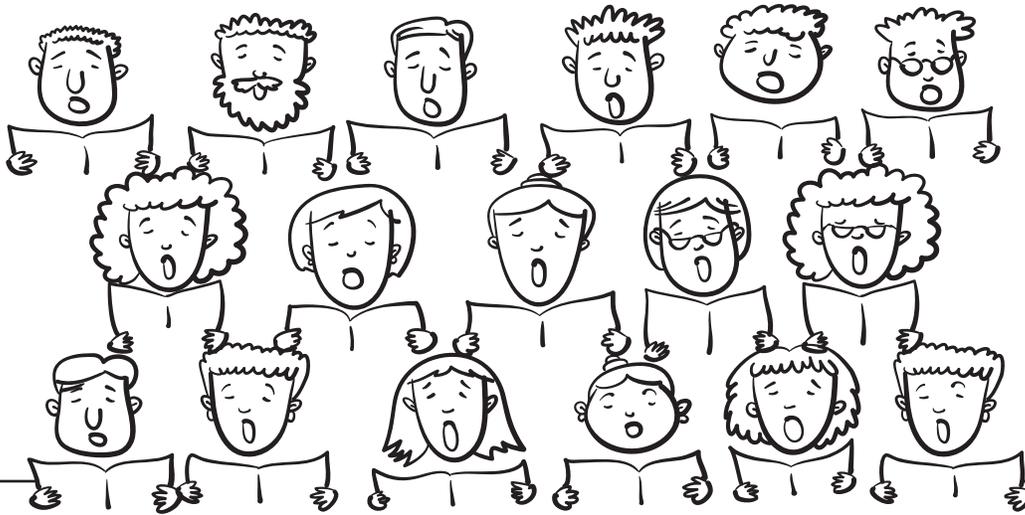
- ✪ How do the lyrics of "Undignified" relate to what we've talked about this week?
- ✪ How does the song's imagery make you feel? Joyful? Uncomfortable? Something else?
- ✪ When you are worshiping, how could you focus more on God and less on what other people think?

## Party on Parade



- Who is celebrating in this passage?
- How are they celebrating?
- Why do you think they are so joyful?
- How does their exuberance compare to the scenes we acted out earlier?
- How does their exuberance compare with the typical Christian worship service?

## I Sing Because ...



The hymn "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" proclaims, "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free."

**I sing because ...**