

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*

# The Presence of God

**Goal for the Session** *Youth will recognize the presence of God in their lives and make a difference in the world because they know God’s presence is with them.*

## ■ 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

Like King David, youth can easily misunderstand the concept of God’s dwelling place. After all, God’s presence is often felt strongest during powerful worship services or meaningful retreats. These experiences may lead youth to connect God’s dwelling place with a specific location or ritual. By engaging 2 Samuel 7:1–14a, youth will discover that God lives in the hearts of God’s people and is with them through thick and thin. This is powerful news for youth who are navigating the sometimes turbulent waters of adolescence.

*O God, help me to spread your love through the teaching of your Word.  
Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- pipe cleaners
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- scissors
- Bibles
- index cards
- pens

#### For Responding

- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens, contemplative music, music player, index cards, pens
- option 3: pipe cleaners, index cards, pens

#### For Music Connection

- recording of “Dwelling Place” by Tommy Walker, music player

If you have more than five participants, consider forming small groups to put the boxes in order. You will need a set of boxes for each small group.

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, copy Resource Sheet 1 (King David Time Line) on card stock and cut apart the time line boxes.

Welcome the youth warmly. Give each participant a pipe cleaner and pose the following question: When or where do you feel God’s presence the most? Have each participant form the pipe cleaner into a shape that responds to the question. When all are finished, give participants an opportunity to show and explain their sculpture to the rest of the group.

Explain that today’s Scripture passage helps us understand God’s presence in our lives.

Pray:

*Holy One, may our hearts and minds be opened as we dive together into your Holy Word. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Distribute the time line boxes cut from Resource Sheet 1 (King David Time Line). Have participants work together to put the boxes in chronological order. The correct order is:

- ✠ Israelites Demand a King (1 Samuel 8)
- ✠ Samuel Anoints Saul as King (1 Samuel 10)
- ✠ Saul Is Rejected as King (1 Samuel 15)
- ✠ David Anointed King (1 Samuel 16)
- ✠ David Defeats Goliath (1 Samuel 17)
- ✠ David Flees from Saul (1 Samuel 18–23)
- ✠ Saul Dies In Battle (1 Samuel 31)
- ✠ David Becomes King of Judah (2 Samuel 2:1–7)
- ✠ Saul’s Son Becomes King of Israel (2 Samuel 2:8–11)

- ✠ Conflict Between Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 2:12—4:12)
- ✠ David Becomes King of Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 5)
- ✠ The Ark of God Comes to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6)

Have them review their ordering of the time line with their Bibles, directing them to 1 and 2 Samuel. Once the boxes are on in the correct order, review the information together to gain an understanding of the events that lead up to today's Scripture passage. Ask: Where is God's presence evident in these events?

Read 2 Samuel 1:1–7 aloud by having volunteers read the following roles: narrator, King David, Nathan, God. Explore the following questions together:

- ✠ Why did David want to build a house for the Ark of God?
- ✠ What is God's response to David's hope to build a house? Why do you imagine God responded in this way?

Read together 2 Samuel 1:8–14a using the same volunteer readers. Explore the following questions together:

- ✠ What promises does God make to David?
- ✠ What does this passage teach us about God's dwelling place?

Assure the participants that the message God sends to David is true for us today: God dwells in the hearts of God's people and invites us to practice the presence of God.

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

1. **Act It Out!** Participants will enact a situation in which God's presence makes a difference in the world. Have participants work together to create and present a short skit that depicts a scene from a typical teenager's life in which people embrace God's presence in their lives by making a difference in the world. For example, older youth may present a scene in which, after seeing a family that is homeless sitting together on a downtown street, a group of youth feel compelled to volunteer at a homeless shelter and join an organization that works to end homelessness in the community. A group of younger youth may create a scene in a school cafeteria where they stand up for a classmate who is being bullied and then create an antibullying campaign in their school. Encourage participants to actively search for ways to practice God's presence in these ways in the week ahead.
2. **Contemplative Reflection** Participants will spend time quietly reflecting on God's presence in their lives. Give each participant a copy of Resource Sheet 2 (Contemplative Questions) and a pen. Play contemplative music while participants sit comfortably and respond to the questions. After a few minutes, turn off the music and invite participants to focus on their responses to the final question: How can you help others connect with

EASY  
PREP

God's presence in their lives? Challenge participants to find ways to put these responses into action in their lives. Distribute index cards for the youth to write the ways they will commit to those actions in the coming week.

- 3. Scene Sculptures** Participants will use pipe cleaners to create a scene that depicts God's presence in their lives. Form pairs of participants and provide each pair with a few pipe cleaners. Have pairs shape their pipe cleaners into a scene that brings to life a group of people who engage God's presence in their lives by making a difference in the world. When finished, give each pair of participants an opportunity to show and explain its scene to the rest of the group. As a group, brainstorm specific ways in which participants can put each of the ideas for making a difference in the world into action. Encourage participants to incorporate at least one of the mentioned ideas into their lives in the week ahead. Provide index cards and pens for the participants to write titles for their sculptures, and display them where others will see them.

## CLOSING

Unless option 2 in Responding was used, give each person an index card and a pen. In response to God's presence in his or her life, have each participant write one thing on the index card that he or she will do in the week ahead to make a difference in the world. When all are finished, gather the group in in a circle. Give participants an opportunity to name the action that he or she wrote on his or her card. Encourage them to support each other through text messages or phone calls.

Pray:

*Holy God, who loves us more than we will ever know, help us to pay attention to your presence in our lives. As we go into your world, may your presence lead us to serve as your hands and feet in the world. Amen.*

## ■ ENHANCEMENT

### MUSIC CONNECTION

Listen together to "Dwelling Place" by Tommy Walker. Explore the following questions together:

- ✠ What statement does this song make about God?
- ✠ What do the lyrics of this song say about God's dwelling place?
- ✠ How do these lyrics connect with 2 Samuel 7:1–14a?

Consider having participants place their completed index cards in the offering plates during worship. If you do this, be sure to alert the people who will count the offering money!

## King David Time Line

### Israelites Demand a King

Tired of being ruled by judges, the people want a king and God tells Samuel to comply with their request.

### Samuel Anoints Saul as King

God sends Saul to Samuel to be anointed as the first king of Israel.

### Saul Is Rejected as King

Saul sins and God regrets making Saul the king.

### David Anointed King

God instructs Samuel to anoint David, a young shepherd, the new king.

### David Defeats Goliath

David, acting as God's agent, defeats a powerful warrior named Goliath, which leads to the defeat of the Philistine army.

### David Flees from Saul

Saul becomes jealous of David and tries to have him killed. David escapes.

### Saul Dies in Battle

The Philistine army kills Saul in a battle.

### David Becomes King of Judah

God tells David to go to Judah where he is anointed king.

### Saul's Son Becomes King of Israel

### Conflict Between Israel and Judah

The house of Saul (Israel) and the house of Saul (Judah) are at war.

### David Becomes King of Israel and Judah

Knowing that God had chosen David to be the leader of Israel, the Israelite elders anointed David to be king. David reclaims Jerusalem for the united kingdoms.

### The Ark of God Comes to Jerusalem

The Ark of God, which had been moved around a lot during all of the conflicts, is brought to the new capital of Jerusalem and placed in a tent.

## Contemplative Questions

What words or images come to mind when you consider God's presence in your life?

What prevents you from paying attention to God's presence in your life?

How does God's presence make a difference in your life?

What can you do to pay more attention to God's presence in your life?

How can you help others connect with God's presence in their lives?

