

Proclaim Hope

LUKE 4:16–21; LEVITICUS 25:1–13



GOAL

In this session, youth explore the welcome table of God's kin-dom and join Jesus in proclaiming God's hope to all.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.

THIS SESSION

Christ's followers are called to join Jesus in proclaiming the hope of God's kin-dom and in extending God's Table, welcoming all persons. We practice hope in the kin-dom of God when we make visible the coming reign of God's justice, love, and grace in the world. As we join Jesus in the holy labors of comforting the brokenhearted, caring for the poor, standing with those who are weak, and helping to free those held captive by every kind of dominating power, we proclaim the hope of God's coming realm in our midst. (For an explanation of *kin-dom*, see p. 34.)

THE BIBLE STORY

In Luke 4:16–21, Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus quotes from Isaiah's prophecy about the unfolding plan of God's redemption (Isaiah 61:1–2). He proclaims himself as the anointed one who is sent to bring hope to the weak, freedom to the prisoners, and liberation to the oppressed. Throughout his ministry, Jesus proclaimed that God's kin-dom is close at hand.

In Leviticus 25:1–13, we read about God's jubilee in which God's people promote justice, liberation, and rest through practicing Sabbath, liberating enslaved people, and forgiving longstanding debt.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

A sense of belonging to friends and community is very important to teens. Youth seek ways to fit in while trying on various roles with different groups and people. Approaching God's kin-dom as a welcome table offers young people a place where they are accepted for who they are, even as they grow and change. It also communicates the importance of welcoming others, a practice many of us seek to live out faithfully. Justice and empathy are emerging themes as youth grow through their teen years. Their ideals and purpose are stimulated by Jesus' call to proclaim hope and offer help to the outcast, the poor, the weak, and the oppressed.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Use a different color marker to write phrases on the graffiti sheet for this session: "Gonna sit at the Welcome Table. / Kin-dom of God. / "There is always light, if only we're brave enough to be it." —Amanda Gorman, Youth Poet Laureate, Presidential Inaugural Poem, 2021.
- "Setting a Welcome Table" (p. 30): Gather supplies, snacks, and drinks if you choose. Be mindful of food allergies and any medical issues.



PRAYER

Fill me with hope, O God, as I seek to proclaim the hope Jesus showed us and as I invite young people to join me in striving for your kin-dom. Amen.

GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11)
- If using during Advent: copies of Resource Page 2 from session 1 (p. 12), Advent wreath and candles (optional)

OPENING LITANY

C

Welcome young people as they arrive. Check in briefly with each person. Invite youth to talk about examples of hope they shared and where they saw people bearing one another's burdens since the last session.

If you choose to include an Advent candle lighting ritual, do it here. Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 from session 1. Light the four colored candles in the Advent wreath and leave them lit during the session. Invite a volunteer to read the leader part for Advent 4. Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1. Lead the opening litany, and begin the session.

Read aloud the new phrases you added to the graffiti wall.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Table or tablecloth (to spread on the floor)
- Paper cups, napkins, blank paper plates
- Markers
- Snacks and drinks (optional; be aware of food allergies)



If you choose to serve snacks and drinks, make these available when it fits with your session activities.

SETTING A WELCOME TABLE

X AM A



Set a table in your learning space and participate in session activities around the table. If you don't use a table, spread a tablecloth on the floor and set it as a table.

Have youth join you in setting a Welcome Table, putting out napkins and cups. Set enough places for each youth and additional places to add others to the table throughout the session.

Give each youth a paper plate to decorate for themselves. They can write their name and draw or write something that describes where they are on their faith journey. Invite them to show what they have drawn and add their plate to the table.

Give each youth four additional paper plates. Throughout the session, you will talk about people who could be added to the Welcome Table. Encourage youth to write the name of a person or group of persons on a plate and add it to the table at any time during the session. Have additional plates and place settings available if needed.

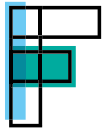
- Internet-connected device
- Markers
- Paper plates

“I’M GONNA SIT AT THE WELCOME TABLE”

T M A

Show the YouTube video of “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table” (bit.ly/FMSitAtWelcomeTable, 1:54). Explain that this adaptation of a nineteenth-century African American spiritual refers to the marriage feast in Revelation 19; it was sung often during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The adaptation refers to voting rights and brings the themes of human rights and racial injustice forward from the original spiritual. Justice and liberation for all is the hope found at the Welcome Table.

Discuss themes from the song and what people will be included at God's Welcome Table. Invite youth to create plates for these people and add them to the table.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.



After each Bible study activity, ask youth what new people would be included at God's Welcome Table. Invite youth to create plates for these people and add them to the table.

SCROLLS (LUKE 4:16–21)

CT A C

Distribute Bibles, paper, and pens or markers. Have youth locate Luke 4:16–21. Read aloud the passage.

Ask the youth to make a scroll by writing their interpretation of Isaiah 61:1–2, which Jesus quoted in Luke. They may interpret what Jesus read in a way that someone today might read or understand it. They may also decorate the scroll if they wish.

Give each person a rubber band or piece of ribbon. Have them roll their paper like a scroll and secure it. Volunteers may read aloud their interpretations from their scroll. Ask:

- ➔ Who does Jesus proclaim hope to? Why do you think Jesus focuses on these groups?
- ➔ What does good news and hope look like for those who are imprisoned, poor, blind, or oppressed today?
- ➔ Where do you hear hope in this passage?

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- Bibles
 - Blank paper
 - Pens or markers
 - Pieces of ribbon or rubber bands

SABBATH JUBILEE (LEVITICUS 25:1–13)

T CT AT

Watch the YouTube video “Sabbath” by The Bible Project (bit.ly/FMSabbath, 5:26).

Invite young people to talk about their thoughts and reflections on the video. Bring their focus to the practice and benefits of jubilee. As you read aloud Leviticus 25:1–13, tell youth to focus on the different numbers named in the text and what the numbers mean.

This story of the year of jubilee speaks to the custom of the people of Israel, who in the fiftieth year in a location would liberate slaves, forgive debts, and not farm the soil, extending grace and mercy to all, regardless of social or economic standing. Discuss:

- ➔ What is radical about this text?
- ➔ Where do you see glimpses of God's kin-dom in this text?
- ➔ How does this passage call us to treat one another (especially the marginalized and oppressed among us)?

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- Bible
 - Internet-connected device

In his Luke 4 synagogue speech, Jesus proclaimed “the year of God's favor,” hinting at a biblical jubilee. How does the liberation, which Jesus announced that he came to fulfill, align with the liberation offered in the biblical jubilee? How does our participation in sabbath-keeping and jubilee encourage our hope for God's kin-dom?



A *tableau* is a “living picture.” It’s a scene where people, like statues, don’t move.

TABLEAU (LUKE 4:18–19)

AM CT

Form at least two groups. Have each group create a tableau of scenes from Luke 4:18–19 (e.g., proclaiming good news to the poor). Give each group time to plan. Have the first group perform their scene and stay frozen briefly as the other group observes the interpretation.

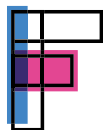
For the group observing the tableau, reflect on what you see:

- ➔ What stands out to you? Where and how do you see hope proclaimed?

For the group creating the tableau:

- After releasing the scene, reflect on what this experience was like.

Switch roles and repeat the activity.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.



After each activity, ask youth who would now be included at God’s Welcome Table. Invite youth to create plates for these people and add them to the table.

CROSSING THE BORDER

T A C

Show the youth a photo of “Giant Picnic,” a live art installation by the artist JR (bit.ly/FMGiantPicnic). Ask the youth to talk about their initial impressions of the photo.

Explain that the live installation was set at the United States/Mexico border. People from both sides of the border sat at one table, sharing the same food, drinking the same tea, enjoying the same music. The image of the eyes on the table are those of a *DREAMer*, a child brought to the United States from another country by their parents, who are not US citizens.

Discuss:

- ➔ What message do you think the artist intended to portray with “Giant Picnic”?
- ➔ How does this art installation connect with your understanding of the kin-dom of God?
- ➔ Where do you see hope in this image?
- ➔ If you were going to recreate this image in your community, who would be seated around the table? Where would the table be located?

MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS

T C

The work of More Light Presbyterians (MLP) focuses on creating a world in which all people are welcomed, loved, and celebrated as beloved children of God. Across their history, MLP has worked for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and larger society. They proclaim that God’s kin-dom comes a little closer when we welcome one another as God welcomes us—with love, grace, and joy.

Have youth use internet-connected devices to read the story of MLP (bit.ly/FMMoreLight). Ask:

- ➔ What work does this group do to support the full inclusion of each of God’s people in the church and society?
- ➔ Why have More Light Presbyterians needed to refocus their activity and advocacy in recent years?
- ➔ How does their work embody hope toward God’s kin-dom?

RELEASE FOR THE PRISONERS

T AT C

Internet-connected devices

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) supports a Free Them All campaign that advocates for reduction in the use of incarceration (jailing). Have the youth use internet-connected devices to learn more about Free Them All (bit.ly/FMFreeThemAll). Scroll down the webpage to “What will we do instead?” and discuss suggested alternatives to locking people up. Ask:

- ➔ How might the suggested activities be hopeful alternatives for individuals? For communities?
- ➔ In what ways might engaging in these activities further the kin-dom of God in the world?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

WELCOME TO THE CROWDED TABLE

T M C

Prepared Welcome Table
 Internet-connected device

Have youth look at the table they created throughout this session and think about it as a big dinner table. How is this table like the kin-dom of God?

Listen to the Highwomen’s song “Crowded Table,” (bit.ly/FMCCrowdedTable, 3:51).

View the lyrics in the comments. Discuss:

- ➔ What do you hear in the song that is reflected in the Welcome Table you are preparing?
- ➔ What message do you hear about hope in this song?
- ➔ How does this song reflect God’s kin-dom?
- ➔ What can you do to create a welcoming and crowded table?

THE LORD’S PRAYER FOR ALL

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Internet-connected device

Remind youth that Jesus taught his disciples the Lord’s Prayer. As part of this prayer, we say: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” As Christ followers, we pray for God’s kin-dom to come and God’s will for the world—peace, justice, and love—to be practiced. Saying this prayer together reminds us that we are called to live together on earth, proclaiming God’s hope as we also wait for God’s kin-dom to come.

Lead the youth in the Lord’s Prayer using the language that is most familiar to you. Then invite youth to close their eyes and imagine people gathered in one place, praying the Lord’s Prayer in different languages. Listen to “The Lord’s Prayer in 11 Languages” (bit.ly/FMLordsPrayer, 1:59) or see it written in different languages (bit.ly/FMPrayerLanguage).

As you pray the Lord’s Prayer in worship, imagine people around the world praying together for God’s kin-dom to come, here and now as well as in God’s future.



“Kin-dom of God” is a term coined by Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, a *mujerista* (woman liberation) theologian, to reject the sexist presumption that God is male as well as the hierarchical imagery of *kingdom*. As she writes, “The word *kin-dom* makes clear that when the fullness of God becomes a day-to-day reality in the world at large, we will all be sisters and brothers—kin to each other.”¹

HOSTING A WELCOME TABLE

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Challenge the youth to think about the Welcome Table they have been populating. Identify:

- ➔ Who has not been invited? Who could be invited?
- ➔ Where could you extend an invitation to people to be part of your community?

Brainstorm and look at the places where you could work to expand God’s kin-dom. Some suggestions:

- Perhaps you could invite a neighboring church or synagogue to be a part of a potluck or a movie night.
- If your church is in a neighborhood, you can offer to host a game night for families who live nearby.
- If your church has a food pantry, you could connect with another congregation to host a food or clothing drive.

Work as a group to make a concrete plan to host a Welcome Table activity. Check with a church leader for assistance in making connections with outside groups and for any permissions needed for building use, church funds, scheduling, and so on.



FOLLOWING JESUS

☐ Prepared Welcome Table

THE KIN-DOM OF GOD IS . . .

AM CT AT

Throughout this session, the youth have been building a Welcome Table that reflects the kin-dom of God. Invite them to walk around the table and look closely at it, noticing who is welcome there. When they return to their seats, invite them to talk about who they expect to see at the table.

Explain that Jesus spoke often about God’s kin-dom and used parables to share what the kin-dom of God is like. Jesus compared the kin-dom of God (also called the kingdom of heaven) to a mustard seed (Luke 13:18–19), yeast (Luke 13:20–21), and a wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1–14), among others.

Ask: What images would you use to describe God’s kin-dom? Use Jesus’ phrase to create your similes:

- [Example:] The kin-dom of God is . . . a family reunion where good food is shared, stories are told, and everyone cares for each other’s children.
- The kin-dom of God is . . .

GRAFFITI WALL

CT

Invite four volunteers to read aloud the words and phrases on the graffiti wall, each one reading what is written in a particular color. Recall what has been said about the practice of *Hope* in these past four sessions.

Form a circle and ask each youth to name something they take away from this practice of *Hope*. In closing, say in unison, “Hope is the rope!”

1. Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha / In the Struggle* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), xi, n1.