

The 2014-2015 NE MN Synod Discipleship Challenge

Dig deep together on a faith journey to...

KNOW the Story

BE the Story

TELL the Story

...of Christ's love in the world.



Children's Discussion Guide February: WORSHIP

All of us are living a story. Together we are living in the middle of God's story – for us, and for our neighbor. Faith practices help us on our faith journey to KNOW God's Story for our lives and the world...to BE God's story of love and reconciliation in the world...and to TELL God's Story so the world can know they are part of God's Story.

The Northeastern Minnesota Synod Discipleship Challenge focuses on the faith practices of *Give, Invite, Serve, Study, Worship, Prayer, and Encourage*. There are many more, and we hope you and your family explore others on your journey as well!

The NE MN Synod faith practice focus for February is "*Worship*." You are encouraged to use this discussion guide with younger children in your home or as part of a Sunday school class or church children's event. As a family you might use this discussion guide after dinner, as you drive from one activity to the next, on a Sunday afternoon – whenever or wherever you have the opportunity to dwell on and discuss what it means for us as individuals and as a family of faith **to KNOW the Story, BE the Story, and TELL the Story of Christ's love in the world!** There are no right or wrong answers, no right or wrong way to do this. There is more content than you can probably use in one sitting: you can do different sections at different times, or pick and choose what will work for your event or family. The point is to make room in your lives for thoughtful and deliberate faith conversations.

And remember, our spiritual hunger to grow and deepen our faith has nothing to do with success, getting the "right" answer, or works. It's all about living – fully living – into the grace of God as God's children... as disciples, following Jesus in our daily life!

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel and for your willingness to accompany children as they grow in discipleship to Christ our Lord!

www.nemnsynod.org/Discipleship

NE MN Synod Discipleship Challenge:

KNOW...BE...TELL the Story!

February 2015 Children's Discussion Guide: WORSHIP

KNOW the Story: *How is the faith practice "worship" part of God's Story?*

Worship by definition means to "to bow down" – "to give worth." Worship is one way we show honor to and love for God. Worship is a way we take time to be in God's presence and focus on our relationship with God. There are examples of God's people worshipping God throughout both the Old and New Testament. There are commands to worship and instructions on how to worship throughout our Biblical story.

You may choose to share a few Bible verses about worship:

Psalm 34: 3 – *"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."*

Luke 24:50-53 - *" they (the disciples) worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."*

As God's disciples we can worship God on our own, but we are also called to come together as the family of God to worship.

One way that we worship as a community of God's people, is at a worship service each week. A worship service in our Lutheran church, usually includes four things: a chance to gather, an opportunity to hear God's Word, a chance to respond to and celebrate God's Word, and a call/blessing that sends us out into the world to live out our faith. In worship we: GATHER, HEAR, CELEBRATE, and SEND.

Tape off the shape of a square on the floor. Have the kids start in one corner and yell "Gather." Then have them hop to the next and yell "Hear," the next "Celebrate," and the last corner "Send." Each week we come to worship and gather, hear, celebrate, and then are sent out in the world to be God's people. Then we come back the next week to gather, hear, celebrate, and be sent again. Have them hop around the four squares a few times.

Today we are going to explore how and why we "gather, hear, celebrate, and send." How and why do we worship?

Divide kids into four groups. Each group will rotate through four stations that teach about one of the sections of worship: gather, hear, celebrate, send. Have an adult leader at each station. Decide as adults how long rotations will be and which of the activities you will be doing in each rotation.

BE the Story: *How has the faith practice “worship” been part of my Story, my faith journey?*

STATION 1: GATHER

Every worship includes a “Gathering” time, right at the beginning. During this part of worship we welcome one another to worship and we share any announcements about what is happening in our church community. We then take time to remember why we are gathering for worship. We read a “Call to worship” that includes words that remind us that we come to praise and honor God. We take time to be still and center our hearts and minds on God. We sing a song that gets us ready to worship.

Gathering time also includes Confession and Forgiveness and the Words of Assurance. This is a special time in each worship service where we tell God how we have sinned or made mistakes and ask God to forgive us for all our sins, even the ones we don’t remember or know about. The worship leader always reads “Words of Assurance” that remind us that God loves and forgives us no matter what”.

Our Gathering also includes a “Prayer of the Day,” a chance to ask God to be present and at work this day.

At this station we are going to have some fun “GATHERING FOR WORSHIP”.

Choose from these Gathering activities:

- Gathering Song: Sing together “Shake Another Hand” while doing the actions.
- Sharing of the Peace: Write on a Frisbee “Peace.” Have kids stand in a circle and say “Peace be with you,” throw the Frisbee to someone who responds “And also with you.”
- Call to Worship: Cut out small hearts and give a heart to each child. Have them quietly hold their paper heart in their hands and try to be as quiet as possible. Encourage them to slow down their breathing and pray with each breath in “Holy God” and each breath out “get my heart ready.”
- Confession and Forgiveness: Give each child a “scratch art” paper (Available at craft stores – rainbow paper covered in a coat of black paint that can be scratched off to reveal the rainbow). Have them think about what they need to confess to God and ask forgiveness for. Then have them scratch the black off the scratch paper and say the words “You are loved and you are forgiven”.
- Prayer of the Day: Pray around the circle: “God this day I pray for...”

STATION 2: HEAR GOD'S WORD:

An important part of worship is hearing God's word. Most worship services include a reading from the book of Psalms and one of the Gospels. Many worship services may also include an Old Testament reading and a reading from one of the other New Testament books that come after the Gospels. A leader then helps us to think about God's word by giving a sermon. During this part of worship we are always asking "What might God want me to hear today?"

Choose from these "Hear" activities:

- Psalm of the Day: Psalm 136: 1-9. Have one child or adult read the first part of every verse in Psalm 136. After each half verse have the group of children respond "for his steadfast love endures forever." Explain to kids that when we read a Psalm in church, the leader reads one part and the congregation the next. For today, their part is always the same. Have them start crunched in a ball, low to the ground and whisper the response. With each time they say "for his steadfast love endures forever," they should grow a little taller and a little louder till they are as stretched out and loud as can be by verse 9.
- Gospel Lesson: Gospel means "Good News." Using a Children's Bible, select a Bible story from one of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Give each child a piece of paper and some pastels or other fun, unique drawing tool. As they hear the story, invite them to draw a picture of the "Good News" they hear.
- Sermon: After reading a selected Bible text, tell each child that they will have an opportunity to share a "10 second sermon" if they would like to. Go around the circle and give each child a chance to stand up and "preach" a message for the morning from the Bible reading you just read. You may pass around a pastoral stole for the child who is sharing to wear as they give their message. Tell them their sermon should briefly share - "What might God want us to hear from our Bible readings today?" or "What good news did God speak to us in our Gospel reading today?"

STATION 3: CELEBRATE/RESPOND TO THE WORD:

Song: Following the reading of God's word and the sermon, we usually sing a song that reminds us of what God's word from today's reading tells us. Each of our Bible readings usually has both "law and gospel." Law reminds us of the rules for how God would like us to live. Gospel reminds us of the Good News that Jesus loves us no matter what. We celebrate this love. Let's sing "Jesus Loves Me".

Confession of Faith: During most worship services we take time to remember what we believe as God's people. Sometimes we say the Apostle's Creed. This creed says we believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let's do the "I Believe Wave." Have your group sit in sections. Assign one section "Father," the next section "Son," the last section "Holy Spirit." Choose one child to be the volunteer that "moves the wave." This volunteer should start by yelling "I believe in the..." and then have them point their way across the group. When they are pointed to, that group should stand up, shout out their word, and then quickly sit down again. They should stand up in a wave that shouts "Father, Son, Holy Spirit." Choose different volunteers. Volunteers could choose to start the wave in a different place and have the words shouted in a different order.

Offering: At a worship service we pass around offering plates to give us an opportunity to give back to God what we have been given. Most of the time we put money in our offering plates and ask God to use the money to do God's work in the world. Today we are going to pass the plate around and have you put your hands in the plate, remembering that we offer all that we are back to God and ask him to use our hands and feet, our money and stuff, and everything we are to do God's work in the world. Have kids sit in a circle. Ask for one volunteer to sit in the middle. The person in the middle closes their eyes. The kids in the circle begin to pass the plate. Whenever the person with their eyes closed chooses, they should shout "stop and give" and open their eyes. Whoever is holding the plate, should lay their hands in the offering plate and give one example of something they can give as an offering this week – using their hands, feet, money or stuff. For example, "I can give a quarter to world hunger" or "I can use my hands to hold a door open for someone."

Popcorn prayer: We take time to listen to and talk to God in worship. We do this in prayer. Help the kids do a popcorn prayer. Talk about how when you put popcorn in the microwave it starts out totally quiet. We listen for when it will pop. Take a minute to be quiet and listen to what God might "pop" into your head. After a while the kernels heat up and start jumping around and making noise. Invite them to pop up and offer a prayer. Give them starters to "pop" around. "Thank you for.... Please help me with.... We pray for these people...."

STATION 4: SENT INTO THE WORLD:

Taking time for worship, gives us time to rest in God, to hear God's word again and get excited about what God is up to. Worship reminds us we are children of God. Worship gives us new energy to go out to do God's work in the world. Every worship service ends with a blessing (sometimes called a benediction), a sending song, and the dismissal.

Benediction/Blessing: Most often blessings remind us we are God's children. They ask for God's presence and protection with us. Most blessings end "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Sometimes we make the sign of the cross, reminding us we are marked with the cross of Christ forever and covered in God's love all week long. Give each child four stickers. Have them partner up. Each partner should put a sticker on their partner's right shoulder, left shoulder, forehead, and belly button. While their partner says "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," the other partner should touch their stickers making the sign of the cross – touch their forehead sticker, then belly button, then one shoulder, then the other.

Sending Song: Teach kids a sending song such as "Send Me, Jesus" #549 in the ELW. Have them create their own verses about what they are sent to do. For example, "I will help friends, I will help friends, I will help friends, send me Lord" or "I will praise you, I will praise you, I will praise you, send me Lord."

Dismissal: Most Lutheran worship services end with the words "Go in peace, serve the Lord!" and the people respond "Thanks be to God!" Play a fun dismissal game. Line up all the kids against one wall. Have a volunteer stand in the middle. Have the middle volunteer shout "Go in peace, serve the Lord!" The children against the wall should shout back "Thanks be to God" and then try to run to the opposite wall while the person in the middle tries to catch them. If they are caught they join the child in the middle. Play until everyone is caught.

After all Stations Discuss:

What did you learn about worship today?

What do you like about worship? Which is your favorite part of worship?

What is the hardest part of worship for you? Is there any part you don't understand?

Why do you think it is important to "Gather" in worship? "Hear"? "Celebrate"? "Send"?

TELL the Story: *How can I share this faith practice “worship” so it can be part of my neighbor’s story?*

Challenge kids:

- The next time you attend a worship service, share what you have learned. Tell one thing you have learned to the parent or adult you sit with. Find someone else near you, and share something you learned about worship.
- Follow along in your bulletin. Can you tell when you are “Gathering, Hearing, Celebrating, and Sending”?
- Invite someone to join you in worship. Help them to follow along with the service.
- Try creating your own little worship service in your home or with a friend this week. Be creative and come up with a way to Gather, Hear, Celebrate, and Send within your own little worship time.