

Gather across Differences

1

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-26



GOAL

Youth learn about the ways Christian communities gather around common visions and commitments, and name and affirm the diversity they experience in their community.

- 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.



PRAYER

God, as we gather together to worship you, give me the wisdom to lead, listen, and learn in ways that honor all creation. Amen.

THIS SESSION

As the early church gathered together in their common commitment to Jesus Christ, so we gather as a community of faith bound by common interests, beliefs, and values. While we share much in common, we are also a diverse group who come from different backgrounds and have different experiences. The things that make communities diverse also make them strong and sustainable. When we gather in ways that affirm diversity, we are better prepared to live as a community committed to a common vision.

THE BIBLE STORY

First Corinthians is a letter written by Paul in the first century CE to a community that was struggling to gather across differences. The Christians in Corinth were being mean to each other, putting each other down, and refusing to include everyone. In chapter 12, Paul encourages the Corinthians to value the different strengths that each individual contributes to the community. Using the metaphor of a body, Paul highlights the ways that a community depends on the collaboration of many diverse parts working together. While all of the parts work differently, they all work toward a common goal.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth are often concerned about social status and may judge or categorize both themselves and others on this basis. Self-conscious youth may benefit from recognizing that their unique gifts are valued by the community. Youth who struggle with being judgmental or excluding others may benefit from reflecting on how their community is strengthened by people who have gifts that are different from theirs. All youth will benefit from constructing and exploring common values—including an affirmation of diversity.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Look and Wonder” (p. 9): Write and post the lyrics to “O Look and Wonder” (*Glory to God*, #397) in English and Spanish” on newsprint to be used in all sessions.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “How the Church Gathers” (p. 8): Invite and prepare a leader of your church’s bilingual services or someone involved in an interfaith community to speak.

GETTING STARTED

☐ Paper and pens

CROSSING OVER C

Welcome youth as they arrive and have them form pairs. Give each pair a piece of paper. Have them draw a Venn diagram of two overlapping circles on their paper and write their names in the non-overlapping sections. Invite them to list what they have in common in the overlapping middle area. Then, have youth write their differences in the non-overlapping areas where they put their names.

After all youth have gathered, invite each pair to introduce themselves by sharing their similarities and their differences with the rest of the group.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

☐ Resource Page 1

RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES AM C



Throughout this activity, be mindful to suspend judgment so youth feel comfortable being honest about the differences in their beliefs, preferences, and practices.

Tell youth to listen as you read some statements, and then move to the side of the room representing the part of the statement they agree with the most. Choose from the statements provided on Resource Page 1. The opinions of some youth may fall somewhere between each statement. If so, encourage them to stand somewhere between the two sides of the room to represent their position. Allow them to discuss why they chose to stand where they are. Youth can change their position as the group discusses their answers.

After the activity, talk with youth about what they felt during that activity and what they noticed. Invite them to share about what may have surprised, comforted, affirmed, or confused them about the differences they discovered in their group.

☐ Copies of Resource Page 2

THREE SISTERS GARDENING AT C

Ask for a volunteer to read Resource Page 2 aloud. After reading, invite youth to share whether they had heard about the Three Sisters or companion planting before.

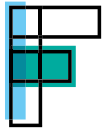
Use one or more of the following questions to process with youth:

- ➔ What are the benefits of gardening using the Three Sisters technique?
- ➔ Think about the roles of each plant. Which one most resonates with you, and why?
- ➔ Think about the people who grow alongside you. How do you all contribute to one another's growth?

PRAY TOGETHER QC

Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

Creative God, your hands mold creation, your breath brings life, and your voice gives wisdom. As your helpers, let our hands serve creation, our breath share life and love, and our voices speak truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE



When discussing today’s passage, be mindful to affirm diverse abilities and bodies when you talk about the metaphor of the body.

PAUL’S METAPHOR

C CT

Bible

Invite four volunteers to read 1 Corinthians 12:4–26. Have each one read one of the following sections: 4–11, 12–14, 15–19, and 20–26.

Ask the group to recall the main points. Encourage youth to discuss what thoughts or questions emerged for them as they listened to the Scripture read.

Choose one or both options.

MAKING IT MODERN

C AT

Bible

Form four groups. Assign each group a portion of the Scripture (use the sections from “Paul’s Metaphor”). Challenge each group to read through their portion of Scripture once more and then work together to create a more modern metaphor to help them explain this passage to their friends today. Encourage students to be as creative as possible. After five minutes, invite each group to share what they have created with everyone else.

THE BODY OF GIFTS

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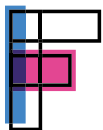
Bible

Paper and pens

Distribute paper and pens. Give the following instructions:

- Quickly draw a picture of yourself.
- Think about at least three different gifts that God has given you.
- Depending on which part of your body is used to share this gift with others, label your picture accordingly. For instance, if you are good at supporting people, you might label your arms to represent that gift because they are good for hugging or lifting up. If you enjoy sharing food and cooking for people, you might label your stomach for similar reasons.

After a few minutes, invite youth to show their pictures and highlight the diverse ways we care for ourselves and serve others. Discuss why it is important for communities to be diverse.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

COVENANTS

T C

Internet-enabled devices



People often gather around common visions, mandates, and commitments. Throughout the Bible, covenants are described as pacts made by God with people and, sometimes, between people. Covenants help us create communities where people are welcomed, affirmed, and honored.

Instruct youth to spend a few minutes on their phone researching what a *covenant* is. Invite them to summarize the definitions they read and then share examples of covenants from the Bible. If they are struggling for examples, discuss the covenants God made with ancient Israel and David or the covenant God has made with us through Jesus. Ask how covenants can contribute to an environment where all feel welcome to gather across differences.

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- Invited guest

HOW THE CHURCH GATHERS



If your church has a bilingual service or participates in an interfaith group, invite one of the organizers to visit with your youth to talk about that ministry. Ask your guest to share the values, joys, and rewards of the ministry. Invite them to also share about the challenges of gathering across differences and what they do to mitigate these difficulties. Invite youth to ask any additional questions they may have for your guest about the ministry they do.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- Two sheets of newsprint
 - Markers

A NEW COVENANT



Invite youth to work together to establish a list of principles and rules that will help all people feel welcomed, affirmed, and honored in their group. Begin by having youth brainstorm various ideas. Have a volunteer write down each of these proposals on a piece of newsprint. Then have youth choose five–seven of these proposals for their final list. Write these final points on a separate piece of newsprint and have each student sign the new covenant at the bottom of the list. Hang the new covenant where you meet as a reminder of the promises everyone has agreed to keep.

If the group already has established norms or rules, review these together and discuss what youth may want to change and why.

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- Paper
 - Markers
 - Clipboards

AFFIRMING GIFTS



This activity requires a certain level of maturity and trust in the group to ensure that they will be supportive and kind toward one another.



If you did “The Body of Gifts” (p. 7), you might instruct youth to write affirmations around one another’s drawings.

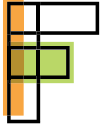
Invite youth to form a circle. Provide a clipboard, a piece of paper, and a marker to each person. As you do, ask the group to think about the diverse spiritual gifts and talents of each person present. Encourage youth to think about the ways each individual contributes to the group.

Instruct youth to write their own name on the paper in large letters. Rotate the clipboards clockwise around the circle once. Encourage youth to write down a spiritual gift or quality of the person whose name is on the paper. Continue to rotate clipboards until all youth have written on everyone else’s sheet. Youth should have their own paper at the end.

POPCORN THANKS

CT QC

Challenge youth to think about what makes them unique as well as the diversity they see in their communities and throughout creation. Invite them to share what they thought about in a popcorn-style prayer. Begin the prayer by saying: “God, we thank you for,” and end by inviting youth to say “Amen” together.



FOLLOWING JESUS

LOOK AND WONDER

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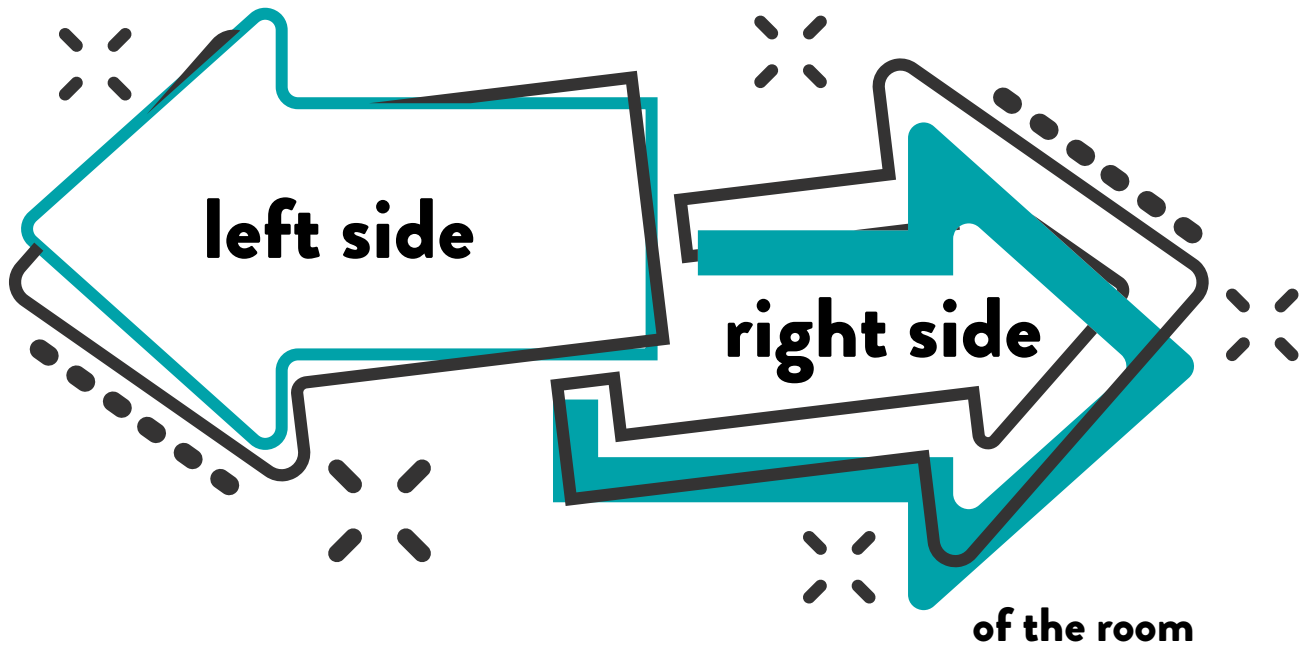
Explain that, for the next four sessions, the group will be singing “O Look and Wonder” to celebrate living in community. Sing or listen to the song. To hear the tune, go to bit.ly/FMOLookTune (0:21). To sing along in Spanish (words not provided), show the YouTube video “*Miren que Bueno* (O Look and Wonder)” (bit.ly/FMOLook, 1:52).

- Newsprint with lyrics to “O Look and Wonder”

Recognizing Differences

Invite youth to contribute additional statements before processing the activity.

Stand on the



- if you **like** pineapple on pizza
- if you like to be **loud**
- if you prefer **mornings**
- if you like to pray with your eyes **open**
- if you come to church because **you want to**
- if you prefer to sing really **old hymns**
- if you read the Bible **on your own**
- if you like to pray **in your head**
- if you **have** been baptized
- if you **believe** Jesus Christ died for your sins
- if you **do not like** pineapple on pizza
- if you like to be **quiet**
- if you prefer **evenings**
- if you like to pray with your eyes **closed**
- if you come to church because **someone brings you**
- if you prefer to sing **modern worship songs**
- if you read the Bible only **at church**
- if you like to pray **aloud**
- if you **haven't** been baptized
- if you **still** have some questions

Three Sisters

The Three Sisters are the three main crops that several indigenous groups in North America have grown for thousands of years. These three crops (corn, beans, and squash) have been planted by the Mayans of Mesoamerica, the Iroquois and Seneca in the northeast of present-day United States, and many other indigenous groups. These crops are traditionally grown together using a technique called “companion planting.” In indigenous cultures, the growers, who were typically women from the same family, plant a set of vegetables very close to one another. In doing so, the plants contribute to each other’s growth.

The corn is planted first so the stalks can grow tall and strong. These stalks provide a structure and support system for the beans to climb.

The beans are planted next. As they grow, they put a lot of nitrogen into the soil, which the other plants collect and use to grow strong.

The squash is planted last and spreads along the soil, preventing weeds from growing. This helps ensure the nutrients from the soil go toward the health of the corn and the beans, and not to weeds.



