

Sing New Creation

REVELATION 7:9-17

4



GOAL

Youth explore the charge to sing new creation, which encourages them to harmonize, synchronize, and improvise as they live their lives to the glory of God.

- 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 of all, open my eyes to the promise of your new creation and signs of your coming realm. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Singing evokes poetry. It requires rhythm. It involves harmony; multiple voices blend together in unity and diversity toward common purpose. Something happens in a song that reveals a gracious gift of God.

Singing God's new creation is a practice of imagination and hope, but the time to begin is here and now. Tune your heart to the life-giving message of the gospel. Harmonize your will with the holy purpose of God. Synchronize your actions with the whole body of Christ. Improvise your life of faith with the joyful freedom of the Spirit. Sing the hymn of heaven to all the earth: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). God is doing a new thing. Sing a new song!

THE BIBLE STORY

In Revelation, the Triune God assembles a choir of 144,000, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:4-8). To this assembly, God adds "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9), ready to join the heavenly hymn: "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10). Something new happens that is much more than the sum of its parts.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth have much to offer the church as it continues to sing new creation in response to God's active presence in the world. Young people see things in ways previous generations do not. They say things that have not yet been said, understand things not yet understood. They are a part of the new creation and new song God is writing in the church. By helping youth see themselves in this role and giving them opportunities for expression and leadership, we infuse the church with creativity and new life.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "New Creation" (p. 32): Post three sheets of newsprint on which you have drawn an abstract line or shape.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "New Creation from Tribulation" (p. 33): Gather magazines and newspapers.
- "Today's Church" (p. 34): (optional) Invite a church leader to speak to ways the church adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- "Harmonizing and Synchronizing" (p. 34): Invite a person with music education experience to explain and demonstrate harmonization and synchronization.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Prepared newsprint
- ☐ Markers



Sample abstract lines or shapes:



NEW CREATION

A C

Welcome youth as they arrive and invite them to examine the abstract shapes on newsprint posted. Give them a marker and ask them to add to the images to create something new. Encourage them to add, color, and invent as they visit each newsprint station.

Gather the group and discuss each drawing they marked on:

- ➔ In each picture, where does the original drawing end and the new additions begin? Share what you see.
- ➔ How has the picture transformed from its original state?

Explain that the group will be looking at God's work of new creation, which includes the work of harmonizing, synchronizing, and improvising in response to what God is already doing in the world.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11)
- ☐ Internet-connected device

OPENING RITUAL

M T

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11) and sing all verses of "Sing a New Song" to the tune of "Morning Has Broken," either a cappella or with accompaniment using music from either bit.ly/FMBunessanTune (two verses) or the YouTube video "Giovanni Marradi—Morning Has Broken" (bit.ly/FMBunessanMusic, 3:39).

Alternatively, use the verse as a responsive reading, saying each line and having the youth repeat after you.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Hymnals

"AMAZING GRACE"

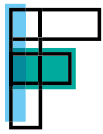
C M T

Without telling youth the name of the hymn, play the simple tune of "Amazing Grace" from www.hymnary.org found at bit.ly/FMAmazingTune. Invite youth to identify the hymn that accompanies this tune ("Amazing Grace"). Distribute hymnals and locate "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" (*GtG*, #649). Sing together the first stanza.

Play various renditions of the hymn as a way to show how believers have made something new out of something known. Three variations on YouTube video to play are:

- "Harlem Gospel Choir—Amazing Grace (Exclusive)" (bit.ly/FMAmazingHarlem, 3:23)
- "Ralph Stanley—Amazing Grace" (bit.ly/FMAmazingStanley, 3:30)
- "Louie Armstrong—Amazing Grace" (bit.ly/FMAmazingArmstrong, 2:02)

Invite youth to tell which version of the hymn they enjoyed most and how each version honors the original song while inventing a "new creation." Explain that you will be looking at various ways that God calls followers of Jesus Christ to sing new creations by encouraging us to harmonize, synchronize, and improvise.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

NEW CREATION FROM TRIBULATION

A

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1. Read Revelation 7:9–17 on the Resource Page. Ask:

- ➔ What is happening in this story?
- ➔ What kind of hardship do you think these people have experienced?
- ➔ How is God receiving them?

Invite youth to use art materials to creatively illustrate hardship and new creation expressed in Revelation 7:9–17. On their Resource Page, they may draw, color, or use magazine and newspaper images to create a representation of hardships God’s people experience in life.

Invite volunteers to share their creations. Discuss:

- ➔ How does Revelation 7:9–17 give us hope when we see terrible things happening in our world? What does it make us want to do here and now?
- ➔ How do the images of God’s new creation in Revelation 7:9–17 encourage us today? For the future?

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ☐ Magazines and newspapers
- ☐ Colored pencils and markers
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue

NEW CREATION THROUGH NEW LANGUAGE

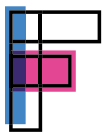
C

Distribute Bibles. Invite a volunteer to read the prose verses and have the group read the “song lyrics” in Revelation 7:9–17. Use information from “The Bible Story” (p. 31) to explain what is taking place in the passage.

In partners or small groups, distribute copies of Resource Page 2. Have youth compare two versions of Revelation 7:9–17. Explain that the King James Version is a translation and dates back to the 17th century. *The Message* is not a translation, but rather a paraphrase version of the Bible written in more familiar, contemporary language. Discuss:

- ➔ What similarities and differences do you notice in these two versions?
- ➔ Why do scholars make new translations of the Bible? Why not just stick with one?
- ➔ How do various translations of the Bible help us live into the idea of God’s new creation?

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 2



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

PSALM 96

C A

Continue to look at Psalm 96 and the session’s theme that appears in the psalm (“Sing New Creation”). Distribute highlighters or markers and copies of Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13), making sure youth receive the paper they already marked. Have additional copies available for new participants.

Have volunteers take turns reading aloud each verse. As the psalm is read, encourage participants to highlight words or phrases that indicate new creation. Distribute colored pencils and ask them to elaborate on their thoughts, drawing words or pictures in the margins of the psalm.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13)
- ☐ Highlighters or markers
- ☐ Colored pencils



This activity can be done at the beginning or end of this section in each session.

Since this is the final session for illustrating this psalm, have youth review their creative work, noticing the multiple themes present in Psalm 96. Invite volunteers to talk about surprises or meaningful passages from the psalm.

Choose one or more options.

☐ Internet-connected device



Encourage interested youth to search for the letter online and read it in its entirety.

LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL

T C

Explain that Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" was written by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he was in jail for leading nonviolent protests. He wrote the letter responding to a statement by eight Alabama clergymen asking King and his associates to be patient when it came to making necessary legal changes to improve Black lives during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. In a way, King was describing the need to protest as a way of singing a new creation when those pastors and society were willing to let suffering continue for Black Americans.

Show the YouTube video "Letter from a Birmingham Jail—US Government and Civics—Khan Academy" (bit.ly/FMMLKBirmingham, 4:11), and encourage participants to listen for the theme of new creation in the situation and the letter itself. Invite comments after watching the video and discuss:

- ➔ How was the church challenged to harmonize or synchronize their efforts when white clergy leaders felt it was too soon for King's vision of a new creation in the United States?
- ➔ Ultimately, what was the new creation that came about?
- ➔ How are we still trying to live into this new creation today?

☐ Guest speaker (optional)

TODAY'S CHURCH

C X

When the COVID-19 pandemic led worshiping communities around the globe to protect their members and encourage members to stay home, churches had to improvise in their work of singing God's new creation.

Invite youth to share their memories and observations of ways their worshiping community adapted and improvised during the pandemic. If a guest speaker is present, invite that person to share their insights.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

☐ Drums or musical instruments

☐ Guest music leader



In place of a guest music leader, show the YouTube video "Harmony, What Is It?" (bit.ly/FMWhatIsHarmony, 1:36).

HARMONIZING AND SYNCHRONIZING

M AM X

Have a guest leader demonstrate harmony and synchronization.

Distribute drums or musical instruments and have youth try synchronization. If possible, have your group practice harmonization by singing a familiar tune such as "Happy Birthday." Reflect on these new creations by discussing:

- ➔ How do harmonization and synchronization force us to pay attention, listen, and work with one another?
- ➔ What do harmonization and synchronization look like when people work together toward goals like justice, equity, and social harmony?

IMPROVISING

A QC

Explain that participants will write new words that describe singing a new creation to a favorite tune they choose. Distribute hymnals and have participants use the index to find a favorite hymn. Invite them to tell which hymn they chose. Distribute paper and pens. Participants work individually or in partners/groups to create new lyrics for their chosen hymn. They may change the words to existing verses or add a completely new verse to the hymn.

Gather the group together. Invite volunteers to share what they have written. Invite the group to sing some of the new verses that were written.

- ☐ Hymnals
- ☐ Paper and pens

NEW SONG GRAFFITI

CT

Write “Sing a New Song” across the top of a sheet of newsprint and write the four session themes down the side of the newsprint, leaving room for youth to write song names to the right of each theme (Sing Liberation, Sing Tribulation, Sing Transformation, Sing New Creation). As you review the themes of this spiritual practice, have youth recall an idea and a song or hymn from each session and write them on the sheet.

Look over the newsprint and identify how their writings connect with the overall theme, *Sing a New Song*. Invite them to add words or phrases to the sheet.

As the youth go out to the world, ask them to look for places or experiences where they see or participate in singing a new song.

- ☐ Newsprint
- ☐ Markers



FOLLOWING JESUS

TRANSFORMED AND TRANSFORMING

C

Distribute Bibles, index cards, and pens and remind participants that Revelation 7:9–17 provides a vision of the new creation. Encourage them to read the verses then write down one new thing they see God doing in the world, one hope they have for God’s new creation, and one action they will take as they step into the future, synchronizing, harmonizing, and improvising.

Remind youth that God’s Spirit continues to gather and guide the church, and each of them, inspiring new songs of creation in and through them. They are a part of God’s new creation.

Close by reading together this song from Revelation 7:12:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pens

Revelation 7:9–17 (CEB)

⁹After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number.

They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands.

¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

¹¹All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving
and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders said to me,
“Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he said to me, “These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb’s blood.

¹⁵This is the reason they are before God’s throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them.

¹⁶They won’t hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, ¹⁷because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:9–17

King James Version—Translation	The Message—Paraphrase
⁹After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ¹⁰And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. ¹¹And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, ¹²Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. ¹³And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ¹⁴And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.	^{9–12}I looked again. I saw a huge crowd, too huge to count. Everyone was there—all nations and tribes, all races and languages. And they were standing, dressed in white robes and waving palm branches, standing before the Throne and the Lamb and heartily singing: Salvation to our God on his Throne! Salvation to the Lamb! All who were standing around the Throne—Angels, Elders, Animals—fell on their faces before the Throne and worshiped God, singing: Oh, Yes! The blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, The honor and power and strength, To our God forever and ever and ever! Oh, Yes! ^{13–14}Just then one of the Elders addressed me: “Who are these dressed in white robes, and where did they come from?” Taken aback, I said, “O Sir, I have no idea—but you must know.” ^{14–17}Then he told me, “These are those who come from the great tribulation, and they’ve washed their robes, scrubbed them clean in the blood of the Lamb. That’s why they’re standing before God’s Throne. They serve him day and night in his Temple. The One on the Throne will pitch his tent there for them: no more hunger, no more thirst, no more scorching heat. The Lamb on the Throne will shepherd them, will lead them to spring waters of Life. And God will wipe every last tear from their eyes.”

