

Share Power

LEVITICUS 25:8-14

4



GOAL

Youth identify various sources of power and consider ways power is redistributed in the Bible and now.

- 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

As I seek to empower youth, help me embody power among them, not power over them.

THIS SESSION

Although we are not always aware of it, power is present in every aspect of life: housing, education, access to resources and opportunities, and of course our churches. The Bible and Christian tradition instruct believers to be attentive to power and its use. Leviticus 25 provides instruction and examples of how to distribute power through sharing resources, elevating the voices of those in need, and loving all creation. The church has a long history of wrestling with holding and sharing power. We are called to continue to oppose unjust displays of power and to promote systems, structures, and ways of life that enable all of God's creation to flourish.

THE BIBLE STORY

Leviticus contains God's instructions to Moses for arranging community life once the people enter the promised land. One way power is to be redistributed involves both people and the land. Every seventh year, the land is to be given a rest from farming. And after seven cycles of this, every fiftieth year, not only does the land get a rest, but people get a break. Debts are forgiven, slaves are freed, land is returned. In the Jewish culture, the number seven (and 49, or 7x7) is significant because it indicates completion and renewal (e.g., God rested on the seventh day after completing the creation).

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

The biblical language may not immediately resonate with youth. Some will need help connecting to *jubilee* as a practice that redistributes power throughout the community. Yet youth understand the concept of power. Older youth are wondering about proper authority and may be pushing back already against those who seem to hold power over them: parents/caregivers, teachers, and so on. An attentive discussion about power and its redistribution will inform youth about appropriate and inappropriate displays of power and assist in a healthy development to adulthood.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Giving and Receiving" (p. 32): Be prepared to teach and lead youth in the second verse of the song "When We Are Living," using American Sign Language as in the first session (see p. 5, "Session Preparation").
- Depending on the options you choose:
- "The Power Game" (p. 32): Familiarize yourself with the game.
- "Our Response" (p. 35): Use newsprint and a marker to create a large grid that is three columns across and five rows deep.

GETTING STARTED

□ Paper and pens



Learn the signs by watching the YouTube videos “ASL Signs for When We Are Living, Verse 2” (bit.ly/FMSignsForVerse, 0:50) and “ASL Signs with When We Are Living Verse 2” (bit.ly/FMSignsWithVerse, 0:28).

GATHERING ACTIVITY

CT C

Welcome youth as they arrive and give each a piece of paper and a pen. Invite them to write down one example of a good use of power and one example of a bad use of power.

Gather as one and invite youth to read what they wrote. Invite the group to respond to one another's examples. Ask:

➔ Today's topic of practicing generosity is redistributing power. How do you think redistributing power can contribute to generosity?

GIVING AND RECEIVING

AM

Remind youth of this activity done at the beginning of each session. You will say and do the motions for the second verse of the song “When We Are Living,”¹ using American Sign Language. Rehearse it with the group, teaching any newcomers and reminding others. When ready, go through it once as a group together.

Through all our **living**, (*both hands in fists with thumbs up, move from waist up to shoulders*) /

we our fruits [**work**] must **give**. (*move both hands, palms down and slightly cupped, back and forth in front of you; thumb in palm facing up on right hand moving away from you to another*) /

Good works of **service** (*move right flat palm from chin to left palm facing up; both palms facing up and alternate hands moving in and out from chest*) /

are for **offering**. (*right finger hooked and move hand away from you to another*) /

When we are **giving**, (*thumb in palm facing up on right hand moving away from you to another*) /

or when **receiving**, (*right fist on top of left fist held out at arm's length, pretend to grasp rope and move hands toward self*) /

we **belong to God**; (*interlock thumb and index finger of both hands as a chain; then move open right palm facing left from above head to center of face*) /

we **belong to God**. (*repeat above action*) /



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

□ Resource Page 1

THE POWER GAME

C G

Using Resource Page 1, tell youth you are going to give them several questions for them to work on answering. Explain that there is a specific trick for finding the answer, but do not explain the trick.

Youth may be familiar with similar games such as Green Glass Door, Black Magic, or the Umbrella Game. Acknowledging that this game is similar, but with a different rule, may help youth understand the premise.

1. Writer Credits: St. 1 anon., sts. 2, 3, 4 Roberto Escamilla, trans. by Deborah L. Alvarez; Copyright: © 1994 Abingdon Press (BMI) (Administered by Music Services). All Rights Reserved.

TYPES OF POWER

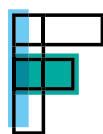
AT T

Prepare youth to watch a video about power by saying that the video talks about how to understand power. It says that people use different forms of power to make others do what they want them to do.

Write the six types of power on a sheet of newsprint before playing the video and challenge youth to remember one way each type of power mentioned in the video can be used to make others do something. They are: Physical Force, Wealth, State Action, Social Norms, Ideas, Numbers.

Show the YouTube video “How to understand power—Eric Liu” (bit.ly/FMPowerExplained, 7:01). Stop the video at 3:09.

As a group, try to remember one example of each type of power mentioned in the video and discuss any examples of this the youth have witnessed. Finally, remind youth that the theme today around generosity is to redistribute power.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

☐ Newsprint and marker

JUBILEE CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

Across:

- 1. joy
- 3. Moses
- 4. family
- 6. forgiven
- 9. return
- 10. debts

Down:

- 1. jubilee
- 2. holy
- 5. Israelites
- 6. fifty
- 7. Egypt
- 8. land

JUBILEE CROSSWORD

CT G

Prepare to read Leviticus 25:8–14 by providing biblical context. In this passage, God is speaking to Moses, preparing him with some rules to follow for living together once the people enter the promised land. Invite a volunteer, or several volunteers, to read Leviticus 25:8–14 aloud to the group.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and pens to youth and have them complete the crossword.

- ☐ Bibles
☐ Copies of Resource Page 2
☐ Pens

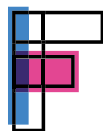
JUBILEE DISCUSSION

AT C

Prepare to read Leviticus 25:1–17 by providing biblical context. In this passage, God is speaking to Moses, preparing him with some rules to follow for living together once the people enter the promised land. Take turns reading the text and discuss:

- ➔ What are all the ways power is redistributed every seventh year?
- ➔ How is power redistributed every jubilee year?
- ➔ What do you imagine someone with a great debt would think and feel during the year of jubilee?
- ➔ What do you imagine a wealthy ruler would think and feel during the year of jubilee?
- ➔ How is this a way to practice generosity?

☐ Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

40 ACRES AND A MULE

T C

A case where power was initially shared and began to be redistributed was with land distribution after the Civil War. The government approved a program of giving land to people who had been enslaved, only to have the next president rescind the program and leave Black Americans in poverty.

☐ Internet-connected device

The same was done with the right to vote. Show the YouTube video “Land: Giving Rise to the Famous Phrase 40 Acres & a Mule” (bit.ly/FM40Acres, 2:56).

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation:

- ➔ Why was it important for Black people to own their own land?
- ➔ What do you think were some of the reasons Andrew Johnson changed the decision?
- ➔ What might a jubilee year look like in the US if Native Americans and descendants of slaves were considered?

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- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3
 - ☐ Pens

RETURNING DWIGHT MISSION

C AT

Form small groups and distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and pens to youth. Instruct the groups to read the news article to each other, switching readers with each paragraph. After youth have read the excerpts, instruct youth to circle examples of sharing power in the article.

As a large group, discuss how and why power was redistributed in this story. Encourage them to use the QR code to see pictures and read the entire article after the session.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

-
- ☐ Paper and pens

IN MY LIFE

QC C

Invite youth to a time of reflection. Give each participant a piece of paper and pen and have them draw a line across the middle of the paper. Invite them to think about one place in their life where power is shared in a fair way, even if it is unequal. An example may be a school group that organizes an event under supervision of teachers. Have them write this on the top half of the sheet and draw an illustration of it if they like.

Have them think now of a place in their life where power is not shared in a fair way. Perhaps they are the person who has too much power or not enough power. Have them write this on the bottom half of the sheet of paper and challenge them to think of something they can do to redistribute that power, if anything. They can also illustrate this if they like. Invite a few volunteers to tell their responses.

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- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 4
 - ☐ Pens
 - ☐ Internet-connected device



Land acknowledgments are public recognition of the indigenous people who are native to the area. Doing so raises awareness of a transition of power, shares knowledge of the history of a place and the groups of people who called the place home, and expresses gratitude for the original stewards.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

T

Explain that the first step in redistributing and sharing power begins with acquiring knowledge. Share that land acknowledgments are a practice of learning and teaching about native lands.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 4 and pens. Work with youth to fill in the first row on the chart on Resource Page 4 according to the instructions on the top of the page.

Encourage youth to use their smartphones to finish filling out the chart. If some do not have internet-connected phones, form groups to complete the form.

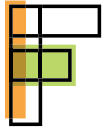
OUR RESPONSE

C

☐ Prepared newsprint and marker

On the top of the piece of newsprint, write the titles for three columns: Situation, Description, and Actions. Have youth name four or five situations they know where power is not shared fairly. Write their responses under the “Situation” column. (*church, school, work environment, housing, the planet*).

Invite youth to describe how power is not fairly distributed in each place. Write their responses under the “Description” column next to the situation. Finally, have them consider actions they might take to make each situation more fair. Write these responses in the third column. Challenge youth to consider doing something about one of the situations this week.



FOLLOWING JESUS

GENEROSITY SUMMARY

C

Invite youth to consider the four sessions spent on considering the Christian practice of generosity. Remind them of the four themes: share resources, share wisdom, share justice, and share power. Repeat the themes, pausing a few minutes for those who were present at the session to call out things they remember talking about.

Tell youth to imagine they are talking to a friend who asks why Christians are so generous. Based on what they have learned, how would they answer?

Invite volunteers to tell one thing from this practice they hope to do to deepen their practice of generosity. (*volunteer, organize a fundraising event, share their wisdom, work on a justice issue*).

CLOSING BLESSING

QC

Form a circle and lead this prayer or one of your choosing:

Gracious, sharing God, thank you for the gifts that you have given each of us that enable us to practice generosity and to share with your children and creation. Guide us, empower us, and inspire us to share resources, wisdom, justice, and power. Be with (*say the names of all youth present*) now and forever. Amen.

Thank youth for their participation.

The Power Game

Explanation of the Game

The Power Game consists of a leader holding all the rules and participants being confused and frustrated by the lack of any fairness or logic. The leader calls out four different scenarios followed by a question no one is equipped to answer. The debriefing of the game is where participants realize and reflect on the issue of power.

In this version, each scenario consists of telling the group how many pink elephants are in a variety of things and then asking how many pink elephants there are. While the logical response is to add up the total number of elephants, the rules of the game that only you know is that the answer depends on how many words are in the question at the end of the scenario.

Leading the Game

Tell the group that, as the leader, you will provide scenarios of several quantities of pink elephants in several different locations and ask youth to guess the number of pink elephants in each scenario.

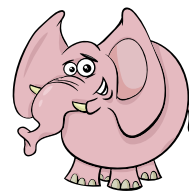
Read each scenario and give a moment for youth to guess the right answer. Respond only by saying what the correct answer is. Encourage them to try again to figure it out.

Scenarios:

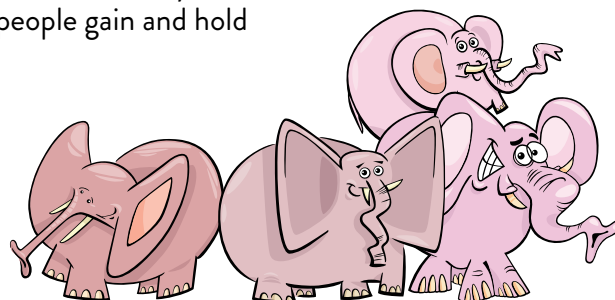
- “There are 3 pink elephants in my coffee mug, 5 pink elephants on the couch, and 2 pink elephants at the window. How many pink elephants are there?” (*The answer is 6.*)
- “There are 7 pink elephants in the doorway, 32 in the back of the room, and 12 on the ceiling. How many pink elephants are there this time?” (*The answer is 8.*)
- “There are 128 pink elephants under the table, 652 in my pocket, and 287 on [Name]’s head. How many pink elephants?” (*The answer is 4.*)
- “There are 16 pink elephants in the plant, there are 93 in my bag, and one hundred million in [Name]’s shoe. How many elephants?” (*The answer is 3.*)

Debrief after several rounds or when youth begin to show frustration. Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation:

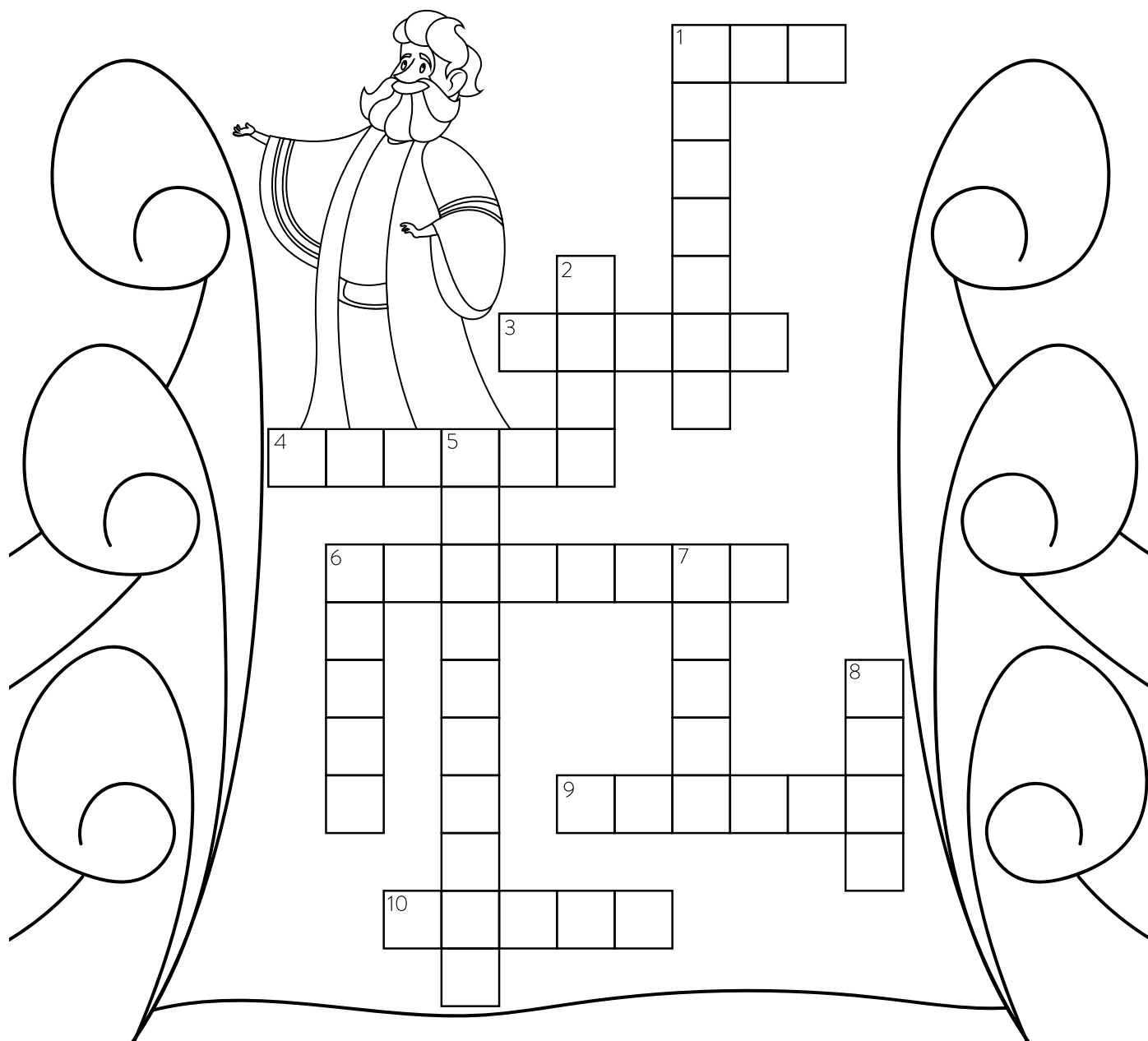
- ➡ Who had the power in this game?
- ➡ What was the power?
- ➡ What are some of the feelings you experienced during this game?
- ➡ Why did you want the power?
- ➡ Do you think it is just for me to know the trick to the game? Why or why not?
- ➡ The actual way to find the correct answer was by adding the number of words in the final question asked after describing how many pink elephants were in different things. What are you feeling now that I have shared the power and told you the rules of the game?



Explain that many people feel powerless and frustrated in our modern society. Often, the few who hold power are the ones who make the rules for how people gain and hold power. These rules are not always clear or equitable.



Jubilee Crossword



After _____ led the _____ out of captivity in _____, he spoke to them about God's
 (3 across) (5 down) (7 down)

plan for their new life together. He explained that every _____ years would be a year of _____.
 (6 down) (1 down)

During this year, _____ would be _____ and people would _____ to the _____
 (10 across) (6 across) (9 across) (8 down)

of their _____. He proclaimed this year a _____ year. Today, many people recognize a period
 (4 across) (2 down)

of jubilee as a period of _____.
 (1 across)

Presbyterian Camp Land in Oklahoma Returned to Cherokee Nation

On paper, this might have seemed like a straightforward property transaction: On June 23, Cherokee Nation acquired about 200 acres in Sequoyah County in eastern Oklahoma, land on which since the early 1950s the Dwight Mission Camp and Conference Center has operated a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-related summer camp.



Like many stories involving land, people and history, dig a little deeper and you'll find this one's complicated—a story of intertwining connections between Presbyterian missionaries and Native Americans going back 200 years; of the nation's scarred history in its treatment of Indigenous people; of a boarding school at Dwight Mission that educated generations of Cherokee children; of the economic difficulties confronting many Presbyterian camps and conference centers; of land that's been long-cherished and is now returning to the Cherokee people who lived there before the state of Oklahoma ever existed.

The recent land transaction involves an historic, 86-acre parcel—the first mission to the Cherokee people west of the Mississippi River—that is now being returned to Cherokee Nation, plus the purchase of 120 acres the mission added on over the years.

“We’re honored to have the property back,” said Travis Owens, director of cultural tourism for Cherokee Nation. “The presbyteries have been great stewards of the property over the years, but the connection to Cherokee Nation dates back to the early 1820s.”

When Cherokee Nation announced the transfer, members of the tribe posted on social media about their own connections with the land—telling of a grandmother who attended school there, of relatives buried in the cemetery, of being married on the property 39 years ago, of family reunions on the grounds, of a grandmother and grandfather who met at the school.

Bill Wiles, a board member, said, “Dwight is recognized as a very spiritual place with deep historical roots and deep impact on the Cherokee people who have been there more than 200 years,” Wiles said. “The Cherokee Nation that we’ve been in relationship with for 200 years are the right ones to take it on. They have the knowledge, the money, the expertise, they understand the story and they value it.”

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Land Acknowledgment

1. For each prompt in the first column, write the corresponding city, state, or country in the “Location” column.
2. Use your internet-connected device to find www.native-land.ca to identify the ancestral people native to that location. Write the names of the tribes, who were the original inhabitants, in the “Territories” column.
3. Select one or more of the territories listed to learn more. If websites are not listed for the territory(ies) you selected, do a search of the territory to learn more. Record one interesting thing you learned about the people who originally lived there in the “Interesting Fact” column. Examples might include treaties, names of people from those communities, or the indigenous language spoken.

	Location	Territories	Interesting Fact
My church community's meeting place			
Where I currently live			
Where I was born (if different from above)			
Last place I visited			
Favorite place I have ever been to			
Dream vacation spot			

Learn more about land acknowledgments at bit.ly/FMLandGuide.

