

Coming through Captivity

The limitlessness of God's love and work in Creation is revealed in Jesus. This week's passages suggest reaching out to God through prayer and reflection as we strive to keep our focus for ministry. Sustained and restored by faith, we can serve in fresh and vital ways as messengers of good news.



Focus scripture
Mark 1:29–39

Additional scriptures
Isaiah 40:21–31
Psalms 147:1–11, 20c
1 Corinthians 9:16–23

Focus scripture: Mark 1:29–39

Immediately is a word used repeatedly in the gospel of Mark and suits its pace. The accounts in the first chapter of Mark's gospel are a frenzy of activity: the preaching of John the baptizer, Jesus' baptism, calling of disciples, teaching in the synagogue, and casting out an unclean spirit. Seeking rest at the home of Simon and Andrew, Jesus is called upon to heal Simon's mother-in-law. Crowds begin to press in around the house, demanding more words and deeds of power from Jesus.

Jesus moves quickly in Mark's narrative, but Jesus also stops, receives the ministry of others, retreats away from the crowd, and enters the stillness and into the presence of God. However, it isn't much of a break from the action. The disciples follow Jesus and right away implore him to get back on the road. In that brief time apart, Jesus found renewed energy in God, the source of his strength. Jesus moves on with the disciples to preach and cast out demons throughout Galilee.

Such renewal is the gift Jesus offered to Simon's mother-in-law the previous night. Jesus reaches out to this woman who is weak with fever, raises her, and restores her to serve. Jesus is restored to continue preaching and healing. Simon's mother-in-law is restored to continue serving as host to those in her home. Common to both is a sense of ministering to and with others. The Greek word used for what the woman does, *diakoneo*, is often translated in English as "to serve" and also can be translated as "to minister." This is the same word used in Mark 1:13 to describe how the angels cared for Jesus in the wilderness. Mark describes what Simon's mother-in-law does as something beyond mere hospitality.

This woman provides what is necessary to sustain life, as does Jesus.

Isaiah 40:21–31 the prophet of Isaiah 40 calls God's people to remember that God is their source of strength. Some scholars place the writing of in the sixth century BCE when the people of Judah were living in exile following the Babylonian conquest. The temple and Jerusalem had been destroyed. It is easy to imagine the people's discouragement and weariness. The prophet reminds them of the power of God to restore and liberate, of God's desire to renew their strength.

The psalmist rejoices in God, who restores and renews. **Psalms 147:1–11, 20c** praises God who gathers those who are outcasts, heals the broken-hearted ones, and lifts those who are downtrodden,

To Paul, freedom in Christ is the source of strength for those who seek to further the mission of God's realm. In **1 Corinthians 9:16–23**, Paul's rhetorical questions make a case for Paul's apostolic rights and claims, including the right to be supported by the community. At times, Paul needed the community to be his source of strength as he ministered

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The texts for this day sing with confidence in God's faithfulness. Jesus drew from this source of strength as his authority for healing and teaching. With Jesus, we are invited to trust in the power of God, who promises, "I will raise you up on eagles' wings." In what ways does confidence in God's faithfulness give shape and purpose to your life as an individual disciple and as a church? How might you forge a stronger connection with this source of strength?

Holy One, who makes all things possible, lift us when we are weary. Be our strength and fill us with hope as we seek to serve you and our neighbour this day. Amen.

Lecton Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Life for children these days can be very busy. Even five-year-olds often have their days heavily scheduled with lessons, play dates, and other activities. Older children's time is often heavily scheduled as they move from school to extracurricular activities. They may spend their school vacations in day camps and other programs that keep them busy most days. Sometimes it seems that children have lost the joy of a quieter pace of life, of daydreaming or just hanging out with a best friend. Taking time to relax and think is important at any age and certainly for children who are trying to sort out the world around them.

In this week's session the children will hear a story in which Jesus demonstrates the importance of both serving (doing) and praying (taking time out). The Respond activities offer options to explore both the life of service and a focus on prayer. One gift we can offer through the church school programme is some intentional quiet time. Consider how you might provide this kind of time for your group on a regular basis. Helping the children discover spiritual practices that help them regroup and connect with God is beneficial for them and their families. Pray that children will follow Jesus' example of a life of both prayer and service.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 1:29–39, and [biblical background material](#) (p. 83).
- ❑ Bring Bibles, matches, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2).
- ❑ Bring, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and *CD player*; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Set a worship space with a green cloth, Christ candle, Bible (with bookmark placed in focus passage), bowl, and a jug of water.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "Invocation" (p. 19 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #5 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring a recording of music, storybook, candle in a holder, prayer shawl or small blanket.

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week's resource sheet "[Jesus Serves and Prays](#)."
- ❑ **Word study group:** bring copies of this week's resource sheet "[Serving and Praying](#)."
- ❑ **Hand sign group:** bring copies of this week's resource sheet "[Serving and Praying](#)."

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Making a Diorama](#)" (p. 103), shoeboxes or other small boxes (one per person), pipe cleaners, round clothespins, modelling clay, construction paper, tissue paper, fabric scraps, yarn
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** coloured paper, wide ribbon
- ❑ **Music zone:** songs "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7) and "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 20–21 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*)
- ❑ **Prayer zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Prayer Wheel](#)," brass paper fasteners
- ❑ **Serving zone:** variety of fresh fruit, dinner knives; or prepared cookies/biscuits, dinner knives, frosting, decorations; or dough cookie/biscuit dough, spoons, oven trays; and serving plates, paper napkins

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



Coming through Captivity

Scripture

Mark 1:29–39

FOCUS To follow Jesus' example in praying and serving others

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. Remind children that we are in the Season after the Epiphany, a time when we hear stories about Jesus and the disciples.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space and remind the group that the colour green marks this season of growing and learning about Jesus.

Sing or listen to, if possible, verse 2 of the song "Invocation" (p. 19 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #5 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Prayer ritual Come, let us remember God's love poured out over all creation and us. (*Pour water into bowl.*)

Let us remember the light of God's love that Jesus brought to our world. (*Light the candle.*)

God's love shines out for you and me. (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*)

Receive the offering and extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to look at the objects displayed and think of ways that each one could be used when someone is having a quiet time. Encourage group members to talk about things they like to do when they take time to relax and get their energy back. Explain that in today's story about Jesus he takes some time out, just as we do.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the focus passage and explain that this week we will read another story about Jesus from the gospel of Mark. Review the stories of the last two weeks: Jesus calls the fishers (**Mark 1:14–20**) and Jesus teaching and healing in the synagogue (**Mark 1:21–28**). Note that today's story takes place just after last week's story of Jesus teaching and healing in the synagogue.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[Jesus Serves and Prays](#)" (based on **Mark 1:29–39**) to tell the story. After the story, ask:

- **What did Simon's mother-in-law do after she was healed?**
- **What might it have been like to be in the crowd at Simon's house that day?**

- **Why do you think Jesus needed time to relax and be away from the others?**

Exploring the story further

(*To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.*)

Word study group The children in this group will have an opportunity to explore further the concepts of service and prayer. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Serving and Praying](#)" and invite children to form two groups to read a section each and discuss the questions. Gather as a whole group to share responses.

Hand sign group The children in this group will have an opportunity to use their hands to continue the exploration of the themes of serving and praying. Begin by talking about the different ways people hold their hands when praying. Invite children to fold their hands together, close

their eyes, and spend a few moments in silence. Then demonstrate the sign for serving (on the resource sheet "[Serving and Praying](#)"). Invite children to take turns using their hands to mime different ways of serving while the rest of the group guesses what they are doing.

Reporting Invite the word study group to share responses to the questions on the resource sheet and the hand sign group to teach the sign for "serve" and demonstrate some ways to serve.

The Bible story and us

Jesus helped people to feel better and we can also help and care for others as we share God's love. Jesus also showed the importance of looking after ourselves with quiet times of prayer.

- **What are some ways we can take some quiet time for ourselves?**
- **What are some ways we can use our hands to help others?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Art zone: Diorama** This week's story shows two important sides of following Jesus: service and prayer. Invite children to make a double-sided diorama featuring these two aspects of discipleship. Distribute supplies and copies of the resource sheet "[Making a Diorama](#)" (p. 103). Help children to decide whether they will create scenes showing acts of service and prayer times, or if they will make items to place in each space as images of service and of prayer.
- **Quiet zone: Ribbon reminders** Jesus' life reminds us that it is important to have prayer times as well as busy times of helping others. Invite children to make ribbon reminders of ways to serve and prayers for quiet times. Distribute coloured paper and have children cut these into triangles. On some triangles have them glue on pictures from magazines to use as prayer reminders (for example, nature scenes, animals, news stories). On other triangles have them print ways they can serve. Staple the triangles along a length of wide ribbon so they are evenly spaced. Encourage them to hang these at home as reminders to pray and serve.
- **Music zone: Prayer songs, serving songs** Invite children to explore prayer and service through two different kinds of music. First listen to or sing the song "May You Find Peace" and then talk about how this music helps us to be quiet and reflective for a prayer time. Invite children to share some of the things they think or pray about when they are quiet. Then sing or listen to the song "I've Got a Voice" and talk about how this music reminds us of the joy of serving or helping others. Invite children to share some things that they enjoy doing for and with others.
- **Prayer zone: Prayer wheel** Jesus took time to pray and be with God. Invite children to make a prayer wheel as a reminder to do this also. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Prayer Wheel](#)" and help children follow directions. Demonstrate how to move the spinners to choose a prayer. Encourage them to use their prayer wheels at home.
- **Serving zone: Sharing snack** After Simon's mother-in-law was healed she helped Jesus and the disciples by serving some food. Invite children to wash their hands and then prepare fruit or cookies/biscuits to share with others.



Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Invite children to think again about how Jesus cared for others and also spent time praying. Practice again the sign for “serve” on the resource sheet “[Serving and Praying](#)” and then invite children to spend a few moments in silence with their hands folded together.

Pray Thank you God for Jesus, who showed us how to serve and pray. Thank you for calling us to help share your love too. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send each child out saying, “(Name), may you find time this week to serve others and time to pray to God.”

Reflect

How might the spirit and enthusiasm of young children help promote healing and serving in your church? In what ways did older children understand the importance of balancing service to others and the importance of time out to replenish one’s energy?



Jesus Serves and Prays

(based on Mark 1:29–39)

With continuing stories, include a recap to help the children recall the previous stories.

When Jesus decided more help was needed to do God's work, Jesus invited four fishers to come along: Simon and Andrew, who were brothers, and James and John, who were also brothers. They had probably heard Jesus teaching, so when he said, "Come with me and you will draw people closer to God," they went with Jesus.

They went to the city of Capernaum <<KA-PER'-NA-UMM>>. On the sabbath day, Jesus went to the synagogue, where the people gathered to learn about and to praise God. There Jesus taught about God's love, and the people were amazed at the power and authority of Jesus. The news of this wonderful teacher travelled from person to person, from family to family, from village to village.

Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, and John left the synagogue and went to Andrew and Simon's house, which was nearby. As soon as they got there, they were told that Simon's mother-in-law, the mother of Simon's wife, was sick in bed with a fever. Jesus went to see her. Jesus

took her hand and helped her get out of bed. When she stood up, the fever was gone and she was fine. She was so fine that she set about her usual work of making her guests welcome.

That evening, as the sun was going down, people came from all around Capernaum to Andrew and Simon's house. They brought sick people for Jesus to heal. It looked like the whole city was crowded around the door. Jesus cured many people that evening.

Now the next morning, even before the sun came up, Jesus went off to a quiet place to be alone to pray to God. Everyone else was sound asleep. But when they got up, they didn't know where Jesus was. They looked all around for Jesus. Simon and Andrew looked for Jesus. James and John looked for Jesus. Simon's wife and mother-in-law looked for Jesus too.

When they found Jesus, they said, "Everyone is looking for you!"

"Now you have found me," said Jesus. "Let's go to the towns around here so I can tell more people the message of God's love and so I can heal people there too."

Jesus and the four fishers went all over Galilee. Jesus taught in the synagogues where many people came to listen, and Jesus healed many people too.



SERVING AND PRAYING

Serving

Mark writes that Simon’s mother-in-law “began to serve” the people. The language of the New Testament is Greek and the Greek word used for serve is “diaconia” (de-a-ko-KNEE-a). It is used many times in the New Testament as people tried to follow the example of Jesus.

Some churches have officers or ministers called deacons. The word deacon comes from the Greek word diakonia. Deacons are people who care for others in many ways. We act as deacons when we serve others too.

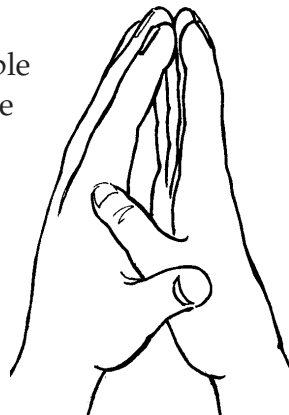


*How does the church serve others today?
How do you serve others?*

Praying

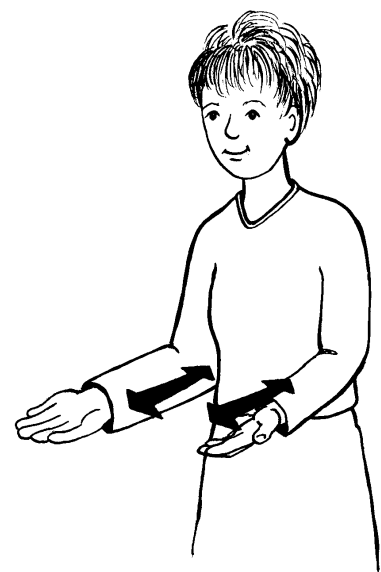
After a night of serving the many people who were sick, Jesus needed some time alone. He had more serving to do the next day.

To prepare, Jesus prayed to God. It wasn’t a short prayer. Jesus began praying before the sun came up, and didn’t stop praying until Simon and the others found him.



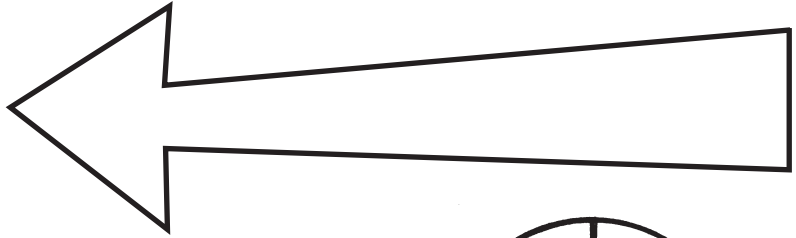
*What do you think Jesus prayed?
What prayer might you say to help you be ready to serve others?*

Sign for “serve.”





Prayer Wheel

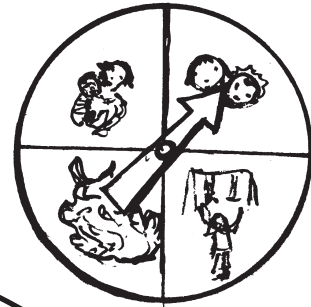





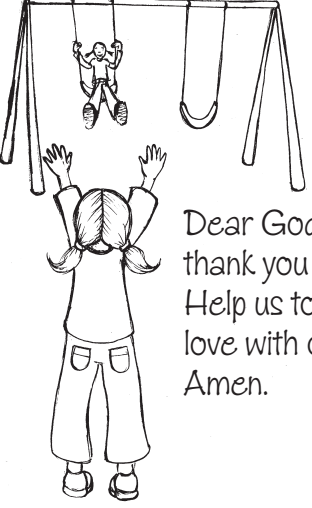
Instructions

1. Cut out the wheel and spinner.
2. Glue onto poster board to strengthen both parts.
3. Use markers or crayons to decorate the wheel and spinner.
4. Use a brass paper fastener to attach the spinner to the middle of the wheel.



brass paper fastener



| | |
|---|--|
|  <p>Loving God, thank you that each day we can learn and grow in love. Amen.</p> | <p>Loving God, help us to listen with our ears, with our minds, and with our hearts. Amen.</p>  |
| <p>Thank you, God, that you care for all your creatures: the biggest, the smallest, and all the ones in between. Help us to care for them, too. Amen.</p>  |  <p>Dear God, thank you for loving us. Help us to share your love with others. Amen.</p> |

MAKING A DIORAMA

Directions:

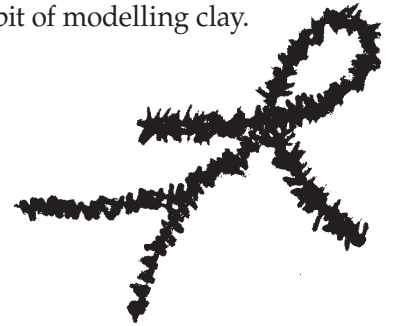
1. Cut off one of the long sides of your box. Draw a line down the middle and glue two different colours of fabric to each side of the bottom of the box, to make two separate scenes.
2. Decide what is to be in each scene, that is the people, the background, or any other items, such as trees, tables, or animals. Assign people to make these objects.
3. Cover the inside of the boxes with construction paper to create the horizon or the building necessary for each diorama.
4. Arrange the figures and objects in the scene and glue or tape each one in place.

To make people:

- Form figures from pipe cleaners.
- Cut a face and clothing from construction paper and glue them to the figure.

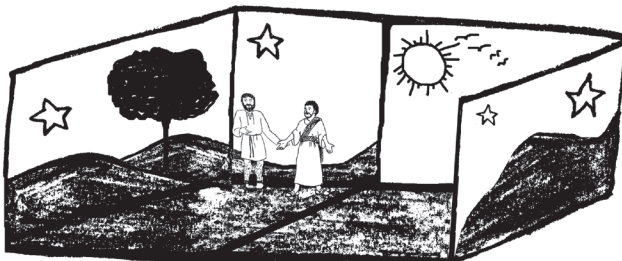
Or

- Draw a face on a round clothespin and dress the figure in bits of cloth or construction paper.
- To make the clothespin figure stand, stick it into a bit of modelling clay.



To make scenery:

- Use a clothespin for a tree trunk, and cut tissue paper or construction paper for the leaves, and glue them to the trunk.
- Form rocks from modelling clay or cut them from construction paper and tape them to the bottom of the box.



Encourage the children to use their imaginations. Set out various supplies without an intended use and see what the children come up with.



Listen to Jesus

(February 14, 2021)

**Here are some
of the things
Jesus taught the
disciples.**

Jesus said,
"Feed the
hungry."

Jesus said,
"Love
everyone."

Jesus said,
"Give water
to the
thirsty."

Jesus said,
"Listen
to the
children."

Jesus said,
"Take
care of
the sick."

Jesus said,
"Forgive
others."

