

Compassionate Leadership

How do we lead in the midst of scarcity, pain, and God's call to us? The word "vulnerable" has its origins in Latin *vulnerare* "to wound." What does it look like to lead from a place of being wounded? Out of the depths of grief, David laments the death of Jonathan and Saul. Out of the depths, a psalmist calls out to God. Out of the depths of desperation, Jairus calls to Jesus. Out of the depths, a woman grasps to touch Jesus' cloak. Experiences of vulnerability cause us to feel as if we have nowhere to turn. In these times and places, we are invited to turn to God, whose compassion knows no boundaries. Themes of compassion and waiting weave through this week's scriptures.

Focus scripture: Mark 5:21–43

Mark 5:21–43 contrasts the unnamed woman with that of a known leader in the synagogue. It also highlights their common vulnerability, which leads them to seek Jesus' healing powers.

Details of the story imply Jairus and the unnamed woman have run out of options; they are desperate. Mark notes that Jairus "begged repeatedly." The woman has expended her resources and found no relief in the 12 years of suffering. As a result, each takes risks. Jairus breaks rank with other religious leaders who view Jesus as a threat (Mark 3:1–6). The woman touches a man in public who is not family. Both Jairus and the woman "fall" at the feet of Jesus. Jairus does so to ask for help. The woman does so "in fear and trembling." Their actions implicitly respect Jesus' identity and power.

The woman knows Jesus' reputation as a healer and believes that touching his robes will bring healing. Jesus does not tell her to wait for his touch; healing comes. Jesus does not ask Jairus to find someone else to help because some leaders oppose Jesus. Healing comes. These miracles show the character of compassion: responsive to those who are vulnerable.

The story ends with Jesus declaring that "no one should know this." This command happens so often in Mark; it has been named the "Messianic secret." The identity and power of Jesus will not be fully revealed until later in Jerusalem when the nature of the Messiah as embodied by Jesus will become clear. At that time, Jesus will challenge the powers of the temple and Rome – not as a warrior ruler, as some expected, but through the cross.

In **2 Samuel 1:1, 17–27** David offers a powerful model for public grief, both corporate and personal. The command that this word not be proclaimed in Philistine cities does not attempt to hide sadness. Rather, it centres on the expression of sorrow among the bereaved of Israel. David affirms the value of public lament by ordering the teaching of this song. Yet, these words also lay bare the personal nature of David's loss. In grief, David risks the admission of vulnerability; his compassion graciously laments not only his beloved but also his former rival.

The writer of **Psalms 130** calls out to God from the depths of pain and suffering. The precise nature of the pain that creates the plea remains hidden. But we need not know why to learn from this cry of pain and declaration of ultimate trust. This lament might easily be the words of Jairus and the unnamed woman before healing comes in the "story within a story" in this week's gospel passage.

Compassion invites a fair balance between one's abundance and another's need in an appeal to the church in **2 Corinthians 8:7–15**. Yet even Paul's urgings must wait upon their decision.

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As a whole, these passages consider how individuals and communities respond in the face of loss. In what ways does grief flow from and become shaped by different experiences of loss – loss of dreams, loss of relationship, loss of life? For what do we cry out and grieve in our lives and the church today? Where would we risk vulnerability for the sake of healing?



Focus scripture
Mark 5:21–43

Additional scriptures
2 Samuel 1:1, 17–27
Psalms 130
2 Corinthians 8:7–15



Seasons of the Spirit
is based on semi-continuous readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

**Sheltering God,
we approach
you with open
hearts and souls.
Strengthen us to
serve you. Help
us discover the
resiliency we have
in following you.
In this word, read
and proclaimed,
speak to us of
your love. Amen.**

Lection 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

Young children often show compassion for others, worrying about a crying baby or someone begging on the street. This desire is one that will grow as they mature in faith. Most children have also experienced times when they have been ill and needing care. They know the comfort of receiving a cold drink or hearing a story read to distract them from their pain.

Most children in this age group will be able to relate to the comfort and loving attention which the woman and the child received from Jesus. The acts of caring and compassion they witness daily can help connect them to these stories. The idea of miraculous healing is often not as difficult for children as it is for

many adults. Be sensitive to the possibility that some children in the group may live with serious health conditions, in themselves or a family member, and may wonder how they might experience healing in these situations.

Older children in the group might connect with other themes contained in this week's reading: the experience of being an outsider in the crowd; the bravery that enabled the woman to reach out for help; having to make oneself known when one's needs are overlooked or dismissed. Pray that the children will sense the depth of compassion in Jesus and be encouraged to follow Jesus' compassionate response in reaching out to others.

Prepare

Before the session

- Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 5:21–43, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 35).
- Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- Bring a small bell or "singing bowl."
- Bring, if possible, "Children of the Spirit" (pp. 8–9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Engage

- Bring this week's resource sheet "[Two Stories of Healing](#)."
- Bible research group: copies of section "[On the way](#)" (p. 39)
- Discussion group: No materials needed.

Respond

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

- Drama zone:** no materials needed
- Quiet zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Reaching Out in Compassion](#)"
- Outreach zone:** construction paper, tissue paper, pipe cleaners, this week's resource sheet "[Flower Cards](#)"; make a sample card and bouquet.
- Art zone:** mural paper, used magazines, construction paper
- Music zone:** song "Friend to Friend" (p. 16 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7; copies of lyrics (from *Seasons Songbook* or downloadable sheet music)

Bless

- Bring resource sheet "[Sign Language](#)" (p. 117)
- Bring, if possible, "Somlandela/We Will Follow" (p. 34 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #22 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



Compassionate Leadership

Scripture

Mark 5:21–43

FOCUS To reach out as Jesus did with healing compassion and love

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

Call to gather Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather in the worship space. Invite a child to light the candle.

Pray the following prayer, inviting group members to repeat each line after you:

O God, open us to your Spirit today.

We ask you to hear our prayers...

(Invite children to name some joys and sadness.)

Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song, “Children of the Spirit” (pp. 8–9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to share stories of times when they have been sick or have hurt themselves. How did it feel? What kinds of things were they unable to do when they were ill? Who looked after them? What did their caregivers do for them to help them get well? Explain that this week we will hear stories about two people who were helped to get well.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Mark. Explain that this book is in the New Testament part of the Bible. Mark is one of four books in our Bible where we can find stories about Jesus. Just before this week’s story, Jesus and the disciples have been travelling around the countryside. Large crowds of people have followed them from town to town. The people came to hear Jesus’ teaching and to ask for healing.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “[Two Stories of Healing](#),” based on **Mark 5:21–43**, to tell the stories from the focus passage.

- **What do you think Jairus was thinking when Jesus stopped to heal the woman?**
- **How do the disciples and the people outside Jairus’ house respond to Jesus?**
- **How did Jesus show God’s love and compassion to the people in this story?**
- **What does this story tell us about Jesus?**

Exploring the story further

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

Bible research group *(for older children)* The children in this group will have an opportunity to learn more about the woman who was healed in this week’s story. Have them find **Mark 5:24b–34** in their Bibles. (Explain that when there is a letter next to the verse number, it means the verse can be divided into parts.) Distribute copies of the questions in the section “[On the way](#)” (from the bottom of p. 39) and have them find the answers.

Discussion group *(for younger children)* The children in this group will have an opportunity to use their imaginations. Invite them to imagine that they are friends of the woman who had been sick for 12 years.

- **How could they help their sick friend?**
- **What might they say when they see their friend well and strong again?**

Invite them to imagine that they are the relatives (e.g., father/mother/sister/brother) of the little girl who was sick.

■ **What might they wonder about after she is healed by Jesus?**

Reporting Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather as a whole group again. Invite the research group to share what they learned about the woman; invite discussion group to share some of their thoughts.

The Bible story and us

In these two stories, the woman and Jairus both take risks to reach out for help.

■ **Who in our world might be reaching out for help?**

Invite children to share stories of times when they have seen someone in need. What did they do to help?

■ **What are some things that we can do to share God’s healing and compassion with others?**

Respond

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

□ **Drama zone: Skits** Jesus saw people’s needs and responded. Form two groups and ask each group to come up with a situation in which someone needs help. Have them create a short skit to portray that situation and one way that children could help respond by offering healing love. Present the skits for each other. At the end of each skit talk together about other ways that children could help in that situation.



□ **Quiet zone: Reflection** (for older children) Jesus offered compassion and healing to the little girl and the woman who reached out. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Reaching Out in Compassion](#)” and read together the definition of the word “compassion.” Invite children to form pairs to do the matching game. Then have them work individually to list some ways they might offer compassion, and share these ideas as a whole group.



□ **Outreach zone: Cards** Jesus reached out to people who needed God’s healing love. We can reach out to those who are ill, lonely, or unhappy by sending a card. Distribute prepared sheets of construction paper, review the instructions on the resource sheet “[Flower Cards](#),” and help children to make their cards and flower bouquets. Arrange an opportunity for the children to accompany the pastoral care team on visits, or give the cards to the team for distribution.

□ **Art zone: Mural** Jesus cared for others by sharing God’s healing love. Distribute news magazines and invite children to cut out pictures of people or animals or situations that are in need of God’s healing love today. Have them glue these onto a length of mural paper. Then distribute construction paper for children to trace around one of their hands and cut out. Have them write on these hand shapes ways that they or the church might help in these situations. Glue the hand shapes onto the paper beside the images and give your mural a title such as “We reach out with God’s healing love.” Display in the church hall, if possible.

□ **Music zone: Song of friendship** The lyrics for the song “Friend to Friend” speak of following Jesus’ example in caring for the people. Listen to the recording of the song (#28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7; or download the MP3 file). Distribute copies of the lyrics (p. 16 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; or download the sheet music) and invite volunteers to read the verses aloud. Lead the group in saying the refrain in between each verse. What does the song say about ways we can care for one another? Make a list together of ways in which members of the group can “give their hands.”

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Teach children the sign for “joy” (p. 117) and use it during the prayer.

Pray O God, help us to follow in Jesus’ way
and reach out with compassion,
helping to bring joy to all we meet. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song, “Somlandela” (p. 34 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #22 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send the children out with these words, “The compassion of Christ is with you; it is yours to share with others.”

Reflect

How do the members of the group demonstrate compassion and care? In what ways can you continue to affirm the capacity of those in your group to reach out in compassion?

On the way

- How long had the woman been sick? (verse 25)
- What did she do to try to get better? (verse 26)
- Why did she come to see Jesus? (verse 27)
- What happened when she touched Jesus’ cloak? (verse 29)
- Why do you think she was afraid? (verse 33)
- How do you think faith can help someone get well? (verse 34)





Two Stories of Healing

(based on Mark 5:21–43)

Invite children to participate by adding sound effects during the reading.

One day when Jesus was speaking to a large crowd of people, a man named Jairus pushed his way through the crowd. Jairus was a leader of the local synagogue and he was desperate to speak to Jesus. Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet and cried, "Jesus, my little girl is really sick, and I'm afraid she's going to die. Please come and lay your hands on her so that she will get better." *(Add sad sounds.)*

So Jesus went with Jairus. But it took a long time because people in the crowd kept talking to Jesus, asking questions. Jesus stopped when he felt someone tug on his cloak. Jesus looked around to see who was trying to get his attention. "Who touched my cloak?" he asked.

The disciples looked at the crowd and shook their heads. "Are you kidding, Jesus?" they said. "With all these people pushing around us, how do you expect to find just one person?" *(Add surprised sounds.)*

Jesus just stayed there, looking all around, searching for the one who needed help. Soon a woman came and kneeled at Jesus' feet. She was afraid that Jesus might be angry with her for touching him.

"I'm the one who touched your cloak," she said. "I'm sorry that I bothered you, Jesus. But I've been sick for 12 long years and no one has been able to

help me. I know that you are really busy, but I was sure that you could make me feel better, even if I could just reach out and touch you."

Jesus smiled at the woman warmly and said, "You were very brave to press through the crowd, even though you felt so ill. You did it because of your faith. And you were right! You can go home now in peace. You are well. Now you can live life fully again." *(Add happy sounds.)*

While this was happening Jairus was getting more and more worried about his daughter. He was glad that the woman was well again, but his daughter was still ill. Jairus worried that now Jesus might be too late to help her, and he was right. Before they reached the house Jairus' servants came with a message: "Your daughter has died. Don't bother Jesus any further."

Jesus heard the message. "Don't worry," he said to Jairus. "Only believe in God's love."

When Jairus and Jesus got to the house, people were weeping loudly. *(Add crying sounds.)* Jesus said, "Why are you doing this? She isn't dead, she's just sleeping."

The people laughed, so Jesus sent them all outside. *(Add laughing sounds.)* Jesus went into the room where the little girl was lying on her bed. She was very still and pale; her eyes were closed.

Jesus gently took her by the hand and said, "Up you get, little girl." And the girl got up right away. She stretched and yawned, and began to walk around. Her family were delighted and amazed. *(Add surprised sounds.)*

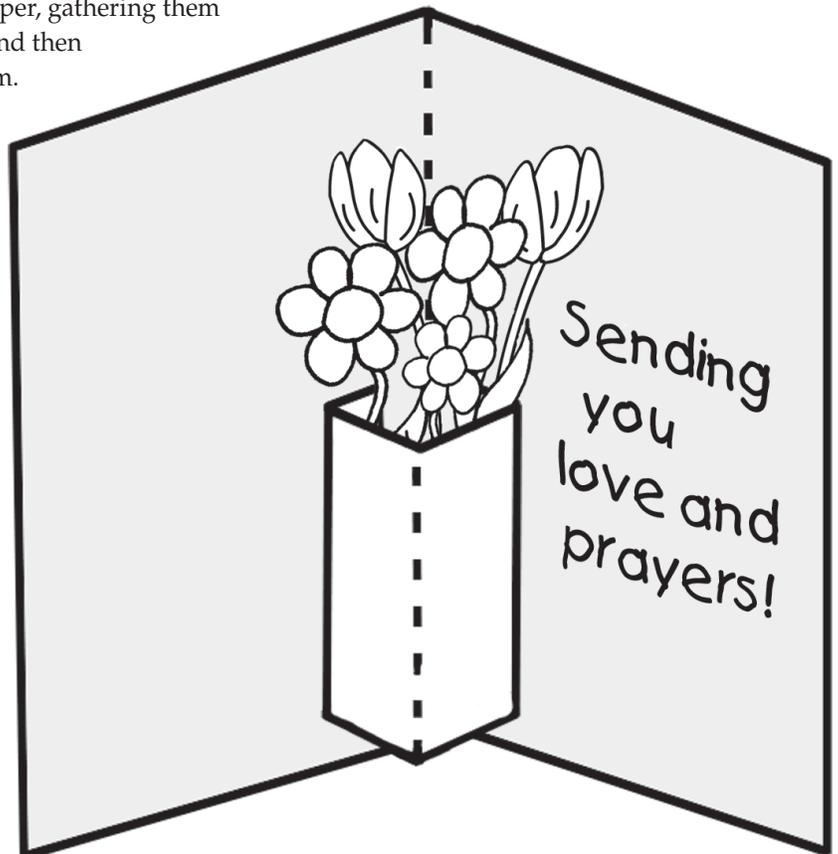
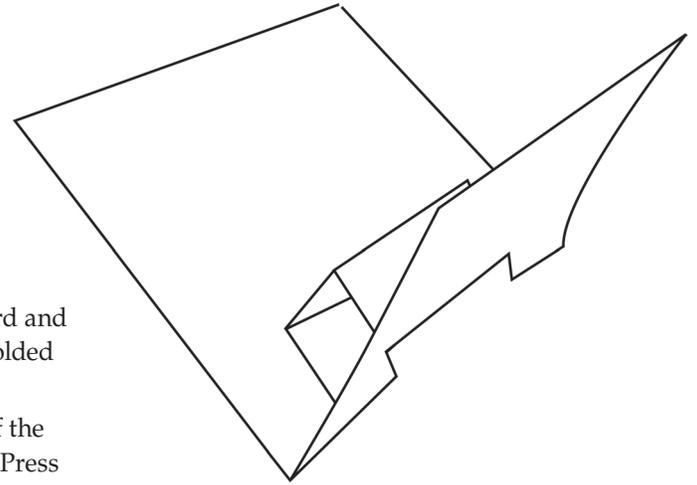
"I think she must be hungry!" said Jesus. "Let's eat." So they all shared a meal and celebrated. *(Add happy sounds.)*



Flower Cards

Instructions:

- ❑ Fold a sheet of construction paper in half to form a card and cut a slit (about 5 cm/2 in deep) in the middle of the folded edge.
- ❑ Bend the bottom half of the fold out into the middle of the card, the opposite direction to the fold in the top half. Press down the new fold so that it forms a W-shape; this sticking-out bit will become the vase for the flowers.
- ❑ Glue a second sheet of construction paper (different colour) to the outside of the first, being careful not to put glue on the area inside the vase.
- ❑ Create tissue paper flowers by stacking three or four squares of different coloured tissue paper, gathering them in the middle and twisting together, and then taping the flower to a pipe cleaner stem. Make two or three flowers for each card.
- ❑ Write a message on the outside of the card such as "Sending you love and prayers" and sign the inside of the card.
- ❑ Decorate the vase with felt markers and add two or three flowers.





Reaching Out in Compassion

COMPASSION – sympathy for the suffering of others; wanting to help.

Those who reach out

There are many people in our communities who reach out to others with compassion and healing. Draw lines to connect each of the following helping professions with the description of what they do.

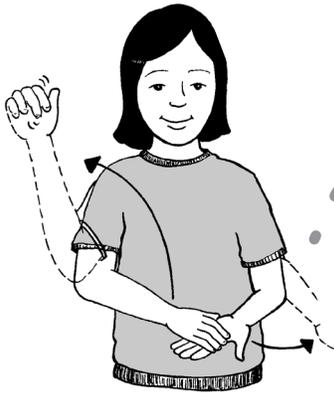
Psychiatrist	Someone qualified to diagnose and treat diseases and injuries using methods other than surgery
Psychologist	An emergency medical technician
Minister	A person trained to specialize in operations that require access to a patient’s body in order to correct defects, repair injuries, or treat diseases
Social Worker	A doctor trained in the treatment of people with psychiatric disorders
Physician	A professional who studies behaviour and experience and is licenced to provide therapy
Surgeon	A member of the clergy of a Christian church (the same word as a verb means to give help to somebody in need)
EMT	A person trained to provide social services such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation or other forms of counselling

I can reach out

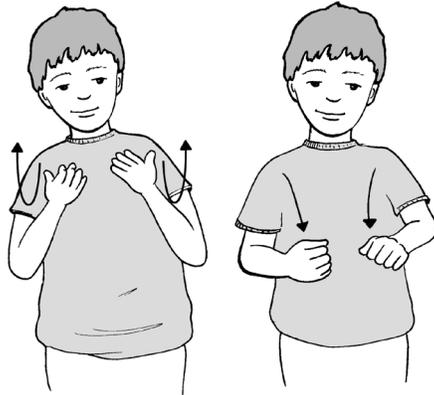
Just like the people in the helping professions above, we can reach out with compassion to help another person or another part of creation. List some ideas for acts of compassion which you might do in the coming weeks.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

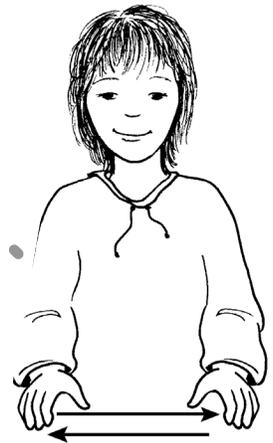
Sign Language



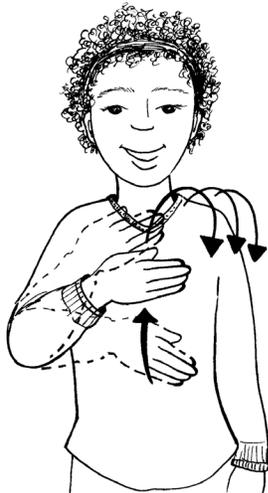
glory



courage



do



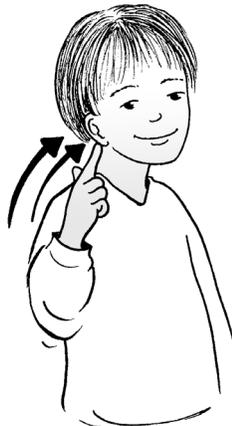
joy



God



gospel



hear

