

Resilient Leadership

As anyone knows, leadership is tough work. Unexpected obstacles come up, circumstances change, and leaders are responsible for keeping it together. All four of our texts this week focus on different areas of leadership, and how when we come together and follow God, we can succeed in the work we are called to do.

Focus scripture: Mark 6:1–13

Jesus' credibility and ministry is questioned in his own hometown, as told in Mark 6:1–13. This passage is in two parts. Verses 1–6a is the story of Jesus's reception by his hometown.

The gospel writer's emphasis on Jesus' identity, particularly his desire to keep it secret, is woven throughout this gospel. This story develops that theme by showing the ignorance of those who have known Jesus the longest. Instead of noticing the work Jesus is doing currently, they are too focused on his family roots. Jesus responds to their rejection by limiting his ministry in that area. Mark's description of Jesus' refusal to do deeds of power there is immediately softened by a few exceptions. This is a similar rhetorical technique used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:14.

Jesus, having been shunned by his hometown, sends the disciples out in his place. While the twelve often represent those who do not understand what Jesus is saying (Mark 4:13), here we see them given authority to act in Jesus' place. Jesus' command to take nothing with them forces them to rely on the hospitality of those to whom they are preaching. No explanation is given for this specific instruction, but it has been interpreted as a way of living by faith as well as a call to a life of simplicity in the monastic tradition. The likely intent is to contrast the disciples' ministry from other travelling philosophers who sought enrichment from their preaching. Paul makes a similar argument in 1 Corinthians 9:15, and 2 Corinthians 11:7.

The story of David's coronation in 2 Samuel 1:1, 17–27 continues the narrative throughout this season. For David, his victory over Saul's children in the power struggles following the Saul's death have made his authority clear. The people are the first to submit to David's authority, with their actions confirmed by the covenant and anointing service.

The strength of the city symbolizes David's strength as king, an image explored in Psalm 48 that celebrates God's protection and power using the city walls as its chief metaphor.

Paul speaks of God's grace apparent in the midst of hardship in 2 Corinthians 2:12–10. Paul's apostolic authority was always debatable, since he was not one of the original disciples. Throughout his letters, including the lection for today, he works to defend his ministry and credibility. Paul's story about being taken up into the third heaven is commonly assumed to be autobiographical. Compared to the Lukan account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 Paul provides more details and focuses more on the message he received. Paul connects himself to the other apostles more in Galatians 1:18–19, which offers more similarities to the Lukan account.

Paul's reference to the "thorn" that negatively impacts his ministry has puzzled scholars with no clear answer. While the original hearers of the letter would have understood it, Paul shifts this weakness into a strength, allowing God's faithfulness to boost his credibility and ministry.

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Through these four texts, we see different aspects of leadership and the success and challenges that come in the process. However, the leader's reliance on God throughout the process, as well as the importance of maintaining that relationship, underpins each of the stories. This is a lesson that biblical and contemporary leaders struggle to learn, and it is often on the other side of our failures where this reality becomes more apparent.



Focus scripture

Mark 6:1–13

Additional scriptures

2 Samuel 5:1–5, 9–10

Psalm 48

2 Corinthians 12:2–10



Seasons of the Spirit

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

Surprising and confounding God, illumine your word to us this day. As we ponder its meaning for us and our work, let it come not as a familiar friend easily forgotten but as a new spring of water for parched souls. 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

Most children in this age group have had chances to try some new adventures, such as sleepovers with friends, going on a field trip with classmates at school, or going to summer camp. They will know that going on trips involves planning and preparation. Organizing homework, preparing school lunches, gathering equipment and uniforms for team sports, or remembering to bring instruments for music lessons also offer opportunities to prepare.

This week's gospel reading offers a story of Jesus helping the disciples plan for travel and a new job. Children know that you have to pack luggage to prepare for a trip longer than a day. What they will explore in this

story is that what the disciples bring within them is of more significance than any objects they might take along. This point is especially directed to the oldest children of this age group as they enter adolescence and begin to explore their own inner identity.

Older children in the group have a strong sense of justice and fair play. They are becoming more informed and concerned about people and global conditions and may respond with eagerness, as did the disciples, to the idea of being invited into active ministry in the world. Pray that the children in your group will feel emboldened to share in Jesus' ministry and experience one another as spiritual companions in discipleship.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 6:1–13, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 43).
- ❑ 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, "Teach Me Wisdom" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring backpack containing toothbrush, hairbrush, pyjamas, extra set of clothes, book, snack food, and DVD.

Engage

- ❑ Invite a male member of the congregation to narrate the story on resource sheet "[On a Mission](#)"; option: costume.
- ❑ Chant group: copies of song "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" (on "[Session Resources](#)," p. 118); option: recording of

song (#45 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 1; or purchase the downloadable MP3).

- ❑ **Bible research group:** copies of section "[Labels](#)" (p. 47)

Respond

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

- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Sharing Jesus' Message](#)"
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Doing God's Work](#)"
- ❑ **Craft zone:** wooden dowels or smooth branches, heart and other kinds of stickers
- ❑ **Community zone:** white paper, white glue, flower seeds, copies of section "God's love message" on the bottom of resource sheet "[Sharing Jesus' Message](#)"
- ❑ **Music zone:** song "Don't Be Afraid" (p. 15 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #2 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7; or available as a [downloadable MP3](#))

Bless

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



Resilient Leadership

Scripture

Mark 6:1–13

FOCUS To ponder the invitation to share in Jesus' ministry

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, "Teach Me Wisdom" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7, #24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

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

Connecting with the focus

Bring out the backpack and examine the contents together. Invite children to talk about some of the journeys they have taken with their families. Where did they go? What did they pack? What did they leave behind? Discuss whether there were things that they took on their travels that they didn't end up needing or using. Explain that in today's story Jesus sends the disciples out to do God's work, with instructions to take very little with them.

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. Review last week's story from Mark about the healing of a woman who had been sick for 12 years and of a little girl whose father Jairus was the leader of the synagogue. After those healings Jesus and the disciples travelled back to Nazareth, Jesus' hometown. On the Sabbath day Jesus was invited to talk at the synagogue. Some people didn't want to listen to him because they thought he didn't have anything important to say. So Jesus and the disciples left Nazareth and went to other places where people came to hear Jesus talk about God.

The Bible story

Welcome the storyteller "James" to narrate the story on resource sheet "[On a Mission](#)," based on **Mark 6:7–13**. Afterwards discuss the story using the following questions:

- **What do you think about Jesus' instructions to the disciples?**

- **Why do you think the disciples were told to travel in pairs or teams?**

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 explore the first part of this week's scripture reading. Have them find **Mark 6:1–6** in their Bibles. Distribute copies of the questions in the section "[Labels](#)" (p. 47) and have them find the answers.

Chant group *(for younger children)* The children in this group will have an opportunity to think about how they might share the message of God's love. Distribute the song, "[I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me](#)" (p. 118) and, if possible, listen to the recording. Invite children to take turns to finish the sentence, "I'm gonna..." in as many ways as possible to describe what children their age can do to share God's love and God's way of living.

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 first part of the reading; invite chant group to offer some of their sentences.

The Bible story and us

Jesus and the disciples shared the gospel, the good news about God’s love and God’s way of living.

Invite the children to imagine what the disciples said to people they visited in the towns and villages.

■ **What messages of God’s love do you think they said?**

Invite children to imagine that they are walking around their town, telling people about God and about Jesus.

■ **What are some things that we could say?**

Respond

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

❑ **Quiet zone: Word puzzle** Jesus gave the disciples some special instructions. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Sharing Jesus’ Message](#)” and invite children to unscramble the words on the backpack and use them to fill in the blanks of the message below. Older children could create their own “scrambled messages” for each other.



❑ **Outreach zone: Making a difference** (for older children) Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Doing God’s Work](#)” and invite children to consider how they too are sent out to do God’s work in the world. Divide the vignettes on the resource sheet among the children and have each group create a skit or mime to illustrate their story. Brainstorm together some ideas for actions the whole group might take as partners in Jesus’ ministry.



❑ **Craft zone: Walking sticks** Invite children to make walking sticks as reminders of the call to go out to share the good news of God’s love. Have children decorate their sticks with stickers and designs drawn with felt markers. Encourage them to print messages such as “Going with God” or “God is love” or “Sharing God’s love” on their sticks. If weather permits, go for a walk outside, using the sticks. As you walk ask, “Where are some places we could go to share God’s love?”

❑ **Community zone: Seed messages** (for younger children) We too can help spread God’s love in the world. Invite children to make “seed cards” to give away. Distribute sheets of paper and fold in half to make cards. Help them print “God loves you” on the outside of their cards. On the insides have them draw a heart shape, cover the shape with white glue, and sprinkle generously with flower seeds. Have them sign their names beside the seed heart and glue the instructions (from resource sheet “[Sharing Jesus’ Message](#)”) on the other side. Choose recipients for the cards.

❑ **Music zone: Song of strength** The song “Don’t Be Afraid” (p. 15 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #2 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7; or available as a *downloadable MP3*) reminds us of God’s love and support. Read the words of this song and then sing together, or listen to the recording. Sharing God’s love in the world is not always easy. Talk together about some fears that might be experienced in facing new challenges. Sing or listen to the song again, imagining together that the Spirit of God is singing these words to the group.



Bless

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

Pray O God, help us to share the gospel,
the good news of your love,
in all that we do and say. 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, “Go out and share God’s love with the world.”

Reflect

In what ways did the children communicate their sense that they are able to share in the ministry of discipleship? How have you seen these gifts in action in your church community?

Labels

- How did the people label Jesus? (verse 3)
- Why do you think the people felt that way about Jesus?
- How did Jesus label himself? (verse 4)
- What happened in Nazareth? (verses 5–6)
- Why do you think Jesus wasn’t able to cure very many people in Nazareth?





On a Mission

based on Mark 6:7-13

Read the story several times, note the major topics in it, and tell it in your own words as you play the part of James.

(Disciple "James" enters room and looks around for the backpack.)

Ah! There it is! I was wondering where I had left it. *(Retrieve backpack and set on floor in front of the children.)*

It's been a while since I got all these things together, but I can still remember what Jesus said when I showed them to him, and every day I understand it better. But you will need some background about this, so let me tell you the story of what happened.

I'm James, one of the friends who travelled with Jesus from place to place teaching people about God and how to live in God's way. We saw Jesus healing people, and teaching people, and preaching in the synagogue. Every day was an adventure. We disciples watched and listened carefully. We asked a lot of questions. Many people were helped by Jesus, sometimes in ways we could never have imagined.

One day Jesus called us together and told us that we would now be sharing his ministry. He was going to send us out to help others. An adventure of our own! I wanted to be ready for anything, so I ran home and packed all

this. *(Unpack the items, inviting the children to tell why the item might have been chosen. Then repack everything.)*

Then I rushed back to show Jesus that I was ready to go. But Jesus had something important to tell us. "You won't need a lot of special equipment," he said, "because *you* are the equipment."

Well, I wondered what that meant, I can tell you. We all did! Jesus saw that we needed to hear more and said, "People will see God's love in you, and God's love will give you everything you need. Go and visit people who need your help."

Jesus was telling us that we didn't need to take a lot of things with us. Jesus told us to go and stay with people in their homes and teach them and heal them and let them look after us. Jesus knew that we'd need to help each other, so he told us to stick together and remember all we'd seen and heard and learned in our time with Jesus.

How exciting! We knew Jesus loved us, and had taught us a lot about living life God's way. We went out in pairs. We went in teams to do everything Jesus had asked us to do. When people welcomed us into their homes we stayed with them and talked with them about Jesus. It was a wonderful time, and I could tell you about so many adventures.

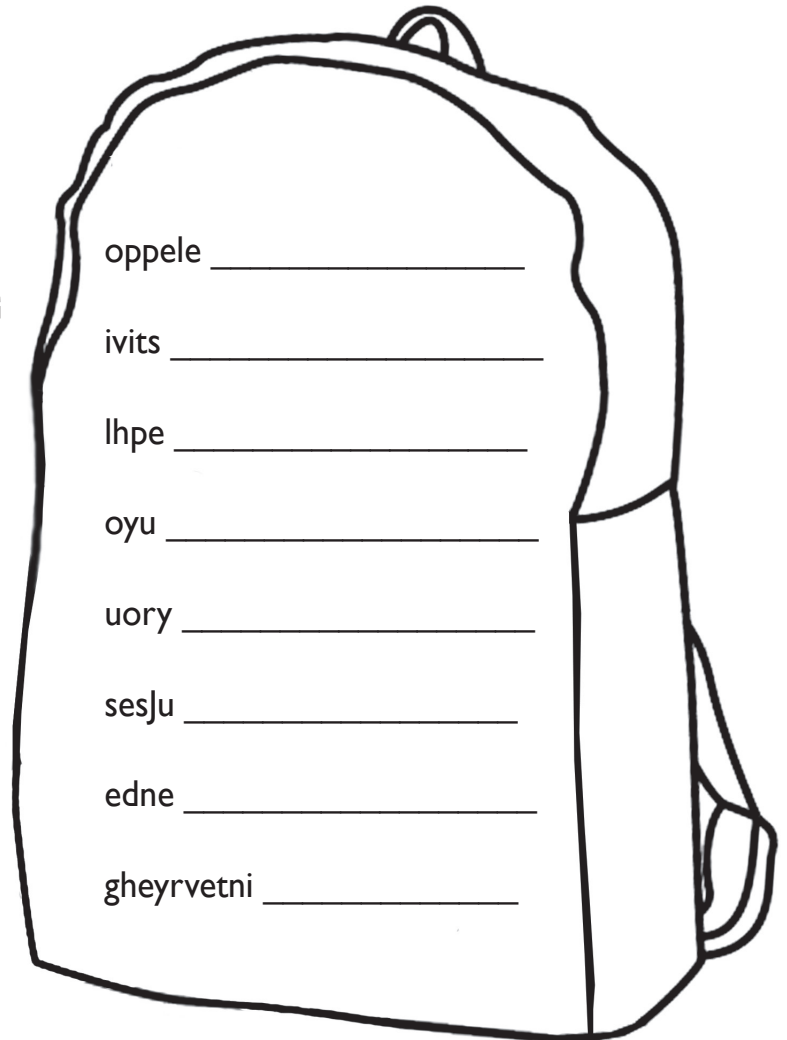
You know, sometimes we think that we're not tall enough, or smart enough, or old enough, or we haven't got all the things we think we need to work for God. Jesus tells us that we do have what we need. We can trust that God's love will always be with us, wherever we are.



Sharing Jesus' Message

Unpack the words in the backpack, unscramble the letters, and fill in the blanks.

Read Jesus' message to the disciples – and to you!



_____ said, "God's love will give you _____."

Go and _____ who need _____."

God's love message

Cut out this part of the card and plant in some soil in a plant pot or in the garden. Care for your seeds by watering them and putting them in a sunny place. The flowers that grow will be a reminder that God's love is always with you.



Young girls become stewards for old trees

When they were in fifth and sixth grade, Amanda McCulloch and Allison MacLean from Nova Scotia, Canada, set about educating their fellow students, collecting signatures on petitions, and writing to politicians, determined to save an old growth forest in their neighbourhood. "We're trying to stop them," Amanda McCulloch says. "If something grows back after a long time it's obviously meant to be there." Their story was reported in *The New Glasgow Evening News*.

Child workers

In 1982, in a factory in South Korea, Kang-ja, an 11-year-old factory worker, fainted from exhaustion. She worked 12 to 18 hours a day packing biscuits. Soon after that she joined other workers, women and children, in a protest against these long hours. They stopped working after eight hours. It was risky. The boss was very angry and locked the doors to stop them from leaving. Kang-ja and her friends crawled out the windows. They marched in protest. They spoke at churches. Finally, the boss gave in.

Adapted from "The Long Struggle for Justice" in *Miriam, Mary, and Me* by Lois Wilson, Wood Lake Books, 1992.

Camp for carers

When Angus Swain was 10 years old, he founded an organization for kids who were caregivers like himself. Every day Angus, who lived in New South Wales, Australia, used to cook, clean, and help bathe and dress his mother who had multiple sclerosis. After Angus was given a chance to go to camp one summer, he came home thinking about other kids who were caregivers. He wanted them to have a chance to go to camp, too, for a break, just to have some fun. He withdrew \$100 from his bank account to start a trust fund and his organization, Caring Kids Australia, continues to provide support for young people who are caregivers.

Building a greenhouse

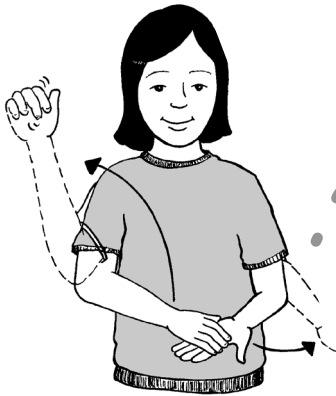
The children of a Boys and Girls Club in British Columbia, Canada, wanted to do something to promote "green initiatives" to reduce the carbon footprint. So they worked together to design and build a sustainable solar greenhouse. They brainstormed ideas on how to be green, learned from local experts how to build a greenhouse, selected the plants and seeds they would use, and learned how to plant, water, and use compost. Their greenhouse is now open to the community and they help to educate other children about the benefits of living green. (This project was one of the 2010-11 winners of *The Great Ekokids Challenge*)

Changing the system

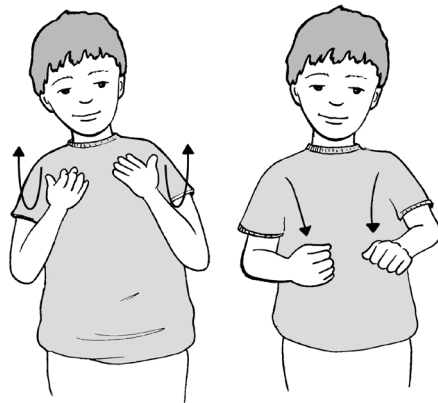
A group of 11-year-olds from one school in Minnesota, USA, worked together to create change in a whole school district (13 schools). It began because of a class project about the damage that CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) were doing to the ozone and landfill sites. The students decided to protest the use of disposable dishes and trays in their lunchroom. They wrote petitions, brought their own plates from home, organized demonstrations, and made presentations to their school, to the School Board, and to the community about alternatives to disposable items. It took a lot of work and a long time but they finally persuaded the school district to switch to non-disposable dishes and dishwashers.

To learn more about young people who make a difference in the world go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the Links tab.

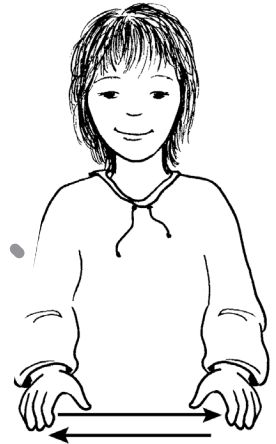
Sign Language



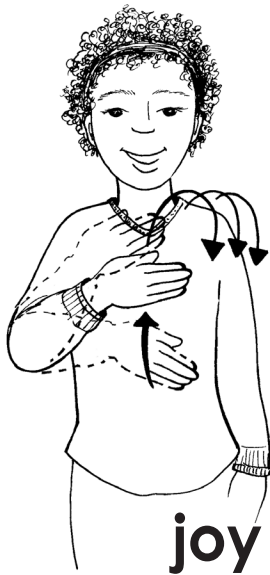
glory



courage



do



joy



God



gospel



hear



Session Resources

We Are Amazing

(Form two groups to say alternate lines, saying "Amen" together at the end.)

We are amazing! **We are amazing!**
 We are filled with power! **We are filled with power!**
 And God loves us! **And God loves us!**
 Like c-r-a-a-a-zy! **Like c-r-a-a-a-zy!**

God is amazing! **God is amazing!**
 God is filled with power! **God is filled with power!**
 And we love God! **And we love God!**
 Like c-r-a-a-a-zy! **Like c-r-a-a-a-zy!**
Amen!

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Musical notation for the first system of the song. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. Chord symbols G, C, and G are placed above the staff. The lyrics are: "I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where__ Lord, an-y-time". Below the main lyrics, the words "work", "pray", and "sing" are stacked vertically under the first measure.

Musical notation for the second system of the song. It continues the melody from the first system. Chord symbols Em, C, G, C, Em, C, Gsus⁴, and G are placed above the staff. The lyrics are: "I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where,__ Lord, an-y-time". Below the main lyrics, the words "work", "pray", and "sing" are stacked vertically under the first measure.

Words and music: traditional African-American.
 Arrangement: Alan Whitmore, © 2002 *Seasons of the Spirit*.

