

Isa. 40:21–31
Ps. 147:1–11, 20c
1 Cor. 9:16–23
Mark 1:29–39

Prayerful Service

Goal for the Session

Tweens will dig into stories of Jesus' early ministry and imagine how they might lead lives of prayer and faithful service.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 1:29–39

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gary W. Charles

Before dawn, and presumably while the crowd is sleeping, Jesus steals out into the darkness to pray. Prayer is not as dominant a theme in Mark as in Luke, but it is an important theme. From the opening chapter of his Gospel, though, Mark introduces us to Jesus who is both a faithful Jew and a faithful Jew at prayer. Jesus is one who makes time and seeks a place to pray. For Mark, prayer is not peripheral to the identity of Jesus, and by implication, not peripheral for those who follow him.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Ofelia Ortega

The healed mother-in-law and Jesus share the same liturgy. Nobody has taught her what she has to do. She has been well aware when receiving Jesus' help and when responding to him precisely on the Sabbath. Her diaconal work is the beginning and announcement of the gospel. Simon and the other disciples won't understand it until Easter. They will not want to become servants of each other (9:35; 10:43). They did not perceive that the Son of God came to serve and to give his life for all (10:45). She, on the other hand, knows it. She has overcome all the selfishness and restrictive teachings and has been close to Jesus; deep down she is already Christian, *diakonisa*, a servant of the church gathered in her son-in-law's house.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” P. C. Enniss

Gerald May, a medical doctor who practices psychotherapy in Washington, DC, writes of the importance of community in the healing process: “God's grace through community involves something far greater than other people's support and perspective. The power of grace is nowhere as brilliant nor as mystical as in communities of faith. Its power includes not just love that comes from people and through people but love that pours forth among people, as if through the very spaces between one person and next. Just to be in such an atmosphere is to be bathed in healing power.”

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Mike Graves

As the summary in verse 39 notes, Jesus goes forth “proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.” Preaching and healing. Healing and preaching. This represents the ministry of Jesus in a nutshell, and it represents still the ministry of those who follow him. It seems for Mark's Gospel that the preaching of Jesus and the extinguishing of evil are two sides of the same coin. Preaching exists that evil might not.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:29–39

Focus on Your Teaching

The concept of praying and serving in Jesus’ name may be difficult for some tweens in your group to understand, especially if the caring adults in their lives are not strong role models of praying and serving. Based on their experiences in life, some tweens may be reluctant to speak about matters of faith—such as whether they pray—because they fear being judged. Still, it is important to nurture Christian practices like serving and praying. Give tweens many opportunities to realize how Bible stories can speak to the decisions they make each day.

Caring God, thank you for hearing my prayers and sending your Spirit to strengthen me to serve in the ways of Jesus. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- Christ candle
- matches
- Color Pack 19, 30, 31
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- study Bible map of Palestine in Jesus’ time
- copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- pens or pencils

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 20, fine-tipped permanent marker, paper, pencils
- option 2: video-recording phones, tablets, or cameras; newsprint or markerboard, marker, index cards, pencils
- option 3: assorted beads, yarn or cord, scissors, copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils, Color Pack 19; *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, arrange the green cloth in the center of your learning space and place the Christ candle and Color Pack 19 on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, plan where tweens will interview adults or older youth in your church about serving; have one phone, tablet, or camera with video-recording capability for each pair of learners. If you are using option 3, cut one 18" piece of yarn or beading cord for each learner.

Greet learners by name as they arrive. Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Say that during the prayer, you will pause for each learner to speak his or her name aloud. Immediately after the prayer, sing the first two stanzas of “Kum Ba Yah” (Color Pack 30; track 15 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Pray aloud:

Come by here, Lord, and make your presence known. Be with (each person speaks his or her name) as we explore your Word and think about what it means for our lives today. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen.

After the song, extinguish the candle.

Pass Color Pack 19 around the group so tweens can take a closer look at the people who are praying. As they do, discuss:

- ✠ How many of these ways of praying have you used?
- ✠ What do you think happens when people pray?

Say that the Bible story today is about praying and serving.

Kum Ba Yah

Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
O Lord, kum ba yah!

Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
O Lord, come by here!

EXPLORING

Show a study Bible map of Palestine in Jesus' day and have learners find the city of Capernaum, where today's Bible story takes place. Recall that this is where Jesus demonstrated power over unclean spirits in a man in the synagogue.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Jesus Heals and Prays). Ask volunteers to read aloud each part of the story. After each part is read, pause to discuss it:

- ✪ Who appears in this part of the story? (Look for proper nouns.)
- ✪ What action does each person take? (Look for verbs.)

Ask if learners have written or read any six-word stories. Explain that in six-word stories, people try to state an important event or main idea in just six words. Usually these stories do not have complete sentences—there aren't enough words! Instead, people use single words or short phrases to get their point across. Together, think of possible six-word stories to retell the first part of the Bible story. (For example: Welcome, Jesus. Sick mom. Heal! Eat!)

Form pairs and distribute pens or pencils. Have pairs compose six-word stories to retell each section of the Bible story. After all have finished, have each pair read its stories to the group. Discuss:

- ✪ What did you learn about Jesus' healing work in this story?

Invite learners to discuss why they think Jesus made time to pray. Encourage a wide-ranging discussion. End by asking:

- ✪ What did prayer help Jesus to do?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (What Is Prayer?). Ask volunteers to read aloud the information there. (Don't take time for learners to write responses.) Ask:

- ✪ How did Jesus combine praying and serving?
- ✪ How might prayer help you to follow Jesus' ways in what you say and do to help others?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Servant Prayers** Learners will compose prayers about serving faithfully. Show Color Pack 20 and invite learners to discuss ways to serve others on behalf of Jesus, such as: stocking shelves at a food pantry, visiting persons who are homebound, making and sending cards to people who are sick, reading and playing with younger children, or helping in community emergencies. Discuss how prayer might be part of these serving actions. For what might they pray as they serve? Form pairs and distribute paper and pencils. Recalling the six-word stories written in Exploring, have each pair compose a six-word prayer asking for God's help while serving. (For example: Strengthen. Encourage. Protect, O God.) Ask pairs to write their prayers on Color Pack 20 with a fine-tipped permanent marker. Option: Publish prayers in the church newsletter or on its Web site.

EASY
PREP

Option: Expand this activity by having tweens use presentation software to combine their videos with graphics of key Bible verses or prayers about serving to make a single presentation to show to groups of adults in your church. You might want to recruit a volunteer to help with this. This activity may take several sessions to complete.

Jesus Bids Us Shine

Jesus bids us shine with a
pure, clear light,
Like a little candle burning
in the night;
In this world is darkness, so
let us shine,
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of
all for him;
Because he knows and loves
us if our lights grow dim;
Jesus walks beside us to
help us shine,
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, then, for
all around,
Many forms of darkness in
the world are found;
Sin and want and sorrows
so we must shine,
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

- Faithful Servants** Learners will take videos featuring other church members telling about serving. Ask tweens what questions they would like to ask other Christians in your church about being a faithful servant and about why serving is an important part of Christian life. Record these questions on newsprint or markerboard. Form pairs to conduct interviews. Explain where your group will go to speak with adults and older youth and ask these questions. Give each pair a phone, tablet, or camera that records video and demonstrate how to use it. Remind them that they need to ask a person's permission before making the video and thank the person afterward. Have each pair write the question they will ask on an index card. After the video interviews, gather together in your learning space to view the videos. Ask: How might you follow the examples of these individuals?
- Beaded Prayer Chain** Learners will make beaded prayer chains to help them remember types of prayer. Explain that sometimes people need a concrete object to help them remember to pray and to help them focus as they pray. Many people use prayer beads for this reason. Ask learners to look again at Resource Sheet 2 (What Is Prayer?). Review the information about the four types of prayer. Invite each learner to take four beads, noting on his or her sheet which bead stands for which kind of prayer. Give each learner an 18" piece of yarn or cord and have them tie a knot at one end. Have learners slip their beads onto the yarn, tying a knot between each bead. After the final bead, have them tie a knot close to the bead. They can use the remaining yarn to tie the chain to a bedpost or as a Bible bookmark. Invite learners to sit apart from one another. Play "Behold, I Am with You" (track 2 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) as learners write their own prayer words in the spaces on the resource sheet and then use their beaded chains in a time of individual prayer.

CLOSING

Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Invite them to tell something from this session they want to remember.

Explain that you will pray a litany prayer together. They will be able to offer their own prayers for serving, such as "When we see someone who is hurt," "When we hear about people who need food or clothing," or "When we are afraid to get involved." Teach the response, "Help us to serve, O God." Pray aloud:

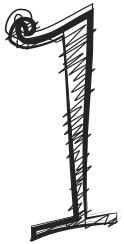
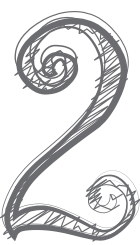
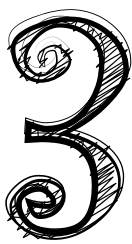

Teacher: *When we* (learners speak their petitions),

All: *Help us to serve, O God.*

Invite tweens to sing or listen to "Jesus Bids Us Shine" (Color Pack 31; track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Say good-bye to learners by name. Thank them for being part of your class.

Jesus Heals and Prays

	Mark 1:29–39, CEB	Six-Word Story
	<p>²⁹After leaving the synagogue, Jesus, James, and John went home with Simon and Andrew.</p> <p>³⁰Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed, sick with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. ³¹He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she served them.</p>	
	<p>³²That evening, at sunset, people brought to Jesus those who were sick or demon-possessed.</p> <p>³³The whole town gathered near the door. ³⁴He healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases, and he threw out many demons. But he didn’t let the demons speak, because they recognized him.</p>	
	<p>³⁵Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer. ³⁶Simon and those with him tracked him down. ³⁷When they found him, they told him, “Everyone’s looking for you!”</p> <p>³⁸He replied, “Let’s head in the other direction, to the nearby villages, so that I can preach there too. That’s why I’ve come.”</p>	
	<p>³⁹He traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and throwing out demons.</p>	

What Is Prayer?

Prayer is communicating with God in a personal way. It is like having a conversation. It is both speaking and listening. When we pray, we tell God what is in our hearts and souls. There are no special words needed for prayer. When we pray, we also are invited to listen for God. God speaks to our hearts and minds in many ways.

There are different ways to pray. For instance, we can pray standing, sitting, kneeling, or lying down. Our heads can be bowed down or looking up. Our hands can be folded or open. Our arms can be held out or crossed over our chests. We can pray anytime and anywhere. We can pray silently or aloud. We can pray by ourselves or with others.

There are different kinds of prayer. Think of the word *ACTS* to help you remember them.

A Adoration. Offer praise to God. Say “You are awesome!” or “Wow, God! Look at everything you do for us!”

My words of adoration:

C Confession. Admit the times you have gone against God’s ways. Say you are sorry for the things you have done or the things you didn’t do that you should have done. Ask God to forgive you and help you to do better. Trust that God does forgive you and gives you another chance.

My words of confession:

T Thanksgiving. Say thanks for everything God has done for you and provided for you. Thank God for the small things (favorite meal, pretty butterfly) and the big things (love, forgiveness, air, water).

My words of thanksgiving:

S Supplication. Ask God to help with some problem in your life or to help other people or creation. When you ask for help for someone else, it is called a prayer of intercession. Intercession means you are acting on behalf of another person; you are praying for him or her.

My words of supplication:

At the end of a prayer we usually say “Amen.” This word means “So be it” or “Let it be done.”

A
C
T
S

