



Week 1 Children's Moment Resources: Are You Sure You're Up for This? Mark 8:27-38

Lessons & Illustrations:

1) Jesus says, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter says, "You are the Messiah."

Ideas to illustrate:

- Have a couple of symbols of different jobs (a tool belt for a builder, a stethoscope for a doctor, a stole for a pastor). Invite the kids, "Who do you think the person who has [tool] is?" And/or invite them to answer, "Who are you?" ("Your name is ____, you are a son, a student, a friend.") Then tell them, "Jesus was a lot of things too. Can you think of some?" ("He was a teacher, a son, the Son of God.") "And today's passage tells us that Peter recognized, 'You are the Messiah.' Messiah means Anointed One, and it was a word people used to describe a special king who would come to save them and make a new kingdom of love and justice. You are many things, and one of the things you are is a follower of Jesus, someone who does their best to love God and neighbor, to help make a world that is more like God's kingdom."

2) "Take up your cross and follow me."

Ideas to illustrate:

- Ask the kids, "What does it mean to follow Jesus? Can you tell me some stories about Jesus or things you know Jesus did that we can do too as his followers?" You could create slides with photos to help prompt the kids, or you could take their ideas and write them on a big piece of paper. The congregation can help too.
- (Note: please use caution with this illustration) Could link this to delayed gratification and the marshmallow test where someone is invited to sit with a plate that has a marshmallow on it. If they can wait to eat the marshmallow, they'll get two marshmallows at the end. "Sometimes doing something that is hard, like not eating the marshmallow even if we really want to, sometimes that makes things better for us and for other people later. Jesus did hard things for us because he

wanted to show us how much God loves us. So sometimes there are things we can do that are hard but that help us and others, like donating money when we can, or visiting our grandmother even if we'd rather watch TV or resisting the urge to say something mean to someone who said something mean to us. Now I want to be careful to say that taking up our cross and following Jesus doesn't mean that we do things that hurt ourselves or others, it doesn't mean we don't stand up for ourselves when we need to, but sometimes it does mean we ask God to help us do things that are hard with courage."

Call to Action:

For Lesson 1: Every time you look in the mirror this week, remind yourself that you are a child of God / follower of Jesus.

For Lesson 2: Pick one thing you can do to follow Jesus this week. Draw a picture of it, or write it on an index card, and put it on your refrigerator to help you remember.

Prayer:

For Lesson 1: God, thank you for sending Jesus, the Messiah, the one you anoint to be a just and loving leader. Help us follow Jesus, who is worthy of our devotion. Amen.

For Lesson 2: God, help us follow you by doing our best to love you and love our neighbor. Give us courage to do things that are hard and trust that you are always with us. Amen.



Week 2 Children's Moment Resources: Hens and Chicks Luke 13:31-35

Lessons & Illustrations:

- 1) When we are doing something important, it is worth it to keep going no matter what or who might try to tell us otherwise.

Ideas to illustrate:

- Bring a simple puzzle for the children to complete. Tell the kids that their challenge today is to complete the puzzle as quickly as they can, no matter what. Ahead of time, get some helpers from the congregation who will do distracting things (jump up and down, wave something, say things like "Hey, look over here!", etc.). After a little while, whether the children have finished the puzzle, ask everyone to stop. Ask how hard it was to finish the puzzle? Is there anything that would have made it easier (if they finished it) – or possible (if they didn't)? Explain this is just a silly game and it's not a big deal if we get distracted. But sometimes our tasks are more important. Like Jesus in this story, sometimes other people try to convince us that we shouldn't keep doing what is important to us, or they try to convince us something else is more important. It is important for us to know what matters so no one and nothing can distract us from it. (Note: Given how many children struggle with attention issues, make sure not to imply that there is anything wrong or bad about struggling with attention/focus.)
 - Read aloud a children's story about perseverance. Examples in additional content below.
- 2) Jesus wants to protect us and take care of us like a mother chicken with her chicks. We can choose to let him do that.

Ideas to illustrate:

- Ask the children, "If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be and why?" "What is it about that animal that you like?" In the Bible story we are reading today, Jesus says wants to be like a mother hen (chicken) taking care of her chicks but the people he wanted to take care of would not

let him. Jesus also calls Herod, one of the rulers at the time, a fox because he is violent and mean. Let's be like chicks who let Jesus take care of us instead of like the fox or like the people who did not want Jesus to take care of them. You might choose to switch the order of this illustration. Tell the children about Jesus (hen), the people he wanted to take care of (chicks), and Herod (fox) first. Then, ask them to think about what kind of person they want to be. What kind of animal is like that? (E.g., lion is courageous, dove is peaceful, etc.) You could bring some cut outs of different animals, have the children describe what those animals are like, and pick which one they want to be.

- Have a conversation with the children about how they respond when someone is mean to them, hurts their feelings, doesn't share, etc. What is their first reaction (e.g., say something mean back, run away, cry)? What do they do? Jesus says he wants to protect us from mean people, like Herod. He won't let meanness distract him from what he needs to do. Give some ideas of how we can "let Jesus protect us," (e.g., we can walk away, not say something mean in return, pray, and ask God for comfort, ask God to help us say something courageous).

Call to Action

Lesson 1: Pick one important thing you want to do this week. Write it down or have someone help you write it down and read it or have someone read it to you every morning to help you stay focused. Try to choose something that is important to *you*, not what other people think or say you should do.

Lesson 2: Draw or print out a picture of the animal you want to be like. On the back, write down the qualities you like (gentle, brave, loyal). Put the picture somewhere you will see it every day to remind you of what you want to be like. *Or* draw or print a picture of a shield to remind you that Jesus is there to protect you. Bring it to school as a reminder.

Prayer:

Lesson 1: God, thank you for teaching us what is important. Help us to remember what is important to you and what is important to us. Help us to keep going no matter what or who distracts us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lesson 2: Jesus, thank you for protecting us like a mother hen protects her chicks. We will try to let you protect us when we are hurt or afraid. Amen.

Additional Content:

Books about perseverance in the face of challenges:

- I Choose to Try Again by Elizabeth Estrada
- Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae
- Sadie and the Snowman by Allen Morgan



Week 3 Children's Moment Resources: Ten Lepers. How Many Miracles? Luke 17:11-19

Lessons & Illustrations:

- 1) When something happens in our lives, we have the power to decide how we will respond (even if sometimes we don't choose what happens!). Our response/attitude can make a big difference in what happens and how we feel about it.

Ideas to illustrate:

- Set up a game where something hypothetical happens and the children have two choices how to respond. You could use cards that have the choices written on them or you could set up a physical marker that the children walk to and through. Depending on what they choose, the next step will be different. It should be clear that there is a "right" choice (for e.g., that involves kindness, gratitude, etc.) Then they have a choice about how to respond to what happens next. Basically, create a live version of a "choose your own adventure" book. Talk about how each way we responds leads to a different outcome. You might go back and look at what would have happened if they had made the other choice.
- Bring a "choose your own adventure book" and ask if the children have ever read one before. What did they think? Did they like it? Talk about how life is really like that and how we respond to situations makes a big difference in what happens and how we feel about it. You might offer a few examples of choices they might face in a regular day.

- 2) Slowing down to notice the good things in life can help us to be more grateful and happier.

Ideas to illustrate:

- Before church, "hide" some goodies (e.g., candies, small dollar store prizes) around the worship space. They should not be too hard to find but somewhere you need to pay attention to notice. If any of the children (or adults!) notice and ask about them before the Children's Moment, tell them to wait and they will find out what it's all about. If no one notices them beforehand, then during the

Children's Moment, ask the kids to slowly walk around the worship space and see if they notice anything different. When they get back (hopefully having found goodies), talk to them about how sometimes when we slowdown in our life we will notice good things we wouldn't otherwise – like opportunities, other people being kind, new learnings. If someone noticed goodies before the Children's Moment, point out that they must have been going slow enough to notice and then proceed to have the children look for the rest. ("I wonder what else we might notice if we slowed down and paid close attention to what's around us.") When we notice something good, what do we do? We say thank you (sometimes to a person or sometimes to God).

- Ask the children to think about their morning or about a typical day. Ask them to name some ways other people help them every day (parent, loved one, friend, teacher, etc.). If they are having trouble, you might offer some prompts (e.g., how do you get to school ... bus driver/parent, who makes your breakfast/lunch ... parent/sibling. Note: be cautious about what questions you ask, knowing that some children may not have some of these basic kinds of help from caregivers). Sometimes these things are so automatic or routine that we forget to say thank you but when we practice gratitude (saying thank you) and feel thankful inside, it can change our whole perspective.

Call to Action:

Lesson 1: Practice saying "thank you" this week by making a card or drawing for someone who has done something nice for you. Notice how saying thank you makes you feel.

Lesson 2: Take a slow walk this week (outside or around your home if it's too cold!). Notice and make a list of five "good things" – it can be things that make you smile, or are beautiful or interesting, or remind you of a happy memory, or something you want to learn more about.

Prayer:

Lesson 1: Jesus, thank you for all the ways you help us. Please help us remember that we have a choice about how to respond to you and to all the things that happen in our lives. Help us to respond like you would and to always remember to thank you. Amen.

Lesson 2: Dear God, sometimes life can move fast. Help us to slow down so that we don't miss all the good and beautiful things you are doing. Help us to be good noticers. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Week 4 Children's Moment Resources: Salvation in the House Luke 19:1-10

Lessons & Illustrations:

- 1) God sees us, even when we feel small. Sometimes when we feel unimportant, we might act in ways that hurt other people because our emotions get in the way. God knows this and God still loves us.

Ideas to illustrate:

- Ask children the question: When have you felt small or unimportant? Listen. If you're hearing silence, try these follow ups:
 - When we are around adults?
 - When we are shy?
 - When we are in a new place?
 - When someone bullies us?
- Today we're going to hear a story about a guy who was named Zacchaeus who was short. When he was growing up there's a good chance people made fun of him because he was smaller than everyone else. Sometimes when people are made fun of, they feel hurt and in turn they hurt others. "I wonder why God wants to heal hurt people?" Listen to the children. (If the children will not be present for the reading of scripture or will not be looking at the same scripture in Sunday School, read it to them either from the Bible or from a children's adaptation of the story.)

Call to Action:

This week, God invites you to see people who are sad, angry, or hurt and be there for them so they can feel better.

Prayer:

Hey God! You made each of us in a unique and special way. Please give us bright eyes to see people as smart, strong, and beautiful images of you. Create in us a caring heart so we will want to heal our friends, just like Jesus did. And all of God's children said, "Amen!"