

Coming through the Call

We may think of an epiphany as a novel idea and possibly a new trajectory for our lives. The Season after the Epiphany can be a time to settle into a new sense of call or a renewed sense of purpose. This week, we study texts that highlight the topsy-turvy, surprising aspects of this season of sustained discovery.

Focus scripture: Mark 1:14–20

Jesus calls out to fishers as they work. Andrew, Simon, James, and John are all compelled to drop everything when they hear Jesus inviting them out of their routines and away from their established identities. They may not have known the story of Jonah or the psalmist's argument in favour of trusting God alone, but we do. We can choose to believe that God will shape our lives, configure them and reconfigure them as often as necessary.

Jonah 3:1–5, 10 Do you know how long it would take to walk across your city? Jonah had a message to deliver and walked for an entire day into a city that takes three days to walk across. He didn't walk the outskirts of the city where it would have been easier to escape but walked so far into the city that he would have been in real trouble if the message was not believed; to turn and run would have been impossible. Jonah was all in, and it worked. The people believed.

Psalm 62:5–12 explains that when you wait and rest with confidence in God, you can stop worrying about status, riches, and even hear the voice of God a little more clearly.

Paul writes on this theme to the Christians in **1 Corinthians 7:29–31**. He explains that everything impossible is possible; everything you thought you knew or were called to do will pass away. If your life is sad, live as if you can celebrate; if you are celebrating, live as if you know sadness. Let go of your possessions; let go of the world you know.

These are helpful poetic ramblings that hedge toward mystical proverbs by which to live. There are Zen stories like this: characters encounter a thief in their homes and insist on caring for the one who would rob them; monks carry wealthy men or women through mud, enduring the physical weight but also the insult of the task. When asked, "Why would you carry such a person?" the wise monk instead asks the novice, "why do you still want to carry the weight of the insult? Perhaps your load is heavier than mine was. I put myself to the task; once completed, I let it all go." If you think that it is ridiculous to protect the perpetrator of a crime, you're not alone! The scriptures do not teach us to seek trauma or endure abuses. Instead, Jonah, Paul, and the author of the psalm recognize how much danger surrounds God's people and tell stories of resilience, recovery, and renewal for all God's people when we can overcome our bias and anxieties.

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This week's readings make compelling arguments for us to drop everything when we are invited to a deeper relationship with God. It can be challenging to leave behind what we once found reliable. What will you leave behind as you discover more about God's persistence, protections, and power? What can you do to feel free to move through this season in the company of the Christ?



Focus scripture
Mark 1:14–20

Additional scriptures
Jonah 3:1–5, 10
Psalm 62:5–12
1 Corinthians 7:29–31

**Persistent
God. You are
the credible
incredible and
the probable
impossible. We
ask that you show
us how and when
we are called
to you by you.
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 3–5

“Follow the Leader” is one of the first games that children learn. Preschoolers find it fun to copy actions they see and to repeat words they hear. Five-year-olds are also beginning to understand what it means to “follow” in a metaphorical sense, as they learn about right and wrong and discover that following some actions can have consequences. As children become more deliberate in their choices and their actions they sometimes discover that what they choose to do can make a difference. Some young children have preferred ways of doing things while others are content to follow along with what others are doing. As children mature they will sometimes experience pres-

sure to “follow along with the crowd.”

This week’s story about Jesus’ call of the fishers offers leaders an opportunity to help children understand that following Jesus is more than simply following along passively. Jesus cared for others, and brought God’s healing love, and is inviting all of us to follow him and show God’s love to others. Children will be encouraged to think about what it means to share God’s love. Pray that each child will feel specially called by Jesus to share God’s love.

(Be aware that the children in your group may not be familiar with the actions related to fishing; the story this week includes actions to help them imagine being in a boat and fishing with nets and fishing rods.)

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Mark 1:14–20, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 51).
- ❑ Prepare a worship space with a green cloth, candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of Mark.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), resource sheet [“Additional Songs”](#) (p. 76) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring, if possible, “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).
- ❑ Cut out a paper footprint for each child (see p. 80 for [pattern](#)) and print a child’s name on each one.

Engage

- ❑ Bring length of yarn, blue sheet or blanket, and resource sheet [“Jesus’ New](#)

[Friends.”](#)

- ❑ Bring Jesus figure from [Storytelling Poster 3](#) and tape a wide craft stick to the back of it.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song “Oh, Will You Follow Me” (p. 21 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*, #14 on *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Activity sheet:** copies of resource sheet [“Following Jesus”](#)
- ❑ **Footprint poster:** glitter glue, poster board; print at the top of the poster board “We are learning to follow Jesus.”
- ❑ **Fishing game:** construction paper, fish [pattern](#) (see p. 80), metal paper clips, short piece of dowel, yarn, magnet; make a fishing pole by attaching yarn to the end of the dowel and tying the magnet to the other end of the yarn; cut many paper fish from construction paper and print “Follow me” on the tail of each fish.

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song “We Are Waiting” (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)



January 24, 2021

Coming through the Call

Scripture

Mark 1:14–20

FOCUS To listen for Jesus' invitation to follow in God's way

Gather

Welcome children by name and help them find the paper footprints with their names. Place these footprints on the floor to make a path to the area where your story will be told later.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table and invite a child to help light the candle, a reminder that God is with us. Point to the Bible and explain that it is a special book with stories about what Jesus said and did to help share God's love in the

world. Explain that this day we come together to sing and pray and learn how to live in God's way. Receive the offering.

Sing or listen to, if possible, "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on the *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Pray Dear God,
thank you for our friends here,
and for always being with us. Amen.

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

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Hi everyone! I really like the game "Follow the Leader," do you? (*Encourage responses.*)

Leader: I like that game, too. Shall we play it together? You start the game, Priscilla.

Priscilla: Okay! (*Priscilla says, "Come and follow me" and models several actions such as shaking her head up and down, or singing a high note, or making an animal sound, and inviting the children to follow by imitating the action. Then she invites children to take turns being the leader.*)

Leader: That was fun, Priscilla. Today we will hear a story from the Bible about someone else who says, "Come and follow me." Let's follow our footprint path to our story area. (*Place Priscilla nearby or have her say goodbye.*)

- ☐ **Game** Play a "Follow the Leader" game by saying, "Come and follow me" and modelling different actions as the children follow behind and imitate the actions. Explain that the Bible story for today is about someone else who says, "Come and follow me." Invite children to follow the footprint path to the story area.

Engage

Before the story

Use masking tape to make a boat shape on the floor and invite children to sit inside the outline. Place a blue blanket or sheet alongside the boat to represent the water. Invite children to imagine looking over the edge of the "boat" and splashing their fingers in the "water." Imagine together that

the "boat" is rocking back and forth on the waves. Invite a child to step out of the boat and bring the Bible from the worship table. Use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Mark. Mention that today's story happens beside a large lake. It was a lake that had lots of fish in it. Use resource sheet "[Jesus' New Friends](#)" to tell the story.

After the story

Stand holding the figure of Jesus on the other side of the “water.” Invite the children to imagine that Jesus is calling them to follow him, just as he called the disciples. Invite the children to take turns climbing out of the boat as Jesus calls to each one, “(Child’s name), come and follow me.” When all of the children are out of the boat, mention that Jesus invites all of us to share God’s love with others.

Game Play “Follow the Leader” again by having children take turns holding the figure of Jesus and walking around the room while everyone else follows. Stop from time to time so each “leader” can mime an action to share God’s love with others. Together, guess what that action is and copy it, then start again with a new leader.

Sing “We Will Follow Jesus” (see “[Additional Songs](#),” p. 76) or, if possible, “Oh, Will You Follow Me” (p. 21 in *SGF Songbook*, #14 on *SGF Music CD*).

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Drawing activity** Children can also follow Jesus, as did the first disciples, and share God’s love with others. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Following Jesus](#)” and invite the children to draw body shapes for all the children. Demonstrate how to connect the children to Jesus and encourage them to draw themselves in the boat with Jesus too.
- ❑ **Footprint poster** Jesus called fishers to follow, and Jesus calls us to follow in God’s way. Invite the children to decorate their footprint shapes, used in the gathering activity, with markers and glitter glue. Point out the title on the poster board and help children glue their footprints

to form a curving pathway on the poster. Talk together about ways they can follow Jesus by sharing God’s love.

- ❑ **Fishing game** Invite children to play the game and catch fish with messages for them. Gather together in the boat created earlier and scatter the fish in the “water.” Encourage the children to take turns using the fishing rod to catch a fish. Each time a fish is caught, ask, “What did Jesus say?” and help the child to “read” the message on the fish. Go “fishing” until all the fish have been caught. Invite children to use markers to decorate their fish to take home.

Bless

Gather around the worship table and light the candle again.

Sing “We Will Follow Jesus” (see “[Additional Songs](#),” p. 76)

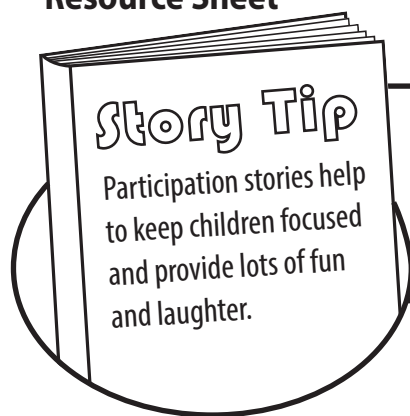
Pray Dear God,
thank you for stories about Jesus.
Help us to tell others about your love.
Amen.

Send each child out with the words, “(child’s name), Jesus loves you and invites you to follow God’s way.”

Reflect

What helps children to feel included in Jesus’ call to follow? In what ways does your congregation include children in church activities?





Jesus' New Friends

(based on Mark 1:14–20)

*(Sit in the boat that was created on the floor.
Practice the actions with these sounds before telling
the story.)*

Swoosh, splash, and stretch: pretend throwing a net into the sea and then pulling it out
Loop, roll, and tie: have one hand rolling over the other and then pretend to tie

One day long ago, Simon and Andrew were out in their boat, fishing. The waves lapped gently against the side of the boat. *Lap, lap, lap.* The fishers threw the net into the water again and again. *(Do the action while saying the sound...)* *Swoosh, splash, and stretch; swoosh, splash, and stretch; swoosh, splash, and stretch.*

Simon and Andrew thought it would be a day like every other day: hot and wet and fishy. But it was NOT like any other day!

That same day, James and John were out in their boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishing nets. *Loop, roll, and tie; loop, roll, and tie; loop, roll, and tie.*

James and John thought it would be a day like every other day: hot and wet and fishy. But it was NOT like any other day!

What do you think happened while Simon and Andrew went *swoosh, splash, and stretch; swoosh, splash, and stretch; swoosh, splash, and stretch?*

And James and John went *loop, roll, and tie; loop, roll, and tie; loop, roll, and tie?*

They got an invitation! Jesus walked by along the seashore and called out to them: "Simon! Andrew! James! John! I need friends like you to help me. Come and follow me."

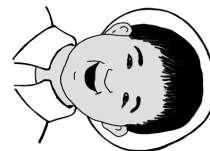
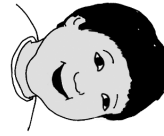
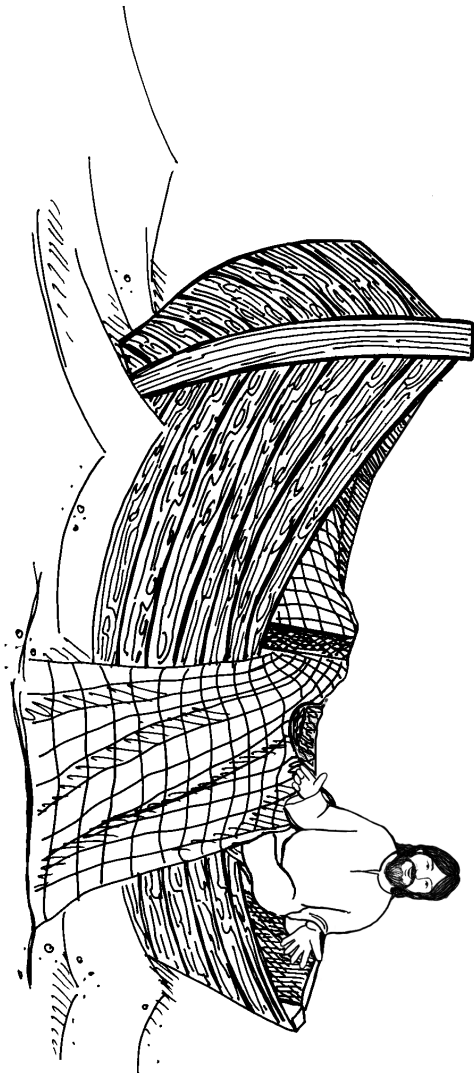
What do you think the fishers did? They stopped what they were doing, got right out of their fishing boats and followed Jesus! Wow!

Now Jesus had more friends to help. Simon, Andrew, James, and John would travel together with Jesus everywhere to help tell everyone about God's love.



Following Jesus

Jesus calls us to follow and learn about God's love so we can share God's love with others. Help these children follow Jesus. Draw a line from each child to the boat. Draw yourself in the boat, too.



Additional Songs

We Are Waiting

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

We are waiting, we are waiting,
every day, every day,
to celebrate a birthday,
to celebrate a birthday,
Jesus' birth! Jesus' birth!

Ring the Bells

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ring, ring, ring the bells.
Ring the bells today.
Jesus comes to share God's love.
Ring the bells today.

God Is With Us

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

God is with us, God is with us,
all the time, all the time,
comforting and loving,
comforting and loving,
Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

If You're Happy and You Know It

The musical notation for "If You're Happy and You Know It" is written on four staves. The first staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. It contains the melody for the first line of the song, with lyrics "If you're hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers." below it. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics "hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers." The third staff continues with lyrics "hap - py and you know it, then your face will sure - ly show it. If you're" and the fourth staff concludes with lyrics "hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers." The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, with chord markings (F, C7, Bb, F) above the staff.

Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry boo hoo.
If you're tired and you know it, give a yawn.
If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot.
If you're excited and you know it, give a jump.
If you're loving and you know it, throw a kiss.

God Loves Us

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will see.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God loves you and God loves me.
(Place hands over heart.)
We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will know.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God's love helps us all to grow.
(Bring arms up and hold hands above head.)

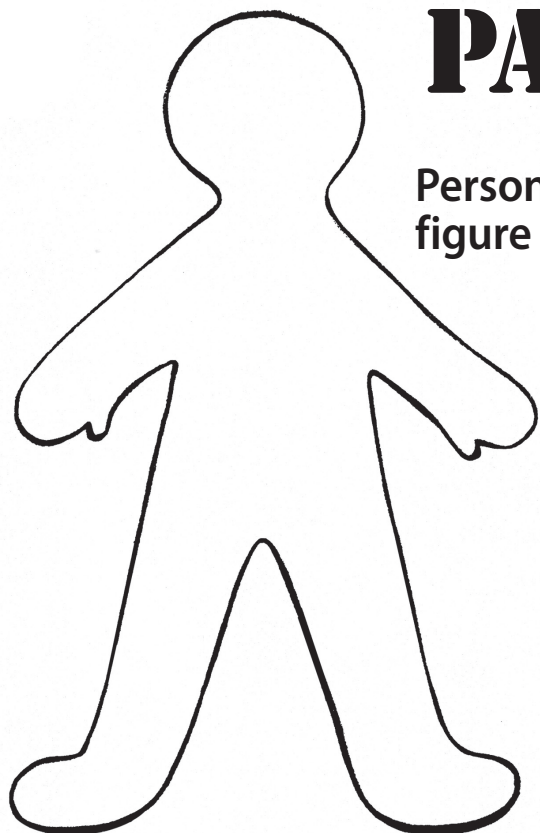
We Will Follow Jesus

(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did.



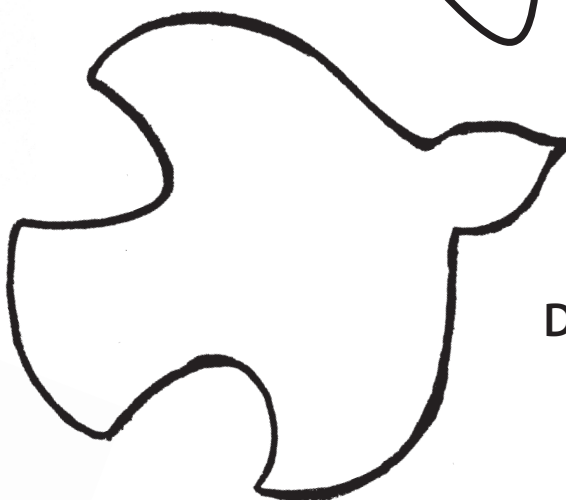
PATTERNS



Person
figure



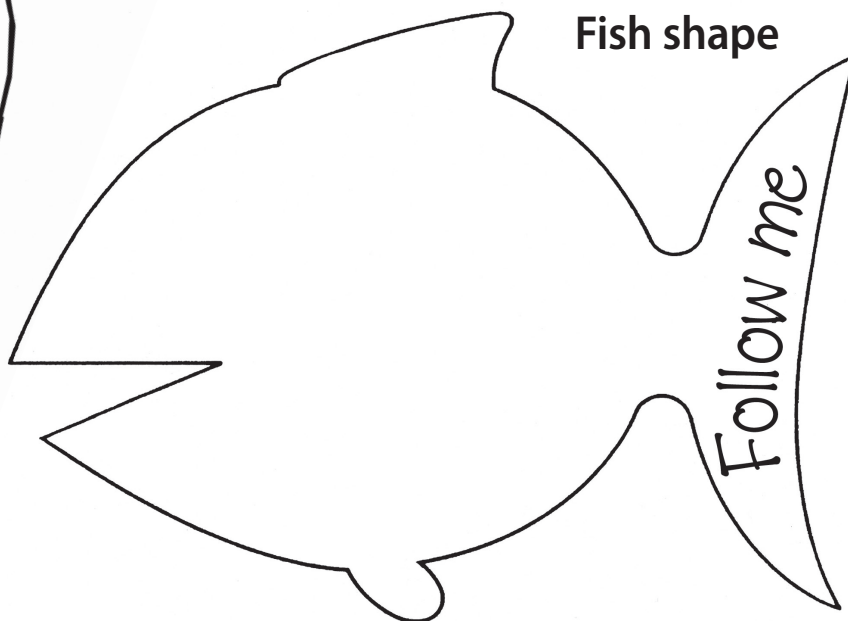
Star shape



Dove shape



Footprint shape



Fish shape

