The background features a cluster of colorful balloons in shades of yellow, orange, and pink. A large, stylized sunburst graphic is positioned behind the text, with rays extending outwards. The overall aesthetic is bright and cheerful.

river

40 DAYS OF FAITH

LENT 2019: SURPRISED BY JESUS

Family Guide | geared towards families with young children

WEEK 2

also on
RiverNYC App

Dear River Families,

I hope you are as excited as I am about celebrating **Lent: 40 Days of Faith!** The 40 Days of Faith has always been a hallmark in our family life. It gives me and my husband a reason and room in our hectic life to be more intentional in growing our faith and deepening our connections with our children.

From my experience with **Riverkids**, storytelling has always been the children's favorite time. It is a special way for them to meet and interact with God. With this Family Guide, I would like to share this experience with you, our River parents. I invite you and your children to explore the stories in the book of Mark with wonder, curiosity and openness.

In this guide I am sharing some tips, some “wondering questions”, and prayers that are designed to help us enter deeper into the story. My hope in this season is that your family will be **“Surprised by Jesus”**. Jesus - who might be different from our expectations and assumptions, who speaks and shows us new ways to look at and approach our life situations, and shows us how to engage God, others, and the world around us.

Warmly,

Amelia Cunard | Riverkids Director

TIPS

As storytellers, we are the **“tour guides”** -- leading the children through the stories and training them how to engage God in every moment. We want to leave an impression rather than information so that, as the children grow up, they can feel secure in finding their own answers to the questions that will come their way.



Read the stories with anticipation. Think of the process like opening a gift box.



We have included [pauses] in the stories, so your children can have time to process with their minds and with their feelings.



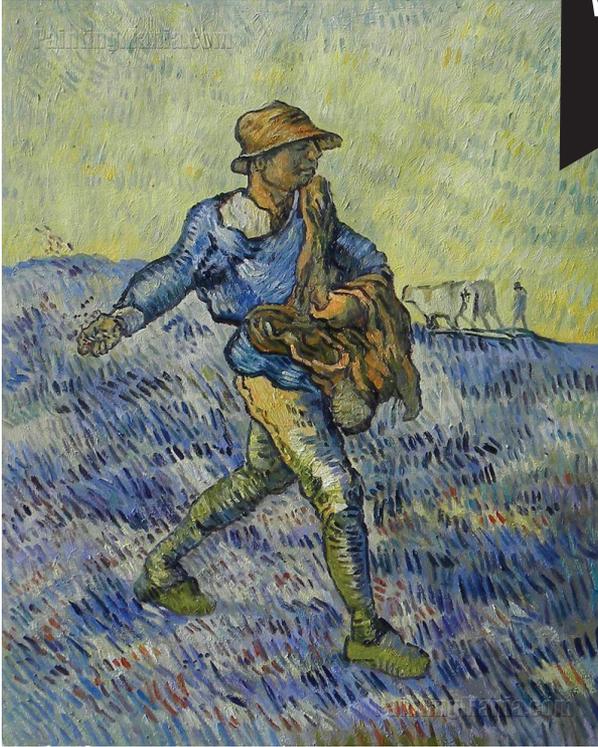
Pick any wondering question or have your children ask a question. Show them that their thoughts and their sharing are valued.

Do not feel like you have to give a quick answer to questions. It's okay to say, "I don't know." This is an ongoing conversation - it takes time to grow.



You can begin the prayer by saying "Let's close our eyes...breathe deep...in and out...quiet our minds so we can hear from God".

For any difficult questions or feelings, invite the children to pray or ask Jesus Himself.



The Sower (after Millet) -Vincent van Gogh

Mark 4:1-20 (NIRV)

The story of the farmer

Again Jesus began to teach by the Sea of Galilee. The crowd that gathered around him was very large. So he got into a boat. He sat down in it out on the lake. All the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things using stories.

In his teaching he said, "Listen! A farmer went out to plant his seed. He scattered the seed on the ground. Some fell on a path. Birds came and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky places, where there wasn't much soil. The plants came up quickly, because the soil wasn't deep. When the sun came up, it burned the plants. They dried up because they had no roots. Other seed fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and crowded out the plants. So the plants did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It grew up and produced a crop 30, 60, or even 100 times more than the farmer

planted.”

Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears should listen.” [pause]

Later Jesus was alone. The 12 disciples asked him about the stories. So did the others around him. He told them, “The secret of God’s kingdom has been given to you. But to outsiders everything is told using stories. In that way,

“They will see but never know what they are seeing.

They will hear but never understand.

Otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!” (Isaiah 6:9,10)

Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this story? Then how will you understand any stories of this kind? The seed the farmer plants is God’s message. What is seed scattered on a path like? The message is planted. The people hear the message. Then Satan comes. He takes away the message that was planted in them. And what is seed scattered on rocky places like? The people hear the message. At once they receive it with joy. But they have no roots. So they last only a short time. They quickly fall away from the faith when trouble or suffering comes because of the message. And what is seed scattered among thorns like? The people hear the message. But then the worries of this life come to them. Wealth comes with its false promises. The people also long for other things. All of these are the kinds of things that crowd out the message. They keep it from producing fruit. And what is seed scattered on good soil like? The people hear the message. They accept it. They produce a good crop 30, 60, or even 100 times more than the farmer planted.”

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder who the farmer is?

I wonder what the farmer felt when the birds ate up the seeds (or when the sun burned the plants)?

If the seed represents God’s message, I wonder what we can do to help it grow?

PRAYER

Jesus, surprise me today. Open my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

Help me see things in new ways. Help me do things in new ways.

Surprise me with your presence, kindness, and wisdom today.

WEEK 2
DAY 2



Indian Folk Art

Mark 4:21-34 (NIRV)

Jesus' parables

Lamp on a Stand

Jesus said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a large bowl or a bed? Don't you put it on its stand? What is hidden is meant to be seen. And what is put out of sight is meant to be brought out into the open. Whoever has ears should listen."

“Think carefully about what you hear,” he said. “As you give, so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more. Whoever has something will be given more. Whoever has nothing, even what they have will be taken away from them.”

The Story of the Growing Seed

Jesus also said, “Here is what God’s kingdom is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. Night and day the seed comes up and grows. It happens whether the farmer sleeps or gets up. He doesn’t know how it happens. All by itself the soil produces grain. First the stalk comes up. Then the head appears. Finally, the full grain appears in the head. Before long the grain ripens. So the farmer cuts it down, because the harvest is ready.”

The Story of the Mustard Seed

Again Jesus said, “What can we say God’s kingdom is like? What story can we use to explain it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. But when you plant the seed, it grows. It becomes the largest of all garden plants. Its branches are so big that birds can rest in its shade.”

Using many stories like these, Jesus spoke the word to them. He told them as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a story. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder what’s your favorite story? And why?

I wonder if the seed represents anything?

Let’s use our imagination, what do you think God’s kingdom is like?

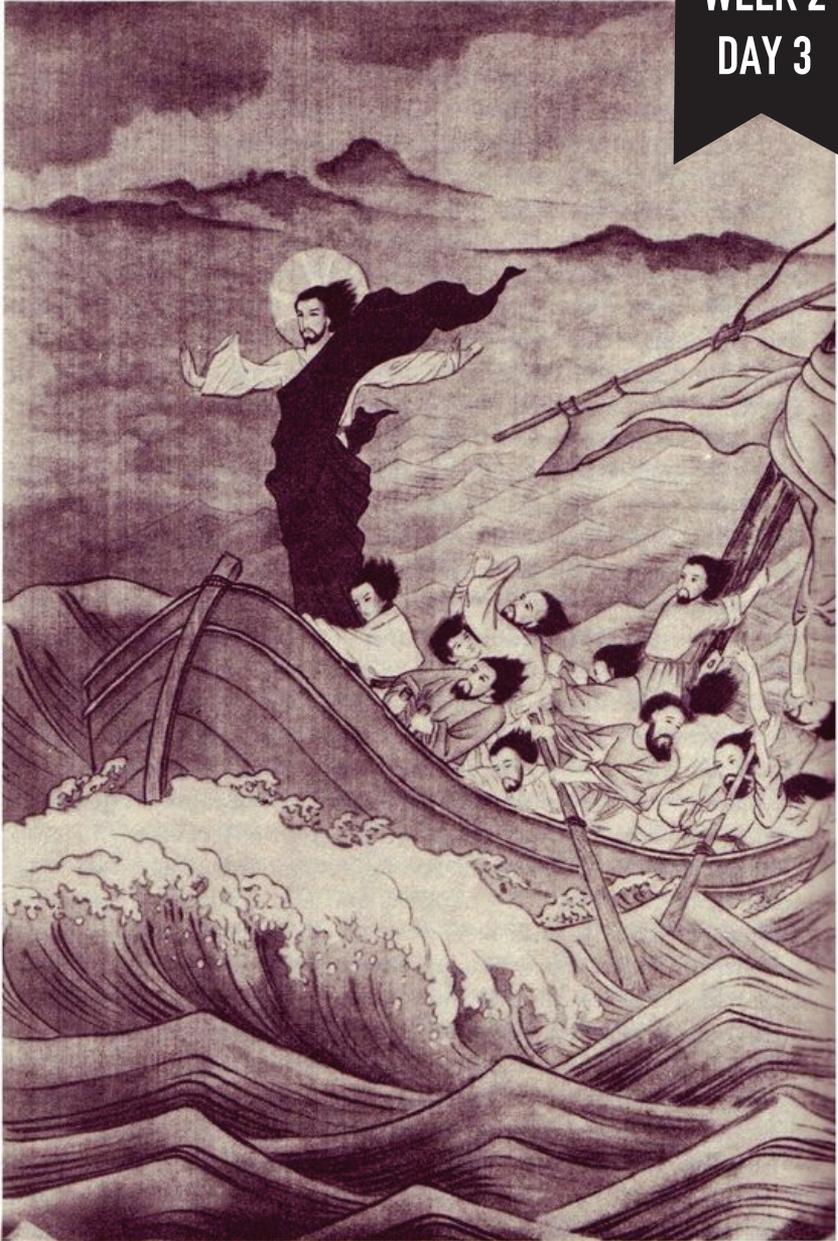
PRAYER

Jesus, surprise me today. Open my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

Help me see things in new ways. Help me do things in new ways.

Surprise me with your presence, kindness, and wisdom today.

WEEK 2
DAY 3



Monika Liu Ho-Peh, *The Stilling of the Tempest*, probably 1950s.

Indian Folk Art

40 Days of Faith | Surprised by Jesus

Mark 4:35-41 (NIRV)

Jesus calms the storm

(*Today we are covering a different story from the adult's reading and response. We are continuing the passage from the previous day)

When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." They left the crowd behind. And they took him along in a boat, just as he was. There were also other boats with him. A wild storm came up. Waves crashed over the boat. It was about to sink. Jesus was in the back, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up. They said, "Teacher! Don't you care if we drown?"

He got up and ordered the wind to stop. He said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down. And it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Don't you have any faith at all yet?"

They were terrified. They asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder if anything in the story surprises you? What and why?

I wonder what you would feel if you were in the boat with the disciples?

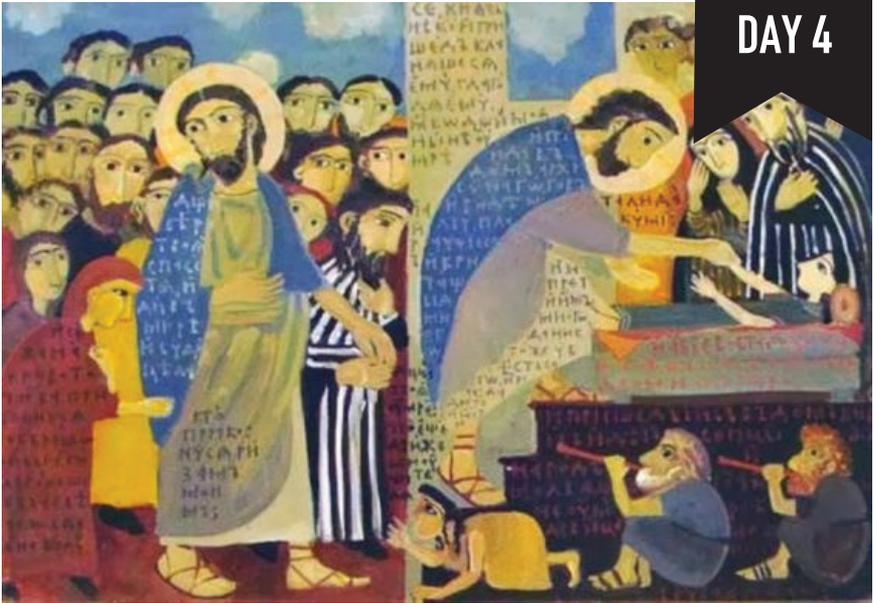
I wonder how Jesus was able to sleep in the storm?

PRAYER

Jesus, surprise me today. Open my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

Help me see things in new ways. Help me do things in new ways.

Surprise me with your presence, kindness, and wisdom today.



Yelena Cherkasova. Christ Raises the Daughter of Jairus. undated

Mark 5:21-43 (NIRV)

Jesus heals Jairus' daughter and a suffering woman

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. It landed at the other side. There a large crowd gathered around him. Then a man named Jairus came. He was a synagogue leader. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He begged Jesus, "Please come. My little daughter is dying. Place your hands on her to heal her. Then she will live." So Jesus went with him.

[pause]

A large group of people followed. They crowded around him. A woman was there who had a sickness that made her bleed. It had lasted for 12 years. She had suffered a great deal, even though she had gone to many doctors. She had spent all the money she had. But she was getting worse, not better. Then she heard about Jesus. She came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. She thought, "I just need to touch his clothes. Then I will be healed." Right away her bleeding stopped. She felt in her body that her suffering was over.

At once Jesus knew that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd. He asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people," his disciples answered. "They are crowding against you. And you still ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around. He wanted to see who had touched him. Then the woman came and fell at his feet. She knew what had happened to her. She was shaking with fear. But she told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Dear woman, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. You are free from your suffering."

[pause]

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus. He was the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" Jesus heard what they were saying. He told the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid. Just believe."

He let only Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, follow him. They came to the home of the synagogue leader. There Jesus saw a lot of confusion. People were crying and sobbing loudly. He went inside. Then he said to them, "Why all this confusion and sobbing? The child is not dead. She is only sleeping." But they laughed at him.

He made them all go outside. He took only the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him. And he went in where the child was. He took her by the hand. Then he said to her, "Talitha koum!" This means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" The girl was 12 years old. Right away she stood up and began to walk around. They were totally amazed at this. Jesus gave strict orders not to let anyone know what had happened. And he told them to give her something to eat.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder why the woman believed that she would be healed?

I wonder what Jesus meant by "Don't be afraid. Just believe."?

Is there anything that you want Jesus to surprise you with today?

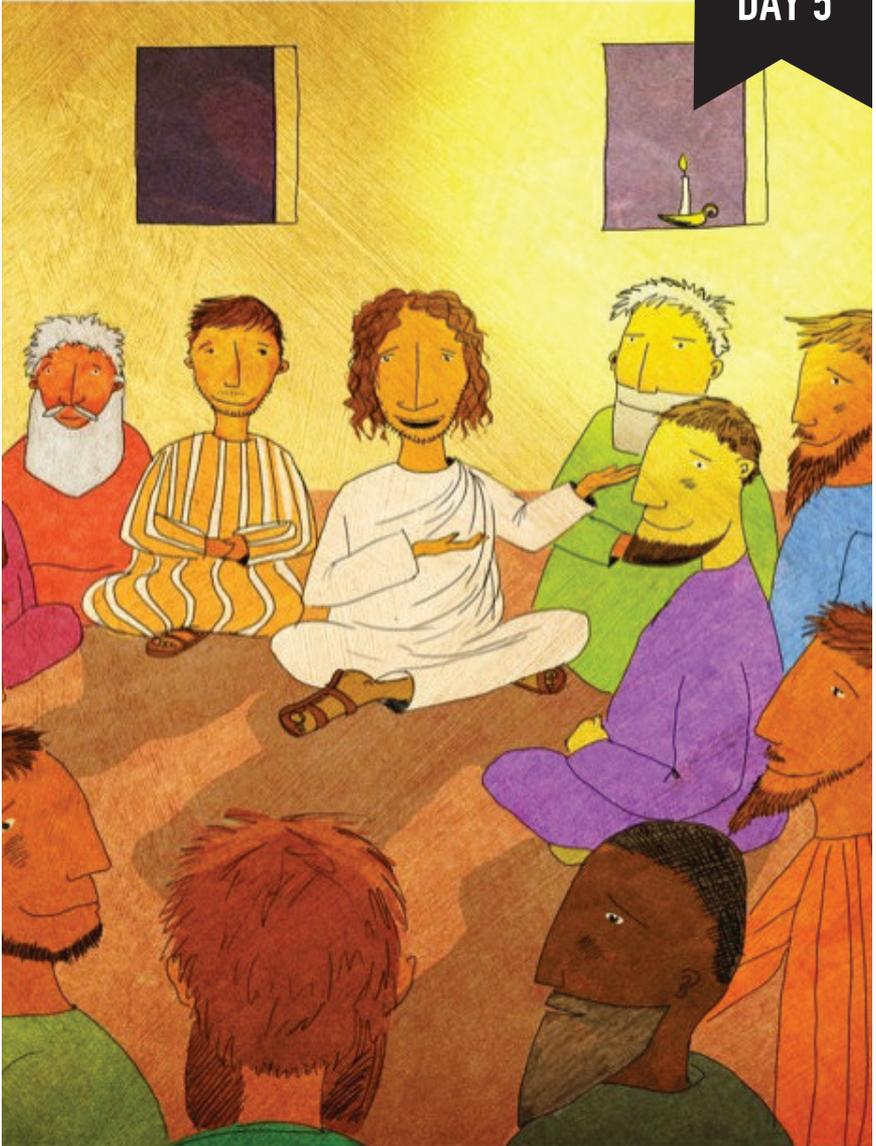
PRAYER

Jesus, surprise me today. Open my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

Help me see things in new ways. Help me do things in new ways.

Surprise me with your presence, kindness, and wisdom today.

WEEK 2
DAY 5



The Jesus Storybook Bible, illustration by Jago

Mark 6:6-13 (NIRV)

Jesus sends out the twelve disciples

Jesus went around teaching from village to village. He called the 12 disciples to him. Then he began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority to drive out evil spirits.

Here is what he told them to do. "Take only a walking stick for your trip. Do not take bread or a bag. Take no money in your belts. Wear sandals. But do not take extra clothes."

"When you are invited into a house, stay there until you leave town. Some places may not welcome you or listen to you. If they don't, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet. That will be a witness against the people living there."

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder what the people felt when Jesus and the disciples came to their village?

I wonder why Jesus wanted his disciples to take only their walking sticks?

I wonder how you would feel if Jesus called you to do something?

PRAYER

Jesus, surprise me today. Open my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

Help me see things in new ways. Help me do things in new ways.

Surprise me with your presence, kindness, and wisdom today.

riverkids@rivernyc.org
www.rivernyc.org

