

river

# 40 DAYS OF FAITH

**LENT 2019: SURPRISED BY JESUS**

Family Guide | geared towards families with young children



**WEEK 1**

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.

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**WEEK 1**  
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Jesus Mafa, "The Baptism of Christ," 1973, Nigeria

## **Mark 1:1-20 (NIRV)**

### **Jesus is baptized and His first disciples**

This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Long ago Isaiah the prophet wrote,

"I will send my messenger ahead of you.

He will prepare your way." (Malachi 3:1)

"A messenger is calling out in the desert,

'Prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight paths for him.'" (Isaiah 40:3)

And so John the Baptist appeared in the desert. He preached that people should be baptized and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them. All the people from the countryside of Judea went out to him. All the people from Jerusalem went too.

[pause]

When they admitted they had sinned, John baptized them in the Jordan River. John wore clothes made out of camel's hair. He had a leather belt around his waist. And he ate locusts and wild honey. Here is what John was preaching. "After me, there is someone coming who is more powerful than I am. I'm not good enough to bend down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. Jesus was coming up out of the water. Just then he saw heaven being torn open. Jesus saw the Holy Spirit coming down on him like a dove. A voice spoke to him from heaven. It said, "You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you."

...[pause]

One day Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. There he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were throwing a net into the lake. They were fishermen. "Come and follow me," Jesus said. "I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Then Jesus walked a little farther. As he did, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat preparing their nets. Right away he called out to them. They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men. Then they followed Jesus.

## **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder what's the most surprising part of the story for you? Why?

I wonder if you were in the story, would you have been surprised by Jesus?

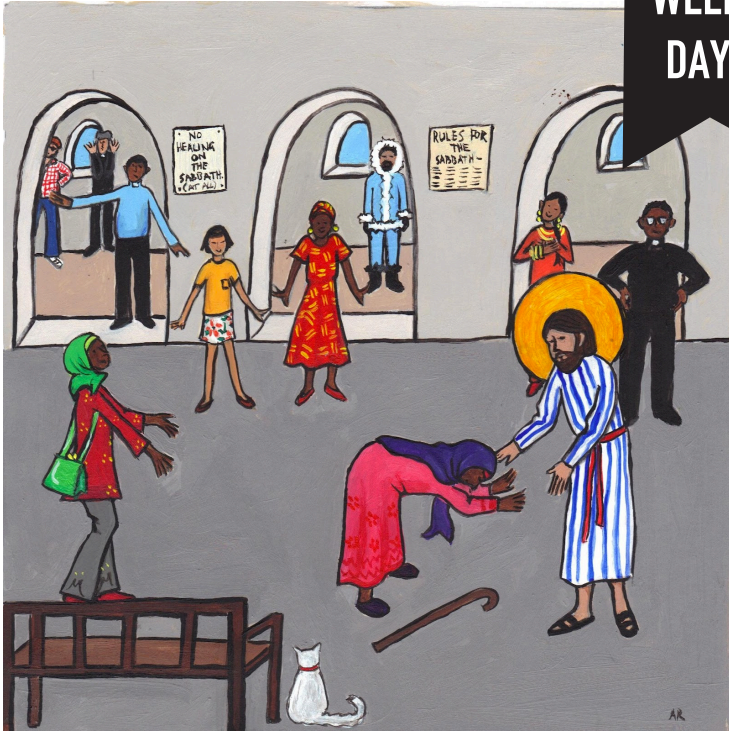
I wonder what Simon, Andrew, James and John felt when Jesus called out for them?

## **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.



“Jesus heals the old lady bent double” by Antonia Rolls

## Mark 1:21-45 (NIRV)

### Jesus heals many

Jesus and those with him went to Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, he went into the synagogue. There he began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching. That’s because he taught them like one who had authority. He did not talk like the teachers of the law.

Just then a man in their synagogue cried out. He was controlled by an evil spirit. He said, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One of God!”

“Be quiet!” said Jesus firmly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man wildly. Then it came out of him with a scream.

All the people were amazed. So they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching! And with so much authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits, and they obey him.” News about Jesus spread quickly all over Galilee.



[pause]

Jesus and those with him left the synagogue. Right away they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever. They told Jesus about her right away. So he went to her. He took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her. Then she began to serve them.

That evening after sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who were sick. They also brought all who were controlled by demons. All the people in town gathered at the door. Jesus healed many of them. They had all kinds of sicknesses. He also drove out many demons. But he would not let the demons speak, because they knew who he was.

... [pause]

A man who had a skin disease came to Jesus. On his knees he begged Jesus. He said, "If you are willing to make me 'clean,' you can do it."

Jesus became angry. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing to do it," Jesus said. "Be 'clean!'" Right away the disease left the man, and he was "clean."

Jesus sent him away at once. He gave the man a strong warning. "Don't tell this to anyone," he said. "Go and show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded. It will be a witness to the priest and the people that you are 'clean.'" But the man went out and started talking right away. He spread the news to everyone. So Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. He stayed outside in lonely places. But people still came to him from everywhere.

## **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder what's the most surprising part of the story for you? Why?

I wonder if those with him (Jesus' friends) were surprised by Jesus?

Do you have anything you want Jesus to surprise you with? What is it?

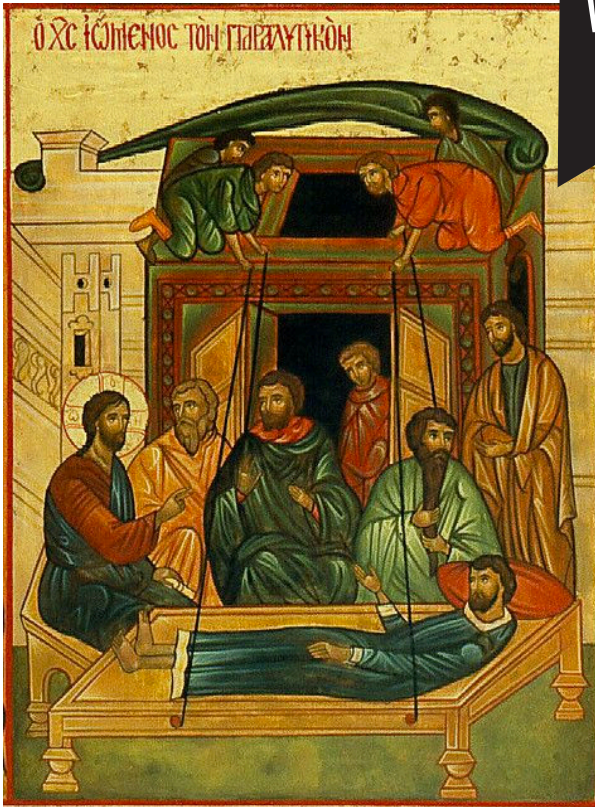
## **PRAYER**

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 1  
DAY 3



## Mark 2:1-17 (NIRV)

### Jesus heals a paralyzed man and eats with sinner

A few days later, Jesus entered Capernaum again. The people heard that he had come home. So many people gathered that there was no room left. There was not even room outside the door. And Jesus preached the word to them.

Four of those who came were carrying a man who could not walk. But they could not get him close to Jesus because of the crowd. So they made a hole by digging through the roof above Jesus. Then they lowered the man through it on a mat. Jesus saw their faith. So he said to the man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

[pause]

Some teachers of the law were sitting there. They were thinking, “Why is this fellow talking like that? He’s saying a very evil thing! Only God can forgive sins!”

Right away Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Is it easier to say to this man, ‘Your sins are forgiven’? Or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”

So Jesus spoke to the man who could not walk. “I tell you,” he said, “get up. Take your mat and go home.” The man got up and took his mat. Then he walked away while everyone watched. All the people were amazed. They praised God and said, “We have never seen anything like this!”

[pause]

Once again Jesus went out beside the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came to him. He began to teach them. As he walked along he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Levi was sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him. Levi got up and followed him.

Later Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house. Many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples. They were part of the large crowd following Jesus. Some teachers of the law who were Pharisees were there. They saw Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors. So they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

Jesus heard that. So he said to them, “Those who are healthy don’t need a doctor. Sick people do. I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to follow me.”

## **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder what’s the most surprising part of the story for you? Why?

I wonder if the man who could not walk was surprised by Jesus?

I wonder what Levi felt when Jesus came and ate in his house?

## **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.

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WEEK 1  
DAY 4



'Harvest in Provence' by Vincent van Gogh

## **Mark 2:23 - Mark 3:1-12 (NIRV)**

### **Lord of the Sabbath, Many follow Jesus**

One Sabbath day Jesus was walking with his disciples through the grainfields. The disciples began to break off some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! It is against the Law to do this on the Sabbath day. Why are your disciples doing it?"

He answered, "Haven't you ever read about what David did? He and his men were hungry. They needed food. It was when Abiathar was high priest. David entered the house of God and ate the holy bread. Only priests were allowed to eat it. David also gave some to his men."

Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath day. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."

[pause]

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue. A man with a weak and twisted hand was there. Some Pharisees were trying to find fault with Jesus. They watched him closely. They wanted to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath day. Jesus spoke to the man with the weak and twisted hand. "Stand up in front of everyone," he said.

Then Jesus asked them, "What does the Law say we should do on the Sabbath day? Should we do good? Or should we do evil? Should we save life? Or should we kill?" But no one answered.

Jesus looked around at them in anger. He was very upset because their hearts were stubborn. Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand had become as good as new. Then the Pharisees went out and began to make plans with the Herodians. They wanted to kill Jesus.

[pause]

Jesus went off to the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. A large crowd from Galilee followed. People heard about all that Jesus was doing. And many came to him. They came from Judea, Jerusalem and Idumea. They came from the lands east of the Jordan River. And they came from the area around Tyre and Sidon.

Because of the crowd, Jesus told his disciples to get a small boat ready for him. This would keep the people from crowding him. Jesus had healed many people. So those who were sick were pushing forward to touch him. When people controlled by evil spirits saw him, they fell down in front of him. The spirits shouted, "You are the Son of God!" But Jesus ordered them not to tell people about him.

## **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder what's the most surprising part of the story for you? Why?

I wonder if the Pharisees were surprised by Jesus?

I wonder how you would feel if you get to see Jesus' healings and miracles?

## **PRAYER**

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

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





## Mark 3:13-30 (NIRV)

### Twelve disciples, Jesus is accused

Jesus went up on a mountainside. He called for certain people to come to him, and they came. He appointed 12 of them so that they would be with him. He would also send them out to preach. And he gave them authority to drive out demons.

So Jesus appointed the 12 disciples.

Simon was one of them. Jesus gave him the name Peter.

There were James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. Jesus gave them the name Boanerges. Boanerges means Sons of Thunder.

There were also Andrew,

Philip,

Bartholomew,

Matthew,

Thomas,  
and James, son of Alphaeus.  
And there were Thaddaeus  
and Simon the Zealot.

Judas Iscariot was one of them too. He was the one who was later going to hand Jesus over to his enemies.

[pause]

Jesus entered a house. Again a crowd gathered. It was so large that Jesus and his disciples were not even able to eat. His family heard about this. So they went to take charge of him. They said, “He is out of his mind.”

Some teachers of the law were there. They had come down from Jerusalem. They said, “He is controlled by Beelzebul! He is driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons.”

So Jesus called them over to him. He began to speak to them using stories. He said, “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom fights against itself, it can’t stand. If a family is divided, it can’t stand. And if Satan fights against himself, and his helpers are divided, he can’t stand. That is the end of him. In fact, none of you can enter a strong man’s house unless you tie him up first. Then you can steal things from his house.”

“What I’m about to tell you is true. Everyone’s sins and evil words against God will be forgiven. But whoever speaks evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. Their guilt will last forever.”

## **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder what’s the most surprising part of the story for you? Why?

I wonder if any of the disciples felt was surprised to be appointed by Jesus?

I wonder how you would feel to if Jesus appointed you?

## **PRAYER**

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