Scripture
Luke 17:5-10

The Impossible Made Possible

Jesus challenges us to recognize the power of faith.

- Jesus teaches that faith grows when we simply obey.
- Young children often can trust readily in God, but they will also often think that their prayers and wishes have magical power. It is the first quality of young children that Jesus praises as true faith.
- Today’s session invites children to affirm their friendship and faith in Jesus Christ.

Question of the Week
How would you like Jesus to increase your faith?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: Mustard Seed and Mulberry Tree (mustard seed)
- Story Ritual Game
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Who’s a Friend of Jesus?
- Faith Tree Poster (butcher paper, red tempera paint, paper towels, pan)
- Info: Catechist-Child Relationships
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More About Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- The World of the Bible: Paul’s Pastoral Letters
Getting Started (5-15 minutes)
If time allows, we recommend beginning with the
Who's a Friend of Jesus? Enrichment game found on
page 3.

Invite children to discuss their understanding of the
word faith. Although we provide a simple definition
you can use, do not expect young children to memorize
this definition or be able to paraphrase it. It is enough
at this age to hear the word, and understand that
it represents something important to God’s People.
(See more background information on faith in Young
Children and the Gospel on page 4.)

Ask:
◆ Do you know what faith is?
◆ What does it mean if I say I have faith in God?

Accept all answers. Explain faith as simply as possible in
your own words. You might say:
◆ Faith in God means trusting God, knowing that
  God loves us, just as we are.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Mustard Seed and Mulberry Tree
Story Focus: Use a mustard seed as a visual focus for today’s
story. Place it on a plate in the middle of the circle, or
briefly pass it from hand to hand. Ask, “What other things
are as small as this seed?”

Jesus was God’s worker.

Jesus came to work for the sick. He held them and
healed them.

Jesus came to work for people who wanted to know
more about God. Jesus told them stories about God.

Jesus came to work for the hungry. He gave bread
and fish to the hungry.

One day Jesus and his friends rested under the leafy
branches of a large tree, a mulberry tree. The friends
of Jesus said, “We want to do what you can do!
Make our faith in God grow!”

Jesus said, “I’m glad you want to do what I do! I’m
glad you want your faith in God to grow!”

Jesus held a tiny mustard seed in his hand. (Show
children the mustard seed, cradled in the palm of your
hand.) He said, “If you have as much faith as this,
you could even make this big tree jump in the sea!
But even better, you could work for others, just as I
do. Pray for more faith!”

After the Story: Let children pass the mustard seed
from palm to palm around the circle. You might
softly repeat the last few sentences of the story as the
children pass the seed.

Story Ritual Game (5-15 minutes)
This short activity is intended as a quick follow-up for
catechists with short session times of 20-25 minutes. If
your sessions are longer, choose Enrichment activities
from pages 3-4 before playing this story-review game.

Children play a ritual game and watch “faith” grow!

Invite the children to sit, scattered about the room.
Hand the mustard seed to one child and say, “Watch
our faith grow!”

This child holds your hand, walks to another child, and
passes on the seed with the same words. Continue until
all the children have joined the growing faith line. Play
several times, asking volunteers to lead the game.

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Gather the children in the circle. If time allows, repeat
the Who’s a Friend of Jesus? game found on page 3.

Then pass a mustard seed to the child on your left and
say, “Thank you, Jesus, for your friend (child’s name).”
Ask the children to respond to the prayer by saying,
“Thank you, God.”

Help children pass the seed and prayers around the
circle. Close by praying:
◆ Thank you, God, for making us friends of Jesus.
  Thank you for the gift of faith. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good
News to group members as they depart (or e-mail it to
families after the session).
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of this week’s Discover the Good News you’ll find an illustrated version of an Action Rhyme attached to this document. You can use either of these resource pages to teach children the rhyme.

Singing Together (5-15 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Follow, Follow” (songbook p. 4, also available as an MP3)
◆ “I Will Serve God” (songbook p. 8)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Teach children these words, set to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush”:

Chorus:
This is the way we work for God,
Work for God, work for God.
This is the way we work for God,
Each and every day.

Verses:
This is the way we help the sick...
This is the way we give the food...
This is the way we tell of God...

Gather in a circle. As children sing the chorus, they can circle first right, then left. For each verse, children can stand still and invent pantomimed motions to accompany the words.

Who’s a Friend of Jesus?
(10-15 minutes)
This simple clapping game introduces the concept that each one of us is a friend of Jesus. The game will also help children review names.

Sit in a circle with the children. Ask them to keep time with you by first clapping their hands and then slapping their thighs. Repeat the motion until most of the children have joined in.

Now begin a chant, as you continue to clap, inserting the name of each child; for example:

Who’s a friend of Jesus?
Lee’s a friend of Jesus.

Repeat the chant, using each child’s name.

Faith-Tree Poster
Children use their fingers to print berries on a faith-tree poster. You can use the poster as a focal point for a ritual prayer.

Draw the outline of a large tree on butcher paper. Show the children how to fill in the trunk area with torn-and-glued brown tissue paper.

Make a “stamp pad” by soaking a pan of paper towels in red paint. Let the children add mulberries to the tree by pressing fingertips in ink or paint, then making fingerprints on the picture. Keep cleanup supplies handy!

Help the children make clusters of fingerprint berries all over the branches.

Help each child cut or tear a leaf from green construction paper. Write the name of each child on his or her leaf. (Some children may want to write their own names.) Ask each child to take a turn sticking his or her leaf to the faith tree. As the child does so, say, “Thank you, Jesus, for your friend (child’s name).”
**Catechist-Child Relationships**

Catechists are often exhorted to love the children in their groups. This does not mean we need to manufacture “nice” feelings about all the children in the group. Respect and patient attention to each child might be more workable goals for most catechists to set.

But even these more modest goals are difficult to meet with some children. These might be the children who look different, are too noisy, aggressive or restless. Some of them already have had some serious hurts in life. These children are the ones who truly need that extra patience—and extra respect.

For some children in your group, this may be their first contact with others outside their family. You can help these children adjust to this new experience. You may need to show them how to play with other children in play areas. At the same time don't forget to enjoy and participate in the open playfulness that makes teaching preschoolers so delightful!

**Young Children and the Gospel**

In today’s gospel, Jesus announces that faith as small as a mustard seed can do such mystifying things as moving a mulberry tree into the sea. Today’s story and session draws on these images to explore this message: the friends of Jesus, who came to serve others, need faith to do what Jesus did.

Be careful of confusing the children's ability to define faith with their capacity for faith itself. As Jesus repeatedly suggested, children are capable of extraordinary acts of faith.

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  - A printable version of today’s *Gospel Story* for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  - A one-page summary of the *Get-Acquainted Games* used so far this season.
  - Directions for a group *Action Rhyme* based in today’s gospel story.
  - Directions for a *Mulberry Tree Game* based on this image from today’s gospel.
  - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News*, to print and distribute or to e-mail to families for use at home.

- Open your Fall-C Seasonal *Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Fall-C’s *Models of the Faith*.
  - An article for catechists and/or parents listing 18 *Ways to Support Leaders*.
  - An article for catechists exploring *Apocalyptic Literature* in the Bible.
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News*. 
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings call us to believe in God’s ability to make the impossible possible. In Habakkuk, God calls the prophet to patience and faith in the face of incomprehensible evil. In the second reading, Paul encourages Timothy to endure in power and love, guarding the truth of the gospel. In the gospel, Jesus teaches that faith thrives in simple obedience.

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

The dates of Habakkuk’s ministry and his exact identity are unknown. The book has three parts: a dialogue between the prophet and God (1:2–2:5); a set of woes against the Babylonians (2:6-20); and a poem of trust (3:1-19).

The book begins by describing a time when Judah was threatened by enemies from without and by moral and social corruption within. Habakkuk struggles to understand God’s ways and timing. He cries out about God’s seeming toleration of injustice and violence. God explains that the Babylonians will be the instrument of God’s judgment.

Habakkuk then complains that, while Judah was corrupt, Babylon was even more unrighteous. How could a holy God send the wicked to devour God’s chosen people? God answers, not in explanation, but in assurance; the time of full vindication will come. Meanwhile the righteous shall “live by their faith”—not mere theological belief, but faithfulness, steadfastness and absolute trust.

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Today’s reading is taken from the opening section of Paul’s second letter to Timothy. At the time of its writing, the Christian community was evidently in a period of settling down and defining itself. Timothy received the “gift of God” (Greek, charisma, v. 6) by the laying on of hands (probably a ceremony of special commissioning or ordination).

The teaching of the community has been organized into “the standard of sound teaching” (v. 13), which is to be guarded as a “good treasure” (v. 14). A sense of continuity is present in the believing family (vv. 3-5) and between apostle and disciple. Yet all this cannot be taken for granted, but must be rekindled in living witness each generation.

Luke 17:5-10

This reading consists of a saying about faith and a parable about a servant’s duty. The comparison of the power of faith to the tiny mustard seed and the unexpected results emphasizes that the issue is not the power of faith, an unquantifiable concept, but the power of God. Faith commands according to God’s will.

The parable, found only in Luke, is based upon the hard reality of a slave’s existence. The slave’s time and toil belong without limit to his or her owner. The parable warns against self-righteousness and teaches that God’s claims on us have no limit. The rewards of God are always of grace, not of debt. A similar point is found in an ancient rabbinic source: “If you have learned much Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, because for that purpose you were created.”

Reflection

A pilot has faith in the mechanic who checked the plane and in the equipment. A student has faith in a teacher’s truth-telling. A customer has faith in the restaurant’s food or the grocery store’s products.

And we, when we find life overwhelming, sorrow debilitating or hardship unbearable, ask, as the disciples did, for more faith. We want to inch forward into a hidden future buoyed by a conviction that God’s promises will be fulfilled, that God will in fact accompany us on our uncertain way. Jesus’ response is encouraging: even a tiny amount of faith, joined with God’s power, can create miracles.

There seems to be little connection to the parable of the farmer and slave, but the story points up a truth we may not want to hear. What we do is, in fact, a natural response to all we’ve been given, and sometimes may seem inadequate. While God may seem a stern master here, the parable doesn’t reveal the whole truth about God.

If it seems overly harsh, Luke 12:37-38 tempers the message. There, the master does serve the faithful servant. In both passages taken together, we see two facets of God, who is at once demanding and merciful.
The Scriptures and the Catechism

God's revelation to us is expressed not only in scripture but also in our tradition of teaching and action (CCC, #74–98). Paul uses a familiar banking image to describe tradition as a “deposit of faith” on which we can draw when our faith is low. When we need an increase, God gives us the grace that we need so that we might become servants of one another as Jesus wanted his followers to be (CCC, #1987–2005).

The World of the Bible

Paul's Pastoral Letters

During this season of the year, several readings are from the three Pauline pastoral letters: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. Although many scholars conclude that Paul himself did not write them, the questioning of authorship does not mean these letters are unimportant for our faith. Whether written by Paul or one of his followers, these letters claimed Paul's authority and shaped the Pauline tradition in the first generation after Paul's death. They also extended Paul's own teaching to deal with new situations confronting the Christian community. Most importantly they have been included in the selection of New Testament writings (the canon) that we consider to be revealed, inspired by God and normative for our faith.

Probably written near the end of the first century, they claim Paul's authority for the growing institutionalization of the early Christian community. These letters contain Paul's advice for establishing similar pastoral and administrative traditions both for communities that he had founded (Timothy in Ephesus, 1 Timothy 1:3) and for communities that he did not found (Titus on Crete, Titus 1:5).

Paul is portrayed as an aging pastor whose final care for the community is expressed by appointing successors to continue his work. Throughout his ministry, Paul had often relied on his coworkers, Timothy and Titus, to speak and act for him in his absence. (See 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, 2 Corinthians 8:16-24, Galatians 2:1 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2.)

To these successors, Paul gives advice about some of the problems of leading a large Christian community, which is now identified as the “household of God” rather than the Body of Christ. As a household, the emphasis is on the community as a structured institution to which everyone could belong. The Christian community is both a home and a family. Paul identifies the Christian community not as the Body of Christ but as the household of God.

This change hints at the type of person who is needed to be a leader (1 Timothy 3:1-13). Although we call them “pastors,” the job description clearly calls not for a shepherd but for a manager; in Greek, the word for the overseer of a household is episkopos (the root of our word bishop).

In 1 Timothy, Paul emphasizes Timothy's role as a teacher who must be on guard against false doctrine (1:3-11, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:3-16). Paul also stresses the qualities necessary for authentic ministers in the community. Just as Paul's life is the model (1:15) of how God's grace can change us, so must Timothy's life be a model for others. He must find others to assist him in his duties of prayer (2:1-15), teaching (4:6-16) and administration (5:1–6:2) so that what is entrusted to him can be passed on.

In the letter to Titus, Paul first advises Titus about the qualities of the leaders whom Titus is to appoint for each town (1:5-9). Paul next describes the guidelines for Christian behavior for members of the community (2:1–3:11).

2 Timothy is Paul's personal farewell to Timothy. Along with warnings against false teaching, Paul provides encouragement by drawing on his experience of being called to share in God's mysterious plan. Despite his sufferings and his loneliness, Paul is not discouraged and bitter. He is the living example for his final plea that Timothy “be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully” (2 Timothy 4:5). His advice still applies today!