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All Together Now

MARK 1:16–20



GOAL

Children learn through play how God gathers us all together to live in community.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Dear God, may I help create community with the children I lead and the people I encounter. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Before we can live in community, we must gather. God always calls diverse groups of people together to live in community. That call is filled with the Holy Spirit and binds us together across all the differences and divides that exist in our world. This session will help the children learn that God gathers us into community in all sorts of diverse ways.

THE BIBLE STORY

In Mark 1:16–20, Jesus calls two sets of brothers, fishermen working in different boats. Yesterday, they competed for the best spots to fish and now they are gathered together cooperating. Jesus also called tax collectors, political activists, homemakers, and all sorts of other people who might not ordinarily cooperate. What do they have in common? They all followed Jesus when he called them. They were ready for something new. Jesus gathered his disparate disciples and kept gathering them. He gathered many more than just the “Twelve.” Many unnamed, uncelebrated people from different walks of life followed Jesus when he called. God’s Spirit moved through their differences to build the movement following Jesus.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Watch young children at free play. It is always a glorious tumult of gathering. Where there are only blocks, crayons, or even just some concrete and stones, children will gather together across their differences to play. Games and how to play them are created on the spot. Rich, complete imaginary worlds are conjured and the vision of them is held in the heads of all the little ones involved. Perhaps young children know better than grown-ups what it means to be gathered to live in community. Maybe we’ll learn something from them in this session.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Set up the room with one space for table work and another space with lots of room to move around.
- “Singing Together” (p. 8): On newsprint, write the lyrics to “O Look and Wonder,” found on Resource Page 1. Keep the newsprint for sessions 2, 3, and 4.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “The ‘Come, Follow Me!’ Train” (p. 10): Obtain a train whistle and train engineer’s cap. These items are optional.



GETTING STARTED

- Mural paper
- Crayons



This project is a great opportunity for a leader to draw with the children to model engagement and creativity.

- Prepared newsprint with lyrics to the song “O Look and Wonder” (see Resource Page 1)
- Internet-connected device (optional)

DRAWING ALL TOGETHER



Start a big communal picture before the first child arrives. Draw a few trees all over the mural paper. As each child arrives, welcome them and tell them that the group is creating a magical forest. Show what has been drawn and invite them to add what they think this magical forest needs. Tell each child that what they want to add is exactly what the forest needs. Engage the children in conversation as they draw, wondering about what they are adding to the forest. Affirm their drawings. Comment on what you see that everyone has added to the magical forest and thank them by name for making the forest more magical with what they drew.

SINGING TOGETHER



Display newsprint with the lyrics to the song “O Look and Wonder.” Talk through the words to the song, then listen to the tune. If the whole song seems too ambitious, just sing the refrain, and perhaps the first verse in this session. Repeat it several times, especially the refrain.

To hear the tune, go to bit.ly/FMOLookTune (0:21). To sing along in Spanish (words not provided on the video), show the YouTube video “*Miren que Bueno* (O Look and Wonder)” (bit.ly/FMMiren, 1:52). Try to sing the refrain in English and Spanish.



Keep the newsprint with the lyrics for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

MAKE A GROUP



Comment how great it is to be gathered and to work together to create the beautiful mural. Tell the children that they’re going to practice gathering in some different ways. Explain that they will have to listen to your instructions; then they will have until the count of ten to gather in the way you call out. Once they are in a group, have them share names and one thing about themselves, such as favorite color, who’s in their family, pets, and so forth. You can do as many of these as you like.

Start with forming groups based on similarities. Then try gathering in groups based on differences. Some examples may be:

- Make a group of two friends with the same color shoes as you. GO!
- Make a group of three friends with the same color eyes as you. GO!
- Make a group of two friends that go to different schools. GO!
- Make a group of three friends who all have different color tops on. GO!

Try to make quick observations so that there is never someone left out. If children cannot make a larger group of three or more, congratulate them on making a group of two friends. End with a group number of all in the room today.



Differences in skin color and features may come up in your conversations. In some ways we’re different, and in other ways we’re the same. This is a good thing to get young children talking about, but make sure that no one is singled out.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

ALL TOGETHER FOR THE STORY

D C

Resource Page 2

Read the adapted Bible story on Resource Page 2 to the children. Each time Jesus says, “Come, follow me,” in the story, reach out your hand and invite the children to repeat those words.

FISHING FOR CHILDREN

G AM

Designate an area in your space as the sea. This may be marked off with items in the room, or it can be your whole room. Create a space to be a boat. A turned-over table or group of chairs works well.

Stand in the boat and invite the children to imagine that they are fish swimming in the sea. They can wiggle like fish and move around in the space you designate as “the sea.” Pretend to cast a net or toss a line from a fishing rod. Call a child by name, saying, “Come, follow me!” That child is *caught* and gets into the boat with you. They are now the fisher and cast their net or line, calling another child to “Come, follow me!” Continue until all the children have been caught and are in the boat with you.

Wonder together what it means that the story said that Jesus told his followers that they would fish for people. Comment that one of the things that Jesus did best was to gather all different kinds of people to follow him and be in community together.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

ALL TOGETHER AT CHURCH

D AM T

Worship bulletin or internet-connected device (optional)

If you have a worship bulletin or the church website on an internet-connected device, show where different groups that meet at your church may be found. This may be in several places or on a church calendar. Otherwise, wonder what groups might meet in your church. Talk about a few of the groups. Perhaps there are musical groups, a weekday school or child care, a committee meeting, a Bible study, or a service group. Invite the children to act out what each group might do together. See some examples below and invent your own actions for other groups at your church.

- For a choir: Point to some children to sing “BO, BO, BO” in a low singing voice. Point to others to sing “NAY, NAY, NAY” in a regular singing voice. Point to others to sing “LA, LA, LA” in a high voice. Conduct your choir with lots of pointing and gesturing. Let the children conduct too!
- For a service group: Assign each child a tool or service task to pantomime, such as cooking food, repairing a house, doing yardwork, and so forth. Have them think of an action and a noise to go with it. Have them alternate between the noise, the action, and both.
- For a Bible study: Have the children sit in a circle and make a book with their hands, pretending they are reading. Whisper things in the children’s ears to say out loud, such as “This text really speaks to me”;

“I like the part where God shows up”; and so forth. Each time one person speaks, the rest of the group says, “Hmmm. Interesting.”

After the children have acted out a few groups, ask them what brings each group together and what they all have in common. They may say that they have your church in common. Comment that God’s Spirit works in each one of the groups, bringing them together for the purpose they have.

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- Internet-connected device

ANIMALS ALL TOGETHER

NS C T

Humans aren’t the only ones that gather. Show the YouTube video “Animal Friends (Learn Animal Group Names)—Debbie and Friends” (bit.ly/FMAnimalFriends, 4:08) to learn about the different names for gatherings of animals. After the video, use the following questions for conversation:

- ✦ What animal-group names were funny?
- ✦ Why do you think animals gather together?
- ✦ Why do you think humans gather together in community?
- ✦ Why do you think Jesus gathers people together? Are the reasons the same or different?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Paper
 - Crayons
 - Mural from “Drawing All Together” (p. 8)
 - Tape

ALL TOGETHER EVERYWHERE

A C

Provide paper and crayons. Invite the children to draw four or five different people on their paper, each in a different color. Then ask each child to add something to the picture that all their people can gather together to do. Some suggestions might be a soccer ball, something to eat, a stage and costumes for a play, a musical instrument, and so forth. Assist them with ideas as needed.

Draw a picture of the children in your group and yourself with a picture of the magical forest mural. This can be simple stick figures, but try to identify the children with an item of clothing or hair color.

When the drawings are done, have each child share what their people have gathered to do. Invite them to add it to the mural. Share your drawing with the children and see if they can tell what it represents. Add a cross to your picture and tell the children that you are so glad Jesus gathered you all together today. Add some wavy lines and tell the children that the lines represent God’s Holy Spirit that is with you all and helps you all learn together. Draw a big heart around all the children to show the love of God holding them together. Add your picture to the mural as well.

 If you know who regularly attends your group, you can make your drawing ahead of time, adding to your picture as you need to during the activity. This may free you to help the children as they create their pictures.

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- Train whistle and train engineer’s cap (optional)

THE “COME, FOLLOW ME!” TRAIN

AM G S

Have the children sit in a circle of chairs. Tell them that you are the engineer of the “Come, Follow Me!” train. Use the following instructions:

- I will ask you by name to “Come, follow me,” along with an act of service, justice, or kindness.
- When you hear your name, get out of your chair and follow me around the *track* outside of the circle of chairs.

- Instead of saying, “Toot! Toot!” we will say, “I will (*action named*),” and pretend to pull the train whistle (or blow a whistle, if you have one).
- When I call another name, the person on the train will change places so another person gets a ride on the train.
- If I say, “All aboard!” then everyone will get up and be on the train together, pulling the train whistle and saying, “I will (*action named*).”

Use the following suggestions and add some of your own as well.

- I will pray for those in need.
- I will donate food to the food pantry.
- I will use my voice if someone is being treated unfairly.
- I will give away toys I no longer play with.
- I will share with my siblings and friends.
- I will help my family at home.



As a variation, the first child on the train could call out a name of a second child to join the ride, and so forth, until all the children are on the train ride. Each time a child is added to the train, change the activity you call out.



FOLLOWING JESUS

A PLACE IN THE CHOIR



Internet-connected device (optional)

As a closing for each session of this unit, you will lead the children in singing or saying the chorus to the song “All God’s Creatures.” Wonder together how coming together as a community of faith is like being in a choir. If the concept of *choir* is too formal or implies only those with trained voices, then use the image of singing in church.

Show the children the YouTube video “A Place in the Choir Lyric Video” (bit.ly/FMAllCreatures, 2:52) and invite them to sing along with the chorus as it becomes familiar.

Or, have the children repeat your words and actions to the chorus of the song. You may want to incorporate this with the singing of the chorus as the children become more familiar with the tune and pace of the song. To begin, invite the children to choose an animal and make a movement or sound like it. Explain that will be what they do to respond to the first line. (If you are using the motions with the song, this will go very fast!)

All God’s creatures (*make animal actions and/or noises*) /
got a place in the choir. (*move hand out from mouth and sing*
“Laaaa!”) /

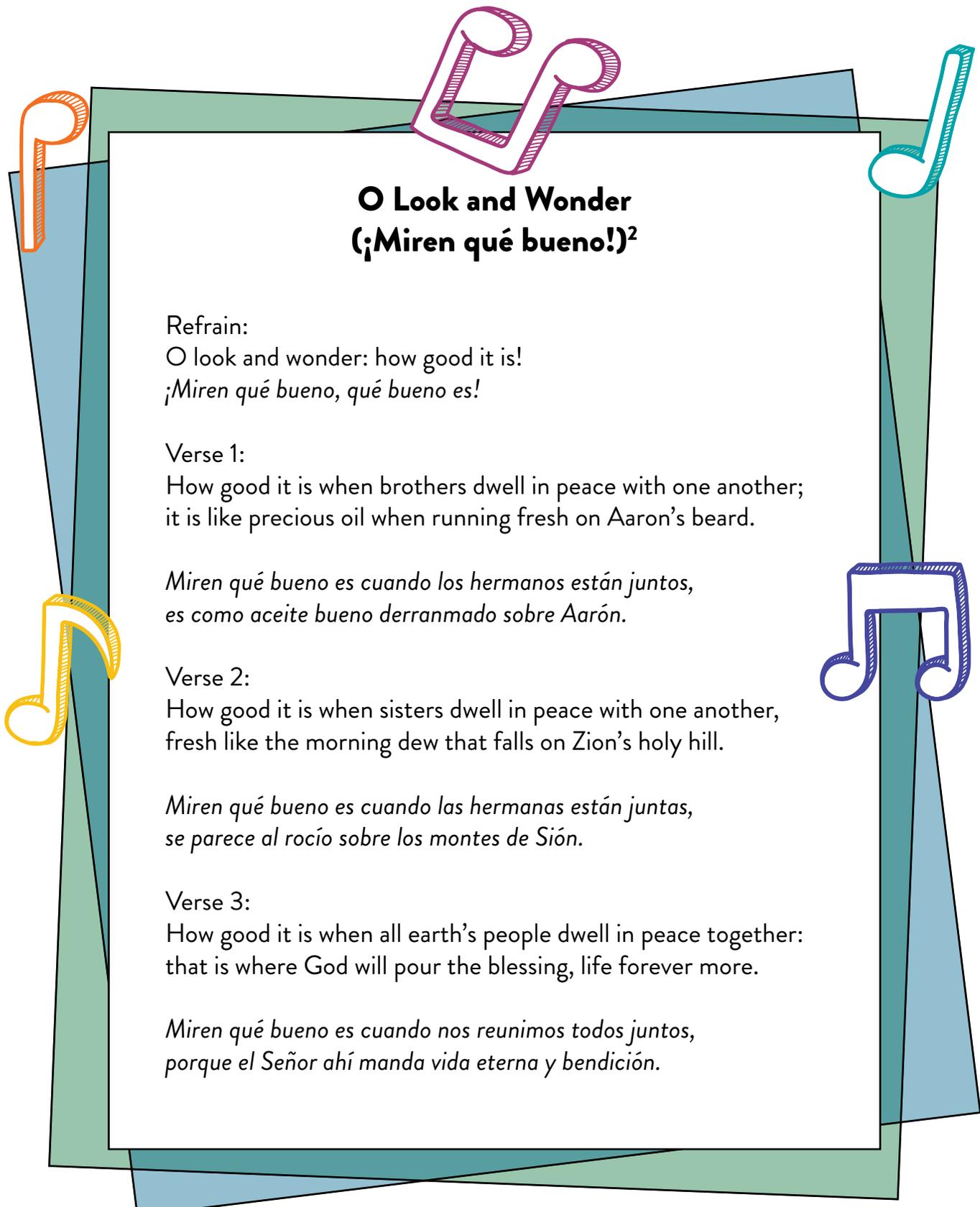
Some sing low (*crouch down low*) /
and some sing higher. (*stand on tiptoes*) /
Some sing out loud (*move arms open wide*) /
on a telephone wire. (*move hands from center outward as if holding*
a thin wire) /

Some just clap their hands, (*clap hands*) /
or paws, (*clap hands*) /
or anything they’ve got now. (*clap hands on each beat*) /¹

After the song, close with the following blessing:

You are not creatures, but beloved children of God.
May you always take your place in God’s family choir
gathered to sing out grace, hope, peace, and love.

1. “All God’s Creatures,” © Bill Staines. All rights reserved.



O Look and Wonder (¡Miren qué bueno!)²

Refrain:

O look and wonder: how good it is!

¡Miren qué bueno, qué bueno es!

Verse 1:

How good it is when brothers dwell in peace with one another;
it is like precious oil when running fresh on Aaron's beard.

*Miren qué bueno es cuando los hermanos están juntos,
es como aceite bueno derramado sobre Aarón.*

Verse 2:

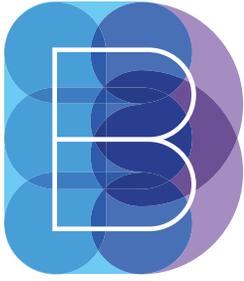
How good it is when sisters dwell in peace with one another,
fresh like the morning dew that falls on Zion's holy hill.

*Miren qué bueno es cuando las hermanas están juntas,
se parece al rocío sobre los montes de Sión.*

Verse 3:

How good it is when all earth's people dwell in peace together:
that is where God will pour the blessing, life forever more.

*Miren qué bueno es cuando nos reunimos todos juntos,
porque el Señor ahí manda vida eterna y bendición.*



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON MARK 1:16–20

Jesus loved people and wanted to teach them about God’s love. One day, he walked by the sea to find some people to teach and love. Jesus needed these people to help him teach and love even more people.

Jesus walked by a lot of people that day and didn’t say anything to them. Then he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were fishing. Do you think Jesus felt something different about them?

“Come, follow me.” Jesus called out to them, “and I’ll teach you to gather people together better than you gather fish.”

That’s all Jesus said. Kinda weird, right? But Simon and Andrew left their fishing stuff and followed. Why do you think they followed?

The three of them walked a little further. They came to two more brothers, James and John. They were fixing their fishing stuff. Jesus called them too, saying, “Come, follow me.” James and John left their fishing stuff too. Now Jesus had some people to teach and love. Now Jesus had people to help him teach and love others. A lot of other people would gather together around Jesus as he taught and loved people.

