

Semicontinuous
1 Sam. 3:1–10
 (11–20)
Ps. 139:1–6, 13–18

Complementary
Deut. 5:12–15;
Ps. 81:1–10
2 Cor. 4:5–12
Mark 2:23–3:6

Holy Time

Goal for the Session *Children will learn about the Sabbath and hear Jesus’ teaching about what is important about Sabbath time.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 2:23–3:6

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Judith Hoch Wray

Mark 2:23–28 is linked to Mark 3:1–6 by two major themes: (a) what is permissible (or lawful) to do on the Sabbath; and (b) the relationship of humanity (*anthropos*) to the Sabbath. Mark’s account prepares the way for the early Christian community to establish its distinct identity. The account ends with Jesus at the center of the synagogue, having demonstrated his lordship of the Sabbath, standing with the human whose hand is now restored. The accusers leave and, ironically, immediately demonstrate their own desecration of the Sabbath by plotting with the Herodians to kill Jesus.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Wendy Farley

Each element of Jesus’ conflict with the Pharisees has to do with basic observances that characterize not only Jewish but also Christian piety: forgiveness of sins; conventions concerning what, when, and with whom we eat; honoring the Sabbath. These are particular ways in which we sanctify time and space. This conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees contrasts religion that hardens hearts with the gospel that opens hearts to the ubiquitous presence of God and gives birth to compassion and joy.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Don E. Saliers

What was the intention of “Sabbath” in the first place? Here we recall that it was a day of rest directly related to the holiness and the goodness of creation. It also carries the resonance of liberation from captivity and slavery. If Jesus counters the pharisaic objection found in Mark by claiming the Sabbath was made for human beings, not the other way around, then we begin to understand that Jesus is actually calling for liberation and restoration of the meaning of Sabbath. Christ’s authority is greater than any human voice, no matter how pious, no matter how deeply entrenched in religious tradition.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Nibs Stroupe

This passage asks of readers in every age: What are the essential categories of our lives that Jesus threatens? What have we made divine in our lives that should remain mortal and finite? Since the Sabbath is the central focus of conflict in this passage, we should look first at the concept of the Sabbath in our time. As always, there is powerful good news here. At the same time that we are threatened by Jesus, our hearts long for him. Who among us does not want to be freed from our consumer lifestyle that is killing our souls and polluting the earth? This text reminds us that the journey to life goes through the cross, but that the resurrection awaits as well.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:23–3:6

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- battery-powered candle
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 27, 28
- Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player
- Bible
- bookmark
- large weekly planning calendar
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- crayons

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 30; *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2; colored pencils or fine-tipped markers; *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player
- option 3: small terracotta flower pots, paintbrushes, acrylic paints (including gold or silver), votive candles, paint shirts
- option 4: index cards, nature magazines, scissors, glue sticks, pens or pencils

Focus on Your Teaching

Children are often over-scheduled with activities. Many families maintain large wall calendars to keep track of all the after-school and weekend programs. Summers are carefully planned. Even Sundays include commitments to sports teams or dance classes. Children may not understand the concept of Sabbath, of Sunday as a special day set apart from the rest of the week. As you prepare for this session, think about how you can create a sense of Sabbath quiet during your time together with the children.

O God, help me to practice Sabbath in my own life and to open myself to the love and care of your Spirit as I teach these children. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, arrange the green cloth in the center of your meeting space, perhaps on a small table. Place the candle and Bible—with a bookmark at Mark 2—on the cloth. Arrange Color Pack 1, 2, 3, and 4 around the cloth.

Welcome the children as they arrive. Gather around the candle. Sing together “God, We Sing” (Color Pack 27; track 8 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Teach the “All” response and then lead the gathering ritual:

Leader: Let us get ready to journey through the green season of the weeks after Pentecost (*touch green cloth*).

We will hear the stories of God, the Creator (*hold up Bible*), and follow the light of Jesus (*light candle*) as the Spirit helps us to live in God’s love.

All: We will learn and grow together.

Sit in a circle with the group and pass around a planning calendar. Ask how many of the learners’ families have a calendar like this. What do they write on it?

Point to the square for Monday and invite children to name things they do after school on Mondays. Continue naming things for several other days of the week. Point to Sunday and ask what is special or different about this day. Comment that this week’s Bible story talks about days like Sunday.

EXPLORING

Ask a child to get the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmarked page. Explain that for the next few weeks your Bible stories will come from the Gospel of Mark. The Gospels are the books in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) that tell stories about Jesus’ life. The word *gospel* means “good news,” and in these books we hear



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

Holy Time

God, We Sing

1. God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of *hope*
anew;
Light this candle, light the
way,
Bring *hope* into our hearts
today.
Jesus, near us as we pray,
Let *hope* be in our hearts
today.

2. *peace*

3. *love*

4. *joy*

5. *Christ*

Encourage the group to say the bolded parts with great enthusiasm, holding up a hand as they shout “Stop!”

Older children might like to find Genesis 2:2–3 in their Bibles and read about the seventh day of creation.

The outdoor image on Color Pack 5 is a labyrinth, a path to walk while praying.

EASY
PREP

the good news of how God sent God’s Son, Jesus, to earth to teach about God’s love. They also tell how Jesus called disciples, or followers, to learn from him and help him in his work.

Show Color Pack 5. Ask:

- ✿ Where are Jesus and his followers?
- ✿ What do you think they might be talking about together?

Invite learners to use their imaginations to join Jesus in the picture and walk with him through the story.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Against the Rules!). Ask for volunteers to read the parts of the Narrator, Disciples, and Jesus. Practice saying the line for “All” with the rest of the group.

Perform the story drama a second time, having children switch parts.

Looking at Color Pack 5, ask:

- ✿ If this were a picture from today’s story, what might the background art include?

Give each child a crayon. Ask learners to circle the word *sabbath* everywhere it appears on Resource Sheet 1. Explain that at the beginning of the Bible there is a story about how God worked hard for six days to create the whole world, and then had a rest on the seventh day. Some people call that rest day the Sabbath day.

In Bible times there were lots of rules about the Sabbath. Ask:

- ✿ In today’s story, what did Jesus say was most important about the Sabbath?

Hold up Color Pack 2 and read in unison the words “Growing in Understanding.” Say that Bible stories help us to grow in understanding more about God and about living in God’s way. Today’s story helped us better understand the Sabbath. Look again at the planning calendar and explain that Sunday is our Sabbath.

- ✿ What are some things that we can do on Sundays to spend time with God?

Hold up Color Pack 6 and 7, and invite learners to tell about the pictures. These photos show some ways to spend time with God. These ways are called spiritual practices. Today in Responding, learners will have an opportunity to participate in some spiritual practices.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Spiritual Practice: Sing** Children will explore one of the things Christians do at church on the Sabbath—sing together. Show Color Pack 30 and play “I’ve Got Peace like a River” (track 12 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Encourage children to sing along. Work together to make up actions to accompany the lyrics as they sing.

If you do not have acrylic paints, make some by mixing 2 parts liquid tempera paint with 1 part white glue.

- Spiritual Practice: Quiet Activity** Children will learn how quiet activities can help them think about God. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Creation Meditation) and read aloud the verses in unison. Set out colored pencils or fine-tipped markers, and invite children to move to a space apart from the others as they color. Encourage them to think about God and God's loving creation as they color. Play "Music for Meditation" (track 16 on *Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*) as they work. Afterward, discuss other quiet activities that might help them to focus on God.
- Spiritual Practice: Prayer Candles** Children will make candles to use during Sabbath time with their families. Point out that many Christians light a candle when they pray. Invite children to make candle holders to take home and use during prayer times. Give each child a flower pot. Have them put on paint shirts. Set out acrylic paints and paintbrushes. Direct them to paint the inside of the pots with gold or silver and add designs to the outside with other colors. When paint is dry, distribute votive candles to place inside the pots. Encourage learners to light these with their families at home and then pray together.
- Spiritual Practice: Service** Children will express the importance of caring for people as they make postcard prayers to give to sick or homebound members of your church. Distribute index cards, scissors, and glue sticks. Have children cut beautiful pictures from nature magazines and glue them to one side of their cards. On the other side, have them print short prayers or messages, such as "God bless you" or "Jesus loves you." Explain that you will give these cards to the pastor or the care team for delivery on their visits.

CLOSING

Gather together around the candle and light it, if necessary. Invite the group to spend a quiet moment looking at the flame. Show Color Pack 6 and 7, and invite the children to tell some ways they would like to spend Sabbath time with God. Sing "Hallelujah" (Color Pack 28; track 9 on *Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*).

Ask the children to stand quietly, with their eyes closed and hands in front with palms together in a prayer position. Ask them to participate in a breath prayer by slowly breathing in and out as you repeat the following phrases several times. Pray:

We breathe in God's Spirit.

We breathe out God's love.

Finish by saying "Amen."

Extinguish the candle.

Thank each child for coming, and encourage him or her to return next week.

Hallelujah

Hallelujah, . . .
Let us praise God. . . .
We are blessings, . . .
Hear our prayer now, . . .

June 2, 2024
Holy Time



Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

Against the Rules! (Based on Mark 2:23-3:6)

- Narrator:** One Sabbath day, Jesus and his friends were walking through a wheat field.
- Disciples:** “We’re hungry! Let’s pick a little bit of this grain to eat. Yum, yum!”
- Narrator:** Some religious leaders were watching and they said:
- All:** **“HEY! STOP! That’s against the rules for the Sabbath!”**
- Jesus:** “Really? Do you remember what King David did when he was hungry? He went into the holy meeting place and ate some bread that only the priests were allowed to eat. Even though it is against your rules to pick grain on the Sabbath day, God doesn’t want people to be hungry.”
- Narrator:** Later that same day, Jesus and the disciples were at the synagogue, the holy meeting place for the Jews. He saw a man with a crippled hand. Jesus watched the man struggling to do things with one hand and wanted to help.
- Jesus:** “Come here and stretch out your hand.”
- Narrator:** The man held out his hand to Jesus, and it was as good as new! Some religious leaders were watching and they said:
- All:** **“HEY! STOP! That’s against the rules for the Sabbath!”**
- Narrator:** Jesus became angry. He looked the leaders in the eye and asked:
- Jesus:** “Is it better to help people or to leave them suffering because your rules say we should do no work on the Sabbath?”
- Narrator:** No one said a word, but they probably knew what the answer should be. Jesus wanted people to know that it is important to look after yourself and others on the Sabbath day.

June 2, 2024
Holy Time

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 2

Creation Meditation

On the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

—Genesis 2:2–3, Common English Bible

