

Semicontinuous
**Prov. 22:1–2, 8–9,
22–23**
Ps. 125

Complementary
Isa. 35:4–7a
Ps. 146

**Jas. 2:1–10 (11–13),
14–17**

Mark 7:24–37

Love for Everyone

Goal for the Session

Children will hear of the Syrophenician woman's persistence and practice ways to demonstrate God's love is for all.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 7:24–37

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Douglas R. A. Hare

How can Christians appropriate this story? First, it reminds us of our debt to Israel. As Krister Stendahl proposed, in Paul's view we Gentile Christians must consider ourselves “honorary Jews.” The Gentile woman humbly acknowledges the priority of the “children,” even as she presses her request to be fed from the same table. Second, the woman's boldness inspires us to be bold in our prayers of intercession and petition. Even though our basic principle is “Your will be done,” we must not prematurely abandon our prayers for healing, thinking they are futile.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Loye Bradley Ashton

To be the Son of God, the Messiah must suffer, not only at the hands of those of us who do not understand him, but also under the conditions of existence, the challenge of the human condition itself. To be otherwise would not allow Jesus to be fully human. Furthermore, according to the tenets of process and liberation theologies, if he is also “fully God,” Jesus cannot avoid this suffering either. Mark provides an interesting way of seeing how the divine and the human can be completely combined in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, a kind of “Ephphatha Christology.” Jesus is fully God and fully human only if he can faithfully “be opened” to both at the same time.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Amy C. Howe

Perhaps it is too much to ask that a homeless person could interrupt the dinner of the president of the United States to ask a favor, but it is not too much to ask humanity to recognize that there are no walls made of withered hands, deaf ears, or troubled minds separating us from God or us from each other. Status is a product of our own imaginations, invisible to God. Once we acknowledge that there are no walls separating us, love and mercy flow unfettered, and all people are deemed equally valuable.

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

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm

Most of us are reluctant to share our faith with others and we find very good reasons to keep quiet: we may believe that our actions speak more loudly than our words, we may be afraid of the inadequacy of our speech, or we may fear that we will make a mistake and alienate those to whom we are speaking. Yet the healed man is every bit as insistent as the Syrophenician woman. He and his companions give voice to God's presence and power among them. The characters in both stories embolden us to share whatever glimpse of God's mercy, love, and truth we have witnessed. Their stories and words remind us to focus our attention on God and to keep pointing others toward the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 7:24–37

Focus on Your Teaching

Young children are familiar with persistent asking and experienced in asking in a variety of ways until they are satisfied their requests are understood. They know they may not receive the answer they want, but they will give the asking their best effort. To children, Jesus' response in today's story may seem exactly that of a tired parent, yet his final response is just the answer for which the woman has been hoping. Invite children to take their requests to God in the same trusting and persistent way, knowing that God's love expands to include all their questions.

Loving God, your enveloping love hears my questions and requests. Help me to express this inclusive love as I teach. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- small table or large box
- battery-powered candle
- Bible
- 4 index cards
- marker
- Color Pack 1, 2, 27
- scissors
- 13" x 9" baking pan
- water
- bath towel
- copier paper (optional)
- Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2; scissors; glue sticks; crayons; Color Pack 27; *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player
- option 2: 12" x 18" construction paper, scissors, pencils, crayons, marker
- option 3: see sidebar by activity

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, use a marker to print the letters L, O, V, E on separate index cards. Cut out the figure on Color Pack 1 and fold it as shown in the diagram. Fill a 13" x 9" baking pan with water and set it on a bath towel. If you are using option 2 in Responding, cut a 6" x 18" piece of construction paper for each child. Fold each piece in fourths accordion-style, so the resulting piece is about 4½" x 6". If you are using option 3, cut several sizes of hearts from cardboard for children to use as tracing patterns. Make a copy of "Poem for Option 3" on Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) for each child. Cut drinking straws in half; each child needs six pieces.

Greet each child by name. Invite the learners to help you place a green cloth on a small table or large box to make a worship center and put the candle and the Bible on it. Light the candle and pray aloud, asking the children to repeat each phrase:

Dear God, / thank you for always loving us. / Be with us today / as we learn about Jesus. / Amen.

Invite the children to tell about times when they asked their parents or teachers for something that was really important to them. Encourage discussion by asking:

- ✎ Did you have to ask more than once? If so, why did you keep asking?
- ✎ How do you feel when you ask for something and the answer is yes? How do you feel when the answer is no?

Say that today's Bible story is about a woman who asked Jesus for something.

Children's persistent asking can frustrate parents and teachers. Some children may have been told "no means no," and so have difficulty understanding Jesus' tolerance for the woman's requests. Affirm that God hears our prayers, no matter how often we repeat them.

Option: From copier paper, make a smaller version of the figure on Color Pack 1 for each child and fold it. Have learners place their folded pieces in the pan of water and observe what happens.

EASY
PREP

EXPLORING

Open the Bible to the Gospel of Mark and point to the word *Mark*. Explain that this book of the Bible has many stories about Jesus. The Bible story for today comes from Mark.

Use "Story Script" on Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) to tell the Bible story. After telling the story, ask:

- ✪ What did the woman want Jesus to do?
- ✪ Why do you think Jesus said no the first time she asked?
- ✪ Why do you think the woman kept asking Jesus to help her daughter?
- ✪ How do you think the woman knew that God has enough love for everyone?
- ✪ How did Jesus show God's love for the woman and her daughter?

Gather around the baking pan of water. Show the folded figure from Color Pack 1. Invite the children to guess what might happen when you place the piece of folded paper in the water. Place the folded heart in the water with the folded panels facing up and watch what happens. Talk about how God's love unfolds until there is enough for everyone. God's love grows and grows to include everyone. Wonder together about how this is good news for them and for others too.

Show Color Pack 2 and invite them to imagine the many kinds of people whose arms are in this picture. Invite volunteers to spell and read the word *love*. Ask:

- ✪ How might we use our hands and arms to tell other people the good news that God's love is for everyone?

Place the index cards with letters (L, O, V, E) in the middle of the circle. Invite the children to take turns holding up one of the letters and naming a way to tell about God's love or to show it.

Wrap up Exploring by affirming that God's love is for everyone, regardless of where people live or how they look. God has enough love for everyone. Discuss:

- ✪ How can you show the people in your family and your friends that God's love is for them?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Song Poster** Children will sing a song about God's love for all. Ask the children to listen as you play the first stanza of "You Are My Beloved Child" (Color Pack 27; track 21 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Song Poster) and scissors. Demonstrate how to cut off the strip and then cut apart the rectangles. Have learners glue the rectangles to the page in the same order as the words in the first line of the song. Invite learners to color their posters. Have children run their fingers under the words as they sing this stanza again. Encourage them to teach their families the song as a reminder of God's love.

Materials needed: copies of Resource Sheet 1, cardboard, construction paper, stickers, scissors, pencils, crayons, tape, drinking straws, play dough, paper cups

- 2. Expandable Hands** Children will demonstrate how God's love stretches to include everyone. Distribute accordion-folded construction paper strips and pencils. Have children place one hand on the top fold, having the pinkie finger and the thumb resting on opposite folds, and then trace around this hand with a pencil. Demonstrate how to cut out the handprint, leaving a bit of the fold at the pinkie and the thumb. Help as needed. Use a marker to print "God's love is for everyone" on the top hand of each child's cutout. Invite them to carefully stretch out their strip of handprints and use crayons to decorate. Suggest that they refold their strips and use them to tell their families about God's love for everyone.
- 3. Bouquets of Love** Children will make a bouquet of hearts as a gift to proclaim God's love for a friend or family member. Lead learners in the following steps: Trace around the cardboard heart shapes and cut out six construction paper hearts in a variety of sizes. Use crayons and stickers to decorate the hearts. Tape one end of every heart to the tip of a half-straw. Place a small piece of play dough in the bottom of a paper cup. Tape a copy of "Poem for Option 3" from Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) to the side of the cup. Stick each straw into the play dough to anchor it in the cup. Discuss to whom they might give their bouquets.

You Are My Beloved Child

You are my beloved child,
hallelujah,
You are my beloved child,
hallelujah.

And my face has smiled on
you, hallelujah,
And my face has smiled on
you, hallelujah.

Then says God to everyone,
hallelujah,
Then says God to everyone,
hallelujah.

You're God's daughter,
you're God's son,
hallelujah!
You're God's daughter,
you're God's son,
hallelujah!

CLOSING

Gather with the children around the worship center. Invite children to stretch their arms out as far as possible as you pray aloud:

Thank you, God, for loving us this much! Thank you for asking us to share your love with everyone we meet. Amen.

Sing "You Are My Beloved Child" (Color Pack 27; track 21 on *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022).

Touch each child lightly on the shoulder as you offer this blessing: "(Name), God has enough love for you and for everyone."

Session Resources

Story Script (Based on Mark 7:24–37)

Directions: Teach the words of the **Refrain** (below). Encourage the children to listen for “The woman said . . .” as their cue to say the refrain.

Jesus wanted to rest. He had been very busy helping people and teaching them how to live in God’s way. Everywhere Jesus went, people followed him and asked for his help. Now he was tired and wanted to rest.

Jesus and his disciples went to the town of Tyre and stopped at a friend’s house to rest. Jesus did not want anyone to know he was there. But a woman came and knelt at Jesus’ feet.

The woman said . . . **Refrain**

Refrain
Jesus, please listen to me!
My daughter is sick and needs to be free!

Jesus said, “I can’t help you. I’m sorry. Please go away.”

But she would not go away. The woman said . . .
Refrain

“I was sent to help some other people,” said Jesus. “I must help them first.”

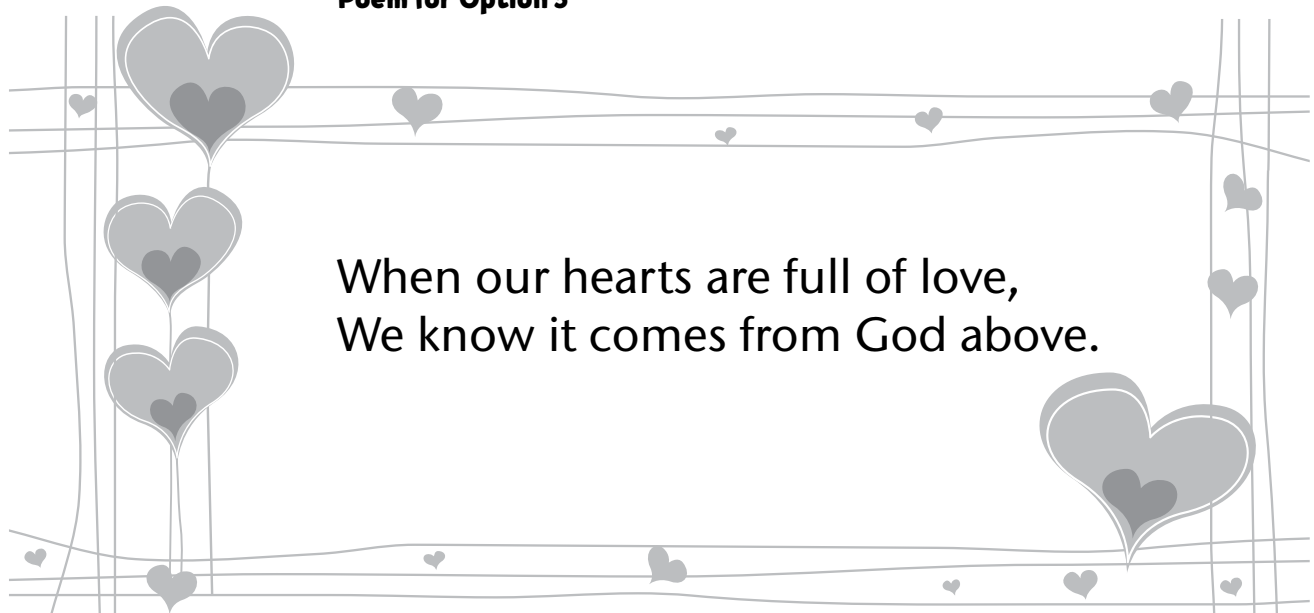
The woman did not give up. “Don’t you have enough love for everyone? Can’t you offer help to people like me who are different from you?” And the woman said . . . **Refrain**

Jesus heard what the woman said. He knew that God’s love was big enough for everyone.

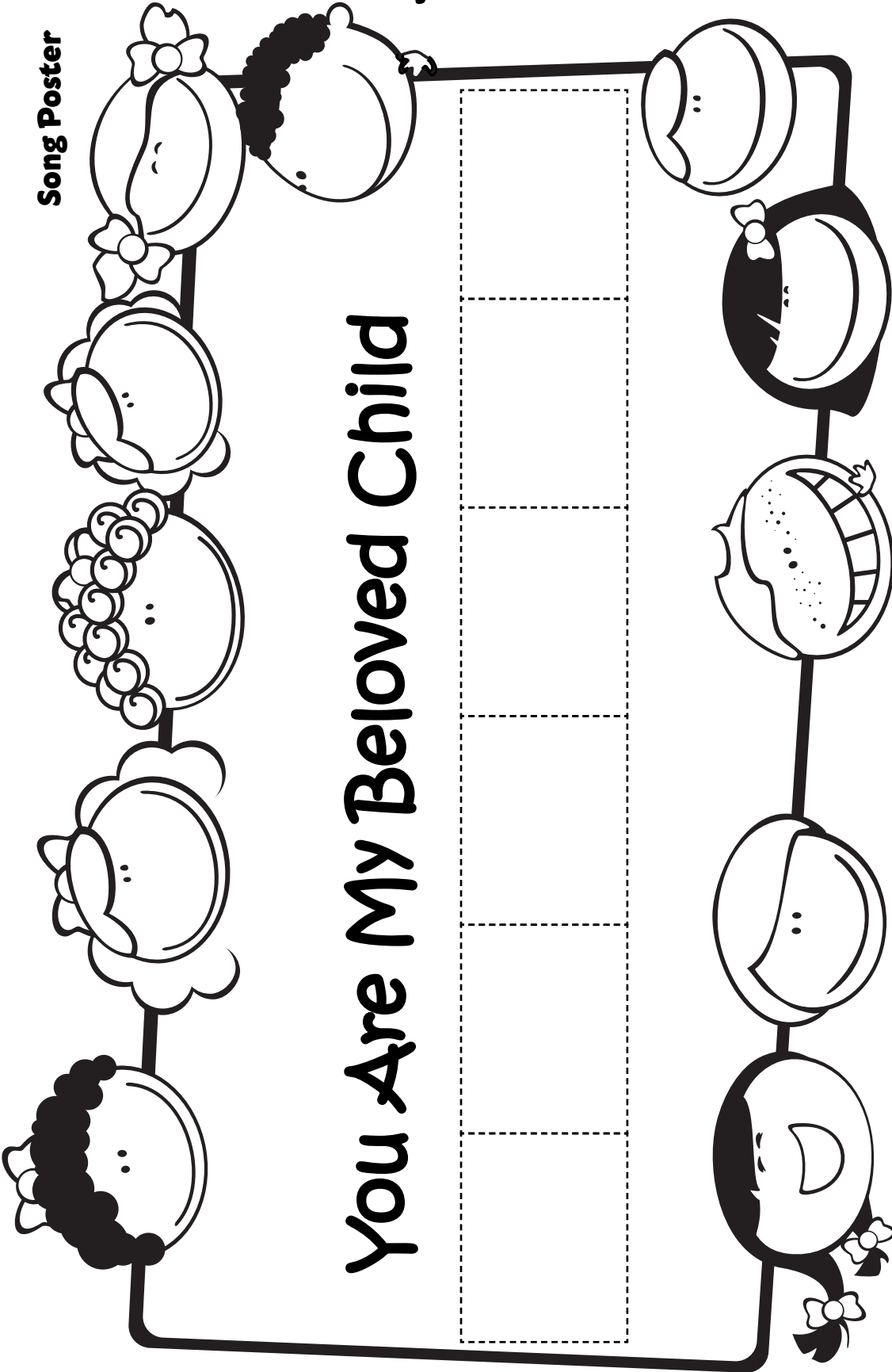
“You are right,” said Jesus. “You are very brave. Go home now. Your daughter will get well.”

The woman went home and found that her daughter was healed!

Poem for Option 3



Song Poster



You Are My Beloved Child

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hallelujah!	my	are	You	child,	beloved
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