

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**

# Jesus Hears Us All

**Goal for the Session** *Third- and fourth-graders will hear the cry of the Syrophenician woman and grow in trusting that Jesus hears the prayers of everyone.*

## ■ 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

Children may not always feel that they are heard. They may have siblings or classmates who monopolize the attention of the adults around them. Their stories may be lost in a flurry of family bustle. Their ideas may be overlooked. Encourage your learners to believe that what they say matters, especially to Jesus. There is never a time when Jesus does not hear them. You can make a difference in young lives as you take care to listen to each child as you teach.

*God, thank you for the children in my class. Help me to assure them that you hear them and that I do too. Open my ears and my heart to you and to them. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- green cloth or place mat
- battery-powered candle
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 27
- Bible
- Resource Sheet 1
- Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: construction paper, scissors, copies of Resource Sheet 2, stapler, pencils, crayons or markers
- option 2: poster board, wide-tipped marker, sticky notes, pens

## LEADING THE SESSION


### GATHERING

*Before the session*, if you are using option 2 in Responding, check with worship leaders about displaying the Prayer Poster and inviting other church members to add to it. If you are using option 3, make arrangements to take learners for a walk outdoors or around your church building.

Greet children as they arrive. Ask volunteers to place the green cloth or place mat in the center of your learning space and put the candle on it. Gather learners around the candle. Explain that the color green indicates the church is in the season of Ordinary Time (or season after Pentecost). Show Color Pack 1 and point out where we are in the church year. Review that the candle is a sign of Jesus' presence with the group. Light the candle and pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each phrase:

*Jesus, as we gather today, / we know you are here too. / Thank you for helping us to learn / and for hearing us when we pray. / Amen.*

Display Color Pack 2. Invite learners to comment on the similarities and the differences they see among the people in this group. Invite learners to tell some of the differences they have observed among children in their school. (For example, good at math/good at art, boy/girl, good at sports/good at computer games.)

 Based on your experience, do people who are different usually listen respectfully to one another? Why or why not?

Comment that today's Bible story is about how Jesus listens.

The beginning of the school year is a great time to talk about expectations for how learners will treat one another. Agree on a few positive guidelines, such as: Be kind to one another. Share supplies. Listen respectfully when others are speaking.

## EXPLORING

Open your Bible to Mark. Explain that there are four books in the Bible that tell the story of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These books are called the Gospels. Today's Bible story is from the Gospel of Mark.

To set the scene for the story, review that Jesus was Jewish. Jewish people followed the Ten Commandments and the law of Moses. Some of their laws said that Jewish people were not to associate with Gentiles—people who aren't Jewish.

Follow the directions on Resource Sheet 1 (Storytelling Guide) to present the story.

Discuss the story:

- ✪ Why was Jesus near the city of Tyre?
- ✪ Why did the Gentile woman want to see Jesus?
- ✪ What did she ask Jesus to do?
- ✪ How did Jesus respond to the woman's plea?
- ✪ If the Gentile woman could give us advice, what do you think she would tell us?
- ✪ What do you learn about Jesus from this story?

Look again at Color Pack 2 and recall some of the differences mentioned in Gathering. Ask:

- ✪ What good news from this Bible story would you tell to each of these people?

Teach the following motions to "Do Lord, O Do Lord" (Color Pack 27; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022). Sing the song with learners while doing the motions.

*Do Lord and Yes, Lord:* Pump fists up and down twice.

*Do remember me:* Place hands on either side of head and shake head side to side.

*Way beyond the blue:* Push hands out from body.

*Need to pray:* Bow head and fold hands.

*Help me to pray:* Pull hands down as if grabbing something from sky.

### Do Lord, O Do Lord

Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me,  
Way beyond the blue.

Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray.  
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray.  
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray,  
Way beyond the blue.

Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray,  
Way beyond the blue.

Wrap up Exploring by discussing:

- ✪ We sang "I know I need to pray." How do you know when you need to talk to Jesus in prayer?
- ✪ We sang "O do help me to pray." Who helps you to trust in Jesus as you pray? (Responses may reflect how God provides other people to encourage learners to pray and how God's Spirit helps them pray.)

**EASY  
PREP**

Expect a variety of prayer experiences among learners. Affirm that God's people can pray in many ways: groups, alone, with families, in church, outdoors, out loud, silently, by drawing and writing, while singing.

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Journal Prayer** Children will make prayer journals to use during their prayer times. Invite learners to name different ways to pray. Recall that Jesus is God's Son and teaches us that God hears all kinds of prayers. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (My Prayers) and half sheets of construction paper. Have learners cut out the journal pages on the resource sheet and staple them in any order inside a folded half sheet of construction paper to make a booklet. Write "Prayer Journal" on the cover. Allow some quiet time for learners to pray, using the pages of their journals as a guide. Encourage them to take the journals home and refer to them as they pray.
- 2. Prayer Poster** Children will create a prayer poster and invite other church members to contribute to it. Recall that Jesus hears the prayers of all people. Ask a volunteer to use a wide-tipped marker to print "Jesus, Hear Our Prayers" at the top of a piece of poster board. Invite learners to write short prayers on sticky notes. Join in a time of prayer, inviting the children to speak their prayers aloud and then place the sticky notes on the poster. If possible, go as a group to hang the poster near the worship space in your church. Place sticky notes and pens near the poster to invite other church members to add their prayers. Next session, retrieve the poster and join in a time of prayer that includes all the prayers.
- 3. Prayer Walk** Children will pray for specific people or situations they encounter as they take a walk. Recall that Jesus hears the prayers of all people. Explain that the group will be taking a prayer walk in the location you have planned. As you walk, the group will pause to pray "popcorn prayers" at different places. To do this, you will begin a prayer and they will offer endings to the sentence prayers without raising their hands or being called on. For example: "Jesus, help our pastor to . . ." "Jesus, as we stand here, we are thankful for . . ." "Jesus, we ask you to . . ." After each popcorn prayer, finish by saying: "Jesus, thank you for hearing our prayers." Encourage learners to pray as they walk around their neighborhoods.

## CLOSING

Gather around the candle. Invite learners to tell what they learned about praying from the Gentile woman.

Stand in front of each child, touch him or her lightly on the shoulder, and offer this blessing: "(Name), pray boldly and trust that Jesus is listening. God bless you in the week to come." Invite the group respond with "Amen"—which means "may it be so"—after each child's blessing.

Tell learners that you hope you will see them again next week.

Receiving an individual blessing or closing charge can be a meaningful moment in a child's week. Stand in front of each learner and make eye contact as you speak the blessing. If you are comfortable doing so, lightly touch his or her shoulder as you speak.

## Storytelling Guide

**Directions:** Tell learners you will read the story twice. The first time they should simply listen. Stand in a circle for the second reading. Tell learners that when you point to them, they are invited to act out that word in the story. As you read, pause at each word in bold type and point to learners.

### **Jesus and the Gentile Woman** (Based on Mark 7:24–37)

Jesus had been working hard in the region around Bethsaida, and he was **tired**. He walked to Tyre, to a house where he thought he could get some **rest**. (The first time you tell the story, show Color Pack 3 and ask a learner to trace the route from Bethsaida to Tyre.)

But the people **found Jesus!** A woman came to see Jesus because her daughter was sick. She believed Jesus could heal her daughter. This woman believed that Jesus would **listen to all people**.

She **bowed** at Jesus' feet. Jesus was Jewish and this woman was a Gentile. In Jesus' time, Jews and Gentiles usually did not speak to one another.

The woman **begged** Jesus to heal her daughter. At first Jesus told her to **wait**. He said it like this: "The children get fed first, and it's not fair to give the children's food to the dogs."

But the woman **knew** that Jesus could heal her daughter. She knew Jesus loves and **listens to all people**, so she said, "Sir, even the dogs can eat the children's crumbs." She knew that **all people** can trust Jesus to help them, **all people**, including her!

And Jesus did help her! Jesus said, "You're right! Go home. Your daughter is **healed**." The woman went home and discovered that her daughter had been healed!

How do you think the Gentile woman felt? Act it out!



September 5, 2021  
Jesus Hears Us All

Grades 3–4  
Resource Sheet 2

## My Prayers



**God, I am thankful for ...**

**God, I am so sorry that I ...**

**God, please help these  
people ...**

**God, I love you because ...**

**God, thank you for sending  
Jesus to teach me to pray.  
I know that you hear me  
when I pray.**

**God, I ask you to ...**