

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

Dogged Determination

Goal for the Session Youth will explore the good news extended to outsiders and find inspiration for reaching across boundaries.

■ 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

Teens live in a world often defined by who is “in” and who is “out.” As a result, young people are desperate to be included, but not always able or willing to include others and for all kinds of reasons: race, ethnic group, social or economic class, weight, height, acne problems, looks, and so on. Mark 7:24–37 challenges young people and the whole church to examine the struggles of becoming a welcoming, inclusive community that brings down boundaries and extends radical welcome.

God, help me to offer radical welcome to the young people so they will experience your love. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- newsprint
- markers
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pens

For Responding:

- option 1: newsprint, markers
- option 2: paper, pens
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils

For Film Connection:

- Step Up 2: The Streets* (2008, PG-13), media player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, write the following on a posted sheet of newsprint: “Remember to _____ outsiders, welcoming no matter who they are or how they look.”

As youth arrive, greet them and invite them to report highs and lows of the past week. Post newsprint and ask the youth to write (graffiti-style) pairs of “us” and “them.” These would be groups of people who allow unwritten (or perhaps written) rules to separate them. For example, jocks and nerds, blacks and whites, rich and poor, attractive and plain. Ask:

- ✂ What is it like to be outside and not be able to get in? How does it feel?
- ✂ What’s it like to be inside and determined to keep anyone else from getting in? How does it feel?

In today’s Scripture, Jesus meets outsiders who are doggedly determined to get on the inside. Pray:

God, open us today to your presence and to the voices of one another. We pray together in Jesus’ name. Amen.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and have youth turn to Mark 7. Use this information to introduce today’s story:

- ✂ According to Jewish law and custom, Gentiles and people with illness or disabilities were considered ritually unclean. Jews did not ordinarily associate with them.
- ✂ Jewish people often referred to Gentiles as “dogs,” a derogatory term.
- ✂ Jesus’ healing stories are always about restoring people to community or breaking social and cultural boundaries that separate people.
- ✂ Jesus regularly crossed the boundaries that separated Jews and Gentiles. He broke the rules, which enraged his Jewish opposition.

Including the outsider—especially if they have to break rules to do it—will appeal to youth in the abstract. It may be more difficult for them to put the concept into practice in their daily lives. How can you encourage them?

- ✪ Tyre and Sidon were largely Gentile territories. The Decapolis (a group of ten cities) was a center of Greek and Roman culture.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Compare Healing Stories) and pens. Create two teams and assign Mark 7:24–30 to one group and Mark 7:31–37 to the other. Instruct each group to fill in the chart for its story and prepare to report its findings to the other group. After sufficient time, hear each group's report. Discuss:

- ✪ Who are the insiders in the stories? The outsiders?
- ✪ What do these two stories have in common? What is different?
- ✪ Why does Jesus use a derogatory word in speaking to the woman? How does this influence your image of Jesus?
- ✪ What motivated the outsiders to approach Jesus? What boundaries did they push against to do so? What consequences did they risk?
- ✪ What rules do the outsiders break? What rules does Jesus break?
- ✪ Why was approaching Jesus worth it to them?

Ask each team to retell today's story from the perspective of the 1) Syrophenician woman or 2) the man who was deaf and mute. Their stories can take whatever forms the team members choose, such as skits, songs, poems, or pictures. Any way they choose to tell the story is fine. The point is to try to tell it from the point of view of the outsider.

Allow each team to present its version of the story. When each team has presented its version, gather the whole group and discuss how it felt to experience the story from another perspective. Discuss:

- ✪ What good comes from welcoming and including outsiders?
- ✪ What is risky about breaking boundaries to include outsiders?
- ✪ In what ways could you be more faithful in how you welcome and include outsiders in the various communities of which you are a part?
- ✪ What rules would you have to break to welcome and include outsiders in your groups?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Imagining Welcome** Participants reflect on the welcome displayed at a youth group activity or church event. On a sheet of newsprint, have participants list what happened before, during, and after the youth group activity or church event. Discuss how welcome the following people might feel at the event: a total stranger, someone gluten intolerant, someone of another faith, someone who is homeless, someone dressed provocatively, someone differently-abled, and an exchange student with basic English. Discuss:
 - ✪ What written or unwritten rules govern the event? Why are the rules in place?
 - ✪ What specific unwritten rules of the event might have made this person feel out of place?
 - ✪ What could be done to make this person feel more welcome? How could we be more welcoming in the future?

**EASY
PREP**

Invite the youth to make posters of their ideas to post in the learning space so they are reminded of this commitment.

- 2. Writing a Song** Create songs that reflect welcome extended to outsiders. Form groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pen. Have groups list five ways they can practice the welcome that was depicted in Mark 7:24–37. Then have groups write new words to a familiar tune (such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or “Amazing Grace”) using the words and phrases found in their lists. When all are finished, give groups an opportunity to present their songs to each other. Ask: In the coming week, how can you practice the kind of welcome reflected in your songs?
- 3. Cooking Community** Participants create recipes that work against social divisions in forming a welcoming community. Form groups of two or three. Give each group a copy of Resource Sheet 2 (Cooking Community). Have groups create recipes using the instructions on the page. See the recipe in the sidebar for an example. Then have groups create and present a skit of cooking shows that features their recipes. Ask: In the coming week, how can you practice the kind of welcome reflected in these recipes?

Ingredients:

2 cups of love
1 pound of faith
1 friendly smile
1 big, giving heart
1 large bowl

Directions: Combine 2 cups of love and a pound of faith in a large mixing bowl. Add 1 friendly smile and a nice, big giving heart. Stir well. (Caution: Do not let set too long. Otherwise, the recipe is no good.)

CLOSING

Call the participants’ attention to the posted newsprint. Form groups of two or three. Have each group come up with a word or short phrase to fill in the blank of the sentence on the newsprint based on what they’ve learned during this session. Then have each group develop a hand motion that brings its word or short phrase to life. When all are finished, give groups an opportunity to say the posted sentence aloud, filling in the blank with their words or phrases while doing the hand motions.

Send the participants with this blessing: “As you go into God’s world, put your faith into action by welcoming outsiders in Jesus’ name.”

■ ENHANCEMENT

FILM CONNECTION

Step Up 2: The Streets (2008, PG-13) tells the story of a troubled teen finding her place among the outcasts at an art high school. Watch these clips:

- ✂ Clip 1: (19:10–20:53) Andi navigates her first day at a new school and tries to find a spot in the cafeteria.
- ✂ Clip 2: (38:08–41:42) Andi and Chase decide to form a hip-hop dance crew from the school’s misfits.

Discuss:

- ✂ How do these film clips connect with Mark 7:24–37?
- ✂ How do communities you’ve participated in reject outsiders? What steps can you take to change this?

September 5, 2021
Dogged Determination

Youth
Resource Sheet 1



Compare Healing Stories

	Mark 7:24-30	Mark 7:31-37
Where is Jesus?		
Who approaches Jesus?		
What does the person ask of Jesus?		
What does Jesus say?		
What does Jesus do?		
What changes because of Jesus' words and action?		

Cooking Community

Write a recipe for creating a community without social divisions, complete with instructions of how to break down barriers and welcome outsiders into the community.

1. List the ingredients that are necessary to create a community without social divisions.
2. Add measurements to indicate how much of each ingredient is needed.
3. Write the directions (sprinkle, mix, stir, sizzle . . .).

Community Recipe

Ingredients:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Directions:

