

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 18
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 7:24-37

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Two healings. One may have come as a surprise even to Jesus. A woman, not of his flock and not of his tradition, begs Jesus to heal her daughter. Because of her persistence he agrees to heal her daughter. A man, deaf and unable to speak clearly, is brought to Jesus. Jesus takes him, gently, off to one side away from prying eyes and heals him. “Don't tell anyone about this,” he cautions. But of course, people find out.

Theme: Prayers of Healing

Before Class: You will need either a roll of paper or a large piece of poster paper, white paper and crayons or markers, scissors, glue sticks or glue. You may need name tags – either purchased, stick-on name tags, or name tags you fashion yourself hung on yarn around the child's neck.

Beginning: If this is your first session with the group, make sure you have nametags for everyone and open with a Get to Know You activity. Find Get to Know You Resources: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/resources/>

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for letting us be together today. Thank you for (and name each child). Amen.

The Story: Ask the children if any of them have ever been sick. Did any of them have a "virus" that made them sick? Tell them that sometimes people say it was a "germ" that made them sick. In Jesus' time, no one knew the words "germ" or "virus." When someone got sick they said they had a "demon."

Today’s gospel story is about a little girl who had a "demon" that was making her very sick and her mother was very worried. The little girl and her mother came from a different country than Jesus did. At first, Jesus thought he was only supposed to take care of the people in his own

country. So he thought he should not heal the little girl. But when the mother begged him to heal her little girl, Jesus realized that he was here to help ALL people, not just a few. So he told the woman to go home and her little girl would be healed. When the woman got home, the little girl was playing in her bed – the "demon" was gone.

A little later Jesus was traveling to another town and some people came to him with a man who could not hear and could not speak so people could understand him. Jesus took the man off to one side where everyone could not see what was going on. He wanted to give the man some privacy. Jesus put his fingers gently into the man's ears and then spat on his fingers and touched the man's tongue. Immediately, the man could hear and could speak so people could understand him.

"Don't tell anyone about this," Jesus said. But it was a secret too hard to keep, and people told each other that Jesus had healed this man.

Activity: To help the children engage in a conversation about healing prayer, give them pieces of paper and crayons or markers to draw the people being healed by Jesus. Suggest that as each child creates a person being healed, they can then cut out that person and paste them on the roll of paper or the poster paper. Ask for a volunteer to draw Jesus to paste in the center of your paper so all the other people they've drawn can come to Jesus.

Option: Tell the children we can help heal people by praying for them. Explain that when we take a vitamin we may not notice right away that it is helping our bodies -- yet it does help our bodies. When we pray for healing, we may not notice right away what has happened. And sometimes, what we pray for does not happen, just as sometimes even though we take vitamins, we get a cold anyway. But we keep on taking vitamins. And we keep on praying.

Getting Closure: Ask the children if there is anyone they want the group could pray for as you close this time together. And feel free to add the names of people you are praying for. Make a note so you can keep asking the children – during the course of these sessions – about these people.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for showing us how to pray for people who need healing. And now we pray for (name all the people the children suggested). Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 18
Lesson Plans for Older Children

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Theme: Prayers of Healing

Before Class: You will need enough copies of the script or Bible and the Book of Common Prayer for each child. If you are going to use the script below and divide the reading into parts, make sure you have enough copies and go over the difficult words with the readers before beginning.

Beginning: If this is your first session with the group, make sure you have nametags for everyone and open with a Get to Know You activity. Find Get to Know You Resources: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/resources/>

Ask the children to define the word "virus," And then ask them to define "germ." Tell them that neither of those words were known to the people of Jesus' time. Tell them that, instead, people spoke of having a "demon" and today you will hear a story about a little girl who was sick with a demon and a man who could not hear nor speak plainly.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for this time we have together and for the stories you give us in scripture to help us understand your love and what you call us to be. Amen.

The Story (Mark 7:24-37): You may simply invite someone to read the passage, or invite one person to read the first healing story and a different person to read the second healing story. Alternatively, you can invite volunteers to read the different parts and use the script that can be

found below. Ask for volunteers to read the parts of: the narrator, the Syrophenician woman, and Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you remember most from the stories we just read?
- I wonder why Jesus so hesitant to heal the little girl? (Jesus had thought his role was to help the Hebrew people and this woman and her little girl were not Hebrews.)
- I wonder what made Jesus change his mind? (Perhaps her persistence and her response to Jesus' rebuff made Jesus decide his message was for a wider audience.)
- I wonder why Jesus took the deaf man off to a private place to heal him? (Perhaps Jesus wanted the man to know he was loved by God. Perhaps Jesus wanted to respect the man's privacy. Perhaps Jesus did not want to draw attention to himself.)

Activity: Ask the children to "present" this passage. They might decide to present it as a play with the parts of the woman, Jesus, and the deaf man. (If you have enough children you can add the little girl and the people who brought the deaf man to Jesus.) Or they might present the passage by sending a reporter to interview at least one person for each of the two healing stories. After they have prepared their presentation, ask them to present it to you, the audience.

Bible Exploration: Ask the children to find the New Testament in the Index. Then find the book "The Letter of James" and turn to it in their Bibles. Then ask them to find Chapter 5 and verses 14-16. Ask for a volunteer to read this passage. You could explain to the children that this Letter of James is a list of things to help people live as Christians.

- Who are the "elders" in our church? (The leaders.)
- Do you think this means only the "elders" can pray for people who are sick? (No.)
- Can children pray for people who are sick? (Why not?)

If time permits, you may also want to look at the section in the Book of Common Prayer on "Ministration to the Sick" (pp. 453-461). To help the children feel comfortable in their calling to pray for people who need healing, invite the children to discuss how they would pray. Some suggestions: ask the person what they want you to pray for; assure the person that God loves them; ask God to use your prayers in the healing of this person. Then thank God and say "Amen."

Getting Closure: Tell the children that in the weeks ahead we will have more stories from the Bible that will give us a better picture of who this Jesus is and what Jesus calls us to do and be.

Closing Prayer: Gracious and Healing God, thank you for revealing your healing powers to us and reminding us to pray for one another. We ask prayers especially for those things we name before you now, either silently or out loud. (Leave silence for people to add prayers.) All these things we give to you in prayer, Lord. Be with us as we leave this place and bring us safely together again. Amen.

Mark 7:24-37

Narrator: From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her,

Jesus: ‘Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.’

Syrophenician Woman: ‘Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’

Jesus: ‘For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.’

Narrator: So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Narrator: Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him,

Jesus: ‘Ephphatha’,

Narrator: that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘

Syrophenician Woman and Deaf Man: He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.

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Lesson Plans that Work
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Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 7:24-37

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The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

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Two healings. One may have come as a surprise even to Jesus. A woman, not of his flock and not of his tradition, begs Jesus to heal her daughter. Because of her persistence he agrees to heal her daughter. A man, deaf and unable to speak clearly, is brought to Jesus. Jesus takes him, gently, off to one side away from prying eyes and heals him. “Don't tell anyone about this,” he cautions. But of course, people find out.

Theme: Prayers of Healing

Before Class: You may wish to talk with the clergy in your church about the role of prayers of healing in your community. If healing services are a part of your tradition as a community, find out when they are offered and have the schedule available to share with your group. You will need Bibles and copies of the Book of Common Prayer for this session.

Beginning: If this is your first session with the group, make sure you have nametags for everyone and open with a Get to Know You activity. Find Get to Know You Resources: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/resources/>. Then tell the class that today we have two stories from scripture about healing.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for inviting us into the privilege of praying for one another. We thank you, also, for this time we have together to explore scripture and meditate on your word. Amen.

The Scripture (Mark 7: 24-37): You may simply invite someone to read the passage, or invite one person to read the first healing story and a different person to read the second healing story. Alternatively, you can invite volunteers to read the different parts and use the script that can be found below. (Narrator, Syrophenician woman, and Jesus)

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in the lesson today?
- I wonder what it means to say the child had an "unclean spirit – or a demon"? (The concept of viruses, germs, even transmittable disease was not understood in Jesus' time.)
- Why do you think Jesus was so reluctant to heal this little girl? (He did not think he had been called to minister to those outside his community. See verse 27.)
- What do you think caused him to change his mind? (He recognized that she made a good point. Perhaps she influenced his realization that his mission was larger than it at first appeared to be.)
- Why do you think Jesus took the deaf man off to one side to heal him? (To respect the man's dignity and privacy. Maybe also to try to keep the healing from drawing publicity. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, we hear Jesus telling people to keep things quiet, what has become known as the "Messianic Secret.")
- What is your response to what Jesus used in the healing of the man? (Notice that this was not abstract, but very concrete, physical, human, down-to-earth actions.)
- Why do you think Jesus told the man to "tell no one"? (He did not want people flocking after him looking for showy events. He wanted his followers to hear what he had to teach.)
- Why would these healings have struck such a chord for the people? (Most knew that in Hebrew scripture the prophets proclaimed that when the Messiah came, the deaf would hear and the lame would walk.)

Option: Especially if the healing ministry does not have high visibility in your community, your group might want to consider what they are being called to do in the way of healing prayer. You could direct them to the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 453-461). Explain that we do not see prayer as "magic" but as entering into the stream of intercessory prayer. We have no way of knowing how many people are praying for any of us – including people who have never met us – on a regular basis. People living monastic lives, people having made a rule of life that includes regularly scheduled prayer, even friends and family members praying for us without our knowledge all create this river of prayer we are invited to enter.

Getting Closure: Invite your group to join in prayer – perhaps writing them in a notebook you bring to class each week – and the group will continue to say these prayers.

Closing Prayer: Gracious and Healing God, thank you for revealing your healing powers to us and reminding us to pray for one another. We ask prayers especially for those things we name before you now, either silently or out loud. (Leave silence for people to add prayers.) All these things we give to you in prayer, Lord. Be with us as we leave this place and bring us safely together again. Amen.

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