

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**

# Pray Boldly

**Goal for the Session** *Drawing from the strong cries of the Syrophenician woman, children will pray boldly for themselves and others.*

## ■ 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 know what it means to be persistent, although they may not know the word. Their parents or other adults in charge may view this persistence in less flattering terms, such as badgering or pestering. Children may even identify with the woman as Jesus tries to turn her aside, as they recall their requests being minimized too. But their persistence can be turned to a positive turn in their prayer life, whether praying for themselves or others. The woman could speak directly to Jesus and the children can speak to him when they pray.

*God, guide me as I seek how to pray persistently and boldly to you, knowing that you always listen. Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- Bible
- white Christ candle
- matches or battery-operated candle
- offering basket
- Color Pack 1, 2, 27, 28
- Resource Sheet 1
- Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

#### For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, scissors, construction paper, stapler, markers
- option 2: Color Pack 2, list of prayer concerns, newsprint, marker
- option 3: construction paper, pencils, ruler, scissors, markers
- option 4: newsprint, marker

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, place a bookmark at the Gospel of Mark in the worship table Bible. For option 2 in Responding, get a list of prayer concerns for your congregation and look at your denominational Web site for prayer concerns there.

When the first children arrive, invite them to arrange the worship table with the green cloth, Bible, offering basket, and Christ candle.

When it is time to begin, gather at the worship table. Lead the children in these opening words:

**Leader:** *Come, Holy Spirit, and give us your power.*

**Group:** *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*

Explain that the church calendar calls the Sundays between Pentecost and Christ the King Sunday (the Sunday before Advent begins) Ordinary or Common Time. During these months, the church studies how to follow Jesus.

Receive the offering.

Sing “Jesus Loves Me!” (Color Pack 27; track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022).

Extinguish the candle.

To introduce the theme of persistence, ask:

- ✠ When have you asked your parents or a teacher over and over to give you something or let you do something?
- ✠ How did they answer?
- ✠ Did you get what you wanted or to do what you wanted?

If children studied with Feasting on the Word summer curriculum, they will recognize the Gospel of Mark, which supplied the focus scriptures for many of those weeks.

### Jesus Loves Me!

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
 For the Bible tells me so.  
 Little ones to Him belong;  
 In his love we shall be strong.

#### Refrain

Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
 As he loved so long ago,  
 Taking children on His knee,  
 Saying, "Let them come to me."

#### Refrain

Jesus loves me, still today,  
 Walking with me on my way,  
 Wanting as a friend to give  
 Light and love to all who live.

#### Refrain

EASY  
 PREP

Explain that asking for something over and over is a form of persistence, when you try again and again to learn something or get something. Today's story is about a woman who kept at Jesus until she got what she wanted.

## EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the bookmark, and read the name of the book. Recall with the group that Mark is one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) that tell about Jesus' life and work. Then have the child turn to chapter 7.

Tell the story based on Mark 7:24–37 on Resource Sheet 1 (A Bold Woman). Ask:

- ✧ Why did the Syrophenician woman come to Jesus?
- ✧ Why didn't Jesus help her right away?
- ✧ Why do you think Jesus changed his mind and healed her daughter? (*Include the word persistent in the discussion.*)
- ✧ What do you think other people in the house learned about God when this happened?

Show Color Pack 1. Ask:

- ✧ What is different about the people in this picture?

After the children have named a variety of differences, such as age, and size, ask:

- ✧ How are these people alike?

You may get many kinds of answers, from they all have a mouth or they are all looking at the camera. Eventually someone will realize that everyone in the picture, just as each one of them, is loved by God.

Acknowledge that today they can't talk directly to Jesus. Ask:

- ✧ How can we speak or listen to Jesus and God?

After the children answer, show Color Pack 2. Talk together about what they see in the picture. Ask:

- ✧ When do you pray? With your family? Elsewhere?

## 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. **Prayer Litany** To encourage their persistent prayers, children will make prayer journals to use during the week. Provide a copy of Resource Sheet 2 (Prayer Journal), scissors, and a sheet of construction paper. They can stack the journal pages in any order and cut front and back covers from construction paper. Help any who need it to stack the covers and pages neatly so the left edges are aligned. Staple the journal. Provide markers to write "Prayer Journal" and the child's name on the cover. Demonstrate how they might use their prayer journal and invite their ideas for using them at home.

If possible, e-mail the prayer litany to the children's families, inviting them to pray it together.

If the group is mostly younger children, fold the construction paper in advance.

**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!

**2. Prayer Litany** The children will practice praying boldly for themselves and others by creating a prayer litany. Look at Color Pack 2 and ask the children when they pray with their families. Show the children the list of prayer concerns from your congregation and denomination. In the case of the congregation, you may wish to talk about groups of people (people who are sick, mourning, traveling, taking care of others) instead of individuals. Have the children select six to eight groups or programs to be part of this litany. Provide at least two options for the response (such as God, hear our prayer; Heal us, God; God, answer our prayer) and have the group select one. Print the selected groups for whom to pray and the response on newsprint. After a moment of silence, pray the prayer litany aloud together.

**3. Accordion Cards** A visual sign of their prayer is cards the children send to people for whom they are praying. Give each child a 6" x 18" strip of construction paper with one fold about an inch wide. Demonstrate how to fold the paper accordion-style. Give each child a piece of construction paper and a pencil to trace around each hand. They can help each other by tracing around the dominant hands. Cut out the hands and glue one to each end of the accordion strip. Print "God's love is for everyone" on one hand. This will be the front of the card. On the back card, they can write a message for the person who will receive the card. Talk about who would enjoy hearing about God's love and could be given a card.

**4. Bidding Prayer** The children will practice praying for others in a bidding prayer. Explain that sometimes in worship the worship leader prays a bidding prayer, which means that the leader suggests a prayer concern and then it is quiet for everyone to pray about this concern. For example, a bidding prayer may suggest that we pray for people who are far from home, people who are in the hospital, people who have helped others, or people who are sad. Invite the children to name groups or individuals for whom they want to pray. List their suggestions on newsprint. Then lead the group in a bidding prayer:

*God, we bring our worries to you because we know you listen to them.*

*We pray for people who are sick (pause for the children to pray).*

Conclude the prayer with "Amen" and invite the children to repeat "Amen." Talk about how they can continue to pray for these people at home during the week.

**CLOSING**

Gather at the worship center. Light the Christ candle. Talk about how the children will pray for others and themselves at home during the week.

Sing "You Are My Beloved Child" (Color Pack 28; track 21 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). If this song is new, play it for the children and have them pat their knees in rhythm to the music.

To each child, say, "Thank you for coming. Pray to God boldly this week."

## **A Bold Woman** based on Mark 7:24-30

Jesus had traveled back and forth from one side of the lake to the other. People crowded around him to be healed. When this story begins, Jesus was in the region of Galilee called Tyre. He was looking for a place to rest and be by himself. So he went into a house, but he couldn't hide from people who wanted to be healed. The word spread quickly from one person to the next that the special teacher Jesus was in their village.

One woman who heard that news was an immigrant to the area. She was Greek, and had been born in Syrophenicia. This means she also wasn't Jewish as Jesus and his disciples were. The Jews tried to have nothing to do with anyone who wasn't Jewish, like this woman.

But this Syrophenician woman knew into which house Jesus had gone and she went there. You see, her daughter had a disease that people in those days thought was caused by a demon, an evil spirit. This Syrophenician woman knew that Jesus could heal her daughter if he would come to her house and touch her daughter. Jesus had healed other people of demons, why not her daughter?

So the Syrophenician woman walked boldly into the house where Jesus was. She knelt at Jesus' feet and said, "Please, please, please heal my daughter. She is suffering from a terrible demon. Nothing has helped her. Please, please heal my daughter."

Jesus looked at the woman and knew that she was Greek, not Jewish. "I have to care for and feed my people first, the children of Israel. It isn't right to take what belongs to them and give it to someone else or toss it to the dogs."



Jesus sounded harsh and uncaring, but that didn't stop the woman at all. She kept looking at Jesus and said, "But even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Now what was Jesus going to do with the woman's persistence and challenge to him? Everyone in the room had gotten quiet and was waiting to see what Jesus would do.

"What a good answer," said Jesus. "You are right. Go home now because your daughter has been healed."

Immediately, the Syrophenician woman left the house and practically ran to her home. When she got there, she hurried to her daughter's bed. The girl was lying on the bed calmly and quietly. She had been healed.

September 5, 2021  
Pray Boldly

Multi-Age  
Resource Sheet 2

## Prayer Journal



**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 . . .**