Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Proper 18 (B)
New Testament: 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 READING
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.

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 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

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can invite volunteers to read the different parts and use the script that can be found below. (Narrator, Syrophoenician 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.)

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

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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 Syrophoenician 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.'

Syrophoenician 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,

Syrophoenician 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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