Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
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 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
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.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

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 Syrophoenician 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.)

ACTIVITIES

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

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

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.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

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.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.