

Be Opened!

FOCUS

To allow Jesus to open us to God, ourselves, and others.

FOCUS PASSAGE

Mark 7:31–37

Materials Needed



BEFORE THE SESSION

- Read the Scripture readings and the Scripture Background for September 6, 2009.
- If this is your first session, read the Introduction and the Season Background for Ordinary Time in Fall.
- Bring **nametags, attendance roster, birthday list**, and the **Basic Supply Kit** (for contents see *Catechetical Resource Book #2*).
- Give the dismissal team copies of the **Catechumenate Dismissal Questions** for this season, located in the Introduction (if they do not already have them).
- Reflect prayerfully on what hinders us from hearing the needs of the world and responding with compassion.

GATHERING

- Prepare the prayer center with a **green cloth, crucifix or cross, candle, seasonal environment**, and a **Lectionary or Bible**. Bring **matches or candle lighter**.

INTRODUCING THE WORD

- Make sure that you have a **blackboard, dry erase board, or piece of newsprint**. Bring **chalk or markers**.

EXPLORING THE WORD

- Bring **magazines, a large poster board** with the words **Lord, Help Me Open My Heart** printed at the top and a large heart drawn on it, **glue**, and **scissors**.
- Review the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 7; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, chapter 24; *General Directory for Catechesis* 57; and the *National Directory for Catechesis*, “Principles of Catholic Social Teaching,” pp. 170–171.

INTEGRATING THE WORD

Choose from the following activities. Prepare and bring the necessary materials.

- *Open My Heart at Home*: Bring **file cards** and **pencils**.
- *Carton of Manna*: Bring an **empty paper ream box** wrapped in plain paper and **markers**.
- *Care Cards*: Bring **colored paper** and **markers or crayons**.

CLOSING

- Make **copies** of this week’s “**Family Sharing**,” which can be found in the Introduction.

MUSIC

- Bring **music accompaniments, CD/tape player, hymnals, or worship aids** based on the music suggestions or **other appropriate music from the parish celebration of the liturgy**.

GATHERING

As the participants arrive, greet each by name. Distribute nametags. After everyone gathers, welcome the group. Take attendance and recognize birthdays.

Community-Building Activity If this is your first session, ask each student to introduce himself or herself and to name his or her favorite food.

Gathering Prayer Gather in the prayer center. Ask a volunteer to light the candle.

Lead the following prayer:

**God of holy love,
we know how important it is
to be open to you
and your presence in our lives.
Help us trust that no matter what limitations we have,
you will guide us to live as Jesus did.
Today we ask for the ability
to imitate the openness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever. Amen.**

Sing “Open My Eyes” (Manibusan) or “All Are Welcome” (Haugen)

**INTRODUCING
THE WORD**

Telephone Game Gather the members in a circle. Explain that you will say a phrase in the ear of the person next to you. Each member will repeat the phrase in turn to their neighbor until the phrase comes back to you. When you receive the phrase, write it on the board or newsprint. Underneath the phrase, write your original one: **I hear with my ears and respond with my heart and hands.**

Lead a discussion using the following questions:

- What changed?
- What does this tell us about how well we listen?

Today we are going to listen to a reading from the Gospel reading about Jesus that will ask us to be open to the world in a new way.

**EXPLORING
THE WORD**

Scripture Reading Invite a member to bring the Bible or Lectionary to you. Invite the members to cross their arms over their hearts while you read. Proclaim the reading. When you come to the phrase “Ephphatha!” (Be opened!), have the participants repeat the phrase loudly as they open their arms.

Church Teaching *In these or similar words discuss with the participants how the Church’s teaching is reflected in the Scripture reading of this Sunday:*

God calls us to be open to his Son Jesus like the blind man with a speech impediment in today’s reading from the Gospel. In response to God’s call to be open to Jesus, Catholic social teaching challenges us to be open to the needs of our world and to respond to them in imitation of Jesus’ example. Invite the children to reflect on the following questions:

- Why did people bring the man to Jesus?
- What did Jesus do?
- What would you miss most if you could not hear or could not speak well?
- What does the healing in this passage from the Gospel teach us about who Jesus is?

Open My Heart Invite the members to find a magazine picture that shows someone or something in our world that needs our help, cut it out, and paste it in the large heart. Invite the participants to share about their picture and how they can help in Jesus’ name.

INTEGRATING THE WORD

Open My Heart At Home Distribute the materials. Invite members to identify one member of their family whom they have failed to be kind to this week. Ask what they can do change their attitude or actions in the coming week toward this individual. Have them write what their action will be on the front of the card. Begin the sentence with **I promise to . . .**

Carton of Manna Remind participants that some people in our community do not have enough to eat. Invite them to decorate the box with symbols of Jesus' love. Ask them to bring non-perishable food items each week that can be taken to your local food bank.

Care Cards Remind participants that some elderly people are lonely. Invite them to make "Thinking of You" cards that can be sent to senior centers. Have them write a prayer on the inside of the card which expresses Jesus' power of healing and care for them.

CLOSING

Gather in the prayer center. Hand out this week's "Family Sharing" and the "Ephphatha" take-home sheet. If you did the Open My Heart Activity or the Carton of Manna, remind the participants to follow through.

Closing Prayer Light the candle.

Lead the following prayer:

**God of openness and trust,
we thank you for the gift of this day
and the gift of your word
which fills our minds and hearts.
Give us courage when we want to run in fear
and show us how to love when we are tempted not to care.
Help us remain ever open to you
so that we may see your power
constantly at work in our lives.
We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our lord.
Amen.**

Sing "Soon and Very Soon" (Crouch) or "The King of Glory" (Traditional Israeli Folk Song)

AFTER-SESSION REFLECTION

- ◆ What worked well? What did not work as well as you expected?
- ◆ What did you learn about your own attitudes and actions about following Jesus' example and helping those in need?



EPHPHATHA

Ephphatha means “be open.” Explore as a family this week different ways—large and small—in which you can respond to the needs of the lonely, the hungry, the sick, and the poor. For each need that you respond to as a family, color one letter. Have your child draw a picture next to the letter of how you responded or are thinking about responding. Discuss what you did or are thinking about doing as your child draws. The child should return to their next session with this sheet.

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