

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 Scripture Background for September 6, 2009.
- If this is your first session, read the Introduction and Season Background for Ordinary Time in Fall.
- Bring the **attendance roster, birthday list, and Basic Supply Kit** (for contents see *Catechetical Resource Book #1*).
- Open yourself to being an instrument of God’s will, listening attentively and speaking his love.

GATHERING

- Prepare **nametags** using suggestions from *Catechetical Resource Book #1*.
- Prepare a **gathering table with things that make soft sounds** (such as a jingle bell, a rain stick, crinkly cellophane). An assistant can assist the children in discovery. Consider inviting a parishioner who plays a musical instrument to be your guest, and ask him or her to introduce the children to the instrument as they arrive.
- If you’re celebrating a saint’s feast that occurs around the date of the session, bring a **picture card**, and be prepared to tell a little about the saint.
- For the prayer center, bring a **green cloth, crucifix or cross, candle, seasonal environment, and a Lectionary or Bible**. Bring **matches** and a **candlesnuffer**. Plan for volunteers to prepare the prayer center.

INTRODUCING THE WORD

- Prepare **three or four small gift boxes with removable lids** by putting a few things in each that will rattle when shaken (examples: salt, rice, coffee beans, popcorn kernels, etc.).

EXPLORING THE WORD

- Set up a **display stand** for the Bible. Prepare from the **Catechist Sheet “Jesus Opens Us to God’s Word.”**
- Familiarize yourself with **“Open Our Ears Song.”**
- *Snack Time:* Have **copies of the Activity Sheet “Grace Table Craft” on card stock** available. Bring **crayons or markers** and **tape**. Make an **example** to show them and to use in future sessions. Prepare **snacks** for the children. Check for food allergies. Have **parents** sign-up to bring **snacks** for the coming sessions.

INTEGRATING THE WORD

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

- *Listening Games:* Bring assorted **percussion instruments** for start/stop game, and **paper** and **pencil/pen** or **chalk** and **board** for cooperative listening game.
- *Canned Celebration:* Bring **soft drink cans with tabs removed**, one for each child, **construction paper or wrapping paper, tape, crayons/markers, stickers, etc.**, plus **items to put in the cans to make noise**, and **masking tape** to cover the holes.

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 liturgy.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and give each a nametag. Invite them to explore the gathering table with your assistant. Take attendance, celebrate birthdays, and make announcements.

Gathering Prayer Teach the children that when you turn the room lights off and on, that means it's time to gather quietly for prayer. Sit in a circle. If you're celebrating a saint's feast that occurs around the date of the session, show a picture of the saint and tell a little about him or her. Place the picture on the prayer table. Have a volunteer light the candle and say:

We light the candle to help us remember that God is with us in a special way when we read from the Bible, the Word of God.

Teach the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father . . .

Lead *the following prayer:*

**God of holy love,
help us to be open to you and your presence in our lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Sing "Open My Eyes" (Manibusan) or the refrain from "Psalm 148" (Farrell)

INTRODUCING THE WORD

One at a time, shake each gift box, and ask the children to guess what's inside.

- **I wonder what has to be open for us to hear the sounds.** (*Our ears.*)
- **I wonder what you have to open to tell what you hear.** (*Our mouths.*)
- **I wonder how well we'd be able to play this game if we couldn't hear or speak.**

Today, we're going to share a reading from the Bible about a man who could neither hear nor speak—until he met Jesus.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Bible Reading: Jesus Opens Us to God Ask a child to bring the Bible from the prayer center. Mention that we have to *open* the Bible to find the reading. Show where to find the Gospel according to Mark. Place the open Bible on the display stand. Refer to the Catechist Sheet "Jesus Opens Us to God" for the reading.

Responding to the Word Explain that having open ears means listening when someone else is speaking.

- **Who are some people we need to listen to?**
- **How do we listen to God** (*Through reading from the Bible and listening to parents and teachers who tell us about God.*)

Jesus also touched the man's tongue so he could speak. How does Jesus want us to speak to one another?

Teach the children "Open Our Ears Song" to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and sing it several times.

**Open up our ears, O God.
Help us hear your word.
Open up our hearts to share
All the love we've heard.**

Focus on Church Teaching God made us and cares for us, especially those in special need, like the man in our story. Listening openly to Bible readings and to those who teach us about God helps us to be open to loving others as Jesus did. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1503.)

Invite half the group to sing the first two lines of the song you just learned, and the other half to sing the last two lines. Point out that each side has to *listen* to the other to know when to sing. Sing several times, starting off softly, and increasing volume each time. Stop before it becomes shouting!

Invite one of the children to return the Bible to the table. Show another how to use the candlesnuffer to put out the candle, and how to draw the smoke up like our prayers rising to heaven. Tell the others that they may take turns doing this in the future.

Snack Time Prepare the children to say grace before and after their snack. Give them materials to make the “Grace Table Craft.” Tell them they can take this home to put on the family table so they can say the same prayers at home at mealtime that we’ll say here at snack time.

After their crafts are made, tell the children that we’re going to say *Grace Before Meals*, the prayer that’s on one side of their craft. Run your finger under the words as you read one line at a time, inviting them to repeat each line after you read it. Saying Grace before and after meals together each week will help the children learn these Catholic prayers.

Once Grace has been said, distribute the snack and invite everyone to enjoy it. Have hand wipes available for clean up.

Finish by saying *Grace After Meals* together in the same manner as above.

INTEGRATING THE WORD

Listening Games Explain that listening openly to Bible readings is an important part of getting to know God. Listening openly to others helps us show respect for them, like Jesus did. Tell them we’re going to practice listening.

Choose one or more of the following listening games:

- *Start and Stop:* Children begin marching in place when they hear a certain sound (like a bell), and they keep marching until they hear another sound (a larger bell, triangle, tambourine, etc.). Anyone who doesn’t start or stop promptly is out.
- *Cooperative Listening:* Everyone is silent for one minute. Then someone writes down all the sounds the group remembers hearing in the silence.
- *Sneaking Out:* Children sit silently while the catechist or assistant, standing outside the door, whispers each person’s name. When a child hears his or her name, he or she tiptoes quietly outside the door. The key is getting everyone to be as quiet as possible until everyone has sneaked out of the room!

Canned Celebration Cover soft drink cans with construction paper or wrapping paper. Decorate them with crayons, markers, stickers, or other craft materials. Let the children choose from a variety of things that will make noise in the cans when shaken. Seal the holes with masking tape. Have a procession while singing “Open Our Ears Song.” Celebrate and praise God for opening our ears to his gift of sound!

CLOSING

Turn the room lights off and on, reminding the children that this is the signal to quietly gather for prayer. Invite the children to hold their open hands in front of them, palms up, as a sign that their ears, hearts, and minds, like their hands, are open to Jesus.

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.
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)

Collect the nametags for use again at the next session.

AFTER-SESSION REFLECTION

- ◆ How well did the children connect the concrete image of Jesus opening the man’s ears with the abstract concept of being open to God?
- ◆ To whom or to what do you need to be more open this week?

Jesus Opens Us to God An Echo Pantomime

(Based on Mark 7:31–37)

Explain to the children that in an echo pantomime, they have to watch and listen to you and then repeat what you do and say. They have to open their ears to hear and open their mouths to echo back.

Jesus (*Touch center of each palm with middle finger of opposite hand.*)
was in a country far from his home. (*Holding hand above eyes, squint into the distance.*)
Some people brought to him a man who could neither hear (*Hold hands over ears.*)
nor speak. (*Hold hand over mouth.*)
He had never heard music. (*Pretend to play the violin.*)
He had never heard someone say they loved him. (*Cross arms over chest.*)
He had never been able to sing. (*With one hand over chest, the other extended, and mouth open wide, pretend to sing.*)
He had never been able to tell anyone that he loved them. (*Frown and shake head sadly.*)
His friends begged Jesus to help him. (*Press hands together as in prayer.*)
Jesus took the man aside from the crowd. (*Motion someone to follow you.*)
Jesus put his fingers gently in the man’s ears. (*Place fingers gently in your ears.*)
Jesus touched the man’s tongue. (*Touch your tongue.*)
Then Jesus looked up to heaven (*Point and look heavenward.*)
and prayed to his Father. (*Looking up, press hands together as in prayer.*)
Turning to the man, Jesus said, “Be opened.”
(Spread arms open wide.)
Immediately the man could hear (*Cup hands behind ears.*)
and speak. (*Touch mouth, and draw hand away slowly.*)

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father before he spoke to the man.
- I wonder if we know how to pray to our heavenly Father.
- I wonder if we know how to open our ears and be good listeners.
- I wonder if we know how to open our mouths to tell others that Jesus loves them.

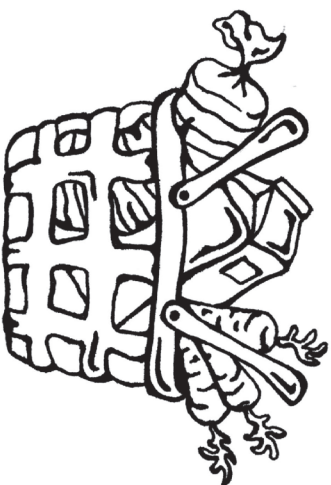


Grace Table Craft

Craft may be taken home the day it's made, or you may postpone taping, laminate the project, then tape and send it home the following week. Cut paper all the way across using line as a guide. Fold into thirds, bend into triangle, and secure edges with tape.

Grace Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord,
and these thy gifts,
which we are about to receive
from thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Grace After Meals

We give thee thanks,
for all thy benefits,
almighty God,
who lives and reigns forever.
And may the souls of the
faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.
Amen.

