

JESUS HEALS

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 7:24-37

CONTEXT

In Mark 7, Jesus journeyed to locations most Jews would not step one toe in. The regions of Tyre and Sidon were Gentile territories. The Decapolis too was comprised of ten Greek cities. These places, and the people in them, would have been viewed as unclean and therefore avoided by Jews. Mark, however, highlighted Jesus's perspective that differed greatly from the traditions of mere humans. Even in this stage of His ministry, Jesus was revealing His fulfillment of the law, and that meant correcting people's understanding of what was clean and unclean.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.

As you examine Mark 7:24-37:

- Recognize that while Jesus first came to the Jews, His message and gift of salvation would be for all who believe in Him.
- Contemplate that people who encountered Jesus proclaimed all the miracles that He did, even though Jesus told them not to.



TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many Parables
(Mark 4:1-34)

Jesus Walks on Water
(Mark 6:45-52)

Jesus Raises Lazarus from
the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Feeds the Five
Thousand (Mark 6:30-44)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Heals in
Gentile Regions (Mark 7:24-37)

Daily Readings

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| ☐ Day 1: Mark 7:1-37 | ☐ Day 4: Matthew 16:1-28 |
| ☐ Day 2: Mark 8:1-38 | ☐ Day 5: Luke 15:1-16:31 |
| ☐ Day 3: Matthew 15:1-39 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 117 |



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

JESUS'S MESSAGE OF SALVATION, HOPE, AND HEALING IS FOR BOTH JEW AND GENTILE (MARK 7:24-30).

Circle the words of Jesus, noting specifically how Jesus treated the Syrophenician woman.

24 He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice.

25 Instead, immediately after hearing about him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his feet. **26** The woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth, and she was asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, because it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

28 But she replied to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." **29** Then he told her, "Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter." **30** When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

Jesus did the unthinkable! Rather than travel around the Gentile region of Tyre or quickly through it, Jesus intentionally made His way to this region and even entered a house there, contrary to all Jewish expectations of faithfulness to God's law. Gentiles didn't have to do anything "unclean" to offend the Jews. The Jews considered them unclean for simply not being descendants of Abraham.

LEADER NOTE: The people of Israel were called by the Lord to be set apart from the surrounding nations. Practices such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and their diet set the Jews apart physically and visibly. The point of being set apart was not to avoid the Gentiles but rather to be a light to the nations, pointing them to God, the Creator of all, through their obedience to God's commands. By the time of Jesus, however, the Jews sought to remain as separated and isolated from the idolatrous Gentiles as possible.

Jesus was becoming increasingly popular, even in this Gentile area. Unsurprisingly, then, the Syrophenician woman came searching for Him. Not only did the woman enter the same room as a Jew, she fell at Jesus's feet, no doubt getting extremely close to Him. But she was desperate—her daughter was demon-possessed. Don't miss how "unclean" this woman was: She was a Gentile woman, ethnically Syrophenician, and she had a demon-possessed daughter!

How do you think Gentiles might have felt around Jews in Jesus's day?

Key Concept: Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.

LEADER NOTE: Today, we underestimate the supernatural. But the ancient world accepted that angels and demons existed and interacted with humans. In the New Testament, demonic oppression was primarily experienced psychologically, yet many were tormented physically as well. Demonic deliverance was an important part of Jesus's ministry because it foreshadowed the ultimate, future victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan.

Jesus's response to the woman's plea for help wasn't shocking to the original readers of Mark's Gospel. Jesus's ministry was first to Israel, "the children" (v. 27). He was the Jewish Messiah, who came to set free the Jewish people from the curse of their broken covenant. The woman's response to Jesus, however, was shocking. She accepted and affirmed the priority of the Jews in Jesus's ministry, but she appealed to His mercy nonetheless.

Notes

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

DOGS: In Jesus's day, dogs were half-wild scavengers. Yet domesticated dogs would sit under the table and eat what fell to the floor.¹ In using this term, Jesus was not insulting the Gentile woman but emphasizing His ministry priority for the lost children of Israel. After Jesus's death and resurrection, the gospel of salvation would be extended freely to all who believe, both Jew and Gentile (cf. Acts 13:46; 26:23; Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10).

The woman understood that Jesus's ministry was to the Jew first, but that didn't mean He couldn't serve the Gentiles too. Jesus had fed (6:30-44) and would feed again (8:1-10) the Jews with bread, yet this Gentile mother believed that even a crumb of the blessings God had for the Jews could save her daughter, and her faith in Jesus was rewarded. Jesus healed the woman's daughter of the unclean, demonic spirit.

How has God revealed His care for the Gentiles throughout the Scriptures?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus ushered in a kingdom that would fix what was broken by sin, including illnesses, diseases, and disabilities. He healed both Jew and Gentile in His earthly ministry, which pointed to His death and resurrection that brings salvation to all who believe.

JESUS HEALED THOSE WHO WERE DEAF AND MUTE, A SIGN OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP (MARK 7:31-37).

Circle Jesus's actions and underline the results of His actions.

31 Again, leaving the region of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis. **32** They brought to him a deaf man who had difficulty speaking and begged Jesus to lay his hand on him. **33** So he took him away from the crowd in private. After putting his fingers in the man's ears and spitting, he touched his tongue. **34** Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!"). **35** Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly. **36** He ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more they proclaimed it. **37** They were extremely astonished and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Once again, Jesus was in Gentile territory. The Decapolis, a region comprised of ten or more cities, was a center for Greco-Roman thought and culture and was no friend to Judaism. Yet even in this region, the Gentiles were aware of Jesus and what He could do (Matt. 4:25). Perhaps they had heard of His power from the man whom Jesus had freed from a legion of demons some time before (Mark 5:20). Despite being Gentiles, the people of this region had heard that Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. So like the Syrophoenician woman seeking help for her daughter, some Gentiles brought to Jesus a deaf man and begged Him for healing.

What must the Gentiles have believed about Jesus to bring the deaf man to Him?

Instead of healing the man then and there, Jesus took him to a private place. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus often performed miracles in private or at the very least requested that the healed individual tell no one what happened. There would be a time for people to spread the good news of Jesus's healing and power—after His resurrection.

LEADER NOTE: Why would Jesus not want others to know about His identity? His time had not yet come. Jesus had to control public perception of what His messiahship meant (see Mark 8:31-38). Jesus's messiahship was unveiled ultimately at the cross. His identity as the Messiah was not one of political power and prestige but one of humble submission and suffering. He came to die on the cross to save His people from their greatest oppressors—sin and death.

Mark here described Jesus's healing technique in great detail. Jesus often healed with touch, but here He healed by touching the organs affected. Moreover, it seems Jesus even put His spit in the man's ears and/or on his tongue. Mark also recorded Jesus's attitude and declaration to accomplish this miracle. Jesus looked up, demonstrating His attitude of prayer toward His Father. Mark said Jesus "sighed deeply" (7:34), referring to the intense emotions He felt toward this man and his condition. And finally, Jesus uttered this Aramaic word: "Ephphatha!" This was not a magic incantation; rather, Jesus accomplished this healing with an authoritative command: "Be opened!"

Instantaneously the man was healed! The man who could not hear and who struggled to speak now spoke clearly in the presence of many witnesses. The Gentiles were amazed by Jesus's abilities, and they wanted to tell everyone what they had seen and heard. More than just an account of Jesus's miracle of healing the deaf and mute man, the people shared their evaluation of Jesus: "He has done everything well" (v. 37). We too should share of Jesus's work on our behalf and praise Him for His holiness and perfection and salvation.

LEADER NOTE: The prophet Isaiah foretold of a time when "the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy" (Isa. 35:5-6a). With Jesus's first coming, He inaugurated this future, giving us glimpses of what His kingdom will look like. When Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom on earth, there will be no more illness or suffering. John recorded, "Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new'" (Rev. 21:4b-5a).

What will it mean for you to believe that Jesus "has done everything well"?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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x

MIRACLES: A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Notes



ARRIVAL

INTERACT: As your group arrives, ask: “When have you seen someone go out of their way to help someone others might overlook? How did that experience impact you?”

TRANSITION: Jesus came to save the outcasts and the overlooked in His day, and He does the same today. No one is outside of His reach.

CONTEXT

SAY: In the first part of Mark 7, Jesus had a confrontation with the Pharisees, who rebuked the disciples for eating with “unclean hands” (v. 5). In turn, Jesus told the Pharisees that they “nullify the word of God by your tradition” (v. 13). Jesus taught that it is what comes from the inside—from the heart—that defiles someone. Immediately after this confrontation, Jesus traveled to Gentile territory. (*Call attention to **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map** and point to the regions of Tyre and the Decapolis.*) Most Jewish teachers avoided Gentile regions, but Jesus intentionally stepped into these areas, showing that His mission extended far beyond Israel alone.

RECAP

ASK: What was one key idea that stood out to you as you prepared this week and read the Scripture passages?

TRANSITION: As you prepared this week, you might have been taken aback by Jesus’s initial response to the Gentile woman. But Jesus went on to commend the woman’s faith in Him. The two Gentiles in our passages—a desperate mother and a deaf-mute man—experienced Jesus’s willingness to heal those who come to Him in faith. Let’s look closely at Mark 7:24-37 and see how Jesus crossed boundaries to bring healing, hope, and restoration.



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Key Concept: Jesus's willingness to heal all people points to His desire to bring salvation to all people.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 72 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “From Hope to Healing.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group's findings as they work through the Scriptures.

Notes

From Hope to Healing

Read Mark 7:24-37. Compare and contrast the circumstances surrounding the Gentile man and woman, and see the breadth of Jesus's love for all.

	SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN (vv. 24-30)	MAN IN THE DECAPOLIS (vv. 31-37)
THE NEED		
THE BARRIERS		
JESUS'S RESPONSE		

READ: Invite one volunteer to read aloud Mark 7:24-30 and another volunteer to read Mark 7:31-37.

INSTRUCT: Divide the group into two teams. Assign one team the Syrophenician woman's story and the other the healing of the deaf-mute man from the Decapolis. Ask each team to reread their assigned passage carefully and to fill in the categories on their side of the chart in their PSGs.

REPORT: Invite each team to share their findings. As they report, record their responses in the chart on the board. Help the group notice key contrasts (different needs; different backgrounds) and shared themes (same compassionate Savior). Ask: “What barriers—cultural, social, or physical—might we encounter today that need to be overcome for the sake of the gospel ministry going forward?” Encourage participants to record the completed chart in their PSG for personal reflection.

ASK: How do these two healings compared side by side help you see more clearly that Jesus welcomes anyone who comes to Him in faith?

CONNECT: Explain that Jesus's healing ministry is a picture of His greater mission: to save people from every background and restore them fully. Direct the group to take a moment and consider someone in their life who might feel "far off" and how Jesus's willingness to cross barriers challenges them to reflect His love toward that person.

DEBRIEF

How does seeing Jesus cross cultural, social, and physical boundaries challenge the way you think about the church's gospel mission?

SUMMARIZE

These two healing accounts—one involving a Gentile mother crying out for her daughter, the other involving a deaf-mute man in the Decapolis—show Jesus intentionally moving toward those on the margins. With the Syrophenician woman, we see persistent, humble faith that trusts Jesus even when His timing or methods seem unclear. With the deaf-mute man, we see Jesus's tender, personal compassion as He takes the man aside, touches him, and restores him fully. Jesus's kingdom is wide enough and His grace strong enough to welcome every nation, tribe, and tongue. No one is beyond the reach of Jesus's compassion.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 73). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Jesus did the impossible. Jesus drove out demons, healed the sick, and performed miracles. But in Mark 7, the Syrophenician woman and the man from the Decapolis could have allowed the culture at the time to keep them from experiencing such miracles. Yet they didn't. Their faith wouldn't allow anything to prevent them from getting to Jesus, who had made Himself available to them in the first place.

How has Jesus crossed cultural, social, and physical boundaries to minister to you?



HEART: The Syrophenician woman understood Jesus was her only option. If Jesus couldn't heal and save her daughter, no one could. Her desperation fueled her faith, and she persisted in faith even when she seemed to meet with resistance. Sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered, and we can grow bitter, feeling God does not love us. Instead, the Syrophenician woman teaches us not to give up and to humbly wait for Jesus's mercy.

How do you need to grow in your persistence and humility in prayer and faith?



HANDS: We do not know who brought the man who was deaf and mute to Jesus, whether they were family or friends. We know they had heard of Jesus and knew He could heal the man. In our own communities, we know people who need the help that only comes from Jesus. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to share with them the good news that saves.

How will you lead people to Jesus this week so they might find the healing and salvation only He can provide?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Reflect on Mark 7:24-37 this week and ask God to show you where you might be overlooking people whom Jesus moves toward.
- Identify someone in your life who feels “far off” and pray specifically for an opportunity to show Christlike compassion to them.
- Consider one barrier—fear, prejudice, busyness, etc.—that keeps you from loving others as Jesus does, and take one step to tear that barrier down in faith and obedience.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 73 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 117. Invite the group to name things they can praise the Lord for. Thank God for His greatest gift, Jesus. And thank God that He reaches all nations.

References

1. R. C. Sproul, Mark, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 172.

