

**12.27.09/ Mark 7:31-37 (Deaf Man Healed)****Opening Activity**

If children are younger, explain to them what it means to be deaf and mute. Tell them that today we are going to learn about Jesus healing a man of these ailments. Choose one child to be “deaf/mute”. Let the children take turns acting out words/phrases to the “deaf/mute” child (like the game Charades!). The “deaf/mute” child can write their guesses on a piece of paper. If this activity goes quickly, allow the children the chance to switch roles.

**Discussion**

What was it like to communicate to a deaf/mute person? How did you have to change the way you communicated so that the person could understand you? To the child that was deaf/mute – how did you feel, not being able to communicate with your friends the way you normally do?

**Read Mark 7:31-37**

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up into heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

**Question 1:**

Why do you think Jesus wanted to deal with this matter privately, away from the crowds? *Perhaps he didn't want to embarrass the man, or make a spectacle of him. Or maybe it was because Jesus was on a specific mission and this healing was something different from that mission. Though we can't know for sure, we do know that this man was special to Jesus, and Jesus handled his situation in a way that the man could understand. God works in each of our lives in very different ways, but there is one thing we can always count on – He is always working out of His amazing love for us!*

**Question 2:**

Why do you think Jesus put His fingers in the man's ears and touch his tongue? *Let children answer on their own. Possible answers might include – “He was communicating with the man what was about to happen”, “He wanted the man to understand and have faith.”*

**Question 3:**

Why do you think he sighed and looked heavenward? *Jesus wanted to acknowledge that healing came from the power of God, not from sorcery or magic of any sort. He was giving glory to His Father in heaven. Jesus showed that even though He was wholly God, He still depended on the Father and stayed in close communion with Him. Another example of Jesus doing this occurs in John 11:41, at Lazarus' tomb. Imagine the things that God could do through us if we only looked to Him for guidance rather than trying to do things on our own!*

**Discussion:**

This is only one of many examples of Jesus healing people physically, but this story can also be an illustration of what Jesus can do for us spiritually. There are many people in this world today who have healthy minds and bodies, but who spiritually, are blind, deaf, mute, paralyzed, etc. Someone who has not accepted the gift of grace from Jesus is spiritually crippled in the same way that the man in our story was physically crippled. What a very sad situation!

**Question 4:**

What are the consequences of living a spiritually crippled life? *Let children brainstorm. Ideas worth mentioning might be – being a slave to our own sin and brokenness with no way out; relying on our own strength which will always end in failure; missing out on a connection with God, the idea that you are part of a bigger plan; failure to reach our potential as created beings that reflect the image of God; and for those who stay spiritually crippled and don't accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness of sin, the ultimate consequence is eternal separation from God.*

Mark says that the people were “astonished beyond measure.” It is interesting to note here that the region where this miracle occurred was the Decapolis, which is the same area where Jesus healed the demoniac back in Mark 5, which we discussed several weeks ago. You might recall that at the end of that story, the people asked Jesus to leave their region. But in this passage we see that these same people are astonished at how amazing Jesus is, and commend him, saying, “He has done all things well.”

**Question 5:**

What do you think caused the people of the Decapolis region to change their minds about welcoming Jesus to their region? *When Jesus healed the demoniac, He told the man to tell everyone he knew about what Jesus had done for him, so perhaps their hearts were changed once they heard the demoniac's story. Perhaps news from other towns where Jesus had been had spread to the Decapolis. Also, as we have learned in other weeks, because of Jesus' divine nature, people cannot help but be attracted to Him. Jesus could have rejected the people of the Decapolis in the same way that they rejected Him, but because He loved them just as much as He loves us today, He didn't give up on them and came back to their region.*

**Question 6:**

At the beginning of this passage, the deaf man's friends and loved ones begged Jesus to heal their friend. What keeps you from begging Jesus to heal the people in your life? *Let the kids answer for themselves at first, then give them ideas if needed. Some possible answers include focusing on themselves, not caring about what other people are going through, or simply not taking the time to find out what people need.*

**Wrap Up:**

What things has Jesus done for you that you find astonishing? Use this to enter into a time of glorifying God and praising His marvelous works. Share any physical and spiritual healings you have witnessed in your own lives, or in the lives of others.

Close in prayer, thanking God that He can not only heal us of our temporary physical ailments, but also can heal us from the spiritual sickness that we all have, caused by sin. Thank God for the personal ways in which He speaks to all of us, always knowing what we need before we even ask. Pray that we would not take the astonishing works of Jesus for granted, but would share our hope with others that may still be spiritually handicapped. Pray that God would change us and make us more like Him so that we would begin to beg Jesus to heal the people in our lives.