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Listen to Ones Left Out

MATTHEW 15:21–28



GOAL

Children hear the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman, and practice active listening and paying attention to people who may not be heard because they are different.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of the marginalized, help me to hear your voice throughout this session. Help me to hear and lift up the voices of others who have been silenced. Amen.

THIS SESSION

God created humanity with all its diversity; yet some take and wield power over others claiming superiority or dominance. Some have taken privilege while others are pushed to the margins. And, some just think they are better than others and ignore those they think less of. This is not God’s intention for God’s creation, and we are urged to do something. We need to listen to the voices of people who have been pushed to the edges and left out. Until we place them at the center of the conversation, we can’t fully embrace everyone as part of God’s beloved creation.

THE BIBLE STORY

In the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28), Jesus finds himself in Canaan with his disciples. When a Canaanite woman approaches him and asks him to heal her sick daughter, Jesus refuses. It wasn’t considered appropriate for Jewish people to associate with Canaanite people. But the woman convinces Jesus to help her. She reminds him that even those others think of as less than because they are different still deserve God’s healing mercies.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children are learning about active listening even though they may not be aware of it. They are learning to follow directions and pay attention to the voices of those important to them. Many young children are empathetic by nature, wanting to help a person in need regardless of perceived differences. For the most part, children at this age can identify external differences, but are just beginning to be socialized to treat people differently because of differences. Hearing that Jesus could change his behavior will empower children as they grow to recognize that not all learned behaviors are just.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Listen to Your Children” (p. 20): Invite a musician to lead singing or use an internet-connected device to play music.
- “The Importance of Listening” (p. 20): Obtain *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld (Dial Books, 2018) or use the YouTube video “The Rabbit Listened—Virtual Read Aloud—Listening—Shon’s Stories” ([bit.ly /FMRabbitListened](https://bit.ly/FMRabbitListened), 3:37).



GETTING STARTED

- Rhythm instruments
- Musician and hymnal with “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Glory to God* hymnal, #469) or internet-connected device

LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN

M T

Greet the children as they arrive and invite them to try out different rhythm instruments you have provided. If you have a musician with you, make introductions. When all the children have arrived, have the musician teach the song “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying,” lining out each line and having the children repeat after them. When the song is familiar, invite the children to add rhythm instruments.

If you don’t have a musician to teach the children, show the YouTube video “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying Lyric Video (Ken Medema)” (bit.ly/FMLordListen, 2:39) to teach the song. Alternatively, you could use the lyrics as spoken word, lining out each line and adding rhythm instruments to help keep a beat.

CELEBRATING GOD’S DIVERSITY

C

Invite the children to respond with suggestions as prompted, highlighting God’s diversity in creation and in us. Let the group know when they will respond individually and as a group. Use the following pattern:

God made (*name an item of creation, such as the moon or mountains, or a particular body of water or land form, or a particular plant or animal*).

Let’s describe (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*Invite people to take turns describing the item of creation named above.*)

Thank you, God, for (*repeat the item of creation named above*).

(*One person at a time, lead this part of the litany.*)

(*Name*), you are made in God’s image.

(*Invite the named person to say a sentence that describes something about themselves, such as “I am tall,” or “I have green eyes,” or “I like to draw.”*)

Thank you, God, for (*name of person named above*).



Example:

God made trees.

Let’s describe trees.

Some trees are green. Some have flowers. Some have fruit.

Thank you, God, for trees.

Bennett, you are made in God’s image.

I like to sing.

Thank you, God, for Bennett.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld (Dial Books, 2018)

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

C T

Tell the children they will hear a story about a child named Taylor. Explain that Taylor just needs someone to listen to them. Everyone has advice, but it’s not very helpful, until Rabbit comes along and just listens. Sometimes we need others to listen to us, and other times we need to be like Rabbit.

Read aloud *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld or show the YouTube video “The Rabbit Listened—Virtual Read Aloud—Listening—Shon’s Stories” (bit.ly/FMRabbitListened, 3:37).

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- When is a time you felt like Taylor and were sad?
- How did people listen to you?
- When was a time when no one would listen to you?
- How did that make you feel?

Comment that listening is more than just being a good listener. It's about that and more. It's also about hearing people who don't get listened to. Wonder together who might be people who aren't often heard. One connection young children may be able to make is with their own voice. They may feel like they try to say something, perhaps about feelings or needs, and are not heard by others, including adults. Affirm that example; other examples may be the feelings and needs of people whom others don't find important enough to listen to.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

TRYING TO BE HEARD

C

Set the background for the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman for the children. Explain that there were two reasons Jesus, a Jewish man, would not talk with the woman in today's Bible story.

- First, she was a woman, and men and women who didn't know each other didn't talk to each other.
- Second, she was not Jewish, and even though Jesus and his friends were traveling through her area, the Jewish people didn't like the people from this place.

Read the adapted Bible story from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 260) or Resource Page 1. Tell the children that this story is surprising because of two reasons:

- First, you would think that Jesus loved everyone, wanted to help everyone, and honored the differences in people. He was part of his culture, though, and he grew up learning that this woman from a different place and background shouldn't be listened to.
- Second, the woman persisted because she knew who Jesus was and what he could do, and Jesus changed his behavior and listened to her needs.

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- At first, how did Jesus treat someone who was different from him?
- How do you think God wants us to treat people different from us?
- Who are some people in your community who are different from you?
- At first, Jesus didn't listen to the woman and her needs. What changed?
- Who might be some people or their needs that don't get listened to because they are different from us?
- What might we be able to do to honor all people, those who are like us and those who are different from us?

□ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
(Flyaway Books, 2018) or Resource
Page 1



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

Active listening skills help us pay attention and hear what is needed to be heard.

☐ Music player

FREEZE DANCING

AM G M

Tell the children that listening involves paying attention. Invite the children to move and dance when they hear music playing and freeze in place when it stops. Using a music player, play music, starting and stopping it at random intervals.

For a challenge, play songs with words familiar to the children. Invite the children to listen for the last word sung when the music stops.

THE RAIN GAME

G QC

Tell the children that part of listening is following directions. Have the children sit or stand in a circle with you. Invite the children to follow your directions to make a rain storm of sound. Say the direction and then do the action, having the children follow your actions until you start the next one.

- Place your hands in your lap.
- Rub your thumb and first two fingers together.
- Rub your palms together.
- Snap your fingers.
- Clap your hands quietly.
- Pat your thighs.
- Gently stomp your feet.
- Stomp your feet and pat your thighs loudly.
- Gently stomp your feet
- Pat your thighs.
- Clap your hands quietly.
- Snap your fingers.
- Rub your palms together.
- Rub your thumb and first two fingers together.
- Place your hands in your lap.



Invite children to make sounds to imitate the rain if they are not able to move their hands or feet.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

God loves all people, but sometimes people don't love all people. Some people don't honor those who seem different from themselves and don't want to listen to their voices and needs. Practicing listening to others and hearing people's important messages is a way to honor all people.

LISTENING TO NEEDS

D

Tell the children that sometimes people don't speak their need loudly, like the woman in the story with Jesus. Suggest that sometimes people have needs that we have to see with our eyes and feel with our hearts. Form up to four groups of two or three children or work together as one group. Give each group a picture cut apart from Resource Page 2. Invite the children to talk together about what is happening in the picture and imagine that they see this person or these people. Ask them to wonder what the person or people in their picture need. Have the children act out the scene they imagine, how the person or people communicate their need, and what the children could do to help them.

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- Pictures cut apart from Resource Page 2

SANNA, SANNANINA

M T

Wonder who has heard people speaking in a language different from their own that they did not know. Ask the children if they would not pay attention to someone speaking a language they didn't know because they are different. Explain that it is often easy to feel like people who dress differently or speak differently from ourselves are not important to pay attention to. Comment that God loves all our differences, and we can learn to pay attention and ask questions to find out what someone might be trying to tell us.

Tell the children that they will listen to a song that is in a different language than they probably know. The song is sung in the African language called Swahili. Show the YouTube video "VT 79 Sanna, Sannanina" ([bit.ly /FMSanna](https://bit.ly/FMSanna), 1:48). Play it again, inviting the children to sing along, pausing and adding rhythm instruments at 0:29, pausing and adding clapping at 0:54, and pausing and adding rhythm instruments and clapping at 1:20, as the music in the video does.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Rhythm instruments

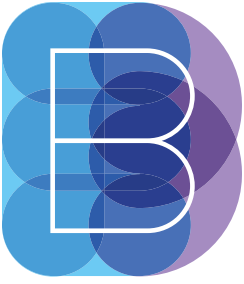
Explain that *sanna* is a word that means the same as a word we often hear around Easter, *Hosanna*. Explain that *Hosanna* is a word that can be either a shout of praise or a cry for help. Ask the children if they think this song was joyful or crying for help. Wonder together what they might want to do if they heard someone saying, "Help! Help!"



FOLLOWING JESUS

Gather the children in a circle. Invite them to repeat after you as you pray:

Lord, you listen to your children praying. /
May we open our ears and hear /
the voices and needs of others— /
especially those who are different from us /
and those who may not be heard by others. /
Lord, thank you /
for listening to your children praying /
always! /
Amen. /



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON MATTHEW 15:21–28

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you did not give up? In this story, a Canaanite woman, whose name we don't know, was determined that Jesus could make her daughter well. And she did not give up until Jesus helped her.

Jesus left Galilee and traveled with his friends to Canaan. He hoped to get some rest. But people found him there, too, and needed his help.

A woman shouted at Jesus, "Lord, listen to me! Something terrible is happening to my daughter. She is very sick. You can make her better."

Jesus did not say anything.

Jesus' friends said, "That woman is so loud. She is really bothering us. Get rid of her."

But Jesus did not send her away. He said to the woman, "I was sent to help the Israelite people. They are like lost sheep."

The woman was not an Israelite. Yet, she would not leave. She got down on her knees before Jesus. "Lord, please help my daughter," she begged.

"It is not right for me to help you," Jesus said. "I cannot give the food of children to dogs."

The woman cried, "Dogs need food, too. They eat the crumbs that fall from the people's table."

Jesus was amazed that the Canaanite woman trusted him. "You did not give up when I said no! You can have what you wish!"

At that moment, the woman's daughter was made well. The mother did not give up!¹

1. "A Canaanite Woman Does Not Give Up," *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), 260–61.

