



## The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

*Embracing Holy Indifference:  
The Man who could not Hear or Speak*

### Warm-up Question

*When have you had to be open to something new?*



[Lady Girl open hands](#) by [Beshef](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

## “Ephphatha,” that is “Be opened.”

Read [Mark 7:31-37](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

It can be both a challenging and life-giving thing to be open. At the same time, being open sometimes takes work. As human creatures, we close ourselves off for a whole host of reasons. When we experience trauma – physical, emotional, or spiritual – we can shut down and close ourselves off because the scars are too deep and the pain is just too real. When we are uncertain about what to do or how to be, we can close ourselves off for fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. When we have been embarrassed or shamed, we can close ourselves off for fear of experiencing again what embarrassed or shamed us in the first place. These are all very personal circumstances that can impede our openness.

We can also struggle with being open to different ways of doing things, different ideas about what is important in society or culture, different ways of living in community and solving problems, or even different understandings about what the problems are. As human creatures, we gravitate toward the familiar, and that which is different from us can cause us to be on guard or even afraid.

The story of Jesus and the man who could not hear or speak comes right after Jesus has an intense exchange with a [Syrophenician woman](#). In this story, the woman asks Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter. Jesus’ response is not what we would call “Christ-like.” Jesus is not open to helping her. In fact, Jesus insults her, but the woman does not give up, and Jesus is changed. Jesus becomes open to a broader understanding of his mission and ministry than he had previously understood.

When Jesus next opens both the ears and the tongue of the man in Decapolis, he invites us to consider our own needs for openness. Jesus invites us to wonder and ask how He can open us to God’s new possibilities in our own lives, just as He did for the man who could neither hear nor speak, and just as the Syrophenician woman did for Him.



## Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus learned to be open?
2. Why do you think Jesus first refused to help the Syrophoenician woman?
3. Who are the “Syrophoenician women” in our world today?
4. Who are those who have no voice in our world today?
5. When have you felt like you needed to be persistent with Jesus?
6. In what ways is it “good news” that Jesus grew in openness?
7. In what ways is it “good news” that Jesus calls you to “be opened?”
8. In what ways is it “good news” that Jesus gives a voice to one who previously had none?
9. How are you being called to be open right now?
10. What can you do to open a way for those who have no voice to be heard?

## Activity Suggestions

Access the day’s news, via smartphone, TV, or computer. Pick a story from the news and share how that story challenges you to be open.

In pairs, share one of your favorite Bible stories. Talk about how that story has opened you to new understandings of God and God’s mission in the world.

Gather a pile of magazine clippings of pictures. Pick a picture from the pile. Tell a story from your own life about a time that you were open to something new.

## Prayer Concerns

Those who struggle with openness to people who are different from them, personal challenges to openness, those who feel like outsiders.

## Closing Prayer

Give me ears to hear and eyes to see, O God, your unfolding vision for me and for your world. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

