



SESSION 2: A SECOND TOUCH (VULNERABILITY/EMPATHY)



## **SESSION 2: A SECOND TOUCH (VULNERABILITY/EMPATHY)**

**Canaanite Woman, Matthew 15:21-28 and Healing of the blind man, Mark 8:22-25**

### **Service/Mission short-term trips**

For directions on preparing for each session, review the “Accompaniment Bible Study Introduction.” Please note that in order to provide you with flexibility and choices in adapting each session to your particular setting, this facilitator guide contains more material than can be covered in a one-hour session. The guiding questions in the right column indicated in **red** provide the core elements of the study and should be ample material for a one-hour session.

### **SUMMARY**

Following Jesus’ persistent call to his disciples to go “to the other side,” the church has always engaged in mission across boundaries. Thanks to resources, transportation, and many other factors, today’s Christians have more opportunities than ever before to engage with people across the street and around the world. How can we, like Jesus, be open to learn from those with whom we partner in mission?

### **ACCOMPANIMENT VALUE: VULNERABILITY**

Vulnerability is the driving force in opening ourselves to relationship and God’s reconciliation in mission. In the dominant U.S. culture, vulnerability often seems to be weakness, but Jesus shows us that vulnerability — openness to relationship, giving up power — is God’s way of redemption. We choose to enter God’s mission through vulnerability, just as Jesus became vulnerable to us and with us.

### **ACCOMPANIMENT CAPACITY: EMPATHY**

As we grow in our compassion, in our ability to feel the pain and joy of our companions and of all those who share the earth with us, we move from pity to compassion, from compassion to empathy, and from empathy to radical solidarity with our brothers and sisters.



<p>Welcome participants as they come in. Give a special welcome to anyone who is new to the group.</p> <p>You may want to begin with a brief summary of the last session and ask participants to share reflections about any of the “From Head to Heart” activities they did over the week or other things that stayed with them from the first session.</p> <p>TIP: You may want to consider setting up candles or a centerpiece on a table as a way to mark the space as sacred and make it more inviting. Have a variety of Bible versions available, including children’s Bibles.</p>	<p><b>Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min)</b></p> <p><i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>
<p>CROSS-GENERATIONAL TIP: Obtain a large world map and two different color post-it dots or arrows. As participants arrive, invite them to put color dots/arrows (for example red) on places in the world they have visited on vacation, business, or study. Ask them also to place dots/arrows of another color (for example blue) on places they have traveled on a mission or service trip.</p> <p>A growing number of Christians participate in short-term mission trips. This session seeks to affirm the desire for connection around the world, while inviting reflection on how we approach our work with others.</p> <p>EXTRA: <b>How did Jesus travel?</b> Since Jesus and his followers were not wealthy Roman diplomats or military leaders but mostly a band of low-class fishermen and subsistence farmers, they likely traveled by foot to the villages and towns in the region. Walking between the towns listed in Scripture literally meant that Jesus and his followers would have spent much of their time hiking through fields and valleys, up mountains and cliffs and relying</p>	<p><b>In the steps of Jesus (8-10 min)</b></p> <p><i>In pairs, talk briefly with someone next to you about where have you traveled to — either for vacation, work, study or service.</i></p> <p><i>Following in Jesus’ steps is quite a workout! Jesus was constantly on the move, particularly during the three years of his public ministry. The Gospel of Mark captures this constant action, by beginning each section of the story with a reference to the next move. Jesus is often calling his disciples to go “to the other side.”</i></p> <p>Using a Bible that has section titles, open it to the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. Look at the first verse of each of the sections, and notice the role that movement plays in Jesus ministry. Pay particular attention to chapters 5-9.</p> <p>1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.</p> <p>1:12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.</p> <p>1:16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee</p> <p>1:21 They went to Capernaum</p> <p>1:35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a desert place</p> <p>2:1 When he returned to Capernaum after some days</p>

on others for their sustenance. (David Landis, The Mennonite February 17, 2009. Full article available at [http://www.themennonite.org/issues/12-4/articles/Jesus\\_trail](http://www.themennonite.org/issues/12-4/articles/Jesus_trail))  
For an interactive map of Jesus' travels, see <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/footsteps-of-jesus>

Looking at the world map from the gathering activity, invite participants to name a place they would like to go on a "virtual" mission trip — either a place they have already been to or one they would like to go to. Ask them to provide a brief explanation of their choice. After a few suggestions, try to quickly move to consensus or a vote for the location of your "virtual" mission trip.

Divide the class into two groups, either by numbering off ones and twos or one side of the classroom and the other. As space allows, ask each group to form a circle. Assign one group to be the "traveling community" (the ones going on the mission trip) and the other to be the "Host Community" (the place where you are going). On a chalkboard write the list of characteristics that appears on the right column. Ask both groups to discuss these areas and be ready to describe the community they have been assigned to the other group.

TIP: If the class is intentionally cross-generational, divide the groups in a way that increases the opportunity for participants to partner with someone of a different age.

- 2:23 One Sabbath he was going through the rainfields
- 3:7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea
- 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."
- 5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.
- 5:21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side
- 6:1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.
- 6:6b Then he went about among the villages teaching.
- 6:7a He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two
- 6:32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.
- 6:45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.
- 6:53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.
- 7:24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.
- 7:31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.
- 8:22 They came to Bethsaida.
- 8:27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi
- 9:2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart
- 9:30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee.
- 9:33 Then they came to Capernaum
- 10:1 He left that place and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.
- 10:17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him
- 10:32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem



Following Jesus' persistent call to his disciples to go "to the other side," the church has engaged in mission across boundaries. Thanks to resources, transportation and many other factors, today's Christians have more opportunities than ever before to engage with people across the street and around the world. Imagine that we are going on a 'virtual' mission trip. Our departing place will be (*name the place where you live or the closest airport*). Where in the world would you like to go?

We will divide into two groups — one representing the "traveling community" (those who are going on the mission trip) and other representing the "host community" (those who live in the place that is the destination of the mission trip). For example, let's say you decide you are a group traveling from Decorah, Iowa, to Guatemala in Central America. Participants in the "traveling community" would explore the items below from the perspective of Decorah, Iowa while those in the "host community" would do so from the perspective of a community in Guatemala. In your group, describe the following about your community and those involved in this mission trip.

- Educational level
- Income
- Religious background
- Race/Ethnicity
- Ability to travel (resources, needed documentation, etc.)
- Skills, expertise or knowledge you bring to the relationship with the other community
- Political or social connections
- If you receive something as part of this mission trip experience, how would you be able to reciprocate?

We will be looking at healing stories that happened during two of Jesus' "mission trips," one *abroad* in the district of Tyre and Sidon (in today's Lebanon) and one *domestic* in Bethsaida. Both stories are told in the Gospel of Mark, but we will read the first one from Matthew's version because it provides a bit more detail. As you listen to the stories, try to keep in mind the perspective of your group — either that of the "traveling community" or the "host community."



**CROSS-GENERATIONAL TIP:**

Kinesthetic learners (also known as “do-ers” for they learn best by doing) and younger participants may benefit from a more active approach to the conversation. Consider having some participants act out the story as it is read, inviting them to emphasize the emotions of surprise, sadness and shock. This story is placed between two miraculous feedings in both Mark and Matthew. Both writers emphasize that Jesus and his disciples are feeling increasingly pressed both physically and emotionally by the demands of their growing ministry. Jesus is often portrayed as going away to a deserted place to pray. Could his trip to Sidon and Tyre, similar to the reasons we often travel on vacation or a short-term mission, be an attempt to get away and focus?

Help participants wrestle with the disciples’ response by sharing experiences you or others may have had when confronted with people in need — panhandlers on a busy city intersection or at a market while traveling abroad. Whether as tourists or on a mission trip, are there times when we struggle to deal with people who “keep shouting after us” with what they have to sell or with their needs?

It is hard to imagine what Jesus could have meant in his response to the woman’s need. Many have tried to excuse the reply or justify it. Encourage participants into an honest conversation about the way that Jesus may have been influenced by the culture in which he grew up — one that, like our own, set boundaries of gender, culture, social status, religion, etc. Point out that the fact that the story was retained in the tradition invites us into an honest exploration

**Going to the other side (8-10 min)**

**Read Matthew 15:21-24**

What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?

We are told that Jesus “left that place” and that he “went away.” Repetition is often used for emphasis in the biblical text. Why do you think Jesus wanted to go on a trip outside of his regular community?

How are some of the reasons you came up with similar to those that motivate people to go on short-term mission trips?

**Even though Jesus is in a community far away from his own, the woman’s approach indicates that she had heard about him. What expectations does she have of Jesus?**

**What do you think of Jesus’ and the disciples’ initial response to the woman’s expectations?**

**When you have traveled abroad, either on vacation or on a short-term mission trip, have you ever felt similarly pressed by the expectations of others?**

**Great is your faith (8-10 min)**

**Read Matthew 15:25-28**

What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?

Taking into consideration that Jesus was a teacher, a foreigner and a man, what do you think of the woman’s actions in response to his attempts to dismiss her? What would it have taken for her to speak the way she did?

**While it is hard to imagine an exchange like the one**

of our understanding of Jesus both as human and divine. Similarly, highlight the woman's strength and character as she refuses to go away, but instead plants herself right in front of Jesus!

Return to the list of characteristics each group came up with for the community they represent, and highlight some of the differences that can make one community feel superior to the other. Often if these differences — these “asymmetries” — are not named, they can cause unintentional damage to the relationship.

See the “Head to Heart” section below for a link to the complete “Letter to a Canaanite Woman.”

**EXTRA: Faith and Culture:** We never live out our faith in a vacuum, but rather we strive to be Christians while also living in a particular time and place with a particular culture. Often times, our faith is so immersed in our culture that it is difficult to separate what is necessary for our faith and what is added on by our culture. There's nothing wrong with our culture influencing the ways we worship God. In fact, it is impossible to completely avoid this. It becomes a problem, however, when we believe that people have to accept our culture if they are to accept the gospel. Or, in other words, it becomes a problem when we begin to believe that our culture and the gospel are the same things. (“Preparing for the Journey” by R. G. Lyons, <http://missionguatemala.com/wp-content/plugins/downloads-manager/upload/MG-BibleStudy.pdf>)

Jesus' praise of the woman's faith is quite a contrast to his regular frustration with what he calls his disciples' “little faith” (Matthew 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8 and 17:20). In fact, the faith that Jesus often praises is that of outsiders and those on

between Jesus and the woman taking place during a short-term mission trip, are there more subtle ways in which differences in status or background between the “traveling community” and the “host community” result in tensions, hurtful words or actions, or breakdown in relationship?

In an imaginary “Letter to a Canaanite Woman,” Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore writes:

Dear Canaanite Sister,

You go girl! I've never seen anyone talk to Jesus like that. And this from someone who so clearly does not belong. No one has called anyone a Canaanite for centuries. You are a foreigner — or you would be a foreigner if it were not your home turf that Jesus had wandered into. What's more, you are a Canaanite woman in the middle of a group of Jewish men. You are so out of place and so out of time and so exactly where your daughter needs you to be ... Did you teach the Teacher? I think you did. Because of you and your fierce need, God's own Son himself came to see his life's work as bigger than before. What he had not thought to look for in anyone like you, he saw: faith. He saw your tenacious conviction that he could help, and amazed, he did ... You taught the Teacher. What will you teach us?

If you compare Jesus' initial response in verse 26 to that in verse 28, is Dr. Hinkle Shore right in saying that Jesus “learned”?

When we embark on a short-term mission trip, we do well to remember that we are not Jesus. But we do travel in Jesus' name.

What might this story tell us about the way we engage others on our mission journeys?



the margins that Jesus tends (Matthew 8:10, 9:2, 9:22, 9:29).

**EXTRA: Why might have Jesus chosen to travel?** Jesus' choice to spend much of his adult life in a state of itinerancy provides hope to the destitute. For the poor and oppressed, Jesus' way of living offered an invitation to choose freedom from oppressive and unjust structures — to consider them insignificant compared with the promised good news. As the movement grew, Jesus' choice to build a kingdom with decentralized geography consequentially disempowered elite establishments that hoarded wealth and exerted control through segregation. Whether Jesus' intentions were to challenge political and religious structures or not, it is clear his movement threatened the authorities enough to publicly execute him. (David Landis, *The Mennonite* February 17, 2009. Full article available at [http://www.themennonite.org/issues/12-4/articles/Jesus\\_trail](http://www.themennonite.org/issues/12-4/articles/Jesus_trail))

Opportunities for service and mission are not only abroad, but also within our own communities and country. In fact, there are times when doing service abroad serves to highlight local needs. While the “asymmetries” or “boundaries” we cross in these domestic mission experiences may not be as obvious as those we encounter when serving abroad, it is still quite important to name and recognize them.

People with disabilities were often shunned in a society with few resources to address them. Blindness and other diseases were considered punishment from God — in John 9:2 the disciples ask Jesus: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Therefore boundaries between Jesus and the blind man included health/illness,

### **Can you see anything? (8-10 min)**

**Read Mark 8:22-25**

What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out?

Once again Jesus is “on the move.” This time he is not in foreign territory, but he is crossing boundaries. What might be some of the diving lines between Jesus and the blind man?

**Contrast Jesus' initial response to this man to his initial response to the Canaanite woman. What might Jesus have “learned” from that earlier encounter that he is applying now?**

**“I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” There is a little humor in the man's response to Jesus, almost as if he is saying, “You almost got it, but not**





<p>acceptance/rejection, holiness/sin.</p> <p>It is quite significant that Jesus takes the man by the hand — as he cannot see — and takes him outside the village. Jesus recognizes the man’s vulnerability. In the earlier encounter with the Canaanite woman, Jesus publically humiliated her. Now he is mindful to show empathy toward the one who seeks his healing. There is a tenderness in the touch as well as in the thoughtfulness of moving away from gawking eyes to deal with his need.</p> <p>By being willing to ask how he has done, Jesus shows his own vulnerability. He creates such a welcoming environment, that the man is willing to speak truth — acknowledging that Jesus hasn’t quite gotten the healing right! Encourage participants to reflect on times when they have been on a short-term mission trip or other service experiences. Is it common that those we are serving would feel comfortable expressing disappointment or frustration? What would it take for them to feel that they are able to?</p>	<p>quite yet.” What would it have taken for him to speak so openly to Jesus?</p> <p>What can we learn about this openness, about how we may approach our partnership with others in ministry, with a willingness to hear an honest assessment of how our good intentions are coming across?</p> <p>Share and discuss this quote with the group:</p> <p>In his book, “The Second Touch,” Keith Miller points out that Jesus gives the person a healing that is wonderful, but not all that Jesus wanted it to be ... So Jesus gave the blind man a second touch. We pray for the same second touch as we partner in mission with others. As we travel to a new place or meet new partners in mission ... it’s easy to get caught up in the exotic, the adventure. We even can find ourselves looking at everything through the eye of our camera! Everything becomes a picture postcard in our minds. That’s when we need Jesus’ second touch so that we see people as people. As part of a short-term mission trip we are not tourists or vacationers or travelers. The people to whom we go and with whom we work are not objects, clients, natives or even “the poor.” Like us, they are people. People with joys, hurts, faith, hopes, fears, love, dislikes, opinions ... just like us. So as we engage in mission with others, we must look again, build honest and open relationships so that we can see more clearly.</p> <p><i>Adapted from a piece by David Johnson Rowe in “Contemplations: Daily Meditation for the Global Village Short-Term Mission Teams” from Habitat for Humanity International.</i></p>
	<p><b>From Head to Heart (3 min)</b></p> <p><i>Encourage participants to connect today’s conversation with their lives throughout the week. You could open it up and invite everyone to share ideas on how they would like to do that during the week or share some of the suggestions below.</i></p> <p><b>Help the congregation make the connection:</b> Mission or service trips, whether local or global, have the potential to influence the whole congregation. Explore how your congregations mission engagement impacts not only those who participate, but the whole congre-</p>



	<p>gation as they pray and support those who participate and seek ways to learn from their experiences.</p> <p><b>Learn about planning a short-term mission trip:</b> With all the cost, time, and work it takes to organize and commit to a short-term mission trip, what can we do to facilitate an experience that impacts all involved in ways that are positive and real? Download and read a copy of the ELCA Short-Term Mission Resource, found under the education tab at <a href="http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Global-Mission">http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Global-Mission</a>.</p> <p><b>Read “When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself”</b> by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (Moody Publishers; New Edition April 20, 2012). Churches and individual Christians typically have faulty assumptions about the causes of poverty, resulting in the use of strategies that do considerable harm to poor people and themselves. Don’t let this happen to you, your ministry or ministries you help fund! This resource provides foundational concepts, clearly articulated general principles and relevant applications.</p> <p><b>Watch “The Mission”</b> (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1986). Starring Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons, “The Mission” tells the story of 18th century Spanish Jesuits who try to protect a remote South American Indian tribe in danger of falling under the rule of pro-slavery Portugal.</p> <p><b>Explore Jesus’ travels</b> in the interactive map at <a href="http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/footsteps-of-jesus">http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/footsteps-of-jesus</a></p> <p><b>Read “Letter to a Canaanite Woman”</b> by Mary Hinkle Shore available at <a href="http://www.pilgrimage.org/2005/08/letter_to_a_can.html">http://www.pilgrimage.org/2005/08/letter_to_a_can.html</a>.</p>
	<p><b>Closing Prayer (3 min)</b></p> <p><i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>