

Women Encountering Jesus- Lesson #5: Canaanite Woman

Drawing Near to God

Introduction:

- What do you do when you are feeling overwhelmed?
- How do you de-stress?

Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7: 24-30

Read the scripture above. What is going on here?

- Is Jesus being rude?
- Is Jesus frustrated?
- Worn out?
- Was he testing her?

Background:

Sometimes, in order to fully understand what is going on in scripture, it helps to read what happens before and what happens after the passage you are focused on.

So, what was happening in Jesus' life in the day or two prior to this scene?

- Matthew 13
 - Tough Crowd
 - o Those in his hometown are doubting his ministry
- Matthew 14: John the Baptist was beheaded
 - o Jesus left for a remote area so that he could be alone
 - o But a large crowd gathered where he was going
 - Feeding of the 5,000 at Bethsaida
 - o Jesus walks on water
 - The disciples are dense though... even after witnessing the feeding of the 5,000 (+), they still doubt that Jesus has the power to do miracles.
 - Jesus had been praying until about 3AM before he met up with the disciples. He would have been spiritually fed, but physically still very exhausted
 - o More healing at Gennesaret after they crossed the Sea of Galilee
- Matthew 15: Pharisees from Jerusalem had traveled to scrutinize Jesus.
 - o They were probably trying to trap Jesus

Finally, Jesus has a break. He goes to Tyre and Sidon basically to hide. He needs to rest. He needs to grieve for his friend. Even Jesus needs a little 'me' time, right?

- Rare that Jesus travels outside of Palestine.

So, what about this scene with the Canaanite Woman? What are the options we have to explain Jesus' interaction with her?

Option #1: *Jesus was trapped*: Jesus could not help this woman because he was sent to the Jews.

- However, he had already helped the Gentiles
 - o Samaritan woman
 - o Centurion

Option #2: *Jesus was being rude*: Maybe? However, is this really in his character? The same Jesus that:

- Just fed 5000 people and healed numerous people even though he was exhausted and grieving?
- The same Jesus that wept over Jerusalem?

Option #3: *Jesus was amused*: In his book, The Eye of the Storm, Max Lucado offers this theory to explain this bizarre conversation

- Was the exchange tongue and cheek?
- We can't read the non-verbal language that was present.
- Was it a humorous exchange?
- Maybe?

Option #4: *Jesus was testing her*: This is the most popular theory.

- Some folks argue though that it would be strange for Jesus to test her by insulting her.
- Maybe it wasn't so strange though... let's explore further!

Verse 22- The Canaanite Woman says, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is demon-possessed!*

- This woman addressed Jesus as Messiah even though she was a foreigner
 - o She was an outsider, a foreigner.
 - o From Syrian Phoenicia
- She is what we might call, 'un-churched'
- **Jesus was her only hope. She would not turn away.**

The Canaanite Woman went to the right person. How often do we have a problem and Jesus is the last one we approach?

- Family?
- Friends?
- Social media? (Facebook)
- WebMD?

What are some of the perceived hindrances to approaching God?

- Shame
- Guilt
- Reluctance
- Mistrust
- The Church? Other 'Jesus-followers'

Verse 23- Jesus did not answer her.

- The Disciples urged Jesus to send her away
- She was 'bothering' them with her begging

The Disciples would not have expected faith from a Gentile.

Why didn't Jesus say anything?

Verse 24- Then Jesus says this, *'I was sent only to help God's lost sheep'*

- In addressing this woman, Jesus is showing her respect. Respect that she probably doesn't receive from many people.
- A little background on Jesus' statement:
 - o Jews were always considered to have had the first opportunity to accept Jesus as Messiah
- Maybe Jesus was testing her
- Maybe Jesus was using her as an opportunity to teach that faith is available to all people.

Verse 25- *She came and worshipped him, pleading again, 'Lord, help me!'*

- She was not going to be put off

When was the last time you PLEADED your request to God?

The thing is, Jesus was her only hope. She would not turn away.

This *Mom* was not just treating Jesus like Santa Claus or a genie in a bottle. This *Mom* worshipped him... adored him.

Ultimately, she was asking Jesus to do what he came to do--- Give great gifts to unworthy children (see Max Lucado's book again)

This woman was really unworthy and had no right to ask anything of Jesus.

- She wasn't a Jew
- She wasn't one of his disciples
- She didn't come offering a sizeable donation
- Nowhere do we read that she promised to devote herself to Jesus or anything else

Jesus does not owe her anything, but she is asking him for everything.

Contrast this attitude with that of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19: 16-22)

- He didn't really need anything from God (or so he thought)
- He was not really willing to give up anything

Verse 26- *food from children to dogs*

There are two common interpretations of the phrase 'dog'

- The term 'dog' was used by the Israelites and was what they called Canaanites. Tyre, where this woman likely was from, was a rich port city, very hedonistic. If the term was used in this context it would not have been perceived as being degrading to this woman.
- Jesus was actually referring to her as a pet?

Also, what about 'children's bread'?

- Probably referring to an old covenant promise that God made to the children of Israel.

Verse 27- She is so persistent!

- The Canaanite woman would accept any leftovers of miraculous power that might enter her life
- She demonstrated amazing courage and commitment in the face of obstacles
- Contrast her faith with that of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Contrast her understanding of scripture to the disciples. She puts them to shame.

Verse 28- *Your faith is great. Your request is granted (!!!!)*

Wow! This woman impressed God!

Jesus took her seriously.

Jesus granted her request.

Jesus complimented her. Really? This is God... and he was impressed... with this woman?

Remember—Jesus had just had a horrible week.

- He was probably relieved, refreshed
- Maybe he was impressed with her bold, unshakeable faith

Thought questions:

- *What have you received from God that didn't belong to you? (Salvation, Every good and perfect gift...)*
- *When God smiles and tells us we are saved, why do we sometimes act like we don't believe it?*
 - o *Instead, we try to impress with goodness, religiosity*

Final Thoughts:

- Be persistent
- Consistently continues to put requests before God until he sees fit to answer you
- Even the faith of a mustard seed can move mountains
- Faith gives believers confidence and delivers us from doubts and fears
- Faith caused this woman to go beyond her comfort zone. What is your comfort zone?
- The Canaanite woman just asked... she didn't even try to earn the gift Jesus gave her.
 - o Sometimes we ask for gifts but want them on our own terms.
 - o Maybe we feel better if we earn it a little?
 - o Maybe we are uncomfortable with bold and outlandish grace?

*** Sections of this lesson were taken from The Eye of the Storm, by Max Lucado