

## Learn From Jesus

### Faith to Push Through

A team was sent out to conquer Mt Everest and failed. So they got George Mallory, one of the finest explorers of the day and gave him the finest equipment available, an unlimited budget, and he was wiped out in an avalanche. And a bunch of mountaineers met at a hotel in London to honour those who had fallen in that great attempt. The last speaker charged his glass and turned to face the large picture of Mt Everest behind him and said, “Mt Everest, I’m talking to you. I want to tell you, Mt Everest, we tried to beat you once and we failed. We tried to beat you twice and failed. Then we tried again with Mallory and failed. But Mt Everest, I want to tell you something. You’re not going to get any bigger, but we are.” There were ten attempts between 1921 and 1952 before New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary succeeded in 1953.

#### **Matthew 15:21-28**

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

This message is from the series *Learn From Jesus*, and I’ve entitled it *Faith to Push Through*.

#### **1. About the woman**

To understand this passage of Scripture, we need first to understand some things about this woman who approached Jesus for help.

First, she was a Canaanite, a traditional enemy of the Jews.

Which makes her a Gentile, which is important because as a Gentile, she has no claim on Jesus’ time.

Here’s how Paul described the Jews.

#### **Romans 9:3-5**

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

None of this applied to the Gentiles; they had no covenant with God – or to them; they weren’t adopted by God, the promises weren’t made to them.

And yet this woman comes to Jesus.

Driven by love and desperation because her young daughter is severely demonised.

And calling Him, “Lord, Son of David” which was a title of the Messiah.

So she recognised who Jesus really was; the promised Messiah.

How did she even know this?

In Mark’s gospel, he gives us a bit more information. Jesus was hiding in a house.

## **Mark 7:24**

From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.

He was looking for some down time.

And He left Israelite territory to try and get away from the crowds.

In fact, this is the only time recorded in Scripture when Jesus ventured outside of Israelite territory.

But Jesus was already too famous, even outside of Israel.

## **Mark 3:7-8**

But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.

So there's a lot of people had seen Jesus doing miracles and healing people.

And no doubt this lady had heard about Him from others.

And she comes to Him, desperate for a solution.

The Scriptures don't tell us what form the demonisation took.

In Mark 9, a man came to Jesus because his son had a demon.

Here are the symptoms the son had: deaf and dumb, convulsions, foaming at mouth, falling down, gnashing his teeth, going rigid.

And if that wasn't enough to cope with, the spirit often threw the son into the fire or water to try and kill him.

Sounds like a parent's nightmare to me.

And if this woman's daughter was going through anything like that, you can imagine how she felt.

So she comes to Jesus and Mark tells us that she fell at His feet and kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

## **2. Jesus' response**

Jesus' response was very interesting: He ignored her.

Matthew 15:23 says that He answered her not a word...

But she kept asking, and then the disciples say, "Lord, get rid of her. She's annoying."

Why didn't Jesus answer her? Sometimes people think that it's because she was a Gentile.

But we know that's not true.

Sometime earlier in Jesus' ministry, (Matthew 8) a man approached Jesus and pleaded with Him to come and heal his servant who was lying at home paralysed.

The man doing the pleading was a Roman centurion.

Not just a traditional enemy of the Israelites like the Canaanite woman, but a current enemy, an officer in the army of the occupying troops.

If Jesus had something against Gentiles, He would have told him to get lost.

But He didn't.

Jesus' immediate response was, "I will come and heal him."

This is important to understand because it's not always about us.

Why does God sometimes delay in answering prayer?

It's not always about us.

It can be, but often, God has something in mind He wants to achieve.

Sometimes what He wants to draw out something more from us.

Perhaps a higher level of commitment, perhaps a stronger expression of faith, perhaps a greater intensity of desire.

Maybe there's a better time for Him to answer: He doesn't work according to our time frames.

Jesus had nothing against this woman as a Gentile, or even more specifically as a Canaanite.

But He wanted to draw something out of her.

And so finally Jesus responds: Matthew 15:24: "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

In other words, healing Gentiles is not part of My mission.

And you've got to admire this woman: she ain't giving up.

As a Gentile, she has no claim on Jesus or the covenants or the promises and Jesus is ignoring her.

But she knows that He's the Messiah, she knows He can set her daughter free and she loves her daughter.

And love can propel people into places they would otherwise never go.

So she tries yet again, "Lord, help me!"

### **3. Jesus' second response**

#### **Matthew 15:26**

But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

Today, that sounds like a real slap in the face.

But what exactly is Jesus saying?

First of all, who are the dogs? Because what Jesus is implying is that she's one of them.

And that doesn't sound very nice.

To our modern ears, it certainly doesn't sound like "gentle Jesus, meek and mild."

It's true that the Jews referred to the Gentiles as dogs, but that's not the word Jesus uses here.

Jesus isn't using the word that describes the mangy scavengers that roamed the streets.

The word Jesus uses refers to the pet dogs.

So imagine this scene: the table is set, a delicious meal prepared: pumpkin soup, roast lamb and baked potatoes, Pavlova and ice cream.

The whole family sits down for the meal.

Then Murphy, family dog, jumps up onto the spare seat.

The whole family is excited. "It's Murphy! Would you like some pumpkin soup, Murphy? Or some roast lamb, or Pavlova?"

Yes, Murphy wants pumpkin soup and roast lamb and baked potatoes and Pavlova and ice cream.

Murphy wants everything, because Murphy is a dog.

And then when Murphy's finished eating, everyone eats.

Would that happen in your home?

Of course not!

You'd say, "Murphy, get off that chair!"

Not because you hate your dog but because there's a priority in the home.

Isn't there?

How many of you think your dog is more important than your children?

So, it's children first, then the dogs.

### **Romans 1:16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek.

There was an order of priority with the gospel too: Jews first, then Gentiles.

And Jesus is saying to the woman, "My mission is first to the house of Israel."

They were the children sitting at the table.

And healing and deliverance and all the promises of God were the children's bread.

And the children get served before the pets under the table.

The Canaanite woman was a smart and discerning woman.

She understood that Jesus wasn't insulting her, that He was using an analogy to explain to her His priorities.

### **4. The woman responds to Jesus**

She said, "Yes, Lord, I know that the children have priority. They get fed first."

"But the pet dogs still get to hang around like vacuum cleaners under the table ready to clean up any crumbs that come their way."

And she nailed it.

She was saying, "Lord, I'm here to get some crumbs. Now, please set my daughter free."

How many people would have given up long before this point?

How many would have given up when Jesus kept ignoring her?

"Mustn't be God's will; I guess I'll just go home and learn to cope."

How many would have given up when Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

"Oh, well, I guess if I'm not an Israelite, it isn't going to happen for me. God's not interested."

And how many more would have given up at this point and said, "He called me a dog. I don't have to hang around here and be insulted."

I wonder how many churches are filled with giver-uppers?

They find out God's will, pray, and the first sign of an obstacle, they give up.

But who put the obstacles in this woman's path? It was the Lord Himself because He wanted to draw something out of her.

Her answer to Jesus really pleased Him.

### **Matthew 15:28**

O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.

**DON'T YOU QUIT:** When things go wrong as they sometimes will, When the road you're trudging seems uphill, When the funds are low and the debts are high, And you want to smile, but you have to sigh, When cares are pressing you down a bit, Rest if you must, but don't you quit. Life is strange with its twists and turns As all of us sometimes must learn. And many a failure turns about, When we might have won had we stuck it out. Don't give up, though the pace seems slow, You may succeed with another blow. Success is failure turned inside out, The silver tint of the clouds of doubt. And you never can tell how close you are, It may be near

when it seems so far. So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit- It's when things get worse that you must not quit. T. L. Osborn

From John Wesley's diary: Sunday morning, May 5, preached in St. Ann's, was asked not to come back anymore. Sunday p.m., May 5, preached at St. John's, deacons said "Get out and stay out". Sunday a.m., May 12, preached at St. Jude's, can't go back there either. Sunday p.m., May 12, preached at St. George's, kicked out again. Sunday a.m., May 19, preached at St. somebody else's, deacons called a special meeting and said I couldn't return. Sunday p.m., May 19, preached on the street, kicked off the street. Sunday a.m., May 26, preached in meadow, chased out of meadow as a bull was turned loose during the services. Sunday a.m., June 2, preached out at the edge of town, kicked off the highway. Sunday p.m., June 2, afternoon service, preached in a pasture, 10,000 people came to hear me.

Don't give up. You don't know how close you are to a breakthrough.