



Humble Faith

Key idea:

The Syro-Phoenician woman is a paragon of humility and faith, accepting her utter need for God's grace and actively seeking until she receives it.

Key text:

Mark 7:24-30

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁸ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Key points:

1. Jesus goes to the region of Tyre in secret to get rest and teach the disciples but is immediately interrupted by a Syro-Phoenician woman begging Him to drive a demon from her daughter.
2. Jesus answers with a parable that is shocking to our sensibilities, comparing Jews to children and this woman to a dog under the table.
3. The woman is the first person in the Gospel to understand a parable of Jesus, and she replies not only with wisdom but with humility and faith.
4. Based on her humble, faith-filled response to Jesus and His Word, the woman receives her request and her daughter is delivered from the demon.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?

2. When I first read this story, what is my reaction to Jesus' words? Am I surprised? Confused? Offended?
3. Mark gives us very little information to help us understand Jesus' words and actions in this context, requiring us to press into the story to understand and apply it. Why is this appropriate given Jesus' constant use of parables and riddles?
4. How do I think I would have responded if I were the woman? Would I have been offended? Would I have objected to the parable and stated that I was not a dog? Would I have simply been confused and left?
5. How do I think most of my friends and neighbors would respond to this story? Why?
6. Why do we find it so difficult to humbly accept our lack of any rights to demand anything from God? Why do we think God owes us explanations and meeting our demands?
5. Can I think of a time when I felt as if God was treating me unfairly? How did I respond?
6. How might the story have ended if the woman humbly accepted her position as an unworthy "dog" but simply left without continuing to press Jesus to meet her need? Why is it important to note a distinction between the woman's humility and her consistent and insistent faith?
7. Have I ever simply given up continuing to wrestle with God like Jacob or press him like this woman? Why am I tempted to do this?
8. Can I identify any areas in my life right now where I am struggling to humbly accept God's Word to me? Are there any areas where I am not continuing to exhibit persistent and insistent faith? Let the Spirit reveal these and then purposefully seek God in these areas.
9. Who can I reach out to this week to share the Gospel or strengthen their faith?