

LESSON: THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Matthew 15:12-28; Mark 7:24-30

Adapted from: www.ministry-to-children.com

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

The story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman can seem odd, as it appears that He ignores her request at first. In the end, we understand how she recognized how powerful Jesus was, and that she was willing to take risks and persist in her efforts because she believed in His ability. The miracle Jesus performed in this lesson, and how it came about, reminds children that sometimes God asks us to be patient, and might seem to be far away. But He is always listening and ready to give us what we truly need.

THEME: Whenever we share messages focused on faith, it's important to remind students that faith is not about us, but about who we are trusting. Yes, this woman was persistent in asking Jesus for help. But it was not her persistence or her own merit that caused the healing of her daughter. That came about through Christ's help. We are all sinful creatures, but Jesus died for all of us, and wants us to come to Him with our needs.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Bag with “treat-like” items inside (small toys, candies, etc.) or other small prizes;
- Blindfold

LESSON:

Greet children, holding pool gear or water items:

Do you like surprises? Sometimes I enjoy being surprised, when there are good things to enjoy, like birthday presents or a special person coming to visit...but there are other times when surprises can actually be a little challenging, like if a teacher gives you a quiz you're not ready for, or you suddenly run out of toilet paper! Well, I have a little surprise here, and I'd like to share it with you (hold up paper bag).

Would you like that? I won't show it to you just yet, but you can trust me: it's a good surprise. You'll like it. But before we take a peek, I need you to do some other things for me. First, I'd like you to jump up and down for a minute. Ready, go! (Let students hop or do another small activity). Okay, great. Now, I'd like you to turn around six times. Okay, spin! Good job. One more thing: can you recite the alphabet for me? (Adjust the tasks as you'd like, just make several things that require some small effort).

Okay, now you may find out what's inside the bag—but no looking! Shut your eyes completely, and hold out your hand. I'll guide you to pick something out of the bag, okay? (Once students' eyes are shut, help them find items in the bag. You may ask if they know what it is before they pull out the objects. Have them show the others what they discovered).

Well, that's not a bad little prize, right? Was it worth the work it took to obtain it? Maybe. But you probably had to trust me a little bit. You had to trust that there was something good in here, and that I'd give it to you at the right time. You had to believe that inside the plain paper bag, I had a worthwhile object.

Well, sometimes we have to trust God in similar ways. He might not give us treats that we can see and hold like this. But He invites us to ask Him for gifts, and to trust Him to provide what we need, when it is in His will. The Gospel story today has to do with this idea. Jesus and His friends were walking down the road, and a woman came up to Him, begging for help for her sick daughter. At first, Jesus seemed to just ignore her, which might strike us as strange. Didn't He come to help people who needed God? Well, He told her that He came to help the children of Israel, of which she was not. In fact, she was a Canaanite, which meant she was from a different group of people than the Jews. Jesus told her that taking His time and attention away from the Jews would be like taking food from children and feeding it to dogs.

However, this did not deter the woman! She told Jesus that at least dogs still received table scraps. Jesus was impressed by her faith and perseverance. Not only did she keep asking without giving up, she truly believed in Him and she knew that He could do miracles. So He granted what she requested, and healed her daughter.

This story isn't necessarily about the woman, or the girl, or the disciples. It's not about calling people dogs or being selective with who we might or might not want to help. This story reminds us that we can have faith and trust in God. He didn't come just for the Jews, but for everyone, and He proved that by dying for everyone.

Sometimes we ask God for things, and He might seem silent. Maybe we don't receive what we wish right away. Perhaps we have to wait for things, and it might feel like we wait a long time. Sometimes, we might not get what we think we want at all, because God has greater plans for us. But we can put our faith and trust in knowing He has our best interests at heart. God knows what we need, and promises to provide it. We might not receive our first choice, but we will get what's best for us. We can trust that God loves us, cares for us, and will continue to grant us what we need. All we have to do is ask!

PRAYER MOMENT: (Have kids repeat each line)

- Dear God,
- Thank you for providing what we need
- Help us to be patient
- Help us to trust in you always
- Thank you for your love
- We love you, God!
- In Jesus name, Amen!