

## Mark 7:24-37 ~ Scripture Verses

### *The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman*

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. [a] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil [b] spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> “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.”

<sup>28</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### *The Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man*

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. [c] <sup>32</sup> There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

<sup>33</sup> After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup> He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”).

<sup>35</sup> At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

<sup>36</sup> Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup> People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

#### Footnotes:

- a. Mark 7:24 Many early manuscripts Tyre and Sidon
- b. Mark 7:25 Greek: unclean
- c. Mark 7:31 That is, the Ten Cities

## Mark 7:24-37 ~ Discussion Questions

1. When was a time you felt like an outsider?
2. Why did Jesus go to the vicinity of Tyre (about 30 miles from Capernaum)?
3. Name four characteristics of the person who approached Jesus. (7:25-26)
4. Was Jesus' response to her? A. Gentle, B. Harsh, C. Offensive, D. Humiliating  
Why would he respond in this way? (7:27)
5. Was the woman insulted by Jesus' response? How did she reply to him? What can we learn from her response? (7:28)
6. Why was Jesus impressed with the woman? Does it pay to be persistent? (Psalm 55:17, Mark 13:13, Luke 5:17-20, 18:1-8, 2 Cor 4:16, James 5:11, Ephesians 6:18)
7. How would you compare your level of faith with that of the woman in this story? Are you persistent in your prayers? If not, why not?
8. The journey in 7:31 is about 100 miles long over mountainous terrain. It would have taken several weeks to complete. Why might Jesus have chosen to travel this long and difficult route with his disciples? What previously happened here? (5:20)
9. What would it be like to be deaf or unable to speak? How do most ordinary people treat those with disabilities?
10. Who did the people bring to Jesus? What did they want Jesus to do? Did the deaf man have faith in Jesus? If not, why did he come to Jesus?
11. Put yourself in the sandals of this deaf mute. What kind of life do you have? Do you have lots of friends? Do you worship God? Why do you think these people are pulling you toward Jesus? What on earth is Jesus doing?
12. An age-old complaint that both Jews and Christians have is that God blesses non-believers as much as believers. (Malachi 3:14-15) This story illustrates one reason for this, which is what? Why else might God bless non-believers?
13. What does this story tell us about how we ought to pray and how Jesus relates to us? Look at Verse 7:37: is amazement the basis of your relationship with Jesus or is it something else?

## Mark 7:24-37 ~ Leader's Guide

1. When was a time you felt like an outsider?
2. Why did Jesus go to the vicinity of Tyre (about 30 miles from Capernaum)?

Since the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus and his disciples had been in the region of Galilee where many people were following him around for healing or to see a miracle. Jesus wanted some quiet time in order to teach his disciples privately. Also, he knew of the great trial that lay before him. It is possible that he was taking advantage of the calm before the storm.

One of the reasons we don't do too well in the midst of storms is that we haven't taken advantage of the quiet before the storm. There is a direct correlation between what you do in a crisis and what you did before that crisis. Are you currently in the quiet before the storm? Are things going pretty good in your life right now? Maybe so, but that doesn't mean this is a time to sit back and relax. It is a time for you to get ready. It is the quiet before the storm.

3. Name four characteristics of the person who approached Jesus. (7:25-26)

- A woman – as such she was doing something out of the ordinary in coming and speaking to Jesus.
- A Gentile – The text calls her a Greek, but this is used as a general term to describe one who was not Jewish.
- Born a Phoenician in Syria, in an area of an ancient race of idol-worshippers.
- A mother of a demon-possessed child – this was the source of her need.

4. How did Jesus respond to her? A. Gently, B. Harshly, C. Offensively  
Why would he respond in this way? (7:27)

The reply of Jesus seems harsh, offensive, and humiliating. That is because we tend to feel that he owed her something. He did not. His reply, "Let the children be satisfied first," seems to indicate the disciples. Jesus had not come here in order to draw a crowd. He had not come here in order to heal people. He had come here to spend time with His disciples, to teach them. They were his "children." His time on earth was limited. And His time with His disciples was equally limited.

Even so, the reply of Jesus still seems overly harsh. Especially in view of his referring to the woman and her Gentile ancestry as "dogs." The Jews called the Gentiles "dogs" in the same way we would call someone a "bitch." It was a term of contempt. Literal translations of Jesus' words indicate he said "little dogs" (or puppies), so perhaps he wasn't being so harsh after all and was making a play on the words which were commonly used by the religious Jews to insult Gentiles.

5. Was the woman insulted by Jesus' response? How did she reply to him? What can we learn from her response? (7:28)

If she was, she didn't show it. She accepts His judgment. She calls him "Lord." And then she asks Him again for His help. There is no false pride here. She does not become offended. She recognizes her unworthiness, even as she continues her request, pointing out that "even the puppies under the table eat the crumbs of the children."

This woman is a loser. She is a woman in a man's world. She is a Gentile before a Jewish Messiah. But that is the kind of person to whom God can respond in grace. He reaches out to losers. If you are going to Christ because you want Him to tell you how wonderful you are, then don't bother. But if you are a loser or going to him in humility, then call out to Him and He will help you.

6. Why was Jesus impressed with the woman? Does it pay to be persistent? (Psalm 55:17, Mark 13:13, Luke 5:17-20, 18:1-8, 2 Cor 4:16, James 5:11, Ephesians 6:18)

The woman continued to petition Him until her prayers were answered. She had faced a challenge to her faith and she had persisted, wrestling with the Lord until she received the blessing she sought.

When you pray, do you persist even if you get turned down the first time(s)? Are you confident and do you have the faith that your prayers will be answered (but in God's time and according to God's plan, which is unknown to us)?

In a sense this woman represents the Gentile world. Jesus had come to His own people, those of Israel, but their leaders rejected Him. That bread of heaven which was rejected and thrown away by the Jews is now available to the Gentiles. But there is a warning: if we do not receive that same bread of life from the hands of Jesus, then it will be taken from us.

Persistence is generally considered a good quality (except when it is used in the pursuit of evil (Nehemiah 9:28) or idolatry (Judges 6:1, 13:1)). Some scriptures:

Psalm 55:17 – Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

Mark 13:13 – All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Luke 5:17-20 – <sup>17</sup> One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. <sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. <sup>19</sup> When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into

the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 18:1-8 – <sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

<sup>4</sup> “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’”

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

2 Corinthians 4:16 – Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

James 5:11 – As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Ephesians 6:18 – [Good News Translation] Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.

7. How would you compare your level of faith with that of the woman in this story? Are you persistent in your prayers? If not, why not?

8. The journey in 7:31 is about 100 miles long over mountainous terrain. It would have taken several weeks to complete. Why might Jesus have chosen to travel this long and difficult route with his disciples? What previously happened here? (5:20)

It was a retreat, a time to get away from all of the crowds and the teaching and the ministry and the miracles and a time for Jesus to be alone with His disciples. It is a fundamental principle of discipleship that you can only affect those with whom you spend time. Jesus understood that principle and He deliberately set time apart from His very busy schedule to spend some times with these men.

As Jesus and His disciples comes back southward, they find themselves once again within the region of Decapolis, meaning “ten cities” (Damascus, Raphana, Hippos, Dion, Kanatha, Gadara, Scythopolis, Pella, Gerasa and Philadelphia).

Because of the high percentage of Greek immigrants to these cities, they had formed a political league among themselves and had developed a tradition of self-government. It was a land of heathen temples, or marble amphitheaters and of Greek culture and art.

Jesus had come to this area before (Mark 5:1-20) and had been confronted with a man who was possessed with a number of demons. He had cast the demons out of the man and had allowed them to enter a herd of pigs. The pigs had stampeded down the hillside and into the waters of the Sea of Galilee to drown.

The man, now healed, had wanted to follow Jesus. Instead, Jesus instructed him to go home and to tell everyone about what had happened to him.

Some time has now passed. Jesus has returned to the Decapolis. And it seems as though the man who had been healed had done his job. Everyone in the area has heard about Jesus. It is not long before people come to him for healing.

9. What would it be like to be deaf or unable to speak? How do most ordinary people treat those with disabilities?

10. Who did the people bring to Jesus? What did they want Jesus to do? Did the deaf man have faith in Jesus? If not, why did he come to Jesus?

The people brought to Jesus a deaf man who could hardly speak. This man had not heard of the miracles. He hadn't heard of anything. He couldn't hear. Because he could not hear, his speech was also affected; he could make sounds, but they were not understandable.

The fact that this man could not ask for himself meant that he was totally helpless. He was not only deaf and mute, but he couldn't even ask Jesus to heal him. And so, certain people among the crowd asked for healing on his behalf. The man had no faith, so the crowd believed for him. It was because of their faith in Jesus that they brought this man to be healed.

11. Put yourself in the sandals of this deaf mute. What kind of life do you have? Do you have lots of friends? Do you worship God? Why do you think these people are pulling you toward Jesus? What on earth is Jesus doing?

This deaf mute has been in this condition for a very long time. It has been a lonely life. He has no one with whom to talk. He cannot participate in worship because he cannot hear the Scriptures or listen to the prayers. He is a social outcast. He has no friends and his family probably considers him to be a liability rather than an asset. He cannot even express the frustration that he feels.

Then one day, a group of people come to him. They are excited and they are talking about something, but he cannot understand them. They pull at him and perhaps he is afraid. What are they trying to do to him? They lead him to where a large crowd has gathered. But since he cannot hear what is being said, he can

make no sense of what they are doing or why they are here.

And then, there is another hand upon his shoulder. It firmly guides him away from the crowd and the confusion. He looks at his new guide and sees a man with Jewish features. This man seems genuinely interested in him. Now that they are alone and free from the distractions of the multitude, the Jewish stranger begins a series of pantomimes.

1. He... put his fingers into his ears (7:33). Jesus takes the deaf man and touches his ears, pointing out that he is aware of the hearing problem the man has and that he is going to do something about it.

2. He spit...and he touched the man's tongue. (7:33). By spitting and then touching the man's tongue, Jesus was letting him know that he intended to deal with his speech problem.

Why is Jesus doing this? Because he wants to create a measure of faith within the man before he heals him. Up to this point, the only people who have demonstrated any faith are those who brought the deaf-mute to Jesus. The man has no faith of his own. And so, Jesus makes his intentions known to the man so that he can have his faith aroused.

3. Looking up to heaven with a deep sigh (7:34). The sigh and the looking up to heaven were also for the deaf man's benefit. As he saw Jesus looking up to heaven, he would realize where the power for this miracle was coming from. As he saw Jesus breath a deep sigh [Greek: groan], he would perhaps understand that Jesus is praying on his behalf.

Why did Jesus groan? Perhaps because he was touched by this man's infirmity. The real importance of the incarnation is that God became flesh so that he could touch us and so that he could be touched by us. We do not pray to a God who is unable to identify with our problems. He has been touched by the same things that touch us.

4. He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" (7:34). This man had not been able to hear for a very long time. Suddenly as he looks into the eyes of Jesus, he hears his voice. This single Aramaic word is the first thing that he hears.

Moreover, his healing is immediate. He can hear what Jesus is saying to him and he can speak so that others can understand him.

12. An age-old complaint that both Jews and Christians have is that God blesses non-believers as much as believers. (Malachi 3:14-15) This story illustrates one reason for this, which is what? Why else might God bless non-believers?

Malachi 3:14-15 – <sup>14</sup>“You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’ <sup>15</sup>But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.”

Also Malachi 2:17 – You have wearied the LORD with your words.

“How have we wearied him?” you ask.

By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”

A brief aside: As the second sentence in Malachi 2:17 says, The LORD really doesn't like us grouching that he blesses whoever he wishes. In the end of Malachi he reassures the people that on the Day of the LORD, *all* will be judged, justice will be done, the faithful will receive their reward, and the others will be punished.

Meanwhile, the LORD is free to bless who he pleases. The LORD created us all in his image and would like to see every one of us join him in heaven. Some people become believers quite young, others are much older, and some do not repent until the last day (think of the thief on the cross next to Jesus). A non-believer may receive blessings here on earth but be assured that unless he repents and truly believes and has faith in Christ, he will not receive any blessings in the hereafter.

13. What does this story tell us about how we ought to pray and how Jesus relates to us? Look at Verse 7:37: is amazement the basis of your relationship with Jesus or is it something else?

This story, as so many others in the Bible, illustrates that Jesus (the LORD) is in the details. Yes, God hears and answers all our prayers, but more than broad platitudes (Please, LORD, keep all our troops around the world safe) I think the LORD likes to the specifics (Thank you LORD for the successful completion of 9 weeks of radiation treatments; if there was any cancer not eradicated by the radiation, I ask that you eliminate it. I also ask that the IRS examiner acknowledge that they made an error that led to recalculating my 2009 taxes.)

Praying the same prayer such as the LORD's prayer or serenity prayer is okay, but the words should not become so repetitive that we don't think about them. In praying the LORD's prayer by myself, I often meditate on just one line or substitute synonyms or different words or get very specific. Instead of just saying, “lead us not into temptation,” I'll enumerate the specific temptations that I'm trying to avoid such as “help me not think of Erica in a lustful way” and “help me not be envious of Scott's new house.”

Pertaining to the last question, you wouldn't be human if you weren't overwhelmed with amazement at Jesus doing everything well. On the other hand, that should not be the basis of your relationship with Jesus. Yes, you should recognize that he can do anything (he is God, after all) and he does everything well (ditto), but he tells the people, “don't tell anyone” because he wants you to come to him because of his message of the Good News and because he brings us eternal salvation if we believe in him—not because you're amazed at his miracles.

Some material above adapted from John Stevenson, [www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/](http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/)

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