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JESUS: GOD'S POWER IN ACTION

Jesus Honors Bold Faith

Bible School Lesson for May 4*

By Linda Ahlgrim

Jesus never fails to show mercy to anyone who falls humbly at His feet. When we put our life in His hands, He always listens to us and honors our requests. This truth is clearly illustrated in the story of Jesus healing the demon-possessed daughter of a Gentile woman. She knew she was undeserving of His favor, yet she persisted in asking Jesus for help.

At this time in His ministry, Jesus had withdrawn to foreign territory. Perhaps He was still seeking to avoid the Jewish authorities who wanted to have Him killed, or maybe He was trying to avoid any circumstance that would encourage a zealous mob to try to put Him at the head of a popular insurrection against Roman rule. Possibly He just needed to find a remote place where He could devote His attention to teaching His disciples and preparing them for His death and resurrection.

Whatever the case, it's clear that Jesus could not be hidden. His fame had spread even into the region of Tyre, where a Gentile woman came and fell at His feet.

An Ingenious Gentile (Mark 7:24-30)

The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia, yet she had the audacity to seek help from Jesus, Son of David, Messiah of the Jews. This same story, with a slightly different twist, also is presented in Matthew 15:21-28. From that account we can assume she had already approached the disciples and been rebuffed. But she was determined not to let the disciples prevent her from seeing Jesus. Her young daughter was possessed by a demon, and she knew Jesus was her only hope.

At first glance, Jesus' response to her seems harsh and uncaring, but He was *instructing* her, not *rejecting* her. When Jesus said, "First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs,"* He was

giving a word picture of a common household dinner scene. Family pets would wait under the table for the children to finish eating and then drop some scraps. In saying this, Jesus made it clear that His messianic mission was to the Jews, and any blessings resulting from that mission were primarily for the Jews.

Apparently, this Gentile woman took no offense in being compared to a dog. Instead, she latched on to a message of hope in His words. After all, weren't the Jewish religious leaders already "playing with their food"? Surely there must be some crumbs for her. Even though it seemed like Jesus might refuse her request, she persisted, and I imagine there must have been a twinkle in her eyes as she gave her ingenious reply. Jesus may even have chuckled at her uninhibited comeback as He granted her request.

Christian parents can benefit from this woman's example of relentless determination to bring the power of Jesus Christ into her home. She had a love that never gave up. Only one thing mattered to her: she wanted Jesus to help her child. The greatest blessing we can seek for our own children is for Jesus to break the power of Satan (sin) in their lives, sweeping out all "unclean" influences, and making them temples of His Holy Spirit.

A Deaf/Mute Man and His Determined Friends (Mark 7:31-37)

We next find Jesus at the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where some people begged Him to put His healing hand on their friend who was deaf and unable to speak. Once again, we see that Jesus honored their persistence. He took the man aside, away from the excitement and distraction of the crowd, and communicated with him in the only way he could, with actions.

Jesus prepared the man to receive the blessing of hearing and speech by putting His fingers in the man's

Home Daily Bible Readings

- April 28Mark 7:24-30
- April 29.....Mark 7:31-37
- April 30.....Mark 8:11-21
- May 1Luke 7:1-10
- May 2Acts 4:5-14
- May 3Acts 4:15-22
- May 4Acts 4:23-31

ears and by wetting a finger with His saliva and touching the man's tongue. Then, to show it was by divine power that He was about to do this, He looked up to Heaven. Finally, with Messianic authority, Jesus commanded, "Be opened!" This fulfilled the prophecy given in Isaiah 35:5, 6. "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."

Even though Mark is giving a factual account of the details of this healing miracle, we also see a powerful picture of the gospel message. It is Christ who opens our ears and our hearts to receive the Word of God, and by His Holy Spirit we are prompted to approach Him boldly and open our mouths in prayer. Sometimes we give up too quickly, assuming that our request is not important to Jesus. But persistent prayer is a statement of faith. It's always too soon to give up on God, so it's always too soon to give up on prayer.

Follow the example of the Gentile woman and the deaf man's friends. Pray persistently and pray boldly!

*Scripture quotes are from the *New International Version*.

THE LESSON WRITER

Linda Ahlgrim graduated from Milligan College in Tennessee in 1968 and married Alan Ahlgrim. She taught first grade in public schools for four years before taking time to raise a family. The couple have three grown children and two grandchildren. They moved to Longmont, Colorado 20 years ago to plant Rocky Mountain Christian Church and have watched the church grow from 150 to more than 2,000 members. Linda has served as director of children's ministry at the church for the past 11 years.



Lesson text: Mark 7:24-37. Printed text: Mark 7:24-37. Memory text: Mark 7:37.
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