

THE MODEL MOM WHO MADE UP HER MIND

Please take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 15. Although this will be a “Mom-focused” message—you already know that from the title—it is really **for all of us** because it is about **bringing our problems** to the Lord. It’s not just about that, though. This model Mom shows us two important characteristics we should have when it comes to prayer—faith and perseverance. Please follow along as I read verses 21-28.

First, let’s consider... **1. The problems of the mother**

Notice I’m using the word “**problems**”—plural—meaning there is more than just one. There is an **obvious problem**—her daughter is “vexed with a devil”—but that is not **the only** problem she has.

A. The problem of her background

Both here—and in Mark’s account—we learn the **background** of this mom who came to Jesus. In Mark 7, she is called a Greek and Syrophenician; here she is said to be from Canaan. There is no contradiction: she was by birth a Syrian, born in Phoenicia—and a descendent of the Canaanites—that lived in an area that had been conquered by Alexander the Great and consequently was considered “Greek.”

The main point? She was **not a Jew**—and was not the kind of person that **we would expect** to be a seeker of Jesus. Fast forward to today. Do we have certain **perceptions** of what kind of people will seek Jesus?

Society sure does! Many promote the idea that “religion” **is a crutch** for the poor...and the uneducated...and the weak. Their attitude is ‘Those poor, simple-minded Christians! If they were better educated—and more financially stable—they would see that they don’t need God!’

Sadly, sometimes that thinking rubs off on **God’s people**. Sometimes we **avoid witnessing** to the rich...and the educated...and “important” people who have high positions. We may also avoid the **rough-looking**, “biker-types” because we think they are “too tough” to need God!

Since the possibility of us falling into this kind of thinking is a real one, let’s be careful not to let it affect **who we try** to share the gospel with! Don’t “judge a book by its cover”—and don’t forget that everyone has problems **that only God** can fix!

B. The problem of her lack of Bible knowledge

Did this woman have a lot of Bible knowledge? Pretty safe to say **she did not!** By Bible knowledge, I’m referring to the **knowledge of the OT** because the NT hadn’t been written yet! The OT at that time was written—by hand—on scrolls. **Very few Jews** owned a copy of **all** the scrolls—and it is highly unlikely that **any non-Jews** would have even **a little bit** of the OT. Not only that, but Gentiles—like this woman—could not **even enter** into a Jewish synagogue to hear the OT being read each Sabbath like Jews could!

The point by now should be obvious—she **knew very little** about God! But somehow, she **had heard about Jesus**—and didn’t let her lack of knowledge stop her from **going to Him** to get help from Him!

The problem of her **background**—and the problem of her **lack of knowledge**—were nothing compared to the **real reason** she came to Jesus—her daughter was “vexed with a devil.” We see that in the middle of vs 22 “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is **grievously vexed** with a devil.”

I’m calling that... C. The problem beyond human help

What does “vexed with a devil” mean? The Greek word it comes from literally means to be **possessed by a demon**. In **Mk 7:26** we read “she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.”

What **does the Bible say** about demon-possession—and Jesus casting out demons? A lot—and way too much to cover as a sub-point in a sermon!

So...even though I “opened the can of worms,” I’m quickly **putting the cover back on!** Instead of discussing it now, we will begin to look at the topic of demon possession in Sunday School next week. Rather than leave you totally hanging, though, I want to share with you two thoughts.

- 1) I do not believe a true child of God—someone who is born again—can be demon-possessed based on I John 4:4 “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” Who is the “them” that is overcome? False prophets influenced by demonic forces!
- 2) I also believe there is significance in the fact that God had Paul write three letters to pastors that He included in the Bible: two to Timothy and one to Titus.

Do you know **how much instruction** God through Paul gives these pastors regarding demon-possession? Zip...zero...none! The **absence of instruction**—in my opinion, anyway—is another confirmation that demon possession was not something that occurred in true believers. If it was a major problem in the early church, God would have addressed it!

I want to pause here for a moment and redirect our thinking to **ourselves** and **our** problems. Do we have problems that are beyond **human** help? We do, don't we? I'm certainly not going to do this, but I could go around this auditorium and publicly share the problems **some of you have**—or someone in your **family has**—that are **beyond human help**. Some of the problems are **well-known** and on our prayer list—but many of them are not. Some of them you have **told me about** in confidence—and others of them I can see for myself.

Knowing these things is **both** a burden—and a blessing. They are a burden because **I want to help you** but can't—they are **beyond what I'm** able to do. And because you are hurting, I often hurt along with you.

But—in spite of the burdens—there is **the blessing of knowing** that although your problems are beyond **my help**, they are not beyond God's help!

Jer 32:17 “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?”

Mt 19:26 “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but **with God all things are possible.**”

Luke 1:37 “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

And because nothing is too hard—or impossible—for God, we need to do what this woman did; we need to follow... **2. The plan of the mother**

What was her plan? It wasn't to **fix her background** because she couldn't!

--And it wasn't to **wait until she had more** Bible knowledge because her **need was urgent!**

--It wasn't a 5-step plan—or even a 3-step plan—and she had no “Plan B!”

She had **one simple** plan, consisting of **five words**. What was the plan? **Bring her problems to Jesus!**

Why? Because her problems were beyond **human** help—but not beyond **God's** help!

Could it be any simpler than that? I can't imagine how!

Anyone and everyone can **understand** the plan—and anyone and everyone can **follow** the plan.

And yet...we try a whole lot of other **things first** and often **take a long time** to do the only thing that really works—bring our problems to Jesus!

What happens when we bring our problems to the Lord? Sometimes the same thing that happened to her!

What happened to her? **At first, absolutely nothing**—a whole lotta notta!

In fact, not only **did nothing happen**—she was actually “put off”—more than once!

3. The “put-offs” of Jesus and the disciples

First, there is ... A. The aloofness of Jesus

Imagine being this woman. What did **she know** about Jesus? What had **she heard** about Him? We really don't know! But she **had heard enough** to know that Jesus had helped others. So she came to Jesus looking for help. That was her plan—**her only plan**. She came to Him (vs 22) and said, “Have mercy **on me**, O Lord!”

Let's not hurry past this. **Who** did this mom want Jesus to show mercy to? **Her**; the mom!

Why? Because the mom was demon-possessed? **No**—because her daughter was demon-possessed!

We see here the heart of a mom, don't we? Her life was wrapped up in the life of her child!

She hurt because her daughter hurt! Do **fathers** love their children? I sure do—and many others do, too!

But a mother's love—in my opinion—is different! Think of the “momma bear” down in OK fighting for her son! And then there is **another** “momma bear” that I know quite well—who also happens to be my wife! I don't want to embarrass her, but I have the wonderful privilege of praying with her—and hearing her pour out her heart to God for her children and grandchildren. They are certainly blessed to have her pleading to God on their behalf!

Children...grandchildren...adult children—**be thankful** if you have a mom that prays for you!

Back to Mt 15:22. What happened when this mom cried out to Jesus, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord!”

Boom! Her daughter was immediately healed, right?

Wrong! As already mentioned, **nothing happened!** If that wasn't bad enough, Jesus **actually ignored her!**

We see that in vs 23 “But He answered her not a word....” Imagine how discouraging that would be! Why did Jesus ignore her? I'll attempt to answer that in a little bit...

Next, let's consider... B. The annoyance of disciples

If it wasn't bad enough to have **Jesus ignore** you, she also had the **disciples annoyed** with her!

Vs 23 “And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

You got to love the disciples! **Who** was the woman crying out to? **Who** had she come to see?

Jesus—not the disciples—yet they were the ones who **were annoyed!** Imagine the scene: on one hand, there is the woman crying out to Jesus for mercy; on the other hand, the disciples are asking Jesus to send her away!

C. The answer of Jesus

Jesus breaks His silence—and gives His answer in vs 24: “But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” First she has Jesus ignoring her...then the disciples asking her to leave so she stops bothering them...then Jesus saying—in essence—‘My focus...my mission...my priority—is the Jewish people.’ That, I'm sure, was not the answer she was **hoping for** or expecting!

So **why** would Jesus first **ignore**—then seemingly **discourage**—this woman when she came to Him wanting her daughter healed? We aren't told, but here are three thoughts:

1) Jesus knew her faith and wanted her to display her faith. If He would have immediately granted her request, no one would have known just how strong her faith was. But Jesus knew—and wanted others to see it, too!

2) To teach the disciples. We sometimes forget that Jesus was always in a “mentoring mode” when it came to the disciples. **What** was Jesus teaching them here? That although Jesus' **priority** at this time was the Jewish nation, it was **not to the exclusion** of everyone else. They would later be sent to **preach to the Gentiles**—and Jesus was exposing their prejudice against Gentiles in how they looked at her with annoyance.

A third reason—and one that ties in with the first—is that Jesus wants to teach us of the **importance of persistence** by showing us... **4. The persistence of the mother**

Does God value persistence in prayer—and what I like to call a “stubborn” faith? Yes, He does!

How do **we know**? Because Jesus **commends her**—He compliments her—in vs 28 “O woman, great is thy faith!”

How did **she show** she had faith? By “making up her mind” that she would not take “no” for an answer! In other words, she was persistent!

A. The proof of persistence

How persistent was this woman? Let's recap what we've seen so far.

1) First, she came and found Jesus. Don't know how far she traveled to find Him—maybe not far at all—but she came to where He was. In Mark 7, it says that Jesus was in a house—and she came to find Him!

2) Second, she asked for Jesus' help—but He didn't even answer her. On top of that, she heard the disciples ask Jesus to send her away. Jesus Himself then answers that His priority His own people—“the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

3) In vs 25, we see her coming to Jesus and worshipping Him—Mark says she fell at His feet—“saying, Lord help me.”

4) In vs 26, we again see Jesus refusing her request by saying: “It is not meet” —it is not proper— “to take the children’s bread,”— a reference to the nation of Israel— “and cast it to dogs”— a reference to her and her people! Was Jesus calling her a “dog”? Yes—and no!

Barnes explains it like this: It is as if Jesus said, “You are a Gentile; I am a Jew. The Jews call themselves children of God. You they vilify and abuse, calling you a dog. Are you willing to receive of a Jew, then, a favor?” (Bible Hub). So it wasn’t that **Jesus** Himself was calling her and her people a dog; it was Jesus reminding her that that is what **most Jews referred** to her as.

Once again, she is not deterred...she is not swayed...she does not give up!

5) Notice her response to what seemed to be Jesus’ third “no” to her request. Vs 27 “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” In essence, she is saying this:

‘I’m not asking to **sit at the table**—and I’m not asking for the **children’s food to be set on the floor** where I am! I’ll be satisfied with the crumbs that fall onto the floor!’ What an incredible, faith-filled response!

So how was it that she could remain persistent in spite of the appearance that Jesus was saying “No”?

B. The “propping up” of persistence

What kept **her going** in spite of the difficulties? The same thing that **can keep us persisting in prayer!** Let’s think about what some of those things are. I’m sure there are more, but here **are three:**

1) Desperation. --If you think you can **do it yourself** or figure it out on your own, you won’t pray!

--And if you **don’t want it very badly**, you’ll quit praying if the answer is delayed.

But...having a need that you personally **can’t meet**—but one that you desperately **want met**—will make you **start** praying—and will keep **you** praying! We need to be more like Jacob when it comes to praying.

Remember what Jacob said to God when he wrestled with Him in prayer? **Gen 32:26** “... I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”

Not only do we need desperation, we also need...

2) Dependence on God and what He says about Himself.

What was this mom depending on? **Why did she go** to Jesus in the first place? Because she had heard about Him—and **believed what she heard** about Him! We have it **so much better** than she did! Why do I say that? Because we don’t have to go by hearsay...we don’t have to wonder if what we’ve heard is true!

--Instead, we can **look for ourselves** in His Word and see what He says **about His person, His character!**

--And we can **look for ourselves** in His Word and see what He **has done for others** in similar situations!

--We can **look for ourselves** in His Word and **see the promises** that He makes!

--And we can **look for ourselves** in His Word and see how He **delights in faith**...and rewards faith...and prizes persistence in prayer!

And yet a third thing that propped up her faith—and will also prop up ours—is...

3) Determination. She was **determined to get what she came** to Jesus for, wasn’t she? She simply would not take “no” for an answer. She made up her mind to go to Jesus with her desperate need—and wasn’t going to leave until that need was met!

--Many of you have **prayed for people** for a long time. If my memory serves me right, George Mueller—a great man of faith and prayer back in the late 1800’s—was said to have prayed for the salvation of a friend for 43 years and **never did see** that prayer answered! But Mueller’s prayer was answered—the man did get saved—**after** George Mueller died!

--We **don’t always know how** God will answer, do we? So **how long** should we determine to pray! **Until God answers!** Sometimes that answer is “no;” but we should **determine to pray** as long as God hasn’t permanently said “no!”

--Here’s an example some of you may be familiar with. **Bathsheba became pregnant** as a result of David’s adulterous affair with her. When the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin, David repented. David’s life was spared—but God through Nathan told David that **the child would die.**

--The child became very sick. What was David’s response?

II Sam 12:16 “David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.” But on the 7th day, the child died—just as God had said. David noticed the servants whispering and asked them, “Is the child dead?” They reluctantly told him that the child had indeed died.

What did David do? He got up off the ground...washed up...changed clothes...worshipped God—and ate! David’s servants were confused and asked him why he responded the way he did. Notice what he told them in **II Sam 12:22-23** “And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, **Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?** But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

How long did David pray? Only 7 days, but don’t miss the point—David prayed until God **permanently said “no!”** I can’t help but think David would **have kept praying** if the child would have kept living! Why? Because he said as much: “Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?”

That’s determination, isn’t it? Do we have that kind of determination, a determination that says, “I’m going to pray **until God answers**—or permanently says “no?”

God wants us to pray that way, doesn’t He? There are a number of people that **I’m praying for** in my family. Although it is not daily, it is quite often. When do I plan on stopping? Not till God answers and **they change...or I die...or they die.**

--That’s not being morbid—it’s being determined!

--And—based on this passage and others—I believe it is something God wants us to do!

Does God reward faith and persistence in prayer? He certainly rewarded this woman!

End of vs 28 “...And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

There is a prize for persistent prayer. God is indeed a “rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning? What actions does God want us to take?

1. First, bring our problems to God, right? That should be our plan—just like it was for this woman.
2. Second, learn more about Him for yourself. Don’t go by hearsay—read what He says about Himself in His Word. Romans 10:17 says, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
3. Third, be persistent in your praying. Don’t give up until God gives you what you your request—or He permanently says “no!”
4. I must end with one important disclaimer regarding persistence in prayer and it is this—you don’t have to pray over and over again and beg God to save you from your sins and make you a child of God! That is a prayer God answers immediately!

Remember the thief on the cross! “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

Jesus’ response: “Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise!”