



WOMEN IN/AND/FOR
MISSION
BIBLE STUDY : MARK 7:24-30

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BIBLE STUDY TEXT: MARK 7:24-30

24. From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know that he was there. Yet he could not escape notice. 25. but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27. He said to her: "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28. But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29. Then he said to her: "For saying that, you may go - the demon has left your daughter." 30. So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.



BIBLE STUDY TEXT: MATTHEW 15:21-28

21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' 23 But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' 24 He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' 26 He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' 27 She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' 28 Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- Tell the story in your own words. Begin with “Once upon a time” (5mins)



BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

2. What are
the themes
of this text?
(5mins)



BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS



3. Main Characters (10mins)

3.1 How does Jesus respond to the woman?

3.2 How does the woman respond to Jesus?

3.3 How do the disciples respond to the woman?

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS



4. Bringing the text home (10mins)

- 4.1 Do we have women like the Syrophoenician women in our contexts today? Who are they and how do they challenge our ideas of mission?
- 4.2 Do we have people like the disciples in our contexts today – who are they and how do they challenge our ideas of mission?
- 4.3 Who are our daughters who need saving today? And who are the demons they need saving from?
- 4.4 Jesus responds in a particular way to this woman. Has his actions told you anything about God's mission (Missio Dei) in the world today?



BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

5. Action Plan

5.1 What will you do now in response to this bible study?

5.2 Are there resources to do what you want to do?





DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

1. MISSION AS DEVELOPMENT - HEALING OR BREAD?

- Food/Bread is a basic need, it provides security/nourishment, but its benefits go beyond the physical to the intellectual and the spiritual – education on an empty stomach?
- Jesus equates healing and food – that it is basic to human development



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

1. MISSION AS DEVELOPMENT - HEALING OR BREAD?

- 2 extremes – some mission only focuses on bread and some only on healing
- Can there be more to mission than these?



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

2. “GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY CRUMBS” MISSION AS SURVIVAL OR ABUNDANT LIFE?

- Has the Syrophoenician woman bought into her own oppression? ‘Chickens that vote for KFC’ – “I’ll take whatever I can get” or is she making a point?
- *Who* gets the bread and who gets the crumbs? Men/Women?
- *Why* do some people get the bread and some people get the crumbs?



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

2. "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY CRUMBS" MISSION AS SURVIVAL OR ABUNDANT LIFE?

- Are crumbs all some people are ever going to get?
- Are there times when crumbs are enough? Women's ordination to priesthood but not office of the bishop – is half a loaf really better than none?
- Is a theology of survival the only theology we can muster up in terms of mission? Is valorizing survival a way to ease our consciousness?



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

3. “WHO IS AT THE TABLE?” – MISSION AS EXCLUSIVE?

- “We do not presume to come to this your table merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather the crumbs under your table...”
- The Anglican Eucharistic prayer which points to grace, is in memory of this woman who fought for inclusion.



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

3. “WHO IS AT THE TABLE?” - MISSION AS EXCLUSIVE?

- How dare we use the prayer and yet...women, people of differing sexual orientation, foreigners, people with disability etc. are glaring in their absence from the table
- Linking of oppressions - racism is sexism is classism is homophobia - Consider the ways in which the Syrophoenician is oppressed: Gender, Ethnicity, Religion?
- Forces us to re-evaluate our ecclesiological practices of exclusion - “Next time I want the Jesus biscuits too!”



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

4. “FOR SAYING THAT...THE DEMON HAS LEFT YOUR DAUGHTER” - MISSION AS CRITICAL (REVERSE MISSION)

- “That” refers to the woman’s challenge to Jesus
- Acknowledges the challenge and provides healing – radical truth – Jesus changed his mind when challenged and confronted by “the other”
- More and more a lack of critical consciousness defines the church – an inability to ask the right questions – “leaving the brain at the door” – globalised, monotonous clichés – “flavour of the month”



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

4. "FOR SAYING THAT...THE DEMON HAS LEFT YOUR DAUGHTER" - MISSION AS CRITICAL (REVERSE MISSION)

- Bishop Camara: "When I give bread to the poor, I'm called a saint. When I asked why they had no bread, they called me a communist."
- Sarojini Nadar "When I build shelters for abused women, they call me a saint, when I ask why women are battered they call me a feminist"



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

5. “LET THE CHILDREN BE FED FIRST” - HIERARCHIES OF GRACE AND MISSION?

- Re-considering mission – who “missionises” who in this story? - “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel”
- Challenging power – hierarchy of grace is toppled



DRAWING THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE STORY

5. “LET THE CHILDREN BE FED FIRST” - HIERARCHIES OF GRACE AND MISSION?

- Ironically the woman is a mirror of the Jesus we have come to know in the Gospels – the one who challenges power
- Megan Mckenna: To say that Jesus died for our sins is only half a theology. It is to forget that he also died because he was dangerous to a society that wanted to hold onto its power.”



CONCLUSION

To summarise: Narrative of the Syrophoenician woman challenges us to re-think mission

- To think of mission holistically – not just physical sustenance – but healing, physical and otherwise
- ✓ To re-evaluate whether food/development is simply for survival or “abundant life” - careful about valorising survival.



CONCLUSION

- ✓ To understand the inter-linking of oppressions – that ecclesiological practices of exclusion can be dangerous
- ✓ To develop critical consciousness around issues of who has access to food (and healing), and why some people don't – to be challenged by the needs of others



CONCLUSION

- ✓ To challenge our understanding of mission – that mission can never be exclusive anymore than grace can be exclusive

THE NARRATIVE INVITES US AS WOMEN TO CONSIDER THAT WE CANNOT SETTLE FOR THE CRUMBS WHEN WE DESERVE THE BREAD OF LIFE.