



## First Baptist Church At The Villages

The Gospel/Who's Your One? • Gospel reach • Luke 5:27-32; Mark 7:24-29 •

For use by small groups 2/2/2020 - 2/8/2020

### MAIN POINT

Jesus dealt with those considered as religious outcasts with grace and mercy. No one was “off-limits.”

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What groups of people would you say have been written off as unredeemable by our culture? For moral reasons? Political reasons?**

**What is the most unusual thing God has led you to do for the sake of having a Jesus conversation with someone?**

Today we will examine who God actively works in to bring them to salvation. Truthfully, anybody at any time can be drawn by the Holy Spirit to a saving relationship with Jesus. The only question that remains is whether believers will be spiritually alert enough for God to use them in the process.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have volunteers read Luke 5:27-28 and Mark 7:24-27.

In looking at the two accounts covered in this week’s study, Luke and Mark present two individuals who would have been outside the circle of those considered religiously acceptable—the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes of the law, and other groups that said all the right things and

did all the right things. The two individuals highlighted in the texts for this week do not fit those categories at all. Matthew was a tax collector, a Jewish man who had aligned himself with Roman authorities to extort egregiously high taxes from his own countrymen for the sake of lining his own pockets. Even still, Jesus called him—not just to listen to Jesus, but to be one of His twelve disciples! Second, there is the Syrophenician woman who came to Jesus to seek healing for her daughter.

**What differences can you think of between Matthew and the religious leaders of his day?**

**Consider the social barriers the Syrophenician Woman was crossing by asking Jesus for help.**

**Consider the social barriers Christ was crossing by extending grace to both of these individuals.**

For Consideration:

- Levi would have been considered a traitor to his people due to collecting taxes on behalf of a Roman system. Further, he was a greed-driven man who had likely taken from many who were in difficult financial situations.
- The Syrophenician Woman: The Syrophenician region was viewed as a wealthy godless people by the Jewish people. Although there are various theories on precisely why Christ chose to use the pejorative term "dog", which was commonly used by the Jewish people to refer to Gentiles, they all culminate in Christ extending compassion to this woman who humbled herself.
- Christ's extension of grace to both of these individuals surely upset many.

Have volunteers read Luke 5:29 and Mark 7:28-29.

**Matthew's entire sense of priorities shifted after his encounter with Jesus. How have you seen your priorities change as a result of Jesus' lordship in your life?**

**The Syrophenician Woman humbled herself in the presence of a people that looked down upon her. Are there areas in your life that pride hinders you from submission to Christ?**

**Can you think of a person or a group of people that if you extended grace to would offend others?**

| Have a volunteer read Luke 5:30-32.

The religious elite's referring to others as "sinners" meant that the Pharisees identified them as people who were "less than" the Pharisees were. This type of response is a troublesome sign that those who are religious have no connection with the heart of God. Jesus' use of the healthy/sick dynamic set Himself in the position of Healer. The Pharisees perceived themselves as healthy because they were self-righteous. They obeyed the right laws, knew the right facts, ate the right things, and were pillars of the community. Therefore, in comparison to everyone else, they were righteous. The sick, however, do not view themselves in light of everyone else; they view themselves in light of God. When that happens, their realization of their sin brings them to repentance.

**How would you explain what it means to be healthy in our own estimation? What about the Pharisees and scribes made them "healthy"? What would be a contemporary example?**

**No one in their day knew more about or memorized more Scripture than the Pharisees and scribes. They were experts. Why is their response to Matthew's banquet so jaded and critical? How do you guard your heart from a similar response?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are some ways that you can gauge your spiritual health over time? Why is it important to do that as it pertains to evangelism?**

**How ready are you to share the gospel with someone much different than you? Would it flow out of you naturally? How easily can you share your own story?**

**Are there groups that you might classify as unreachable? How does remembering your own testimony eradicate such prejudice? Why is it important to do so?**

## PRAYER

Pray that God would break our hearts over those whom we would incorrectly see as unreachable or far off from God. Pray that God would mobilize our group to invade all facets of our community with the gospel.

Take time to pray specifically for "Your One".

## COMMENTARY

## | Luke 5:27-32

5:27-28. One day Jesus encountered Levi. The rebel with a cause against religious power structures met the man who represented foreign power structure at its worse—a man whose profession was to collect money for the Romans. Luke took up the Markan call narrative refrain: Follow me (Mark 1:17). Levi showed how to join the proper power structure. He left everything he had—his profession, his profits, and his personal identity. He followed Jesus.

5:29-30. Following meant more than just wandering the countryside listening to Jesus teach and preach. Following meant using your influence and skills for Jesus. Levi left the tax table to invite people to the supper table. Following Jesus meant telling others what Jesus had done for him. The others were friends Levi had known for a long time—not new acquaintances formed for convenience and prosperity.

5:31-32. In typical Jewish teacher fashion, Jesus cited a proverb to emphasize his message. Wellness did not drive people to the doctor. Illness did. Jesus was the spiritual doctor. He came with a message of repentance. That message seemed misdirected. It did not save Israel and the Middle East, where political confusion reigned. It saved those religious leaders considered unworthy of God's attention. Power began to reveal true positions in life. Who was sick? The tax collector's friends, people willing to work for the Roman government and thus against Israel? Or religious leaders who knew more about God than God did? The title Righteous One given them by humans was the only title they would ever receive. Jesus picked out the lowest social positions as the positions through which he would work.

## | Mark 7:24-30

7:24. Note that this encounter of Jesus with the Syrophenician woman came on the heels of a major conflict with the religious leaders about ceremonial uncleanness. Jews normally did not have any contact with Gentiles because this made them ceremonially "unclean" according to Jewish tradition. Jesus showed by example that "it's what's in the heart" that matters. He showed the absurdity of the tradition of the elders by making contact with this Gentile woman. Mark also wanted to emphasize the mission and inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation. The gospel of God's love and his kingdom are not limited to Israel, even though Jesus showed that Israel must have the first opportunity. By using the example of the Syrophenician woman, Mark wanted his Roman (Gentile) readers to realize that the good news was also for them.

Only one other time had Jesus crossed into Gentile territory (Mark 5:1-20) Yet, this time Jesus stayed in Gentile territory for quite some time. He traveled to Phoenicia (now Lebanon), where the city of Tyre was located. Jesus had not gone there for public ministry. He was looking for a place to rest with his disciples as well as to escape the persecution of the religious leaders who were always following him. He knew they would not want to defile themselves by going into Gentile territory. Yet, in his attempts to get some rest, he could not keep his presence secret.

7:25-26. A Gentile woman sought Jesus. Mark shows the incredible cultural and gender boundaries that existed between Jesus and the woman. First, she was a Gentile. The Gentiles had not always treated the Jews kindly, and they often dominated them. There was a gender issue. Men dominated women during this time. Also, a rabbi (teacher) was not supposed to have any direct contact with a woman. By nationality she was a Syrophenician (during this time Phoenicia belonged to Syria). Yet, the desperate need of her daughter and her radical faith in God's goodness caused her to humble herself before Jesus and risk crossing all these barriers.

7:27-28. Jesus probably spoke to the woman in her language, which was Greek. He said to her, 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. Jesus was not being sarcastic or uncaring. His mission centered on the "lost house of Israel." Jesus implied that there was a place for the Gentiles. It just was not then. Their turn would come later. The reference to dogs was not to scavengers on the street but to the little dogs that wait eagerly under the table of their master for the scraps and crumbs to fall from the table. The children of the household indicated the privileged position of Israel in hearing the gospel, and the "little dogs" indicated the less privileged position of the Gentiles.

The woman did not deny the precedence of Israel, but she suggested that this did not exclude the Gentiles. Only here in Mark's Gospel is Jesus addressed as "Lord," although he is quoted as referring to himself as such in 2:28; 5:19 (?); 11:3. Significantly, a Gentile used this title.

This did not deter this woman of faith. Jesus left an opening, saying that the Gentiles would have a turn at hearing the gospel and benefiting from his ministry. Why could not that time be now? As far as she was concerned, it was time to "seize the moment." This woman agreed that Israel was first but she had a radical faith that refused to believe she was excluded. She replied, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. This shows her persevering faith and her belief in God's goodness. The barriers of race, culture, and gender are surface issues. The real need is true healing on the inside, and only the gospel can cross these barriers to bring such healing.

7:29-30. To say the least, Jesus commended the woman for her humility. Although her faith is not explicitly mentioned, it is certainly implicit. This is the only instance in Mark of an exorcism

or a healing from a distance, although similar cases are found in Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10; John 4:43–53. All of these likely involve healings of Gentiles.

It is significant that the Gospels refer twice to people of “great faith”—this woman and the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:5-13. Both these people were Gentiles. In both instances, Jesus healed at a distance. Jesus will test our faith, just like he did with this woman, but he will reward our faith when we persevere in the process.