

Desperate Parents, Never Give Up!

By Deshni Ganesan

Matthew 15 : 21 - 28 / Mark 7 : 24 - 30 (NIV)



When I look at the world today I see a world that is in turmoil and chaos, war torn and crime filled countries are consumed with violence, hate and revenge and there is a sense of uncertainty all around, but the one thing that stands out the most to me, is that there is an evident evil that is incredibly forceful in attempting to destroy the innocence and purity of our children. Satan is continually creating new 'exciting' evils that are quite tempting in trapping our children and setting them on a damaging path of hopelessness and robbing them of a bright and prosperous future. If you look at the things that our children are exposed and desensitised to, show us how very well Satan has been working in infiltrating into the innocence of youth in the last few decades. The number of young kids that have been exposed to violence, drugs and sexual offences in their communities and schools are disturbing and we see evidence of these activities everyday in the news and papers. Where do we as parents, teachers and leaders stand? Have you as a parent tried

everything to set your child on the right path again but your child remains stuck in a trap of addiction, rebellion or violence? But are we desperate enough for our children and youth? And are we looking in the right places for answers?

The Bible tells us that there was a woman in a troubled situation. A woman who was looking for an answer to her problem. Her child was in trouble and she needed an answer fast or else her child would die. The story tells us of a mother who turns away from the traditions that held her back from the deliverance of her child. The Bible tells us of a story of a desperate mother looking for someone to save her child.

Matthew 15: 21-28

The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Mark 7: 24 - 30

The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. "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." "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

There are two accounts of the story of the Syrophenician woman found in the bible, that of Matthew and Mark. To fully understand this story and the events of this woman's encounter with Jesus we have to fully understand the context that it was written in and we have to understand the history of the people and the area. We find at this point of Jesus' life, He was at the heart of His ministry, we see Him move from town to town ministering to people, healing people, performing miracle after miracle and He was preaching a wonderful message that the Jews all over Galilee had never heard before. Prior to this point we see Jesus heal the sick and calm the storm. We see Him feed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and we see Him walk on the water. So as you can imagine the word was getting out as to who Jesus was and the signs and wonders

that He was performing. People started to hear of these wonderful things this man was saying and wonderful things He was doing and crowds started to follow Him, people surrounded Him, and everywhere He went people were there. But He was also stirring up the Pharisees and opposition was building up against Him so He wanted to get out of the public eye for a while.

“Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.”

Mark 7: 24

The gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus had decided to leave the area of Galilee and that He moved on to the area of Tyre and Sidon. But Tyre and Sidon were Gentile territories. It was the land of Canaanites. The religious history of the Canaanites is one of paganism and idolatry worship. Even though their religious culture was influenced by the occult and witchcraft, Tyre and Sidon was also a very wealthy area. It was a commercial hub, a land of merchants and the people that lived there were a prosperous people and they lived a rich, lavish lifestyle with magnificent architecture around them. So Jesus decides to go to this Gentile region to rest, to get away from the throngs of people that surrounded Him or possibly he just wanted to spend time teaching the disciples or to spend some quiet time in prayer. When Jesus comes to this area, he didn't want anyone to know where He was. But the Book of Mark tells us that Jesus could not keep His presence secret.

In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. Mark 7: 25

The message of what Jesus was doing in Galilee had spread far and wide and here is this woman who had just heard about Jesus. She heard a message that Jesus could help her. This woman's daughter was possessed by an evil spirit, and she was desperate to get help for her child. Her daughter was being tormented. So as soon as this woman heard that Jesus was in the area she ran to Him, as soon as she heard that the man who was performing all those wonderful miracles, was in her town, she ran to Him and she fell at His feet. Jesus' intention was that he wanted to 'keep His presence secret'. He didn't want anyone to know where He was, but there was a woman who needed Him, there was a woman who was desperate to see Him, a woman who at all cost searched for the man who could help her. And she found Him. You see when you are in a desperate situation, when you need God and you need His help, He can never keep His presence from you! No matter what your background is and who you are, if you look for Him, He will make His presence known to you. He will show Himself to you. And it was no different with this Canaanite woman.

The bible tells us that her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. The bible does not indicate the exact nature of the possession of the child but if you look at other accounts of demon possession in the bible, demon possession can manifest itself in many ways. But the common evidence and indications of demon possession is mental disorders, violent actions and outbursts, a manifestation of a disease or sickness within the body or rebellion against authority and God. This woman found herself with a child who could have been very sick with a terminal disease, or a child with a severe physiological disorder. The child could have been cutting herself causing injuries to her own body or maybe even attacked those around her in violent fits of rage and anger. Or she could have just been rebellious, not listening to reason and fighting those around her. Demons and evil spirits are sent by Satan, their assignments set by Satan are to steal, kill and destroy. Their intention was to steal this child's life, to kill her or to destroy a hope of a future for her. Whatever the manifestation of the demon was, her mother was desperate to get her child set free of this evil spirit.

The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. Mark 7: 26

Mark tells us that this woman was a Greek woman, who was born in this land. This was a rich Canaanite woman; she was surrounded with wealth and riches of her country and people. The Canaanites were a people who were deeply entrenched in their pagan religious beliefs and surely if this woman was a Canaanite and a native of the land, she must have sought help from her own gods, religious and spiritual leaders and elders. She must have gone to healers and to diviners who could have helped her in her plight. But because of the fact that this rich Canaanite woman fell at the feet of a foreign man for help meant that the spiritual leaders and elders that she grew up trusting could not help her, her money and wealth could not get her child healed. She had come to a point where she had to come to the feet of Jesus for help. When you find yourself in a difficult situation and no one can help you. When you go to doctors, specialists and physicians and they turn you away, when you go to all kinds of healers, diviners and soothsayers and you find no positive results you find yourself in a desperate

situation. This woman was so desperate for her child to be healed that she went on the word of a so called rumor and fell at the feet of Jesus. She had just heard what Jesus was doing and she put all her faith that He could help her in what she heard about Him, she trusted in His ability to heal her child and she believed that what she heard about Jesus was true.

Our troubles and problems today should take us straight to the feet of Jesus. Don't waste precious time, money and resources on people and procedures that cannot help you. People remain trapped in their problems and end up sacrificing the wellbeing of their children because they refuse to seek help of a spiritual nature. People will rather remain holding on to their ways of life and traditions even when their children are perishing before them, they would rather turn a blind eye than to admit that there is even a problem. This woman was so desperate that she was willing to take a step against the flow of things around her. She was willing to sacrifice her traditions, history and culture to see her child healed. And she did this on just what she heard. She did not witness any of these miracles herself, she did not see with her own eyes all the wonderful signs and wonders Jesus performed. She went to Him, trusting that what she heard He could do was true.

She pleaded for Jesus to help her. The problem this woman faced brought her face to face with the living God! When we go through tough times and troubles come our way, we need to realise that sometimes God allows these things to happen to us. He allows these periods of persecution in our lives so that we can meet Him face to face. Satan attacked her child, Satan wanted to destroy her child, Satan intended on killing her child. But God used her problem to bring her face to face with Him. God used her troubles so that His power could be revealed to her. God does not allow us to go through tough times to destroy us, that is the job of Satan. God allows us to go through tough times to bring us closer to Him. He wants us to come to His side in difficulties. Turn to Jesus and look to Him in your times of need.

"Jesus did not answer a word..." Matthew 15:23a

Matthew's account of this woman's encounter with Jesus is slightly different to that of Mark's. Matthew tells us that after she pleaded with Jesus, He did not answer her. He was silent. He didn't respond to her request. He definitely heard her cries for help. But this was a strange reaction from Jesus. Some would even think that he just ignored or just disregarded her. But God knows how to handle the emotions of people, even if it's in a very unusual way. But in keeping His silence God tests the quality of the faith of people. In His silence Jesus was testing this woman in this similar way; He was bringing out the best in her. He was challenging her; He wanted to see what her faith contained and if she was serious and genuine in what she had believed about Him. But this strange reaction from Jesus did not deter this woman. She still pleaded with Him. She had made up her mind that Jesus was the only one who could help her and she refused to leave without Him helping her. He challenged her faith and found that she truly believed the He could help her.

"... So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." Matthew 15:23b

Even the disciples did not understand what was going on. Even though they walked with Jesus everyday and learnt from Him, they did not think that Jesus could help her. They actually found themselves getting annoyed with her pleas for help and just wanted her to go away. How many of us find ourselves surrounded by people who don't believe that God can actually help us. Even though they may be walking daily with Him, watch out who you listen to and who you get advice from. Never allow your miracle to be cut off by people who don't have the same level of faith as you do. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by naysayers and people who force their opinions on you. If this woman had listened to the disciples and left at that point, her child would have never received the deliverance she needed. We often end up listening to people who seem qualified and experienced to have all the right answers for us but they actually cannot deliver and set us free from those problems.

"He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said." Matthew 15 : 24 - 25

Jesus finally responds to her pleas. But I doubt what He said to her is something that she expected or wanted to hear. Jesus tells her that He couldn't help her because He was sent for the children of Israel and not Canaan. He was sent to help the people of God and unfortunately He could not help her. She was not a Jew and she was not entitled to that deliverance and healing that He offered. But still she continued to plea with Jesus.

“He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”” Matthew 15:26

Here we see a very shocking statement from Jesus. Jesus always came across as loving and kind, always willing to heal and help people when He heard their cries for compassion. But here we see a very different Jesus. You almost cannot believe what you are reading and whether or not he refers to this woman as a dog. But to understand what Jesus actually said to her, we have to read this statement in the context that it was written in. Jesus was from Israel and this woman was a gentile. She was not a Jew as He was. In biblical times gentiles were referred to as dogs by the Israelites it was a colloquial term or slang of the time. We do not see this woman get offended by the manner in which he refers to her. Jesus was basically telling her that He could not take the covenant blessings intended for the Jews and give it away to a foreign people who didn’t earn it. He was telling her that the gospel was first for the Jews. And we see that the woman completely understood what Jesus told her. She understood that He could not help her first. But what she wanted was not His blessings; she was looking for His mercy.

“Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Matthew 15 : 27

This woman understood something about Jesus’ ministry that had not been revealed as yet. She knew that she didn’t need the whole loaf of bread; she was not part of the family who the bread was intended for, she was an outsider and foreigner, but what she pleaded for was for the part of the bread that fell to the floor, she wanted them to have some mercy for her and leave her to take that bit of bread that would fall to the floor. We see this rich Canaanite woman humble herself, all she wanted was to see her child healed, she loved her daughter to the point of bringing herself to bow down and plead for mercy from Jesus. She didn’t need all the blessing He could give her, she just wanted the crumbs. She just wanted a little bit of what He offered. She just wanted mercy and compassion. Jesus’ ministry to this point had only been for the Jews, but this woman believed so much that Jesus could help her child that her faith turned His ministry over to the gentiles as well. Jesus was so moved by this woman’s humbleness and great faith that He set her daughter free.

“Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Matthew 15 : 28

No matter whom you are what background and culture you come from, Jesus can and will save you from your distress. He is capable of setting you free and releasing your children from bondage. This woman held on to what she believed. She was so sure that Jesus could help her and no matter how long it took or what He said to her, she held firmly on to the truth that Jesus saves, heals and delivers.

Today are you a parent and are your children are going through a difficult time? I want to tell you that even though Satan can try to create all sorts of evils in the world to try to steal, kill and destroy our children and their futures, even though he can try to invent new ways of taking their innocence and holding them captive. I want to tell you that even though Satan can try to set our children on a path of destruction, there is an answer for you. There is an answer for you, Mother. There is an answer for you, Father. There is an answer and His name is Jesus. There is a man whose name is Jesus who can save your child. There is a man named Jesus who can set your child free. There is a knight in shining armor who has already conquered Satan and conquered all these things that he has created to trap and destroy your child. All you have to do is come running into the ever present presence of Jesus, and trust in Him. Turn away and humble yourself from the pride that is making you hold on to your traditions and customs which are not helping you or your family. Trust in His ability to set your child free, trust in the message that you have heard, trust in the report you have heard that He is capable of healing the one you are standing in the gap for. Even when you hear people tell you that it will not work, never give up, even when God is silent and His answers are not immediate, never give up. Hold on desperate parents, never give up on your child, Jesus can deliver them. Jesus can heal them and Jesus will set your child free based purely on your great faith. Jesus has a plan and future for your child so hold on to Him.