

## A Mother Pleads For Her Child

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### **Scene Summary**

The “Healing of the Canaanite’s Daughter” is a play that illustrates great faith. The scenes include a woman pleading for the life of her sick daughter...Jesus not answering her immediately...the woman continues to plead...the disciples urge Jesus to send her away...Jesus responds to the woman...and the woman reply indicates her great faith in the Master...the daughter is healed.

### **Scripture**

(Mat 15:21-28 NIV) Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. {22} 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." {23} 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." {24} He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." {25} The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. {26} He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." {27} "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." {28} 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 NIV) 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. {25} 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. {26} The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. {27} "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." {28} "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." {29} Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." {30} She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

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### ***Players***

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Jesus** – God’s One and Only Son.
- **Woman** – The Canaanite woman whose daughter is very sick.
- **Daughter** – This is a non-speaking part.
- **Disciples** – One or more disciples can be added as needed.

### ***Special Props***

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.

### ***Script – A Mother Pleads For Her Child***

[Opening scene: the Narrator enters center stage, acting as a divider between the two areas of action. Stage right is the woman's home with the sick daughter. Stage left is where Jesus and the disciples are staying.]

**Narrator:** Everywhere Jesus went there were crowds of people. Many people wanted to hear the great Prophet. Others were sick and wanted Him to heal them. Other people just wanted to talk with Jesus and ask Him questions about God. The people came seeking Jesus day or night. There were always people coming and going, some pressing in and others waiting their turn. [pause] They needed break, to rest from the crowds, so Jesus and the disciples went quietly to the seashore, on a vacation, to get away from the crowds.

[Enter stage right, the home of the woman and her daughter. The daughter comes and lies down on a bed, suffering, turning back and forth and moaning. The woman is trying to give comfort]

**Woman:** [kneeling by her daughter, in a comforting voice] Try to be still and rest child, it will be OK.

**Narrator:** News spread quickly that Jesus was in town.

**Woman:** I have heard that a great prophet has come to town. He has healed many people in Israel. [the daughter continues to moan] He must be the Messiah. [to herself] I must find Him and ask Him to heal my daughter. [pause, then anxiously to her daughter] Don't worry. I will be back soon.

[the woman leaves and goes offstage to search for Jesus. The daughter continues moaning, turning back and forth.]

[focus changes to stage left, Jesus and the disciples enter casually and sit down in chairs around a small table.]

**Disciple 1:** We really needed this rest.

**Disciple 2:** It has been along time since we were able to eat together without being interrupted.

**Disciple 1:** And to sleep through the night without someone waking us up wanting to see the Master.

[the woman comes to the door knocking]

**Disciple 3:** I think you spoke too soon. I hear someone at the door.

**Woman:** Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!

**Disciple 1:** [goes to the door] Yes, may I help you?

**Woman:** Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly

**Narrator:** Jesus did not answer a word.

**Woman:** Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!

**Disciple 2:** Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.

**Jesus:** [to the disciples] I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.

[the woman comes and kneels before Jesus]

**Woman:** Lord, help me!

**Jesus:** It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.

**Woman:** Yes, Lord but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.

[pause as Jesus looks lovingly at the woman]

**Jesus:** Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.

[stage right, the daughter gets up, feeling much better and happy]

**Narrator:** The daughter was healed from that very hour.

**Woman:** Thank you Jesus.

The End

## **Supplemental Information**

Could this time have been a type of retreat or a vacation for Jesus and the disciples? Listen to the words in the Gospel of Mathew, “Jesus withdrew” and in Luke, “He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it.” Tyre and Sidon, where this story took place, would be on the East shore of the Mediterranean Sea encompassing what is now the area around modern Lebanon. It would be reasonable to assume that from the chronology, from the feeding the 5000 in Mathew 14, that Jesus was becoming so popular that people were coming from everywhere to find Him. “When the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.” (Matt 14:13) Also, “...great multitudes came unto him...” (Matt 15:30)

Picture the setting of this story as Jesus and the disciples on quiet vacation by the sea, trying to avoid public notice so that there could be quality time of renewal, teaching and fellowship. Into this peaceful setting comes an interruption. There is a disturbance caused by this Greek woman from Phoenicia. The word “Phoenician” may have meant purple or crimson and it was first applied to the dark red color of the people north of Palestine. There was a distinctive character about this woman, possibly associated with her hair, skin color, clothing or her language. This woman had heard of Jesus. She called to Him with the title “Son of David,” a direct reference to the Jewish Messiah. This woman was an outsider to the Jews, yet she recognized the Messiah and sought Him out.

She came with a heavy burden. She knew that her daughter was very sick, near death. Normally she would want to say constantly by the child during the illness, yet there was desperation in her actions, in her tone of voice and intense desire to speak with the Messiah.

Help your students see the virtue of tenaciously seeking Christ. The parable of the unjust judge from Luke 18:1-8 could also be used to parallel this theme. “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18:1)

## **Dogs in the Scripture**

A dog was held in very low esteem in the Bible. The dog was seen as a scavenger, a worthless creature. Dogs were commonly found rummaging the trash heaps outside the city. In the Bible, the word “dog” did not imply “man’s best friend,” but it was commonly used as a derogatory term. In the Bible the dog is almost always spoken of in contempt.

Still, the dog was probably the first domesticated animal. The Greek word used by Jesus and the woman in this story (Mat 15:26-27; Mark 7:27-28) is *kunarium*, translated “a little dog, a puppy.” The character of the story changes when you visualize this exchange between Jesus and the woman, not in context of a dog as a scavenger or pest, but that of a pet, a small puppy in the home of a family, interacting and playing with the children, eating from the leftover table scraps.