

Faith and Assurance: Lessons from a Canaanite Woman

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June 25, 2020

We see in God's word that the Lord rewards faith. Sometimes we don't quite understand what this means, but persistence is important. Not only that, but often there are elements of life that we don't at first comprehend, but God makes clear. This lesson looks at Jesus and His interaction with a woman who did some unique and surprising things.

Lesson focus: Jesus promises salvation for all people; through faith and perseverance we know we can trust Him and pass good news along to others.

Passage: Matthew 15:21-28

Target Audience: Pre-k through fifth grade (adaptable)

Materials Needed: Aluminum foil, small prizes or coins, crackers or small bread pieces; paper and decorative materials (markers, glitter, etc.).

Lesson Opening: Begging and pleading, tossing and catching...start out with a fun and funny partner activity to introduce a couple of the lesson's elements:

- First, have students break off into pairs
- Walk around with crackers/graham crackers/bread cubes and ask if the students would like one
- Initially, refuse. Wait to see if kids ask again, and/or if they say please (if not, prompt them to do so). Try to wait one or two times before passing around the items.
- Provide a couple of items per pair, but have students wait to eat them.
- Instruct students to "feed" their partner the crackers. This can be done in a few ways...they might stand a few feet apart and try tossing the item into the other's mouth. Or one could get lower on the floor and try to have the item dropped down into their hand or mouth. Provide additional crumbs/crackers if needed, until everyone has a chance to toss and catch the food.

Bible Lesson: The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

This was sort of a silly game, wasn't it? Well, explain to students that today we will talk about an encounter Jesus had in the Bible that seems a bit confusing when we read it today, but has important things for us to remember. It has to do with asking, begging, and providing. It also has to do with who Jesus loves. And it deals with faith. What does "faith" mean? Briefly discuss with students what faith is and why it's important. Then invite them to open the passage and read the first few verses:

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 demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

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.” -Matthew 15:21-23

Jesus is traveling here, going from one place to another. He is trying to give His disciples some rest and take a little break away from things when this woman comes up screaming to Him. She has nowhere else to turn and is frustrated. But look at what Jesus does! It seems like He ignores her. But she “keeps crying out”, so much that the disciples come and ask Jesus to send her away.

Does anyone have younger (or maybe older) brothers or sisters? Do they ever poke and pester? When that happens, it can get quite frustrating. It’s hard to ignore a whiny sibling who just won’t quit. But this woman is persistent and does not give up. So Jesus responds:

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 the dogs.” -Matthew 15:24-26

Wait...did Jesus just call someone a dog? That hardly sounds considerate. What exactly is going on here? This is where the passage takes a bit of explaining, especially for younger audiences. Describe for students how there is a change going on here in the way that God’s chosen grace recipients are perceived. For Jews during the times of Jesus and the Old Testament, only the people of Israel (Jewish people) were considered to be Holy or worthy of God’s love. They were the special ones. This woman is not only a Gentile (non-Jew), she’s also a Canaanite. People from Canaan were considered even lower than the average Gentile, and they had practices and beliefs that did not line up with God’s. Jesus is here confronted by someone who is (a) a woman (not usually respected in society) and (b) a non-Jew (even less respected). He tests her, though...when He doesn’t answer right away, she keeps begging Him. He tries to give her a simple response, and even says that He was sent for Israel. He says it would be wrong to take the things the chosen ones (children) are supposed to receive, and toss them to “dogs.” He is not necessarily disrespecting her specifically, but again testing her humility and faith. The woman comes back with quite a response...

“Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment. -Matthew 15:27-28

Throughout the life of Christ, we see Jesus come up against the leaders and Jews, the people who were supposed to be waiting for the Messiah with eager hope and expectation. However, when Jesus came, they ignored and hurt Him. This story emphasizes that it is the

condition of the heart, not the following of rules, that demonstrates true faith. Jesus did reward this woman by saving her daughter, and He did it immediately “at that moment” she asked. He commended her for her great faith, in stark contrast to the lack of faith shown by many leaders of the day.

Finish out the lesson with a little scavenger hunt of sorts. Use old paper or aluminum foil to hide various items (quarters, small toys, etc.) around the room. Have students find them and take a guess at what it might be. Perhaps it looks like trash, and should just be tossed aside. Or maybe we should first take a look to see what it is...explain that even when things don't make sense or seem rough and trashy on the outer appearance, what lies on the inside is what truly counts. *Note: this activity could also be done as an opener, or swapped with the written opening.

Craft: See below

Close with prayer and thank God for all He has given. Thank Him for Jesus and ask for faith, as well as acceptance of those all around us.

“Have Faith!” Craft Ideas on Jesus and the Canaanite Woman

On the outset, Jesus ignoring a woman and then nearly calling her a “dog” does not seem like a terrific story for kids! However, the story of the Canaanite woman has a couple of important truths for us to draw. For one thing, it is a great reminder that we can have faith in God and trust Him to do great things in our lives, even if at first it seems He isn’t listening. The principles in this story also tell us that Jesus does care for all people, and came to save all, regardless of nationality or appearance. The crafts here touch on both of those themes. We have a fun “what’s inside doggy bag” to remember that great things can come in unexpected packages; we also have a “faithful follower decoration” to contemplate and remember elements of trust in God.

Extra Ideas:

- Have a “blind test” with tasting or feeling objects to trust what they might be without sight.
- Have a “crumb-y snack” with cookie crumbs or cracker crumbs, mixed in with pudding or peanut butter and bananas!
- Examine other Biblical characters who were forced to endure, persevere, try things multiple times, or have patience (examples include Elijah, Hannah, Moses, Joshua, etc.).

Bible Verses or Captions to Consider...

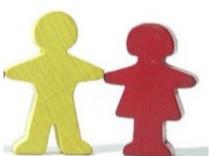
*Now **faith** is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. -Hebrews 11:1*

***Trust** in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. -Proverbs 3:5-6*

What’s Inside Counts! Jesus Loves All

Wait for God to act...He is worthy of trust!

Faith...trust...hope...love... (decoration labels)



Craft one: “What’s Inside Counts Doggy Bag”

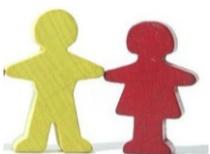
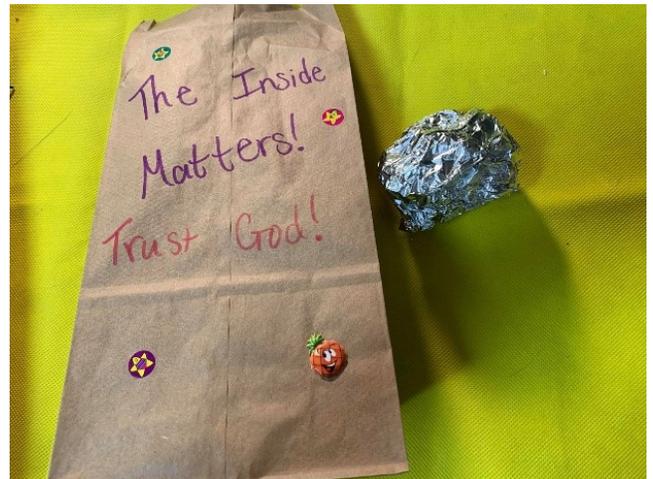
You will need:

- Paper bags
- Small treats
- Markers, stickers, or other decorating materials
- Scissors
- Glue, tape or string/ribbon
- Aluminum foil



Procedure:

1. Wrap a small treat or candy in aluminum foil, adding extra paper if desired.
2. Decorate the paper “doggy bag” as a reminder of the significance of the craft (looking at inner value, rather than outer appearances). Add decorations and stickers.
3. Place the foil-wrapped treat inside the paper bag.
4. Give the bag to someone that you care for, or set in a prominent place to recall the story.



Craft Two: “Hang your Faith on Jesus Decoration”

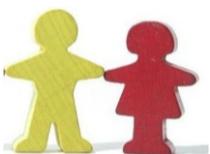
You will need:

- Yarn or string
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Extra decorations (stickers, etc.)
- Caption or verse
- Markers or crayons
- Hole punch



Procedure:

1. Choose how many words or phrases you'd like on your decoration.
2. Cut construction paper into shapes such as hearts, crosses, or other shapes.
3. Add verses, captions, or specific words to each paper.
4. Hole punch the papers, adding additional decoration if desired.
5. String the yarn, string, or pipe cleaner through the papers. This can be used as a long wall decoration or a simple necklace or “belt” to enjoy.





These craft ideas were prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May

2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

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