



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V23 N19

May 9, 2021

## KING JESUS

“Refusing to Take NO for an Answer”

Mark 7:24-30

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Humanity

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3:16



What is a mother to do?

Although Jesus makes a number of excursions beyond the borders of Galilee (see Mk 4:35; 5:20; 6:32-52; 7:24-8:10) ministering to Gentiles at times, the one to Tyre and Sidon recorded in Mark 7:24-30 is his only excursion outside of Palestine into Gentile Phoenicia. The woman he meets there speaks Greek and is steeped in Greek culture. She comes to Jesus on behalf of her little daughter, who is “possessed by an evil spirit” (v. 25), and she begs him to drive the demon out. The Lord’s initial response to this desperate woman is surprising and puzzling. He dismisses her plea (surprising), explaining that “it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs” (v. 27) (puzzling). His use of ethnocentric language makes it sound like he flatly denies her request simply because she is a Gentile. But God loves Gentiles just as much as he loves Jews, doesn’t he? And he desires the salvation of Gentiles just as much as he does Jews, doesn’t he?

Thankfully, a prejudiced reading is not supported by how the passage ends. Her clever reply, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs” (v. 29), is received favorably by Jesus, but not because she gets the best of him or changes his mind. As one commentator writes: “It is unlikely that Mark intended his readers to see the woman ‘besting’ Jesus and forcing him to ‘capitulate’ (contra Van den Eynde 2000: Donahue and Harrington 2002: 234-35, 237). How does one ‘best’ and force the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord, to ‘capitulate’?” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 352). And another explains: “Verse 29 does not support an interpretation in terms of ‘because you have changed my mind’; it means, rather, ‘because you have passed the test’” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 174). In other words, Jesus’ enigmatic, parabolic statement is intended to test the woman’s faith, inviting a renewed appeal. And her faith passes muster. She turns Jesus’ words to her advantage to point out “the crumbs dropped by the children, after all, are intended for the dogs! If the dogs eat the crumbs under the table, they are fed at

*the same time* as the children (and do not have to wait, as implied by the affirmation in verse 27a)” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 263). Jews may have a claim on Jesus, which is grounded in the covenants, that the Gentiles do not have (see Ro 3:1-2; 9:4-5; Eph 2:11-22), but that claim is not *exclusive*. Galatians 3:8 reads, “Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’”

John’s Gospel and the rest of the New Testament indicate that God *loves* all people, Jew and Gentile alike, *provides salvation* for all people, Jew and Gentile alike, and *desires the salvation* of all people, Jew and Gentile alike.

For example, regarding God’s love, in his Gospel, John writes: “For God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (3:16), and in his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: “At just the right time, when we were still powerless, *Christ died for the ungodly* . . . God demonstrates *his own love for us* in this: *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (5:6-8).

Regarding God’s salvation, in his first letter, again John writes: “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of *the whole world*” (2:2), and in his first letter to Timothy, again Paul writes: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a *ransom for all people*” (2:6).

And finally, regarding God’s desire to see all people saved, in his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to *all who believe*. *There is no difference between Jew and Gentile* (3:22), and in his second letter, the apostle Peter writes: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, *not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*.”

24 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 impure 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 the dogs."

28 "Lord," she replied, "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.

### READ in another translation

24 Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre. He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in, but he couldn't keep it a secret. 25 Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, 26 and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter.

Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, 27 Jesus told her, "First I should feed the children – my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

28 She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates."

29 "Good answer!" he said. "Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter." 30 And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone. (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "that place" in v. 24.
- Circle "Tyre" in v. 24.
- Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 24.
- Underline "impure spirit" in v. 25 and "demon" in vv. 26, 29, 30.
- Bracket "Greek" and "born in Syrian Phoenicia" in v. 26.
- Circle "children/s" in vv. 27, 28.
- Circle "dogs" in vv. 27, 28.
- Highlight v. 28

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What makes the *geographical* setting of Mark 7:24-30 significant?
  2. Jesus wants to remain *incognito* in Tyre. Why so?
  3. Jesus and his disciples have a place to stay in Tyre (v. 24). How so?
  4. What does Mark tell his readers about the woman?
  5. *Coming from her*, the woman's request seems somewhat odd. Explain.
  6. Jesus doesn't refuse her request outright, but he does accuse her of trying to jump the queue. Explain.
  7. In Jesus' parabolic reply to her request, identify: the "children;" the "little dogs;" the "bread;" and the one serving the "bread."
  8. Explain the *point* of the woman's witty reply, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."
  9. Jesus rewarded her witty comeback. What did he see in it?
  10. **Discussion:** Talk about what Mark wants his readers to take away from this story.
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### Commentary On The Text

An unnamed woman comes to Jesus asking for help. Her little daughter is “possessed by an impure spirit,” and she wants Jesus to “drive the demon out.” But she is a Gentile, and because Mark emphasizes her ethnicity, pointing out that “she was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia,” The NIV Study Bible gives Mark 7:24-30 the hopeful heading: “Jesus Honors a Syrophoenician Woman’s Faith.” Jesus has ministered to Gentiles before, but he hasn’t gone outside of Palestine to do it. In this case, he leaves a “house” (v. 17) in Capernaum, and with his disciples, heads northwest toward the Mediterranean Sea to the vicinity of Tyre on the Phoenician coast. He most likely goes there to rest rather than to minister. One commentator writes: “The purpose of Jesus’ withdrawal to Tyre was to secure the rest which had been interrupted both in the wilderness (Ch. 6:30-34) and in the district of Gennesaret (Ch. 6:53-56). The house provided a place of retreat for Jesus with his disciples” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 260; cf., John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 135). Jesus wants to remain *incognito* while in Phoenicia, but that proves impossible for his reputation precedes him everywhere he goes. From Tyre he continues his circuitous course north to Sidon and then back around, avoiding Galilee to the south, to the Decapolis on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. From there he goes to Bethsaida and then to Caesarea Philippi (see map: “Territories of Tyre and Sidon,” in *The NIV Study Bible*, 1670).

This simple, seven-verse narrative has four parts: 1) verse 24 describes the setting of Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman; 2) verses 25 and 26 describe the encounter itself, including the woman’s request; 3) verses 27 and 28 describe Jesus’ parabolic answer, including the repartee between them; 4) and verses 29 and 30 describe the exorcism “from a distance” and its proof.

There are two ways to read the narrative. According to the first, the “children” in the parable represent the disciples, the “children’s bread” represents the benefits of Jesus’ ministry to them, and the little “dogs,” that is, house pets rather than outdoor scavengers, represent Gentiles like the woman but not in a derogatory sense. One commentator explains: “Jesus was telling the woman that His first priority in being there was to instruct His disciples. It is not appropriate to interrupt a

family meal to give the dogs food from the table. So it was not appropriate for Him to interrupt His ministry to His disciples to give His services to her, a Gentile. But Jesus’ reluctance to help stimulated her faith” (Grassmick, 135).

The second way to read the narrative is also explained by the same commentator: “Other interpreters understand a broader theological meaning in Jesus’ words: the children (unbelieving Israel) must be fed (Jesus’ mission); their bread (special privileges including their claim on Jesus’ ministry) must not be thrown to the dogs (Gentiles) because their time for feeding (worldwide proclamation of the gospel) had not yet come. Though this view is true theologically, it overplays Mark’s point” (Grassmick, 135).

The first reading is more *practical*, while the second is more *theological*. In either case, the woman’s observation rings true. Gentiles can benefit from Jesus’ ministry simultaneously along with the Jews. That said, I’m inclined to the first reading because it fits the historical context better. It coincides with the reason for which Jesus and his disciples are in Phoenicia – rest rather than mission. And it fits the woman’s level of theological sophistication better. Another commentator writes regarding the second reading: “This is certainly the deeper meaning behind Jesus’ words, but it may legitimately be asked if the woman possessed the background necessary to appreciate the distinction drawn between Jews and Gentiles and the prerogative of Israel in the divine intention. The text stresses her Hellenistic background, whereas this common interpretation of the comparison presumes a high degree of theological sophistication” (Lane, 261).

Jesus recognizes a confident yet humble faith that will not take NO for an answer, and announces that the demon has left the woman’s daughter. When she returns home, she finds that it is as Jesus said.

Jesus’ apparent refusal to help conveys the impression of harshness and insensitivity and that on the basis of ethnicity, but in the end, it turns out to be an enigmatic response set forth to test the woman’s faith.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 24 *that place* I.e., “the house” (7:17).

v. 24 *Tyre* Cf., “Tyre and Sidon” (Mt 15:21). “A Mediterranean seaport city in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) about 40 miles northwest of Capernaum. Because of excellent, early Greek manuscript support, the words ‘and Sidon’ (cf. NIV marg.) should be included (cf. v. 31” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 135). “The bad blood between Tyrians and Galileans—Josephus describes Tyrians as ‘notoriously our most bitter enemies’ (Ap. I.70)—was in part due to the fact that Jewish trade in the region was dependent on the wealthy merchants of Tyre; the agricultural production of Jewish Galilee supported the higher standard of living of the Tyrians” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 172).

v. 24 *yet* The contrast raises the question of why Jesus went to the region. “Jesus went there not to minister publicly to the people but to secure privacy, previously interrupted (cf. 6:32-34, 53-56), in order to instruct His disciples” (Grassmick, 135; so too, William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 260; Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34A, *Mark 1-8:26*, 384). “The comment that Jesus entered a *house* suggests that some of the people around Tyre who had travelled to Capernaum to hear Jesus teach and to see him drive out demons and heal the sick (3:8) remained sympathizers, or had become followers who were able and willing to provide accommodation for Jesus and the Twelve”—or perhaps, it was the house “of some Jewish disciple or friend” (R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, TNTC, 188)—in any case, “Jesus wanted to be alone with his disciples (cf. 1:35; 3:13; 4:10; 6:31-32), but he was not able to escape people in need” (Schnabel, 172).

v. 25 *impure spirit* I.e., “demon” (cf., vv. 26, 29). “Mark may have chosen to use ‘unclean spirit’ here in order to link the present account with the preceding discussion of ‘unclean/clean’ (*koinos/katharizōn*; 7:18-19) . . . The change to ‘demons’ in 7:26 may be due to a Markan preference for using ‘demons’ with the verb ‘cast out’ (*ekballō*; cf. 1:34, 39; 3:15, 22; 6:13; 9:38; but also 9:18, 28; Guelich 1989: 56)” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 350-51).

v. 26 *Greek, Syrian Phoenicia* “Mark describes the woman as a *Greek* (*Hellēnis*), a term that describes not merely ethnic Greeks but often more broadly

a person who is ‘Greek’ in language and culture, a description that may suggest that the woman was a member of the upper classes . . . This is more plausible than the alternative that understand *Hellēnis* in terms of ‘Gentile’ or ‘polytheist’. The latter is indicated by the description of the woman as Syro-Phoenician (*Syrophoinikissa*); she is a Gentile living in the Phoenician territory of Syria” (Schnabel, 173). “She was a member of the Hellenized citizen class in the Phoenician republic of Tyre, a Gentile by birth and culture. She is designated a Syrophoenician because Phoenicia belonged administratively to the province of Syria and was distinguished from Libophoenicia with its center at Carthage in North Africa” (Lane, 260).

vv. 27, 28 *children, dogs* Jesus responds to the woman’s request with a parable, describing a family meal. The parable includes three characters, two that are identified, namely, “children” and “little dogs,” and one that is not, namely, the master of the house serving the bread. The “children” represent either (more specifically) Jesus’ disciples, who are with him on retreat (see Grassmick, 135) or (more generally) Jews, who are the focus of his ministry (see Guelich, 386; Stein, 352; Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Mark,” 2021 ed., 162, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf)). The dogs are “little dogs,” that is, “house pets, not outdoor scavengers” (Grassmick, 135; contra Stein, 351-52)—presumed to be under the table. The Master serving the bread is Jesus.

v. 28 *even the dogs . . .* “Her point was that the dogs get some food at the same time as the children and thus do not have to wait” (Grassmick, 135). “The woman seems to be saying that the dogs under the table do not have to wait until the children have finished eating but can now eat the crumbs that fall from the table (Strauss, p. 314). Note that *psichion* does not mean ‘leftover’ (GNB): the response of the woman does not describe the dogs eating after the children have finished their meal but suggest simultaneous eating” (Schnabel, 174). “If the little pet dogs (Gr. *kynarion*) get the table scraps, then she felt she had a right to a crumb from Jesus’ table. She implied that the Gentiles need not wait to receive Jesus’ blessings until a later time. They could feed when ‘the children’ did, namely, during Jesus’ ministry. A little Gentile blessing would not deprive the Jews of what God wanted them to have” (Constable, 162).



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Jesus delights in and responds to the confident yet humble faith of all people who call on him regardless of their individual differences.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

We were checking in at the pediatrician's office when my boys were two and three years old (my newborn daughter was next to me in the carrier, for the record) and I noticed two situations happening simultaneously. One: a lovely well-dressed mom with two darling little girls in matching dresses and bows sitting obediently in the seats with their ankles crossed quietly coloring. The other, in contrast: my raucous boys leaping over the armrests from seat to seat. I'm sure you can imagine the look she gave me with turned-up nose and all. I immediately prayed this woman would have 12 more children, all boys - rowdy, loud, stinky boys. This is just one of the reasons why I jokingly called myself the "Most Okayest Mom" for years. As parents, we are our children's greatest advocate. Even the "most okayest" of moms will go to battle for her kids. We know our kids best; we know what they need and aren't afraid to fight for it. One of our best weapons in fighting this battle is undoubtedly prayer. Our kids may never know it, but we are quietly behind the scenes praying for their spiritual health. We pray they will trust in Jesus and grow closer to the Lord daily. Not only that, but we pray for our personal spiritual discernment to lead them into adulthood. Parents, if you're not regularly praying for your children, can I encourage you to begin today? Ask God to grow them to be compassionate, humble, self-controlled, or generous. Whatever your child needs, hit your knees, and begin the battle today!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 7:24-30.

1. Why did this woman's come to Jesus?
2. What do you learn about the woman in verse 26?
3. Why did Jesus agree to heal the woman's daughter even though she was a Gentile?

### What Do You Think?

Do you think talking about dogs in this passage is insulting (think about the culture of the day)? Why or why not?

### What Do You Do?

Read Psalm 96:3. Jesus didn't come for "good" people, He came for all people. Pray for someone you wouldn't ordinarily pray for as well as people from another nation.

## CORE COMPETENCY: Salvation by Grace

I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

## MEMORY VERSE: Romans 10:13

*"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)  
*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)  
*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)  
*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)  
*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)  
*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)  
*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)  
*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)  
*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)  
*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)  
*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)  
*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)  
*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)  
*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)  
*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)  
*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)  
*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)  
*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)  
*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)  
*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)  
*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)  
*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)  
*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)  
*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)  
*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)  
*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)  
*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)  
*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)  
*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)  
*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)  
*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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