

# HELPING A FRIEND IN NEED

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: LUKE 5:17-26

PRINT PASSAGE: LUKE 5:17-26

RESOURCES: *New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition,*  
*Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School*

**KEY VERSE:** And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. Luke 5:18-19, KJV

## Intro

Ideally, to be a member of a Christian church is to be part of a community of believers bound together by faith in Christ. While this is how it is supposed to be, for many the unfortunate reality is that the people are bound together more by tradition and routine, where the concept of faith has been reduced to the means to secure blessings from God.

The true essence of faith is much more than a formula for prosperity; it is the currency of communion that we are invited to spend on God.

As the pure expression of our relationship with God, our faith is where intimacy with the Lord, the reality of our circumstance, and the confidence we have that He is able to do all things converge under the banner of hope. If the church were to adopt such a disposition regarding faith, it would establish itself as a place for healing and deliverance.

Today's lesson is an example of what can happen in a community of believers when Christ is at the center of everyone's attention and the example of faith is at work. We should take this lesson to heart and ask the Spirit of God to move on us. How could we be taking action in our congregations to bolster faith? Have you been living a lukewarm lifestyle? Ask God to crank up your fire!

### Think About It

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In the lesson, the men successfully got their friend to Jesus, who upon seeing their faith, healed him. But who fixed the broken roof?

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## 1. The Context for Faith (Luke 5:17)

### King James Version

AND it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

### New Revised Standard Version

ONE day while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were sitting nearby, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

### Know It

Prior to and since His rejection at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30), Jesus has been widely accepted in the villages of Galilee for His works of healing the sick and casting out demons. The beginning of chapter five, however, changes the tone as it marks the first of a series of conflict stories that begin to reveal some opposition to His growing popularity.

At the time in the text, Jesus is teaching the people in Capernaum, one of the villages of Galilee. As usual, large crowds gather in a house to hear Him, so much so that according to Mark 2:2, there wasn't enough room to accommodate the number of people. To say that it was "standing room only" would be a significant understatement. The crowds that came to hear Jesus had grown so large that any house He commandeered and turned into a make-shift classroom would be immediately packed to capacity, and by the end of His sermon, overflowing with spectators on the outside.

Luke notes that among the crowd were "Pharisees and teachers of the law who came from every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem," which also happens to be all of the places where Jesus' fame had spread. They came to observe Jesus, looking for opportunities to discredit Him in front of the people. Jesus' notoriety was perceived by the religious establishment as a fomenting threat to their authority.

Yet, despite their presence, "the power of the Lord" was also present. Luke emphasizes this when he culminates the verse with a set-up to exploit the contrast between the institutional authority of the Law—which the religious leaders represented—with the ultimate power of the Lord that was present to heal.

### NOTES:



## 2. A Demonstration in Faith (Luke 5:18–20)

### King James Version

**18** And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

**19** And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

**20** And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

### New Revised Standard Version

**18** Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus,

**19** but, finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus.

**20** When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you.

During the sermon, verse 18 records that some men carrying a paralytic sought to bring him to Jesus so that He might heal their friend. Beyond Mark's description of there being four men carrying the one, Luke's account is silent regarding who they were, whether they knew each other, or how far they had traveled to get to Jesus. What is certain, however, is that they were bonded by a common faith in Jesus that He could heal the man's disease. The men demonstrated this in verse 19 by their insistence to get to Jesus despite the crowd thronged around Him. Rather than give up when they could not find a way to navigate through the people, they instead went up on the housetop, dismantled the roof, and let him down with his bed through the tiling.

Motivated by their collective conviction of what Jesus could do, the four men worked together to create opportunity for the one who was paralyzed to be healed. Their actions not only confirmed a unified faith, but also showed love, community, and commitment.

When Jesus saw their faith, He acknowledged their actions and incorporated it as part of His teaching. With the use of the possessive plural pronoun "their," Luke implies that all five men were regarded by Jesus as having shown their faith, not just the one needing the healing. Sacrificing their own opportunity to get close to Jesus, the four men instead worked together to ensure the one who needed Him most did. Upon seeing their actions, Jesus focused His attention to the man who was paralyzed and said, "Your sins are forgiven." Once the man let the burden of his sin go, he was able to be made whole. Through this act, Jesus directly exposes the theological fallacy that one's sin is directly related to an illness and replaces it by showing the power forgiveness has to heal.

### 3. Evidence of Faith (Luke 5:21–26)

#### King James Version

**21** And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

**22** But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

**23** Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

**24** But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

**25** And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

**26** And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

#### New Revised Standard Version

**21** Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

**22** When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?"

**23** Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'?

**24** But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your stretcher and go to your home."

**25** Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God.

**26** Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen incredible things today."

By proclaiming to forgive the man of His sins, Jesus arouses the suspicions from the religious leaders. To forgive someone of their sins puts them (the one doing the forgiving) on an equal level with God, given only God alone can forgive sins. Therefore, the internal thinking of the scribes and Pharisees saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies..." is understandable. For them, a statement like this was sacrilege.

However, according to Luke, in verse 22, Jesus was aware of their unspoken grievance against His claim and addresses it and them directly. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus asks them, "Why are your reasoning in your hearts..." which was an invitation for them to express their discontent rather

#### NOTES:



## NOTES:

than keeping it to themselves. To address their silent disapproval, Jesus furthers His query and asks, "Which is easier: to say, 'your sins are forgiven...' or to say, 'rise up and walk?'" Which is to ask: What is easier to do? Say that "one's sin is forgiven" or that "one is healed" knowing that the legitimacy of the former cannot be disproven, but the latter can, if there is no healing? Since Jesus is the Son of God, one of these tasks is not more difficult than the other. They're equally easy to accomplish; however, one is of more significance when it comes to the eternal soul of the paralyzed man. Therefore, Jesus was much more concerned with forgiving his sins than simply healing him and walking away. If Jesus was a really nice healer or doctor, that would be great in the short-term, but what matters is the state of our souls. His focus was always on forgiving sins first; healing and other miracles were secondary to His main mission: salvation of the world.

Without waiting for their rebuttal, Jesus tells the paralyzed man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." The logic behind Jesus' actions was to establish, for His opponents, His authority to forgive sins by demonstrating His power to heal the sick. That the man was able to get up on his own proved not only that Jesus had the power to heal, but because of His ability to heal, it also proved that God gave Him the authority to forgive. If Jesus had said He was going to heal the man and then didn't, they would also doubt His ability to forgive sins since there is no physical proof of that. But since He healed the man's legs and he was able to walk immediately, the logic stood that his sins were also forgiven immediately. Thus, Jesus proved that He had the power of God and was, in fact, the Son of God, as He so claimed.

In response to Jesus' command, in verse 25, the man got up, took what he had been lying on with him, and departed to his own house. His healing, which was verified in front of all to see, not only restored his body but also empowered him to reclaim his life in that he was able to return to his own home rather than to that of a caretaker. He would no longer be a burden or someone who was pitied or mocked; but rather, he was welcomed back into society as a contributing member. He was no longer an outcast.

If you've accepted Jesus into your heart, then you've received this same divine healing and forgiveness as well!

Remember It

While this passage focuses attention on the controversial act of Jesus forgiving the paralytic man which necessitated his healing, the context for the miracle was established by the shared faith of men who delivered the man to Jesus.

A church can only claim to be a place for healing when its congregants gather around a shared faith in God. As in today's lesson, when believers are united by their conviction that God can do all things, a culture is created that invites possibility for miracles. Their example proved that a shared faith helps to create community, cultivate commitment, and ensures that Christ is at the center. May we strive to be such a church.



Share It • Live It • Hear It




For a musical complement to today's lesson consider: "Press" by Maranda Curtis.

Assess and determine how your faith shapes defines your life.

Assess and determine how your faith is defined in community with other believers.

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Devotional Readings for April 8–14, 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Accept What God Has Made Clean	God's Servant Enlightens the Nations	God Is Praised among the Nations	Christ Is All and in All	Nations Shall Entreat God's Favor	All Flesh Shall See God's Salvation	Jesus Helps a Righteous Gentile
Acts 10:1–15	Isaiah 42:1–12	Malachi 1:10–14	Colossians 3:1–11	Zechariah 8:18–23	Luke 3:1–14	Luke 7:1–10



# FAITH OF A CENTURION

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: LUKE 7:1-10

PRINT PASSAGE: LUKE 7:1-10

RESOURCES: *New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition,*  
*Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School*

**KEY VERSE:** Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. Luke 7:7, KJV

**Intro** When we as believers describe our faith, there is a tendency to explain it as the means to acquire a favorable outcome on a matter that has been prayed to God for or about. Albeit the most popular, this is only one perspective of faith. The truth is, faith in God consists of so much more! In addition to its people, the Christian church is comprised of symbols that express our theology and faith in God. Mature faith, however, is when one's confidence in God is so certain that symbols, rituals, and traditions are not necessary for belief. Instead, it is the conviction of certainty reinforced by regular communion and relationship with God.

Today's lesson demonstrates faith from this perspective. When Jesus healed the sick, He was usually in their presence when doing so. And like the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48), those who were infirmed would try to touch Him, believing that making contact with Him would automatically render the healing they needed.

Though the Bible is silent about it, for many this didn't effort work. Not because the power to heal wasn't with Jesus (Luke 5:17), but rather because they, even with tangible access, lacked faith to believe. In contrast, the centurion had enough faith to believe without access to Jesus. In other words, he had faith from a distance, and as a result his servant was healed from a distance.

## Think About It

Healed from a distance is about the reach of our faith that is determined by the personal proximity of God's presence.

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## 1. The Appeal for Jesus (Luke 7:1-5)

### King James Version

NOW when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

### New Revised Standard Version

AFTER Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

2 A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly and who was ill and close to death.

3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave.

4 When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him,

5 for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us."

### Know It

Verse one opens at the conclusion of one of Jesus' sermons. After dismissing his audience, Jesus returns to Capernaum. Though it was a small village on the seashore of Galilee, Capernaum was an administrative center of commerce, accommodating about 1,500 people. Because of its location, fishing and trade became essential industries of the economy. Along with it being Jesus' base of operations for ministry, Capernaum also held a Roman garrison and served as a polling station for tax collection.

At a certain point while in Capernaum, Jesus was approached by some elders of the Jews, begging Him earnestly to heal a certain centurion's servant. It is important to note that the term "elder" in this context does not refer to age, but rather to their being religious officials of the local Jewish community and not to members of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. The use of the expression "of the Jews" further affirms that the author of Luke and the audience he was writing to were Gentiles.

The centurion, on whose behalf the Jewish elders were speaking, had a servant "who was dear to him," who was sick and ready to die. Customarily, when a servant was unable to

### NOTES:



## NOTES:

perform his or her duties for the master and/or mistress, the servant would be traded. Apparently, the centurion's servant was more than a replaceable cog in the machine that ran his household. That the servant was "dear" to him suggests that he was highly esteemed, as though a member of the centurion's family.

From local gossip, the centurion had heard about Jesus and the healings He performed throughout village and beyond. So, in desperation he sent Jewish elders to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant. He was willing to try anything, much like the other people whom Jesus healed during His time on earth. They had tried countless doctors or healers, and were desperate enough to try anything to receive healing. That's why people who weren't even Jewish would appeal to Jesus. They were at the end of their ropes and had nowhere else to turn. They were willing to cross any societal or ethnic boundary if it meant that their woes would be removed.

When the elders make their appeal to Jesus, they do so with ringing endorsement of the centurion's reputation, saying "the one for whom He should do this was deserving." Their description of the centurion being "deserving" should not imply that he was worthy of his request to be granted, but rather that he is an ally to the Jews and doing this favor for him would only strengthen that alliance.

To persuade Jesus to grant the centurion's request, the elders further advocate in verse five, saying that "he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue." Despite being a Gentile, the centurion's love for the "Nation" encompassed not just the people, but possibly their God as well, which is perhaps why he used even his own resources to build a synagogue for them.

Given the Roman presence in Capernaum, it was not uncommon for there to be social interactions between the soldiers and Jews, at least to some degree. Though they were under the political occupation of Rome, the Jewish people didn't view all of Rome and its soldiers as an enemy; some, like the Jewish elders in the text, saw it as an opportunity. They realized the need to establish and maintain positive relationships with power, and this centurion was a perfect means to that end. Since this centurion was open to the Jewish faith and house of worship, maybe that's why he was also open and receptive to the idea of Jesus healing his servant.

## 2. Confidence in the Lord's Authority (Luke 7:6-8)

### King James Version

**6** Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

**7** Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

**8** For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

### New Revised Standard Version

**6** And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof;

**7** therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.

**8** For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it."

It didn't take much convincing for Jesus to comply with the elder's appeal to go see the centurion because, according to verse 6, the elders returned and Jesus was with them. En route, not far from the house, Jesus is met with a second delegation sent by the centurion. Rather than a request, this time he sends personal friends to convey a direct message. Speaking as if it was himself present before Jesus, the centurion says "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof..."

The Aramaic equivalent of "Lord" was a title of respect in the setting of Jesus, but the title took on greater meaning after the Resurrection. The centurion's words demonstrate the humility and sincerity he had for God's people. His felt unworthiness referred to the respect he had for the Jew-Gentile boundaries. For a Jew to enter a Gentile's home would defile him ceremonially. The centurion knew this and did not want to subject Jesus to ritual impurity. Though he was a social superior of a conquering people and had the right to make a demand for Jesus to see him, he instead surrendered his authority to honor Jesus. In addition to being unworthy to host Jesus in his home, the centurion did not even think himself worthy to come to Him in person, not wanting Jesus' purity to be defiled by associating with a Gentile. Instead, he had enough faith that Jesus could heal from a distance.

### NOTES:



### 3. An Example of Great Faith (Luke 7:9–10)

King James Version	New Revised Standard Version
<p><b>9</b> When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.</p> <p><b>10</b> And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.</p>	<p><b>9</b> When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and, turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."</p> <p><b>10</b> When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.</p>

#### NOTES:

Upon hearing the words of the centurion, Jesus marveled and turned around to address the crowd that followed Him and said, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." The centurion's words demonstrated a unique faith in Jesus, one that required a deep conviction of who He is and what He can do. This type of confidence in Jesus exceeded that of the Jewish elders who saw Him heal yet refused to follow Him. He demonstrated confidence that went beyond that of the crowds who often only followed hoping for another miracle or sign. His faith, according to Jesus, was found in no one "... not even in Israel."

In Luke's context, the centurion became a symbol of believing Gentiles who stood in contrast to unbelieving Jews. This affirmation of the centurion's faith served as support and encouragement for the later acceptance of Gentiles into the church. This man and his faith were something to be admired and looked up to, even though he was a Gentile. That's good news for us who are fellow Gentiles! Throughout the Bible, we have repeated examples that God doesn't show favoritism to Jews over Gentiles or consider Gentiles second-class citizens. The free offer of salvation He gives to the Jewish people is the same offer He gives to every person on earth, no matter their background.

Though there were no actual words of healing delivered by Jesus, verse 10 indicates that by the time those who were sent returned to the house, they discovered that the servant who had been sick had already been healed. The assumption is that at the moment the centurion's words of faith were expressed to Jesus his servant was healed.

Remember It

When Jesus addressed the crowd and told them that He hadn't found faith like the centurion's, it implied that He had been looking. The kind of faith the centurion showed is apparently the kind that not only impresses Christ, but is what He is looking for in His followers. This necessitates examining certain aspects of the centurion's faith so as to duplicate it in our lives. First, the centurion sought the presence of Jesus. Another component of the centurion's faith consisted of a practical understating of God's authority. Finally, the centurion's faith was public. Going public with our faith is to not be ashamed to live our beliefs in God out loud. It is to be known by others as one who is guided by faith born from a real relationship with the Divine.



Share It • Live It • Hear It




For a musical complement to today's lesson, consider: "Presence" by Maranda Curtis.

How would you describe your level of faith maturity?

Give explanations and examples to the class as to what qualifies your faith maturity ranking.

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Devotional Readings for April 15–21, 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Jesus' Compassion for the Grieving	Sing Praises to God's Name	Confession, Prayer, and Healing	God Pardons Iniquity and Transgression	God Is Good and Forgiving	No Condemnation in Christ	Jesus Forgives a Sinner
Luke 7:11–18	Psalms 92	James 5:12–20	Micah 7:7–20	Psalms 86:1–7, 11–17	Romans 8:1–16	Luke 7:36–50



# HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE ME?

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: LUKE 7:36–50

PRINT PASSAGE: LUKE 7:36–39, 44–50

RESOURCES: *New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition*,  
*Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School*

**KEY VERSE:** And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.  
Luke 7:50, KJV

## Intro

Love is the ultimate motivator. As the greatest force on earth, love (or some iteration of love) drives all human action. Consider the love of money that motivates human actions to acquire it, often by any means necessary. The love of companionship that drives us into relationships with one another, despite the pain and heartache that can come along with it; the love of life that makes us avoid anything that may compromise the preservation of it. Whether right, wrong, or indifferent, love is at the core of all we do and the reason why we do what we do.

As it relates to our relationship with God, love is the ultimate motivator—at least it should be. Our initial connection with God starts with the belief that He not only made us, but also that He loves us. As our belief in God's love is deepened through the experience of being in relationship with Him, the more our capacity grows to love God in return. Eventually, our love of God rather than just His love for us becomes the primary motivator of our actions. In essence, there is a point at which our spiritual maturity evolves wherein faith and love become the foundation for our relationship with God.

What does that look like? Today's lesson serves as an example. Though nameless, the actions of this so-called "sinful" woman demonstrate for all believers how the natural marriage between faith and love is expressed through worship.

## Think About It

Cheap oil was often offered to guests as a gesture of hospitality and meant to be used on the head to freshen up. But to show the degree of devotion the woman had for Jesus, she offered instead an expensive, perfumed oil that she poured on His feet. Her worship had a cost.

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## 1. Determined to See Jesus (Luke 7:36–39)

### King James Version

AND one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

**37** And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

**38** And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

**39** Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

### New Revised Standard Version

ONE of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and when he went into the Pharisee's house he reclined to dine.

**37** And a woman in the city who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.

**38** She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

**39** Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."

### Know It

Ironically, in the wake of Jesus scolding the Pharisees for rejecting His and John the Baptist's message, one of them invites Jesus to have dinner at his home. So, Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat. That they reclined at the meal indicates it was a banquet or Sabbath meal. It was quite common to invite a visiting rabbi or teacher to the Sabbath meal after he had taught in the synagogue. If it was a banquet meal, Jesus may have been invited because of His reputation as a prophet.

Verse 37 introduces a woman in the city known for being a sinner. Though an uninvited guest, she was allowed to participate in the meal, as it was a special public celebration. During such times, outsiders could enter the open door, sit by the wall, watch, and perhaps beg for leftover scraps. Though it's not mentioned, the woman was labeled as a "sinner" possibly due to her occupation.

### NOTES:



NOTES:

The woman not only came to see Jesus, but also to anoint Him. Knowing where Jesus sat at the table, she positioned herself to have access to His feet and anointed them with oil from an alabaster flask she brought with her. Alabaster is a soft stone that was frequently used to make perfume containers. The cost of one jar filled with the fragrant oil was equivalent to a day's worth of wages. While the use of expensive perfumed oil on the feet would have been considered wasteful, for this woman it was a gesture of love that expressed her gratitude to and high regard for Jesus. She wept and began to wash His feet with her tears. She wiped them dry with her hair, emphasizing the degree of appreciation she had for Jesus. It is possible that her activity had gone unnoticed until the strong scent of the oil called everyone's attention to her as she poured it on Jesus' feet.

When the Pharisee who invited Jesus saw what the woman was doing, and that He had allowed her to do it without rebuke, he spoke to himself of his concerns. Rather than share his suspicions of Jesus openly and run the risk of embarrassment, he instead questioned the validity of His calling in silence. He thought that if Jesus were really a prophet, He would have known who and what manner of woman was touching Him; she was a "sinner." Of course, Jesus knew exactly what this Pharisee was thinking.

## 2. The Contrast of Love (Luke 7: 44–46)

King James Version	New Revised Standard Version
<p><b>44</b> And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.</p>	<p><b>44</b> Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.</p>
<p><b>45</b> Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.</p>	<p><b>45</b> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet.</p>
<p><b>46</b> My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.</p>	<p><b>46</b> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.</p>

After Jesus asks Simon (the Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner) the parabolic question of which debtor loved their creditor more (vv. 41–42), He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman...” lifting her up as the example in the lesson. In the parable (Luke 7:41–42), the behavior of the two debtors toward the creditor is analogous to the behavior of Simon and the woman toward Jesus. While looking at the woman, Jesus addresses Simon and said, “I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet.” While this courtesy wasn’t mandatory, it would have been a kind gesture for the host to have water available for guests to take off their sandals and wash their feet as they came off the dusty roads and into the house. Given that meals were shared lying down with one’s feet near the face of another, such a practice was an important for maintaining proper hygiene.

To contrast Simon’s neglect of common courtesy, Jesus refers to the woman who “washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.” Different than Simon’s, the woman’s honor of Jesus’ presence went above and beyond appreciation. For her, it was an opportunity for worship. Even if Simon had offered water for Jesus to wash His feet, it would have been provided to Him in a basin or a bowl no doubt drawn from cistern. But this so-called “sinful” woman offered her own tears that flowed out of a well of deep contrition.

Continuing with the contrast, Jesus said to Simon, “you gave Me no kiss...” which was a common form of greeting, like a handshake and a hug today. “But...” He adds, “...this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.” To emphasize the point further, Jesus goes on to say, “You did not anoint My head with oil...” another overlooked courtesy of the host, “...but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.”

### 3. Faith Defines Love (Luke 7:47–50)

King James Version	New Revised Standard Version
<p><b>47</b> Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.</p>	<p><b>47</b> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little.”</p>
<p><b>48</b> And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.</p>	<p><b>48</b> Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”</p>
<p><b>49</b> And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?</p>	<p><b>49</b> But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”</p>
<p><b>50</b> And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.</p>	<p><b>50</b> But he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”</p>



NOTES:

The first word in verse 47, “therefore” initiates Jesus’ explanation of the lesson. While looking at the woman, and still addressing Simon, Jesus tells him “her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.” Just as the debtor in the parable loved his creditor more than the other because he had the most debt to be forgiven, this woman loved Jesus more than Simon because her sins were many. This is not to suggest that Simon sinned less, but rather that the woman was more aware of her sins and her need for the Lord’s forgiveness, in comparison.

The impression Luke infers for his readers is that Simon, though a Pharisee, was not as burdened by his sin as the so-called “sinful” woman was by hers; therefore, he didn’t share the same level of appreciation in Jesus’ presence as she did. To Simon, Jesus was just a high profile guest, a religious celebrity. But to the woman, He was her redemption. Jesus sums it up as He culminates the lesson “...but to who little is forgiven, the same loves little.” In essence, according to Jesus, the love we express toward Him is the proper response for being forgiven of our sins. And the more aware we are of our sins and our need to be forgiven, the greater capacity we have to love.

Jesus then focuses His attention on the woman directly and tells her “your sins are forgiven.” He ignores the disapproving stares from those who sat at the table, witnessing Jesus’ actions and saying to themselves “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” Instead, Jesus dismisses the woman in peace with the assurance that her faith has saved her. Jesus not only associates the woman’s demonstrated love for Him as what validated her faith, but He also rewarded her determination by forgiving her sins.

Though unnamed in the text, the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair will be forever remembered for her actions of deep devotion to the Savior. Demonstrating a love for Jesus that was expressed through worship and rooted in faith, the woman’s actions provide a format for believers today as to how we too can deepen our devotion to the Lord.

The reason for her love, we learn in verse 50, is because of her faith, which consisted of two qualifying implications: the awareness of sin; and the confidence of being forgiven of those sins. Jesus saw these qualities in her and was moved by her love.

Remember It

Whatever the woman's sin was didn't matter; what mattered was her awareness of it. Her conviction made her realize her unworthiness and at the same time fueled her desire to be in Jesus' presence. A fair assumption can be made that though Jesus was the object of her focus, she viewed Him through the lens of personal self-examination and need of grace.

Along with the awareness of her sin, this woman was sure of her forgiveness. Perhaps her worship was the result of the immediately-felt assurance of being forgiven the moment He told her she was. Regardless of what the actual motivation was, faith validated her deliverance. What a beautiful example she leaves behind for us today.



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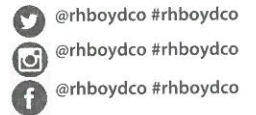
For a musical complement to the lesson, consider "Alabaster Box" by Cece Winans.

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DDR

Devotional Readings for April 22–28, 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
God Provides for a Gentile Woman	God's Authority over Life and Death	God Blesses Whomever God Wills	Hear My Cry, O God	May God Grant Your Heart's Desire	God Gives Grace to the Humble	Jesus Hears a Desperate Mother's Plea
1 Kings 17:8–16	1 Kings 17:17–24	Luke 4:24–30	Psalms 61	Psalms 20	James 4:1–10	Matthew 15:21–28



# HELP FOR AN OUTSIDER

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: MATTHEW 15:21–28

PRINT PASSAGE: MATTHEW 15:21–28

RESOURCES: *New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition*,  
*Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School*

**KEY VERSE:** Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Matthew 15:28, KJV

## Intro

As African Americans, ours is a rich history of heroes and heroines who have faced immense suffering and yet found strength and resilience through faith to not only survive, but also to accomplish great things for the glory of God. Sojourner Truth (1797–1883) for example, despite being born into slavery, became an influential abolitionist. Drawing strength from her faith, she delivered powerful speeches that highlighted the experiences and resilience of the Black woman living in America. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), who was also born into slavery, became a world-renowned writer, speaker, and advocate for the abolition of slavery. His faith in God played a significant role in shaping his worldview and inspiring his fight for justice. Nat Turner (1800–1831), relatively unspoken about in the Black Church and unknown to its members, was still enslaved when he invoked the powers of his faith. Believing he was called by God to do so, Nat Turner led a famous rebellion in Virginia in 1831, killing between 55–66 enslavers.

Faith in God is a gift for those who believe. It is the primary resource that connects us to the Source in times of crisis and need. The discipline to live by faith promotes a deeper and more intimate awareness of God's presence; an awareness that endows us with an assurance of His power.

The woman in today's lesson is an example of someone who dared to believe in God, despite not being part of the so-called "chosen" people of God. May we learn from her bravery.

## Think About It

Was Jesus' insult of the woman justified? Why or why not?

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## 1. The Audacity of Faith (Matthew 15:21–23)

### King James Version

THEN Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

**22** And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

**23** But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

### New Revised Standard Version

JESUS left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

**22** Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

**23** But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

### Know It

Verse 21 opens with Jesus withdrawing to the region of Tyre and Sidon. These were port cities that today are parts of Lebanon and Syria. It is likely that He was coming from Gennesaret, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. From there it would have been a forty-mile journey on the Mediterranean coast to reach Tyre and another twenty miles farther north to reach the coast to Sidon. It is probable that Jesus' venture into Gentile lands was an effort to escape Jewish opposition as well as to find some solace from the crowds. Nevertheless, even in Gentile territory, huge crowds were attracted to Him.

Geography was important for Matthew in this passage as it sets the stage for Jesus' encounter with the woman from Canaan who came from that region. As Tyre and Sidon represented paradigms of old enemies against God's people, Matthew quickly establishes this unnamed woman as being linked to them. Conjuring up long-standing animosity with the roots of Israel's history, she is identified as a Canaanite, whom the Jewish people were commanded to keep a distance from. Of all the Gentile nationalities, those of Canaanite descent would have been among the most abhorred by the Jews. The Canaanites were one of the idolatrous nations Israel was instructed to exterminate when they entered the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:1–2).

The woman came to Jesus and cried out saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!" The woman's petition

### NOTES:



## NOTES:

gives remarkable insight into Jesus' messianic authority. It recalls, for Matthew's readers, the account of another Gentile who also exhibited an exceptional understanding of Jesus' authority (8:5–13). In both episodes, the faith of a Gentile stands in stark contrast to the unbelief and blindness of Israel.

Which camp do you fall into? Jesus says that even the faith the size of a mustard seed is enough to move mountains, so don't feel bad if you think your faith is too small.

The woman appeals to Jesus about her daughter who is severely demon possessed. Viewed as a unique situation in which an evil spirit takes control of an individual, demonic possession was often associated with being the cause of various diseases and illnesses such as epilepsy. That this woman violated Jewish social codes to get to Jesus amplified the severity of her daughter's illness and the intensity of her desperation to get help. Despite her bold request however, Jesus answered her not a word.

One would think that with such a desperate plea from the woman, Jesus would have responded with urgency. That He did not, suggested that His silence was deliberate and dramatic. Perhaps He was waiting to see if she would continue to seek help on behalf of her daughter. It could have been a test of her determination to receive intercession.

She did keep asking, and the disciples seemed to react with annoyance. Since there was already animosity between these two people groups, they may have been offended by her petitioning Jesus in the first place. They told Jesus to send her on her way. On the other hand, perhaps they meant give her what she wants so that she'll go away, like shooing away an annoying fly.

## 2. The Challenges of Faith (Matthew 15:24–25)

King James Version	New Revised Standard Version
<b>24</b> But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.	<b>24</b> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
<b>25</b> Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.	<b>25</b> But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

As a means to justify His silent rebuttal to the woman's request and seemingly align Himself with the disciples, Jesus reiterates the limitation of His mission: "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...." His statement refers to the covenantal relationship God has with Israel, wherein His people are given priority in the blessings for humanity. Yet, Jesus ignored this limitation when He obliged the prayer of a Gentile centurion in 8:10. It can be argued then that Jesus' hesitation in addressing the woman's need was not due to limitations but rather an attempt to elicit a deeper belief from her.

By His silence, Jesus created opportunity for the woman to demonstrate her conviction of hope along with a commitment to follow Him. Her actions served as the basis for inclusion of Gentiles in the blessings reserved for the Jewish people. With her words and actions, she expressed the intensity of her desperation, determination, and total dependency on Jesus to address her need.

From this Canaanite woman, we learn how to pray as a dedicated intercessor. It involves an acknowledgement that we cannot solve our own problems, or even the problems of loved ones, but rather, that Jesus is the ultimate Source of truth, provision, and deliverance. She took on the request as if she was asking for her own healing; she was so committed to interceding on behalf of her daughter. When was the last time you prayed for someone else as if praying for yourself?

### 3. The Reward of Faith (Matthew 15:26–28)

King James Version	New Revised Standard Version
<p><b>26</b> But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.</p>	<p><b>26</b> He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."</p>
<p><b>27</b> And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.</p>	<p><b>27</b> She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."</p>
<p><b>28</b> Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.</p>	<p><b>28</b> Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.</p>



NOTES:

The woman's persistence in worship finally gets Jesus' attention. In verse 26, He stops ignoring her. But His hard-sought reply was arguably worse than giving her the silent treatment. Jesus tells the woman "it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." This implies that the blessings (bread) of Abraham that have been promised by God (the Master) are for the Jewish people (the children) exclusively, not the Gentiles (little dogs). In essence, Jesus was calling this woman a dog who is unworthy of the healing!

As insulting as it seemed, the derogatory label of "dog" even was a common epithet that most Jewish people used to describe non-Jews. Like the common perception of dogs during that time as wild dirty animals, the Jewish people regarded anyone who wasn't under the Abrahamic covenant as unclean and unworthy of association—dogs.

But was this the attitude of Jesus toward the Canaanite woman? Of course not. Jesus' purpose in calling her a dog was not only to test her resolve of faith in Him, but also to show how mature it was in comparison to the children who sit at the master's table. If a "dog" can worship, it emphasizes her debased status among God's people, which in turn accentuates the strength of her faith in Jesus, despite knowing her unworthiness. In other words, she demonstrates, in the face of opposition, rejection, and even insult, the discipline to bow down rather than back off when it comes to her belief. Her tenacity is confirmed in verse 27, when she responds to Jesus' insult with a statement in faith, saying, "yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The woman worded her response not as a contradiction of what Jesus said, but rather as an extension of His analogy. By taking the insult on the chin, she displayed humility that occasioned wisdom to appeal to God's compassion, as the Lord promises blessings to each and every nation.

The woman's response impressed Jesus. She has amply proven her faith, and He, as a reward, praises her openly by saying, "O woman great is your faith..." and then assures her that her desires have been granted. Healing for the woman's daughter was immediate, "from that very hour." Jesus' praise of this woman's actions and the granting of her request is meant to contrast Jewish standards of uncleanness and ethnic boundaries.

Remember It

Because faith is an essential component of our spiritual development, the adversary aspires to dismantle it. As believers, we should take our cues from the Canaanite woman as to how we can practice our faith in a way that pleases God. First, faith that pleases God is initiated by the relationship, or the attempt to draw closer to Christ. Our faith begins at the point of realizing how broken we are and how much we need God to fix us. Thirdly, it was also nurtured in worship. Fourth, rather than turn away in disappointment because Jesus ignored her at first, she instead doubled down in her worship of Him. Finally, the woman's faith was defined by a changed perspective.



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For a musical complement to the lesson, consider Rev. Milton Biggham – “We’ve Come This Far By Faith.”

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Discuss ways in which our personal faith can be leveraged to help others.

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Devotional Readings for April 29–May 5, 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Vindicate Me, O Lord My God	Blessed Are They Who Fear God	Repent and Turn to God	God So Loved the World	Lord, Lead Me in Your Righteousness	Christ Our Atoning Sacrifice	Atonement by Christ's Blood
Psalms 35:1–7, 22–28	Psalms 112	Acts 3:12–26	John 3:1–8, 13–17	Psalms 5	1 John 1:1–2:2	Romans 3:21–30