

The Character of Jesus 34
Matthew 15:21 – 38, Mark 7:24 – 8:9
Meeting Faith Where It Is

- Characteristic: Meeting faith where it is
 - Following the Matthew account.
 - (21) Facing renewed opposition, Jesus moved out of the limelight, perhaps to avoid personal danger, perhaps to avoid sparking a revolution.
 - (22) Demon possession was not restricted to the borders of Israel. More demons are noted in Paul's journeys through Greece and Turkey (Acts 16:16 – 18, 19:11 – 16). Note that Zechariah 13:2 specifies that unclean spirits would be banned from "the land," which apparently was bigger than just Israel.
 - (23 – 28) The exchange between Jesus and the woman has several interesting facets:
 - (23) Was Jesus' silence to test her faith?
 - (24) The statement about "only Israel" was hinted previously in Matthew 10:5 – 6. How true was this? Did Jesus ever interact with other ethnic groups?
 - (25) Apparently, this Canaanite woman had significant knowledge about the Messiah, considering "Son of David" in verse 22 and worshipping here.
 - (26 – 27) The repartee appears to be good-natured even in this serious situation.
 - (29) Mark 7:31 gives the detail that Jesus went around the Sea of Galilee to the Gentile side (Decapolis).
 - (30) These multitudes could include Gentiles from the swine incident (Matthew 8:28 – 34) but Jews seeking healing had come long distances before. Mark 7:32 – 37 adds details about a certain deaf and mute man, plus Jesus' admonition to keep quiet about the healings, and the fact that the crowd did not keep it quiet.
 - (33) The disciples did not seem to make the connection to the feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:13 – 21).
 - (39) Magdala is back on the Jewish side of the Sea.
 - Three levels of faith: the Canaanite woman, the crowds seeking healing, and the disciples.
 - Jesus dealt with each differently
 - Jesus caused each to grow
- Application: Meeting faith where it is
 - Do we relate to each according to their faith?
 - Are opportunities afforded to every level?
 - Is growth expected?
 - What is needed to enable various levels and rates of growth to co-exist?
 - Not a program but relationships
 - High expectations such as God has of us
 - Everyone is a leader and a follower
 - Do we tackle difficult situations? Demon possession must have been embarrassing.
 - Does our faith-building adjust to take advantage of rather than be limited by opposition?