

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 14-20 (A) – Matthew 15:21-28

Tips of Discipleship: *Be Bold*

Focus Question: *What bold thing have you done related to your faith?*

word of life

“Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’” Matthew 9:12 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 15:21-28

At the time of Jesus, it was important for those who followed the Jewish faith to remain ritually pure. Consequently, the Pharisees and scribes were quite upset when the disciples of Jesus would not wash their hands before they would eat. But Jesus challenged the Pharisees concerning what made a person clean or unclean by saying, “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” (Matthew 15:11 NRSV) Time and time again, Jesus emphasized what was in the heart of the person. That core principle allowed Jesus to respond to people based on their faith and not based on exterior factors.

1. *What does the phrase “in the heart of the person” mean?*
2. *Give examples of times when Jesus responded to someone based on their heart rather than exterior factors.*

Following this discussion Jesus encountered a Canaanite woman who would test his principles. She had many things against her including being both a Gentile and a woman. Thus, by a rating scale established by her society, she had no status in two categories. Yet this woman came to Jesus on behalf of her daughter shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” She did not seem to know she was to remain silent. Jesus did not answer.

3. *How could Jesus ignore the woman? Is this a typical reaction of Jesus? How so?*
4. *How would you expect this woman to respond when she is ignored by Jesus?*

The disciples wanted Jesus to send her away so she would not bother them any more. She was an “outsider” who didn’t seem to know or accept her place. This woman – who was declared by society and Jewish law to not have a voice – chose to use her voice to cry to Jesus repeatedly.

5. *Why didn’t this woman get the hint and leave?*
6. *What was motivating her persistent behavior?*

Jesus responded with a somewhat puzzling remark. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24 NRSV) The words of Jesus appeared to explain his behavior towards the woman. But these words were not satisfactory to the woman, so she engaged Jesus in a conversation as she begged Jesus for help. Jesus seemed to be unmoved commenting, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” (Matthew 15:26 NRSV)

7. *What could Jesus possibly have meant by this comment about dogs?*
8. *How would this comment have sounded to the woman?*

Nevertheless, this woman persisted for the sake of her daughter. She was willing to take crumbs of Jesus for even crumbs would be sufficient to heal her daughter. Despite the odds against her, this woman’s inner qualities of humility and faithfulness came through to Jesus. He responded to her faith and healed her daughter instantly.

9. *What can be learned from this story?*

word among us

Ralph could not believe it. There he was in the same restaurant as his grandfather's most favorite baseball player. His grandfather loved baseball – almost more than anything.

Not much brought joy to his grandfather these days. His health had declined and most of his friends had died in recent years. Sometimes his grandfather's loneliness and grief overwhelmed him. This was painful for Ralph to watch. About the only thing that brought his grandfather relief from his misery was watching baseball games on television – especially the player eating lunch fifteen yards away from Ralph.

Normally, Ralph was a quiet man and would never intrude on anyone. But, something stirred within Ralph and he began a mission to get an autograph for his grandfather. Ralph believed an autograph would be a perfect gift for his grandfather – something to bring him joy. Instinctively, Ralph jumped out of his seat. He would have to act quickly. The baseball player had been spotted and crowds pressed upon him, causing him to head towards the exit.

Ralph heard a loud voice come out of his throat. Ralph never, ever knew he could yell so loud. Everyone in the restaurant turned and stared at him. Ralph kept on yelling wonderful things about his beloved grandfather and begging for an autograph. Simply put, Ralph would not be quiet. Finally, the baseball player consented.

1. *What possessed Ralph to respond in such an atypical way?*
2. *When have you acted boldly?*
3. *Would your friends describe you as bold? Why or why not?*
4. *When might it be good to be bold?*

The woman who approached Jesus concerning her daughter probably knew she had no place or status to make a request of him. She came to him out of a mother's love for her child. She did not ask for wealth, fame, or privilege, but for the health of her child. Her faith in Jesus was firm and steadfast. This woman knew Jesus could perform miracles. She also knew she did not need much from him – just a few crumbs.

5. *Describe that woman's faith.*
6. *Whom do you know who has faith like this woman?*

This story is about bold behavior; but more than that. It is about faith. The Canaanite woman came in prayer, begging Jesus for mercy. She came hoping and expecting a miracle.

7. *Take a moment to reflect on an act of mercy from Jesus for your life. What would you ask?*
8. *Do you expect Jesus to respond? Why or why not?*
9. *What might we learn from this woman?*

Prayer

Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. Strengthen me in faith so I might turn to you to meet my needs. Amen

Dig Deeper

Psalm 67

last word

Take a moment to offer
a bold prayer to God, trusting a response will come.



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Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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