

# Life Group Questions

Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023

**Crumbs for the Hungry** – Pastor Vinh Doan - **Matthew 15:21-39**

To the Life Group leader: thank you for your ministry leading this Life Group. **Take time to review the questions, selecting those you believe will be most helpful for your group study.** You will not have time to use all the questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead, as you select questions, and as you guide the discussion.

## Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Group Leaders,

Thanks so much for using my material. I've been really humbled by the positive responses I've received. I can't take all the credit, though. I couldn't do it without great feedback and suggestions. Please continue to let me know how I can better serve you and your groups.

May God work through all of us disciple our Life Group members so they will be disciplemakers.

Thank you all,

Pastor Jonathan Hsieh

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## Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- How has God gifted you to serve Him?
- How will you serve Him this fall at Willingdon Church?
- Where has God placed you in the city? What is your role there?

## Open in Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the text, the questions, and each other.

## Message Recap Questions

**Review the message using these questions**

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

## Questions



1. How do the geographic locations and ethnicities shape the story?



2. What can we learn about the woman's faith?



3. How can the Canaanite woman's faith encourage you to have faith in Jesus?



4. Imagine you are the Canaanite woman or in the crowd by the Sea of Galilee. What are you experiencing?



5. What is the significance of Jesus healing?



6. Who can you bring to Jesus?



7. How does your hunger for Jesus compare to the crowd's?

## Commentary and Questions



### 1. How do the geographic locations and ethnicities shape the story?

Jesus heads to the region of Tyre and Sidon

([https://youtu.be/U7O09GmUcdU?si=W7r\\_r\\_cJpc3CAPp](https://youtu.be/U7O09GmUcdU?si=W7r_r_cJpc3CAPp)), probably around 80ish miles away. Check out the map. It's a Phoenician (non-Jewish) area. The Pharisees weren't going to chase Him that far. Jesus "entered a house and did not want anyone to know" (Mark 7:24). Jesus also went away to be alone before feeding the 5000+ (Matthew 14:13).

A Canaanite woman finds Jesus somehow. Canaanites lived in Canaan before the Israelites. In Mark 7:26 we learn she's Syrophenician. She's NOT Jewish. She's the last person you'd expect to hunt Jesus down.

We see the theme of reversal in Jesus' ministry. Previously in Matthew Jesus was rejected by people who should have welcomed Him, namely His hometown and the Jewish religious leaders. They should have recognized Jesus' true identity from being around Him or studying God's Word. Ironically, non-Jewish people who lacked access to God's Word are hungry for Jesus.

Often people who grow up in the church are the most apathetic to Jesus, while people who came to faith later are on fire. As the expression goes, familiarity breeds contempt.



### Diving Deeper: Son of David

The last time a son of David ruled Israel was about 600 years earlier. That's like us looking back to Joan of Arc or Henry V. The last two Davidic kings were Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. During their reigns, Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians and the temple was destroyed. Not a great ending.

Over the next few hundred years, the people of God were ruled by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. There was a period of independence when they rebelled against a super evil Greek ruler (Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the temple during this), but it wasn't great. Confused? Just know the people were looking for a king to free them from foreign rule.

The Book of Matthew was written for a Jewish audience, so it opens with "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the son of Abraham." Multiple people cry out to Jesus as the son of David (Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:30, 31). The crowds wonder if Jesus is the son of David (Matthew 12:23) and also call Jesus son of David when He enters Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus declares He is "the descendant of David" (Revelation 22:16).



### 2. What can we learn about the woman's faith?

She calls Jesus "O Lord, Son of David." As a Gentile, she has no ties to the Jews, but she addresses Jesus by a double messianic title. That's incredible. Over a thousand years before Jesus was born, God

promised David an eternal dynasty (2 Samuel 7:16). It makes sense if a Jewish person is excited about a Jewish king, but why would a Gentile care?

Crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."	Jesus ignores her and tells the disciples, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
Came and knelt, saying, "Lord, help me."	"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."
She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."	"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire."

Some commentators (e.g., Barclay) think Jesus was speaking with compassion and a smile as He tested this woman's faith. You might see it in her progression. She cries out, kneels and speaks, and eventually just speaks. She seems to know she's about to get what she's asking for.

Jesus' first statement isn't even to the woman, but to the disciples. His focus was the Jewish people (Romans 1:16). She kneels before Jesus, calling for His help again. He tells her it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

The woman gives a wise response. While you're feeding the children, the dogs get crumbs. You don't need to stop feeding the children. It's a win-win. Jesus doesn't need to stop ministering to the Jews to care for Gentiles. He can focus on the Jews while Gentiles get collateral compassion.

Jesus calls her faith great. The Greek word is "μέγας" (megas) where we get mega. Jesus says she has MEGAFAITH. In the book of Matthew, Jesus is blown away by the centurion's faith. "When Jesus heard [the centurion's statement], he marveled and said ... "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith." (Matthew 8:10). Again, a reversal, because Jesus constantly calls out the disciples' tiny faith (Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).



### Diving Deeper: Dogs Are a Good Thing?

There's a daily prayer for Jewish men (<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/119367.13>):

Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who did not make me a gentile.  
Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who did not make me a slave.  
Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who did not make me a woman.

This Canaanite woman has two strikes against her, being a Gentile and a woman. Paul likely had this prayer in mind when He wrote,

There is neither Jew nor Greek,  
there is neither slave nor free,  
there is no male and female,  
for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

God doesn't judge you by your ethnicity, social rank, or gender. Jesus died to save all.

Jesus calling the Gentiles dogs is an improvement to how Jews viewed Gentiles. The word Jesus used is "κυνάριον" (kynarion) referring to a house pet, instead of "κύων" (kyon), a wild scavenger dog. He's saying Gentiles are part of God's household!

"...heathenism stands related to Judaism as the house-dogs to the children, and it were not meet to rob the children their bread in order to give it to dogs. But Thine own words show, that such would not now be the case. *If they are house-dogs, then they are the Master's, and*

under His table, and when He breaks the bread to the children, in breaking of it the crumbs must fall all around.” (Edersheim)

The fact that Gentiles are in the household was mind-blowing. Even though Jesus ministered to this Canaanite, a Samaritan (John 4), a centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), and other Gentiles, Peter and the apostles needed more divine intervention to see that God welcomes all people (Acts 10:34-35; 11:17-18).



### 3. How can the Canaanite woman's faith encourage you to have faith in Jesus?

**Go to Jesus.** There is a lot about this woman that I'd love to know about. How did she find Jesus when He was hiding (Mark 7:24)? There aren't pictures of Jesus. He's not wearing a nametag. Jesus didn't look like a beautiful celebrity (Isaiah 53:2). There's no social media, so she didn't see Jesus post a photo and tag it #TiredOfThesePharisees. God only knows how she found Him. It's a billion times easier for us to approach Jesus, so what's stopping us?

**Action: Set a time to pray, pray together during the week as a group over the phone or online, start a prayer journal, or listen and learn from others' prayers.**

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” (Hebrews 4:15–16)

**Learn more about Jesus.** She understands who Jesus is. When Jesus tells her about His ministry to the Jews, she knows what to say. She's prepared.

Sometimes our faith is weak because our knowledge is weak. How do we approach Him? Who is He to us? What can He do? What has He done? As we learn more about Jesus, we can trust in Him more.

**Action Suggestions: Read the Bible, ask a pastor, be disciplined, or take a WSBM**  
**(<https://willingdon.org/wsbm/spring23>) or Discovery (<https://willingdon.org/events/discovery-classes/>) course.**

“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...**” (2 Peter 3:17–18a)

**Be persistent.** She knows only Jesus can help, so she keeps responding until she gets a response. Sometimes God doesn't answer us immediately. Maybe God has a plan and He's working things out in His own way, so we stay the course and keep praying.

“**And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?** Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:7-9)

**Action Suggestions: Find accountability, leave reminders to pray around the house, or write out why this prayer item is important to encourage you to persist.**



### 4. Imagine you are the Canaanite woman or in the crowd by the Sea of Galilee.

**What are you experiencing?**

Could you imagine what the scene must have been like? You carried your daughter in your womb for nine months and gave birth to her. You fed her from your own body (no formula back then and she probably couldn't afford a wet nurse). You weaned and watched her grow up until one day she became

“severely oppressed by a demon.” No one could help. No MRIs or CT scans. No medications. We don’t know how long this lasted. But imagine the anguish and pain as you see your precious daughter suffer. Your life is on hold because all your energy is used to take care of her. But you hear Jesus is in town. He instantly heals your daughter. You have your daughter back. She smiles and calls to you and embraces you in her arms. How do you feel? What would you say to Jesus? Who would you tell?

Imagine you’re on the hill with thousands of people. Fathers and mothers carry their blind or deaf sons and daughters. Now for the first time in their lives, these children can see their parents’ faces and hear their voices. Imagine the tears of joy as they hold each other’s faces in their hands. People bring their crippled friends to Jesus and He gives them the ability to take their first steps. Imagine how they’re dancing together and shouting for joy. Try to picture the energy. It must have been wild! How would you act if you were one of them?



## 5. What is the significance of Jesus healing?

Jesus goes to a mountain near the Sea of Galilee. People bring their loved ones all the way to Jesus. They had to carry them on animals or their backs. Once there, Jesus heals the lame, blind, crippled, and mute. He also teaches them.

Earlier in Matthew, John the Baptist was in prison. Worried about whether Jesus was actually the Messiah, John sends his disciples to ask Jesus. Jesus tells John “... the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” (Matthew 11:5).

Jesus’ miracles were proof He was the One sent by God. Many of Jesus’ miracles are tied to prophecies where God announces He would restore His people. For example, “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 29:18-19). Other examples are Isaiah 35:5, 42:7 and 18, and 61:1.

When Jesus performed these miracles, “they glorified the God of Israel.” As the people saw that Jesus was the One sent by God, the glorified God. Jesus didn’t heal just for the sake of healing.

Do we pray for God’s miracles so that we can glorify God? Do we use what God’s done for us to show others that Jesus is the Messiah?



## 6. Who can you bring to Jesus?

The Canaanite woman went to Jesus on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. We don’t know how it affected her. Demons could make people blind or unable to speak (Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22), make them violent (Matthew 8:28), or cause seizures (Matthew 17:14-16). Often the possessed person needed help to get to Jesus. The lame, blind, and crippled needed help, too.

Are there friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers, classmates, or others who need your help to get to Jesus? Here are some suggestions for what you can do:

**Pray for non-believers.** We know “our gospel is veiled” because Satan “has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” so they need God to let them see Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). Physically and mentally they’re fine, but spiritually they’re dead and need God to bring them to life (Ephesians 2:1-10). Pray for God to open up their hearts.

**Invite both believers and non-believers to church.** Non-believers can come and hear the Gospel preached, build relationships with Christians, and learn about our faith through classes like Alpha

(<https://willingdon.org/alpha/>). Many self-professing Christians need encouragement to gather as the church as well (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00010-eng.htm>). They need the body of Christ to keep them accountable (Hebrews 3:12-13), serve and be served (1 Corinthians 12), love and be loved (John 15:12), see examples of Christian maturity (Titus 2:1-10), experience Jesus' presence and community through the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16), and more. You can share how being part of the church has helped you grow to love God and others.

**Serve with First Impressions.** God gifts our church with new visitors every week. I really appreciate Pastor Ray and others who keep asking the question, "How can we shepherd these newcomers?" It's not just the job of the people on stage! As Nelson Searcy says, first-time guests won't be judging the church on theological or biblical grounds, because they have no idea about that. They'll judge the church based on the atmosphere and people's friendliness (John 13:35). There are many steps between the parking lot and sanctuary seats to experience welcoming love. We want them to know Jesus loves them way before they even sit down. Check out opportunities here: <https://willingdon.org/first-impressions-volunteer>.

**Disciple younger believers.** People struggle to be with Jesus when they don't know how to pray or read the Bible. You can come alongside them and show them. Pass down what you've learned (2 Timothy 2:2). Answer their questions, encourage them when they doubt, and share what God has done for you. Over time they'll be able to get to Jesus on their own and eventually help others to get to Jesus, too. Parents can also learn how to disciple their children through events such as the iParent Seminar (<https://willingdon.org/events/iparent-seminar/>).



## 7. How does your hunger for Jesus compare to the crowd's?

The crowd stayed with Jesus for three days, even though they ran out of food. Most of us have trouble spending time with Jesus for 15 minutes while reading the Bible or praying because we want to get onto the next task. We struggle to worship God Sunday morning because we're thinking about lunch. We want to spend time with Jesus, but don't want to be inconvenienced.

For many Christians, being with Jesus is worth risking their lives. Take a look at what North Korean Christians are willing to do: [https://youtu.be/R\\_IV8NASv\\_I?si=nJKi2xwBtMekYt7h](https://youtu.be/R_IV8NASv_I?si=nJKi2xwBtMekYt7h). I'm not sharing this to shame anyone, because I struggle with this now and then. (Shhhh, don't tell Vinh!) I think we can be like Jesus' hometown. We get too familiar with Him and forget how amazing He is.

If you realize you've not been taking spending time with Jesus seriously, good news! Jesus wants to come spend time with you (Revelation 3:20). Here are some suggested steps to take:

**Ask for forgiveness.** Jesus gave up His life so you can be forgiven. That shows how much He wants to forgive you! Confess your sins to Him and He'll forgive and clean you (1 John 1:9). I bet you're not the only one in the group that needs to do this. Confess together. There's real power in that.

**Ask Jesus to show you why He's amazing.** Maybe we're too distracted by all the busy/shiny things in our lives. We need God to show us His glory (Exodus 33:18). Ask Him to soften your heart and see Him clearly. Read the Bible and learn what He's done.

**Spend time with others who are hungry for Jesus.** How many of us have picked up fashion trends or phrases from people we spend time with? We're easily influenced by our circles (1 Corinthians 15:33). Use that to get closer to Jesus. Talk about what Jesus is doing or what you're learning from God's Word. Share YouTube videos (<https://youtu.be/mtjMANw2hCA?si>) or podcasts (<https://compelledpodcast.com/episodes/hormoz-shariat>) that leave you in awe of Jesus' love and power. Join Women's Ministry (<https://willingdon.org/women/>), Men's Ministry (<https://willingdon.org/men/>), or UNITE

College and Career (<https://willingdon.org/unite/>). Join the Prayer Summit (<https://willingdon.org/events/prayer-summit/>).

**Take a class to learn more about Jesus.** Here are some resources your group members can take advantage of at Willingdon Church.

UNITE Bible Study	Group Bible study for all skill levels.	<a href="https://willingdon.org/events/unite_bible_study">https://willingdon.org/events/unite_bible_study</a>
Discovery	Learn how to be a follower of Jesus.	<a href="https://willingdon.org/discovery/">https://willingdon.org/discovery/</a>
Willingdon School of the Bible and Ministry	Dive into topics like an intro to the New Testament or how God can use you at work.	<a href="https://willingdon.org/wsbm/spring23/">https://willingdon.org/wsbm/spring23/</a>

## Choose Your Next Step

**What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?**

## Closing Prayer

A closing prayer is an effective way to point people back to our Loving Father as they seek to apply their new learnings throughout the week. Ask group members to share what they sense God calling them to. Pray for each other and commit to continue to do so during the week as people step out in obedience to God's leading.