

Chapter 4
Lesson Plan Enrichment Ideas
Adding Insult to Injury
Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician Woman

Warm-Up

A metaphor is a word picture, using something concrete and familiar to describe something else. Some examples that may be familiar to you: life is a journey, it's raining men, feeling blue, time is a thief, etc. The metaphor is not a direct comparison or meant to be taken literally; rather it conveys common characteristics between the two things being compared.

Discuss what particular characteristics Jesus might have had in mind when he used the metaphor of pets under the table waiting for crumbs. How are the dogs like the woman? How is the master of the house like God? How are the children like God's chosen people? Do you think any of this was meant to insult the Syro-Phoenician woman? Did she seem insulted?

Things to teach for enrichment

1. Jesus commended the Syro-Phoenician woman for her faith, and noted it was her faith-induced response that opened the conduit of healing for her daughter. An unmistakable component to her faith was her humility. Discuss how her words and actions demonstrated humility.

Her humility is especially commendable in view of the fact she was probably financially well-off (Mark used the word "couch" to describe where her daughter lay. This was a luxury item.) Her surprising boldness in approaching Jesus in the first place may indicate she was a woman of influence. Yet she was humble in her interactions with Jesus.

Now read James 4:8-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9. What is essential in our own approach to God? Read Romans 3:21-28. How does this affirm the necessity of humility when it comes to our salvation?

Humility continues to be essential as believers. A part of humility is in being honest about our shortcomings, needs, and limits. We cannot tap into the power of God if we are relying on our own resources. Read Philippians 3:1-11 and 4:12-13. What is Paul getting at? What is the result?

2. The disciples don't seem to recognize Jesus had come for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This was a blatant disregard for what Scripture had laid out as God's plan all along.

In Genesis 12:3, God promised Abraham, the father of His chosen nation, that *all nations* would be blessed through Abraham's seed (see also Galatians 3:14, 29). God

gave His chosen people a calling: they would be a kingdom of priests among *all the peoples* (Exodus 19:5-6), acting as mediators between Gentiles and God. His intent was to use the miracles he performed out in the dessert to reveal Himself to the Gentiles among them (Exodus 34:10). Isaiah prophesied that God's chosen one (Israel in Isaiah's time, the Messiah in the future) would be a light to the nations. He would use his chosen as a channel of blessing to the Gentiles, just as Abraham was promised (Isaiah 42:6). Daniel also prophesied that when the Son of Man came, "all peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him." (Daniel 7:13-14)

Jesus was keenly aware of The Plan. He performed miracles for many Gentiles during his ministry: the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-10), the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, a Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19), a deaf/mute man (Mark 7:31-37) and miraculously fed a gentile crowd of 4,000 (Mark 8:1-9).

Jesus counted the Gentiles among his "sheep" in John 10:14-16: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd." He also told a parable on this: the invited guests (the Jews) shun an invitation to the banquet, so the master invites those from the highways and byways (the Gentiles) to sit at his table (Luke 14:16-24). After entering Jerusalem, Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple, clearing the Gentile Court of their trappings, and quoting Isaiah 56:7: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."

The disciples didn't truly understand the inclusion of Gentiles in God's offer of salvation until Peter was given a vision in Acts 10. Peter relates the message: "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean..." (Acts 10:28) "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." (Acts 10:34-35) Eventually, in Acts 13:44-52, Paul and Barnabas abandon the Jews who reject the truth and concentrate their evangelistic efforts on the Gentiles.

The challenges of joining Jew and Gentile into one unified group remained an issue decades into the new Church. The Jewish Council dealt with some of the issues in a letter to the churches in Acts 15. Paul also addresses the conflict in his letters to the Romans (see Romans 1:16, 2:9-11 and 14:13-15:6), the Ephesians (see Ephesians 2:14-16), and the Philippians (see Philippians 2:1-4).

4. Thirty-some years later Paul found disciples in Tyre, noted in Acts 21:2-5. Was this group a result of the witness of the Syro-Phoenician woman? There is no way of knowing. But it is an interesting possibility.

Use this link to learn more about the setting of the story: Link: http://www.welcometohosanna.com/LIFE_OF_JESUS/030_Ministry10TyreSidon.htm

5. In Mosaic Law the Israelites were given many restrictions on things to avoid. This included food, religious observances, rituals concerning offerings, and health-related

issues. As if 613 laws were not enough, the Pharisees' predecessors composed thousands of additional rules about keeping the Law. Their zeal for remaining "clean," not allowing themselves to be contaminated by the "unclean," became a huge legalistic burden for the people.

Jesus came and redefined clean and unclean. Our uncleanliness is not from an outside source. Our uncleanliness comes from within.

Read what Jesus had to say about clean and unclean traditions in Mark 7:1-13 as well as in Matthew 23:1-36. How had the religious establishment gotten it wrong? Do you see evidence of the same mistake on other issues being made in the American Church today?

6. What significance did bread have in New Testament times? Matthew has grouped several accounts together in his gospel with the common symbol of bread in Matthew 15-16:12. What truths can you pull from these accounts that might shed light on Jesus' use of bread in his metaphor?

7. Jesus loved the Syro-Phoenician woman's faith. Our trust in and belief in God is very important to Him. Read the story of a time when His people refused to trust Him in Numbers 13-14. What punishment did they incur? How were Joshua and Caleb rewarded for determining to trust God? (See Numbers 14:38)

When you think about it, our sin is all about a lack of trust. For example, if we covet, we are not trusting that the goodness or wisdom of God (that He would give us our particular circumstances). Can you think of how other sins are really a reflection of a lack of faith?