

# Underdogs

## “The Canaanite Woman — Rude Awakening”

### Matthew 15 Small Group Plan

Jesus withdraws to the Syrian coast far to the north. Only once before has he left his own land (Matthew 8:28-34). But this is a turning point. And so, from the time he enters Gentile territory until he turns toward Jerusalem and his own cross, he will stay on the fringe, seeking seclusion (v. 21 “withdrew”), becoming an exile, a refugee. Jesus anticipates his death, and he seeks a privacy he has not found in Galilee. He plans to teach his disciples. But even here, in out-of-the-way Tyre, he cannot escape the interruption of human need.

#### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- What do you like to do in your “time off”?
- When we “get away” from our routine, why is it easy to also get away from our core values as well?

#### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

The woman who comes to Jesus is called a “Syrophoenician” by Mark (7:26) and a “Canaanite” by Matthew (15:22). Mark seems to be describing her political background, while Matthew highlights the fact that she is from a race disowned by orthodox Jews. This story must be seen in view of the vast differences that exist between her and Jesus. Her faith shines brightly as she overcomes imposing barriers.

#### **— THE UNFAMILIAR BARRIER —**

##### **Matthew 15:21-22**

<sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

- This woman might have heard about Jesus, but she didn’t know him. How would you describe the difficulty of talking to someone you don’t know?
- Why do we like to stay around people who are similar to us?
- Why was she willing to move beyond her comfort zone?

## — THE RACIAL BARRIER —

**Matthew 15:23-24**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” <sup>24</sup> He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

- Why does Jesus give her the typical Jewish response?
- What kind of insult does it take to make your humility vanish?

## — THE PRIDE BARRIER —

**Matthew 15:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

<sup>26</sup> He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” <sup>27</sup> “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

- How would you describe her humility? Where do you see it working in her life?
- What does she teach us about taking our needs to God (cf. Hebrews 4:15-16)?

## — THE FAITH BARRIER —

**Matthew 15:28**

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

- As the Gospel of Mark tells the story, “She went home and found her daughter ... and the demon gone.”
- After traveling down so many blind alleys in the past, what might she have been thinking as she heard Jesus promise and traveled home?
- What is trusting faith? How does it show itself? What does it do?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- What major lessons do we learn from this woman?
- What major lessons do we learn from Jesus?
- Why is it important to be persistent?
- Why is it important to learn to wait?
- In the presence of “needy” people are you more like Jesus or the disciples?
- Close by asking God for a greater understanding of His compassion.