

# **A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus**

## **The Bold Woman**

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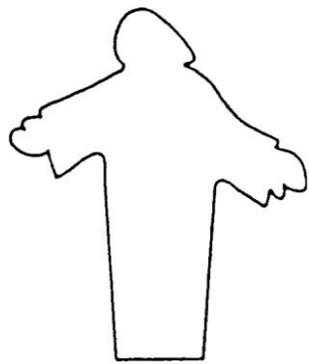
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## **THE BOLD WOMAN ... MATERIALS**

- small wicker basket to hold:
  - wooden Jesus figure
  - wooden woman figure



Jesus



Woman

## THE BOLD WOMAN ... MARK 7:24-30

### ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story basket from the shelf and return to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place Jesus to one side of the story telling area.

Move Jesus to the center of the story telling area.

Place the woman to the other side of the story telling area.

Place the woman next to Jesus.

Place your hand on the woman as you speak of her.

Touch the woman again. Then touch Jesus.

Rest your hand on Jesus as you speak these words.

Using a strong, soft voice speak the woman's reply as you touch her.

### WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to this story?

Jesus had just come to Tyre. It was a place where there were very few Jewish people.

He went to a house there and didn't want anyone to know he was there. But he couldn't keep it a secret.

There was a woman who had a daughter who was very sick.

As soon as she heard that Jesus was in Tyre she came to him and fell at his feet.

The woman was a Greek, a Gentile. A Gentile is someone who did not follow the Jewish faith.

The woman begged Jesus to make her daughter well.

Jesus said, "First I must feed the children," meaning the children of Israel, or Jewish people. He added, "It isn't right to take away their food and feed it to dogs." Often Jewish people called Gentile people 'dogs'.

The woman answered him, "Lord even dogs eat the crumbs that the children drop from the table."

Turn Jesus to face the woman.

Jesus looked at her and said, "For such an answer, you may go. Your daughter is well."

Move the woman away from Jesus, back in the direction from which she came.

The woman hurried home and found her daughter lying on the bed, her sickness gone.

### **WONDERING QUESTIONS**

I wonder why Jesus didn't want to be seen?

I wonder why Jesus didn't want to heal the woman's daughter?

I wonder how the woman felt when she talked back to Jesus?

I wonder how Jesus felt after he healed the woman's daughter?

Place all the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Dismiss the children when everyone has had a chance to choose his/her work.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's begin.

## THE BOLD WOMAN ..... TEACHER HELPS

There are many interesting points in this short story. But one of the most interesting is where it is placed in the Bible. Remember that these stories didn't necessarily happen in the order they are given in the scriptures. The Bible was compiled by groups of people hundreds of years after Jesus lived. So the placing of this story is very significant. Jesus had just left a group of faithful Jewish people where he had been talking about clean and unclean things. Basically Jesus had been telling them that the laws about eating unclean food and touching unclean things were getting too much attention. He reminded them that it didn't really matter what went into someone, but what came out of them. The Contemporary English Version gives us the following in the last few verses before this story in Mark 7:20-23.

"Then Jesus said: What comes from your heart is what makes you unclean. Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride and foolishness. All of these come from your heart, and they are what make you unfit to worship God."

Then comes the story we will learn today: Jesus had left the Jewish area of Gennesaret and was traveling into the Gentile area of Tyre. He obviously had friends there, because he went immediately to a house. The text tells us that Jesus wanted to keep his presence a secret. But he had become too well known to make that happen.

Into our story comes the bold, assertive and gutsy lady with no name. She had heard what Jesus could do and she came with a single-minded purpose. She had a daughter who was ill, or possessed with demons. (I have used the term "sick" for the story because it's one the children understand and is also probably the explanation for "possessed by demons".) In Jesus time, if a person was ill, especially if it was a chronic illness, the person was considered possessed by a demon. Usually the cause of demon possession was believed to be a sin either the parent or child had committed. That's why Jesus often forgave sins in the healing process. He knew that only in their belief of sins forgiven could people accept healing.

The woman in our story today seemed uninterested in the cause of the illness. She just wanted her daughter well. So she knelt down at Jesus feet and begged him to heal her child. Jesus response is hard for us to read, and must have been harder for the mother to hear. Jesus told her that he had not really come for people like her, but for the children, meaning the children of Israel. He told her it wouldn't be right to take what was meant for them and give it to the dogs, a common Jewish term for Gentiles.

Here we have Jesus caught in the very trap he had spoken of in the earlier passage. Jesus had grown up as a Jewish man. He brought with him all the prejudices that were part of that upbringing, as we all do. In fact, those prejudices were so much a part of him that he probably didn't even realize he was insulting the woman or doing anything wrong. And if the woman had just left without a word, he may not have learned to live what he had just preached to the gathered crowd and disciples earlier.

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But the woman didn't keep quiet and she didn't go away. She was trying to save the life of her child, and no woman can easily be put off from that task. Instead she responded to Jesus by reminding him that the dogs which waited under the table ate the crumbs the children dropped. The comment is a smart comeback, perhaps a "smart-aleck" comeback. But it did two things: First it got Jesus attention. Second it caused him to consider what he had just said. We can almost imagine Jesus mind dealing with what she had put before him. He, who had been telling others about harsh words that come out of their mouths being unclean had just done the same to this woman who only wanted her daughter well again. I have used the Mark text because I love Jesus reply here. "For such a reply", he told her, "you may go; the demon has left your daughter." He didn't tell her that her daughter was healed because her faith was great. He told her that her daughter was healed because of the reply she gave him. Obviously her faith was great. The woman came believing that Jesus could heal the child, even at a distance. But her courage was even greater.

Like so many of the stories of women in the Bible, we don't know this woman's name, or her daughter's name. But her story has been kept in two gospels, Mark and Matthew. It is a story to remind us to bring our needs to Jesus, to continue to pray even when it seems we are turned away. It is a story to remind us of how strong is the love of a mother for her children. And finally, it is a story to remind us that Jesus was fully human and carried with him much of his upbringing. His own spiritual journey took him along a path to grow beyond those prejudices.

The first wondering question asks why Jesus didn't want to be seen. No doubt Jesus got tired. The children often seem very sensitive to this. Also, some more introverted children are quick to understand how much Jesus just wanted to be alone sometimes.

The second question wonders why Jesus didn't want to heal the woman's daughter. This will be interesting! Often children will rationalize when an adult does something that is basically "wrong" in their understanding of how adults should behave. That's why children usually rationalize abusive behavior. Somehow they make it someone else's fault, like their own. Expect a little of that with this question. They may say Jesus was just too tired or was sick. See where the conversation goes.

The last two questions are "feeling questions". First we wonder how the woman felt when she talked back to Jesus. The universal response will be that she was a little afraid. But on the heels of that may come that she felt good or strong. The last question wonders how Jesus felt after he healed the child. Here the universal response is "good." But don't be surprised if you get an explanation with that!

## **SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

Read Mark 7:20-23. Remind the students that *this* is what comes just before today's story in the Bible. What do you think Jesus was saying in this passage? Does that seem to fit what happened in today's story?

Have you ever felt "not good enough" for something? What was it and how did you handle that?

Why do you think Jesus refused at first to heal the daughter of the Gentile woman? Remember that Jesus was Jewish and had been raised in a time when Jews believed Gentiles were unclean.

Jesus response to the woman is interesting. Why didn't he say anything about her faith?