

40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS

SESSION 5 | DISCOVERING FAITH WHEN YOU ARE UNWANTED OR AN OUTSIDER

MATTHEW 15:21-28 | THE CANAANITE WOMAN

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28

Background: Matthew 15

Key Verse: v.28

Supporting Scripture(s): Gen 32:26,
Matt 10:5-15, Romans 1:16-17

INTRODUCTION

One of the great evils of society has been the separation of human beings into categories: those who are desirable and those who are not. The Pharisees argued with Jesus about cleanliness and defilement, seeing themselves as the “cream of the crop”—model Jews in a Jewish society. As a result, their theology shifted, placing their works above relationship with the Messiah. Like the Pharisees of old, there are many in our culture who believe that they are connected to Christ via their cultural heritage, traditions, and nationalism. In their pride, they attach Christ to their prejudice. However it is faith that pleases God and creates a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

In this session, we encounter a woman who would have been considered the absolute lowest on the societal totem pole. Women were not granted the full societal rights and privileges as men, and the fact that she was a Gentile made matters worse in her attempt to approach a Jewish rabbi named Jesus. She was a foreigner, minority, woman, living within a patriarchal, nationalistic, and xenophobic system. She serves as an example of faith even when considered an outsider.

LET'S DISCOVER!

_____ the silence. v.23a

“But he did not answer her a word...” v.23

God is often silent towards our requests. Though silent or unresponsive to our requests, it does not mean that He has not heard us. We ignore the silence and continue our press towards Him.

_____ the obstacles. v.23b

“...And his disciples came and begged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out after us.'” v.23

“He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” v.24

There are two types of obstacles at play here:

1. People: Whether misinformed or hostile, other people can act as deterrents to your breakthrough (i.e., the disciples in v.23). The irritation of the disciples showed that she would not withdraw even in their desire to deny her access.

2. Religious tradition (not the Biblical principles behind them): Tradition can become an obstacle when seeking the Lord. Jesus Himself asserted that the blessings he brought were to come first to Israel then the Gentiles (v.24,26). He even used the cultural terminology of the day for Gentiles: Dogs (Ouch!).

_____ **in asking again. v.25**

"But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.'" v.25

The Canaanite woman persisted by repeating her appeal and prostrating herself at Jesus' Feet. Jesus never rebuked her for asking.

_____ **with the Lord. v.27**

She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.'" v.27

She wouldn't back down! As she believed him to be Messiah, she wittily flipped a derogatory remark into a declaration of faith. She stood on the promised blessings that surrounded His coming, which would be extended to the nations of the world. She became like Jacob when he wrestled with God: "I will not let you go until you bless me." (Gen 32:26) Jesus commends her for her faith and grants her request.

CONCLUSION



The Canaanite woman is placed in scripture by Matthew as an example of the faith Christ sought from His disciples. Her actions are in direct contrast to the faithless Pharisees. While the Pharisees, who assumed right standing with God by their works and cultural practices, rejected their Messiah, it was the Gentile "dogs" (outsiders in their eyes) that approached Jesus in faith and acknowledged Him for who He was. He tested her resolve by ignoring, and seemingly denying her appeal. The woman's faith was so strong that she even acknowledged the distinction between Jew and Gentile, but recognized that His promised coming also brought blessing to her: "Even your residual blessings are sufficient enough to break the stronghold of demonic power oppressing my daughter." His eventual death and resurrection brought her full rights and privileges of the Kingdom of God.

“

God is looking for those who will trust Him

”

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION

1. Describe a time when God was silent in your life.

How did it feel? _____

How did you handle it? _____

2. What have been some of the greatest obstacles to your faith? How did you overcome them?

3. When was the last time you truly felt desperate for God to move in your life?

Have you had to wrestle with God for anything?



APPLICATION

- Search the promises of God from scripture (e.g., "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him... 2 Corinthians 1:20)
 - Find 7 that are applicable to your situation.
 - Post them around your house in strategic locations as reminders to you.

“

To trust God in
the light
is nothing,
but to
trust Him in
the dark -
that is faith.

C.H. SPURGEON



40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS

WEEK 5 | DAYS 29-35

Daily Prayer Journal

The Psalms show us how to pray and when to pray—when tired, angry frustrated, lonely forsaken, overwhelmed as well as when joyous, full of praise, thankful, or happy. Spending time with a Psalm each day will draw you into an open and honest dialog with God.

Read slowly and repeatedly, and write your thoughts and images that come mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource “*Suggested Weekly Discovery Exercises*” on page 14 for other ideas to experiment as you learn to pray scripture in all its raw and “subversive” emotion and glory.

WHAT ARE SOME

“TREASURES IN THE DARK”

YOU HAVE FOUND DURING
THIS SEASON OF LIFE?

ISAIAH 45:3

Isaiah 45:3 says, “*I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.*” God lets a pagan king know that he has treasures in darkness and riches (hoards) in secret places, so that God’s name may be glorified.

There lies in each of us the capacity for great faith, which God wants to nurture and grow. God knows in what area your faith needs to grow, and he will use whatever means necessary to make that happen. As a loving father, he will use whatever means necessary to draw out the faith that already exists in you, but has been placed in other things. It is his desire to transfer that faith to Him. God's tool chest is bountiful: pain and suffering, disappointments and discouragement, and the trials of others you love. Though difficult, these challenges become invitations! Our faith grows in proportion to the challenge we face and the trust we place in our God. So, the greater the difficulty or obstacle to overcome, the greater the opportunities to watch God do “Even Greater Things.”

This 40-day journey will be ground-breaking for Golden Gate. First, this is our first all-digital 40-day spiritual growth campaign, and second, the first campaign designed, written, and produced by our own Golden Gate members.

We have two primary goals for this 40-day journey together:

1. Growing faith in tough (dark) times.
2. Learning to pray by reading the Psalms.

These two goals can be accomplished by entering into and following through on three commitments.

1. Spending time with God using the Daily Devotional Journal. Each day you will dive into the prayer book of the Bible.
2. Encountering God in his word with others. A weekly Bible study taught by some great guest teachers will enlighten and offer hope to you and your friends who journey with you.
3. Adoring God in weekly corporate worship. Every Sunday at 10:15 a.m., join the Golden Gate family as we seek to bring pleasure to God in praise, prayer and preaching.

How to Use the 40 DOD Weekly Resources

VIDEO LESSONS

- Each week, a video lesson will be released along with a downloadable lesson guide. Use the guide to follow along, jotting down the key points of the lesson. You may watch the lesson individually, with your discovery partner, or with a group. Always take the opportunity to invite someone new into your study: friends, family, co-workers, etc.
- Set a weekly time to meet with your partner or group and answer the reflection questions.
- Pray together and challenge one another to exercise the application points listed in the guide.
- Join in on the fellowship and discussion for our ***Sunday Chat & Chew at 11:30am CST*** on ZOOM where we will allow open forum and discussion along with other fun and challenging activities.

WEEKEND SERMON NOTES

- Take notes of the weekly sermons. There is space provided with your weekly lesson to take sermon notes as well. Write any questions, immediate thoughts and comments from what you hear.
- You are welcome to join in the after church ***“Chat & Chew”*** on Zoom to engage with others on the sermon for the day and other topics related to the theme for the week.

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

- The journal offers a daily walk through the “Prayer Book” of the Bible. Each day, a passage from the Psalms based on the theme for the week allows you to absorb the prayer itself and offer it back to God.
- The Psalms show us how to pray and when to pray – when tired, angry, frustrated, lonely, forsaken, or overwhelmed, as well as when joyous, full of praise, thankful, or happy. Spending time with a psalm each day will draw you into an open and honest dialog with God. Read slowly and repeatedly. Write the thoughts and images that come to mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource *“Suggested Weekly Discovery Exercises”* on page 14 for other ideas to experiment as you learn to pray scripture in all their raw and “subversive” emotion and glory.

LEANING IN

Start and end your week every Monday and Friday at 6:00 a.m. with a word of encouragement highlighting the theme for the week. Several guests have been invited to share God’s word on Golden Gate’s FB Live and Free Conference call. Invite someone to join in with you as well.

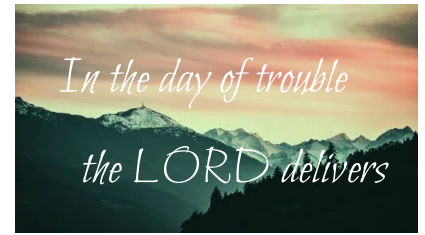
SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAG

#GG40Days2021

Please follow us on social media: [@goldengatembc](#) and post your discoveries with [#GG40Days2021](#)

DAY 29

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.



PSALM 41

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.

Psalm 41 (ESV)

Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him; the Lord protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health. As for me, I said, "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?" And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, "A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies." Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. But you, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

DAY 30

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.



PSALM 8

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.

Psalm 8 (ESV)

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED. YOU BELIEVE IN GOD; BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.

John 14:1

DAY 31

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 86:1-7

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

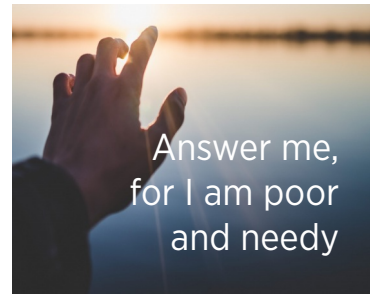
PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 86:1-7 (ESV)

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.



DAY 32

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 86:8-10

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

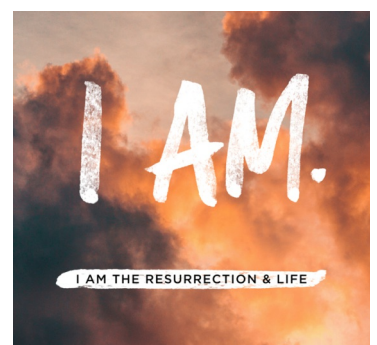
Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 86:8-10 (ESV)

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.



DAY 33

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 86:11-13

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 86:11-13 (ESV)

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.



DAY 34

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 86:14-17

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 86:14-17 (ESV)

O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.



DAY 35

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 67

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.

Let the nations
be glad and
SING FOR JOY

Psalm 67 (ESV)

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah* that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah* Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!



MY PEACE
I GIVE TO YOU

SUGGESTED WEEKLY DISCOVERY EXERCISES

In order to encourage you to truly experience the Psalms and make them your own, complete one of the following exercises for each weekly lesson in this study. These aren't designed to create busywork, but are to stretch you spiritually. When you finish, report back to your partner or group how the exercise worked for you. Ideally, you'll vary the exercises from lesson to lesson to allow the psalms to become part of you in new ways.

- 1. Pray a Psalm.** Select one of the psalms along the theme of the lesson. Then, using the ideas and as many of the words as seem to fit your situation, pray that prayer to God, inserting your own struggles and needs within the prayer. Go through the entire psalm, paraphrasing it as you pray it sincerely to God. Many people have exercised this kind of prayer – they pray through every Scripture passage they read. Why don't you start this practice with one of the Psalms?
- 2. Meditate on a Psalm.** To meditate means to think deeply about something and mull it over in your mind over a period of time. You might read it several times in different translations. Say it over to yourself to feel the words on your lips. Write it out longhand. Consider the meaning of each important word. Memorization is another exercise, but memorizing is a good way to meditate on a verse or a passage.
- 3. Read a Psalm to a Shut-in.** People who are home-bound or in hospitals, nursing homes, jails, etc. need encouragement. As you exercise, read a psalm from this week's theme to a shut-in. If you read more than one, you'll be doubly blessed!
- 4. Paraphrase a Psalm.** Write out a paraphrase of the psalm of your choosing in your own words. Try to find modern-day synonyms and thoughts that correspond to the thoughts in the psalm. Don't be afraid to be creative.
- 5. Write Your Own Psalm.** Write your own psalm based on the theme of this lesson. You're entirely free in how you do this. Some approaches include:
 - Write in the style of Hebrew poetry using thought parallelism and imagery. This will be fun, though you may find it challenging. Consult my Introduction to Psalms in the section on Hebrew Poetry before beginning.
 - Write a psalm with lines that rhyme like traditional Western poetry.
 - Write a psalm in free verse, not bothering to make the lines rhyme. Just express yourself to God.
 - Write a psalm in Haiku style.
 - Write a psalm in any style you wish. The idea here is to learn to express yourself to God more freely.
- 6. Sing a Psalm.** Find a song, hymn, or praise chorus that relates to the theme of this chapter – and that is based on a psalm. Then sing it or lead it for your group. If you like, write your own song, or find a melody that you can use to sing the words of the song from a translation you prefer. Be creative here.
- 7. Prepare a Liturgy, Responsive Reading, or Choral Reading from a Psalm.** Psalms are at the core of the liturgy of Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican branches of the Church. Explore adapting a psalm for public worship. You might enjoy writing the script for a choral reading of a psalm or portion of a psalm creating parts for 3 or 4 readers. Then try it out during a worship service or in your small group or class.
- 8. Teach or Preach a Psalm.** It's hard to prepare a message for people without really getting inside the text. Teach a psalm to a class of children, youth, or adults, or preach a psalm to your congregation.
- 9. Memorize a Psalm.** "My mind is too old to memorize!" Hogwash! Try it, but perhaps start with a short psalm, or one you've already partially memorized. It's work, but you can do it and you'll find it very spiritually enriching. In ancient days many Hebrew boys memorized the entire Psalter. **In his 90s, Billy Graham put it this way: "Over the years I've memorized many passages from the Bible, and I'm especially thankful now that I did this. I wish we gave more attention to Bible memorization in our churches today."**¹

Memorize one psalm that relates to the theme of the lesson.

¹ Billy Graham in "Quotation Marks," *Christianity Today*, June 2007, p.19.