

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MATTHEW 14-15

If you grew up in the 60s you probably saw an episode or two of the sitcom, “*My Three Sons*.” Fred McMurray played the father. His three sons were Robbie, and Chip, and Ernie Douglas. And Uncle Charley was always part of the action. The show ran for 12 years – from 1960-1972.

Another version of “*My Three Sons*” ran in ancient Israel during the first century. When Herod the Great died his kingdom was split among his three sons...

**Archelaus** ruled over Judea and Jerusalem. He proved so cruel and ineffective the Romans banished him and set up a procurator, or governor, in his place.

**Phillip** was given the land north and east of the Sea of Galilee – the Golan.

While **Antipas** ruled over Galilee and Perea. This threw Antipas headfirst into conflict with Jesus and John. Perea was east of the Jordan, parallel to Jerusalem, where John was baptizing – and the Galilee, served as headquarters for Jesus.

Sadly, Herod Antipas was a seedy, immoral fellow. His family life resembled a TV soap opera. It was more like “*Days of Our Lives*” than “*My Three Sons*.”

On a trip to Rome Antipas became infatuated with his niece and sister-in-law, Herodias. Their adultery culminated when she divorced Antipas’ brother, Phillip, and married Antipas. Herod Antipas, a Jewish king, had flaunted God’s Law.

When the pastor at their wedding ceremony asked the question, “If anyone objects to this union let him speak now or forever hold his peace?” John the Baptist spoke up. He exposed the king’s sin, and angered the newlyweds.

Verse 1 “At that time Herod the tetrarch...”

Herod the Great was called a “*Monarch*.” Antipas and Phillip were each “*Tetrarchs*” or “*Quarter Rulers*.” And Archelaus was called an “*Ethnarch*.”

All these “narchs” sound like narcotics officers, but they were actually rulers.

Antipas and Philip were each given a quarter of Herod’s kingdom. Their older brother, Archelaus, was given a half until it was taken away by the Romans... In Roman rank *Monarch* was tops. *Tetrarch* was lowest. *Ethnarch* was in between.

Herod Antipas built the city of Tiberias on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Because Jesus and John ministered in his provinces, he is the ruler most often mentioned in the Gospels. In Luke 13 Jesus calls him “that fox.” Antipas was the Herod who tried Jesus after His arrest, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Antipas “heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” Herod was paranoid. He was suffering from a guilty conscience.

It’s been said, “A bad conscience has a good memory.”

God had used John the Baptist to speak to Herod - yet Herod silenced God’s voice by killing John. Verses 1-2 show

Herod's thoroughly pagan worldview. Jews didn't believe in reincarnation, but Herod assumes Jesus is John back from the dead - seeking revenge. Herod's paranoia was grounded in superstition.

Ironically, Herod lived in luxury and ease, yet his guilty conscience trapped him in fear and worry. A conscience has been defined as "The thing that hurts when everything else feels good." Herod's guilty conscience made him miserable. In the next 10 verses Matthew provides a flashback. He reveals the cause of Herod's guilty conscience.

"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." John didn't mince words. A Jewish leader had done an immoral deed and John *calls him on the carpet*. In retaliation the image-conscious queen wants to *sweep John under the rug*. He's arrested and incarcerated.

"And although (Herod) wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet." Herod was a politician. The king was acutely aware of public opinion - and the multitude of Jews loved John.

But there was more to it than just politics. Herod had a respect for John.

Mark 6:20 tells us, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." John had purity and courage – the traits Herod lacked.

John's only concern was pleasing God. And for a politician who's every decision was based on the poll numbers, John was a breath of fresh air. Herod listened.

Verse 6, **"But when Herod's birthday was celebrated..."**

In Kathy's family, birthdays were always a very, big deal. In our family they were recognized, but it wasn't the same. It's been a marital adjustment I've had to make.

But in defense of my family the Bible isn't big on birthdays either. In fact, there are only two birthdays mentioned in the Bible... Here and in Genesis 40:20, the pharaoh's birthday. And in both cases someone ends up decapitated.

Evidently Herod's wife, Herodias, arranged for Herod a special birthday present. We're told, **"the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod."**

Her name was Salome. Long legs - tiny waist - hourglass figure - she was young, sexy, and beautiful. And she had been taking belly dancing lessons.

This was a stag party. The wine had been flowing for hours. The crowd started shouting for a little *"male entertainment."* Usually this kind of seductive dance was performed by a prostitute or professional dancer. Not often did a lady of standing, and a member of the royal court, stoop to perform such a degrading deed.

And Herod was so impressed with Salome's dance... verse 7 **"Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask."** Mark tells us Herod qualifies his offer, **"Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my**

kingdom."

"So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter." Herodias had manipulated the whole event.

It's sad when a mom teaches her own daughter the art of seduction and manipulation. This is not the way for a young woman to try and *get ahead*.

"And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her." Based on Mark's qualifier, Herod had an out. He had limited his offer to "up to half his kingdom."

He could've told Salome that he valued John far more than half his kingdom.

Instead, all Herod could think of was his pride and how he would be perceived. The opinions of his guest were more valuable than the life of a man of God.

"So he sent and had John beheaded in prison."

How ironic, John *lost his head* so Herod could *save face*. And sadly, Herod's decision gets repeated everyday. At work, at school, in the Halls of Congress - conscience and truth are shoved aside to please people – to enhance someone's power among their peers. People still try to *get ahead*.

In 39 AD God served justice. Herod and Herodias were accused of treason against Rome. They were stripped of their wealth and power - and banished to Spain. In the end the man who shunned God to get ahead, ended up losing all.

Verse 11 “And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.” Lust, and power, and ego always come at a high price.

“Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it...” If Herod had buried his pride the disciples wouldn't have had to bury John.

And notice what John's disciples do with their pain and confusion. What we should do when we're hurt and reeling... “And (they) went and told Jesus.”

“When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities.” Luke 9:10 says they sailed NE toward the fishing village of Bethsaida.

On a clear day you can see across the Sea of Galilee. Folks could easily have seen the disciples' boat. They were able to follow on foot along the shoreline.

“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.” The word translated “compassion” is from the Greek word “viscera” or “visceral.” It speaks of “deep emotions.” The OKJ uses the phrase “bowels of compassion.” Jesus felt for the multitudes in His gut.

“When it was evening (the sun was setting), His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” There's not a Waffle House or McDonalds for miles. Send the hungry crowd

home before it's too late.

John 6 tells us this event took place near Passover - the sun sets in Israel in the springtime around 6:00 pm. It must've been around 4:00 in the afternoon.

“But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” They had no rations - certainly not enough to feed 5000 families. “And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.”

Again the Gospel of John fills in the details. One little boy had packed a lunch - some fish and chips - five hand-size loaves of bread, and two sardine-size fish.

Andrew found the boy and brought his brown bag to Jesus.

“(Jesus) said, “Bring them here to Me.”

Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.”

A miracle of multiplication took place.

Jesus altered the molecular structure of the bread and fish so that each time He broke off a piece it added to the volume. The little boy's bag refused to empty.

And notice what Jesus did to the bread and fish – it's exactly what he wants to do with you and me. Here's the Master's four-fold work in our lives...

First, He **takes** us out of the world, forgives us, and makes us His own.



Second, He **blesse**s us with new life, and grants us God's favor and favors.

Finally, He **give**s us. He uses you to meet the spiritual hunger of folks nearby.

All that we like, we want, we relish – but notice in between the *blessing* and the *giving*, He **break**s us. He humbles us and reminds us what we are without Him.

Spiritually speaking we're a puny, powerless brown bag lunch.

To be given away we have to be broken. If not, we won't be digestible. Folks we want to serve will choke on our haughtiness. We'll cause spiritual indigestion.

Before we're broken we're hard, insensitive, self-sufficient, full of ourselves...

And when a proud person tries to serve God, people will choke on his arrogance. They can't swallow him. *That's why there are no shortcuts...*

*If we want to be used by God you first have to be broken!*

Verse 20 “**So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.**” 5000 families could've been 20,000 mouths.

Notice too, the 12 baskets of leftovers. There was a take home box for each of the 12 tribes of Israel – or more probably for each of the 12 weak-faith apostles.



Jesus was proving to them and us it doesn't matter **how little we are** or **how little we've got** - if we give Jesus our *all*, there's no limit to what He can do.

There's no need He can't meet - no work He can't do! The *increase* and *impact* can exceed our wildest dreams when we give our all to Jesus.

Verse 22 **“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.”** Notice, Jesus **“made”** His disciples set sail – the word implies *“a strong urging”*. The thrill of the multiplication had captivated them. They didn't want to leave the moment.

**“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.”** This was Jesus' habit to retreat from time to time, and pray. This would be a good habit for us.

**“But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.”** A northeasterly swept down from the Golan - hit the warm air over the lake - and a sudden storm rocked the boat with churning waves.

The disciples had launched from the northern-eastern tip of the lake and were sailing for Genesaret - which was south of Capernaum on the western shore.

So here was the plan – they were sailing from the northeastern tip to the lake to its northwestern shore. It should've been a short voyage, but the storm pushed the boat to the center of the Lake. They were four miles south of their

destination.

And understand the disciples are in trouble - not because they were disobedient to Jesus. If they'd disobeyed they'd probably be in a safe, dry house somewhere.

They encounter the storm – and all its difficulty - because they obeyed the Lord.

Throughout its history the Church has compared itself to this little boat of the disciples. The word "nave" is an old English word which referred to the main part of the church building - the sanctuary. But it is from a Latin word which means "ship".

The Church is like this little ship.

Obedience to God sends it in a direction that's contrary to the prevailing moods and values of the world. Inevitably, followers of Jesus will encounter rough seas.

“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.” The fourth watch was around 3:00 AM. They'd been floundering for 8 hours.

“And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.” I'm sure they weren't expecting anyone to walk out on the water. It shocked the disciples.

“But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." When we're in trouble, Jesus always comes to us, but often in ways we don't expect. We think the Lord is **NO-WHERE** - then suddenly He's **NOW-HERE**.

Here's good news – sudden storms are as much a part of

the Christian life as supernatural surprises. Be on the look-out for both. When a storm arises, don't panic – look for Jesus walking on the water. He comes, bringing good cheer.

And notice, Jesus calms *the storm in the boat* before he calms *the storm on the sea*. He calms both. But if you understand the purpose of the storm, you realize Jesus wants to bring *peace to our hearts* before he brings *peace to our lives*.

In verse 28 Peter asks to do some supernatural surfing...  
“And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

What a bold request. Peter is not afraid. For Peter following Jesus wasn't just dutiful living, but an opportunity for new adventure. “So (Jesus) said, “Come.”

“And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.” He's doing fine! He's staying above the waves... until... “But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink...”

Peter did fine as long as his focus was on Jesus, but the moment he got his eyes off Jesus, he had the buoyancy of a brick. Floatation depends on focus.

The lesson is clear... If we want to live a supernatural life – *stay happy when life gets nappy* - keep your eyes on Jesus. Deal with unpleasant circumstances responsibly, but keep your focus on Jesus and you'll stay above the waves.

Often Peter gets a black eye for this episode, but I admire him. He's the only disciple who got out of the boat. Most

Christians sit back and enjoy the safety of the boat without ever risking anything for Jesus. They're afraid to get wet.

Hey, you can't walk on water if you stay in the boat!

And when Peter sinks, He knows what to do. **“He cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"** Jesus was there to rescue him.

Extra-biblical writings refer to Peter as **“the giant.”** Pete was a big man.

Which meant Jesus must've also been a strong person. He grabbed Peter with one hand and curled him into the boat. Jesus was a carpenter before the days of electric nail guns and power saws. Jesus must've been a buff, muscular guy.

Remember, Jesus always rescues faith-challenged swimmers - but for me, I'd rather surf, then sink - than play it safe, and spend my whole life in the boat.

**“And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.”** Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, **"Truly You are the Son of God."**

**When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.”**

Jesus **sends** His disciples into the storm - **prays** for them during the storm - **joins** them in the midst of the storm – finally, **saves** them from the storm...

And He does the same with us. His methods of discipleship haven't changed.

Notice Jesus docks the boat in Gennesaret.

One of my favorite places to stay in the Galilee is a hotel at Ginnosar – that’s the modern name for Gennesaret. It’s where the Jesus Boat is on display.

“And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region (the western shore of the lake was the most populated area), brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.”

Numbers 15:38 tells us every Jewish male wore tassels on the border on his garment. A blue thread was woven into the tassel. The blue stood for heaven.

When folks touched Jesus’ tassel they were touching the power of heaven. Heaven had come in healing power. If you want heaven come to Jesus.

Chapter 15, “Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?”

These were not serious seekers. They were theological hit-men. They were sent to ensnare Jesus, find fault in His teaching, and label Him a blasphemer.

And here was their specific beef – “For (your disciples) do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” The Jewish rabbis taught that in addition to the Mosaic Law, God gave further instructions that Moses didn’t write down, but passed on orally.

They believed these traditions were the key to correctly

interpreting the Law.

By the end of second century AD this oral tradition was recorded and codified in a book called "*The Mishnah*." To some rabbis living at the time of Jesus this oral Law was as important - if not more so - than the written Law of Moses.

And in *The Mishnah* 35 pages were devoted to the proper washing of hands. The Jews believed external washing was necessary for spiritual purity.

Some rabbis taught that a demon named Shibna would come and sit on a man's hands while he was asleep. If the next day he ate without washing - the demon could enter into the man through his food and take control of his life.

The rabbis had rules governing how and when to wash.

The story is told of a rabbi who almost died of thirst. While in a Roman prison he spent all his water rations on ritual washings, and had nothing to drink.

At Jerusalem's Wailing Wall today, there's a wash basin and a spigot by the entrance, where you can wash your hands before entering the holy area.

For Jews at the time of Jesus ceremonial washing was the way to heaven, and the Jewish rabbis were upset over reports that Jesus didn't follow their traditions.

Verse 3 "(Jesus) answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" Tradition was supposedly the key to keeping the Law. One rabbi referred to the Oral Traditions as "A fence around the Law." But Jesus saw it as a loophole to avoid the



Law's intention.

He gives an example, "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' *Kids pay attention.* These are strong exhortations from God straight from His Law.

"But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" - then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." The Law's intent was for children to honor their parents, but Jesus brings up "The Law of Corban." This was a familiar Jewish tradition...

"Corban" means "gift of God." And here's how the Law worked... If a child knew his parents were in trouble and were coming for financial assistance, he could pronounce all his household goods were "corban," or given to the Temple.

They remained in his possession, but he couldn't sell them or give them away for technically they belonged to the Temple. It was a scam to keep a family from doing their duty and caring for their parents. They could turn down their poor parents, and feel like they were pleasing God. This was just one example...

Rather than a *fence* around the Law, their traditions were a *farce*.

And Jesus tells them, verse 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying (He quotes Isaiah 29:13.): 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they



worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Here's a danger that should concern Christians of every generation.

Often tradition gets mistaken for truth. The doctrines of men get passed off as commandments of God... Hey, tradition might not be bad. It might serve and help for a season, but a tradition should never be elevated to the status of Scripture.

Traditions eventually run their course, and outlast their usefulness, and when a tradition becomes a hindrance to faith it needs to be kicked out on its ear.

Verse 10 "When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." One commentator calls verse 11 the most revolutionary passed in the New Testament... at least in Jewish eyes.

Dietary Laws and outward washings were central to the religion of Judaism. And Jesus is nullifying the importance of what was all-important to the Jews.

Jesus is saying that as far as God is concerned, "At the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart." The purity He desires doesn't originate *on your plate* or *your hands* - but *in your heart*. Righteousness isn't an *appetizer*, it's an *attitude*.

True purity is *inward* not *outward*. It works from the inside out, not outside in.

"Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this

saying?" In other words, "Jesus, do you realize you're not being politically correct? You've offended the Pharisees."

Every pastor faces this dilemma... *"Do you know you offended someone?"*

I hope you know it's not my desire to be deliberately offensive to anyone. I'm not on the attack. I love people. But there are beliefs and behaviors that quite frankly, offend God - and if I don't speak out against them - I'll offend Him.

And as much as I love you, *I would rather offend you than offend God.*

Jesus answers them in verse 13. He states His opinion of the Pharisees. **"Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone."**

Human teachings and traditions will not stand. They'll eventually be uprooted. Only the commandments of God are eternal. They alone pass the test of time.

**"(The Pharisees) are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."** Follow a man-made system – even a path of religion - and you're headed for a wipe-out. Only God's words and ways last forever.

It reminds me of the two airline pilots who entered the cockpit wearing dark glasses - guided by a seeing-eye dog. One pilot used a cane to tap his way.

The passengers laughed sensing a joke.

As the plane started its take-off a few of the passengers got nervous. The plane was heading straight for the water at the end of the runway. Just before it ploughed into the lake panicked screams filled the cabin. At that moment the plane

lifted-off.

The passengers relaxed... But in the cockpit one of the blind pilots said to the other, "You know, one day they'll scream too late and we're all going to die."

How's that for the blind leading the blind!

"Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." Obviously, Peter didn't understand what Jesus was saying. This wasn't a parable it was a direct truth. "So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding?"

This whole notion that there's a difference between man-made religion and Divine truth is so radical, Jesus has to repeat it a second time to Peter.

Verse 17 "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?" Foods are consumables. They offer no spiritual, lasting sustenance. They supply a temporary benefit – not an eternal one.

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." Godly purity is inward and spiritual. It transforms my heart and works its way out into my life.

False righteousness - self-righteousness - is outward and physical - it touches and even trains my hands - but it never tames my heart. True purity originates not with *what I eat* – but it begins *with the beat of my heart and in the seat of my soul*.

Even after Jesus repeats this principle, Peter still doesn't understand. He won't *get it* until years later on a rooftop in Joppa. Faith not food makes us righteous.

Verse 21 **“Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.”** This is Gentile-land. These cities were north of the Israeli border.

**“And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!”** This was a Jewish term...

God promised David a son, who would be Savior and King – the Messiah. Even though this woman was a Gentile she approaches Jesus as if she was a Jew.

She comes with a need... **“My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”**

**“But (Jesus) answered her not a word.”** At first glance Jesus seems rude - at least uncompassionate. She pours out her heart and Jesus sits in silence.

Have you ever had a similar experience with Jesus? You were deeply grieved and troubled. You pray passionately, and heaven was stone silent. *We all have!*

What's going on here in this story, and what's going on in our lives...

First, understand Jesus had an uncanny ability to sense the potential for faith in people, and draw it out. Spurgeon put it, **“Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith.”** Though He remains silent, He sees in this woman the seeds of a great faith.

And in the next few verses he's going to try her faith and strengthen it...

“And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” She's a bother – a pest. She's annoying us. “But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Jesus finally speaks of the woman, but He offers her little encouragement. As Jesus said earlier, His time was short and His priority was Jews, not Gentiles.

“Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” If I'd been this woman I'd have sulked away discouraged. She had everything going against her. She was a Gentile, a woman, and an annoyance - *but she refused to give up.*

And this is the essence of true faith – persistence and endurance.

In Luke 11 Jesus told a parable about a man he beat on his neighbor's door, and got him out of bed, to borrow some bread. He was teaching persistence in prayer. You've got to put your pride aside, and keep knocking on God's door.

“For everyone who asks (or literally “keeps on asking”) receives, and he who (keeps on seeking) finds, and to him who (keeps on knocking) it will be opened.”

True faith is a desperate dependence. It puts its pride on the shelf. Your need becomes greater than your pride. The man of faith is shamelessly persistent.

When a man's desperation eclipses his dignity... God

begins to move.

At first Jesus was silent. Then He spoke about her. Now He speaks to her.

“But He answered and said, **“It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.”** Notice the softening of Jesus' tone. He's referring to Gentiles as dogs – but not the back alley mongrels that were common in the cities, but the **“little dogs”** – the puppies - animals kept around the house...

Yet you still, would never feed your pets with bread from your children's mouth. The puppies feed from the scraps. The kids are always fed first.

This woman picks up on Jesus' train of thought... **“And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”** Yes, the Jews come first, but the Gentiles get the crumbs that slip through the cracks.

All this lady was asking for was a crumb. To an infinite, all-mighty, awesome God - who she believed Jesus to be – her girl's deliverance was a mere crumb.

**“Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”**

I love this story... At first this woman comes to Jesus as if she was a Jew. She was pretending to be something she was not. Her faith was a borrowed faith.

But Jesus was silent... then He played coy and hard to get... He's drawing out a desperate faith. He's determining

the determination of her faith. Finally He embraces her faith wholeheartedly. He coaxed out of her a real faith...

When she admitted she wasn't a child at the table – she had no rights or claims of inheritance. She was just a puppy under the table – a beggar – waiting on a few scraps - then Jesus acknowledged her “**great...faith**” and answered her prayer.

The next time Jesus is silent to your prayers – or it seems like He's playing coy and hard to get - *Jesus may be trying to draw out a deeper, more authentic faith.*

Verse 29 “**Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.**” Jesus skirted or walked around the lake.

He's now on the eastern shore – in an area known as the “**Decapolis**” – which means “**Ten Cities.**” This area was Gentile territory. These cities were steeped in Hellenistic culture and Greek religion. The Decapolis was filled with temples to false gods and idols. There were Roman bath houses and theaters.

These cities were full of pagan pleasures and opulence.

The Decapolis had an ancient advertising campaign. The ads read, “**What happens in Bet Shan stays in Bet Shan.**” The Decapolis was “**Sin City.**”

Verse 30 “**Then great multitudes** (most of which were pagans and Gentiles - or backslidden Jews) **came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.**

**The multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking,**



the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.”

“Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

Apparently, the healing meeting had gone on unabated for three days. Now the food supply was running low and the people were getting hungry.

“Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude? Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish."

So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were 4000 men, besides women and children.” Here’s another *miracle of multiplication!* Jesus turns our *meagerness* into *more than enough!* He feeds a hungry army with just 7 loaves and a few sardines.

Some folks have asked was this the same event we read about earlier, or were there two separate miracles of multiplication. I believe there were two events...

In chapter 14, 5000 were fed in Bethsaida, Jewish territory, with 5 loaves.

In chapter 15, 4000 were fed in the Decapolis, Gentile territory, with 7 loaves.

In chapter 14, there were 12 baskets of leftovers. Here there are 7 baskets.

Jesus Himself clears up any controversy. In Matthew 16 He told His disciples, "Do you not yet understand, or remember the 5 loaves of the 5000 and how many baskets you took up? Nor the 7 loaves of the 4000 and how many large baskets you took up?" Jesus understood the two accounts as two separate incidents.

I think the reason people doubt there were two miracles is the comment the disciples make in verse 33, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" How could they be so stupid, and forget so quickly?

In fairness to the disciples I don't think they're questioning "Can Jesus do it?" but "Will He do it?" At Bethsaida the hungry multitude consisted of law-abiding Jews. Here the crowd was made up of pig-eating Gentiles. The question for the disciples was would Jesus bless the Gentiles, as He had the Jews?

We too believe Jesus **can bless us**, but after our repetitive failures – **will He bless us?** We forget God's blessings are the result of *His mercy* not *our merit*.

Regardless of where you live - whether you start in Bethsaida or the Decapolis - if you'll come humbly to Jesus by faith He's willing to pour out mercy upon you!

Verse 39 “And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.” The hometown of Mary – a Magdalene is from Magdala.