

To Truly Be Clean

Jesus’ run in with the Pharisees

“Why do your disciples eat with unclean hands?” – The Pharisees

“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” – Jesus

Unclean

Unclean territory – Tyre and Sidon, in the land of Gentiles

Unclean spirit – verse 25

Unclean woman – a Syrophenician

Not just an ancient problem

Feeling unacceptable

Proving yourself to yourself, others, or God

“I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. . . I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being, and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting. . . . Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove I'm Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.” - Madonna

Feeling unworthy

“I’ll never be like my moral superior at work. I’m just trying to climb that spiritual ladder, man; but I’m just not doing that well. But I am *trying*.” – The Unbelievable Gospel

To Truly Understand

Bold

“*And she begged*” → Literally “was begging.”

Compare to Matthew 15:23 “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.”

She is crossing all sorts of societal barriers as she pursues Jesus’ healing word.

Humble

Jesus refers to children and dogs, implies that she is a part of the dog group... what could it mean?

Possibility 1: The word is literally “little dog” indicating she is like a household pet, as a Gentile lesser than the children of Israel, but still important.

Possibility 2: He is using a phrase a Jewish person would use to speak down to a Gentile.

Matthew 7:6 “Do not give what is holy to the dogs.”

Psalms 22:16 “For dogs encompass me, a company of evildoers surround me.”

Phil 3:2 “Look out for the dogs, the evildoers...”

Jesus’ statement is a parable

Children refers to Israel, dogs refer to Gentiles

Jesus uses the term “dogs” because

1. The woman can handle it. He knows what she’s made of.
2. The disciples need to have their prejudice exposed for the ugliness that it is.

What the disciples learn

You can’t fix your uncleanness by comparing yourself to someone ‘worse’ than you.

Come to Jesus boldly, because of who he is. He is full of generosity and love, even for those who are unworthy.

Come to Jesus humbly, with full acknowledgment of your unworthiness, because that’s the only way to become clean.

Questions for Personal Study

1. If you had to choose whether you feel clean or unclean, how would you answer? Why?
2. How does Jesus remove her uncleanness?
3. What does this woman understand that the disciples didn’t?
4. Why does knowing Jesus make us both bold and humble? Are you both, why or why not?