

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME TWO

STUDY SEVEN

Would Jesus Call Your Faith “Great”?

Mark 7:24–30; Matthew 15:21–28

The story we’ve come to in our study of Mark provides us with an example. Not an illusion or presumption or wishful thinking. This is an example of absolute faith.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT does great faith look like?

A little girl sees a magician pull a rabbit out of an empty hat and truly believes the magician has magical powers. Her faith is based on an *illusion*, however, and when the magician shows her the secret pocket in his hat where he hid the rabbit, her faith vanishes in a second.

A student believes that he deserves good grades just for attending class and shouldn’t have to study for the final exam. When he fails the test and flunks the course, he gets angry at the professor for not giving him what he believed he deserved! His faith is based on a *presumption*—a false notion that cracks like thin ice when he tries to walk on it.

Some people think that whatever they hope for will happen if they believe hard enough. But that’s not faith. That’s *wishful thinking*.

Whatever great faith looks like, it must have a great object in whom we place our faith. It’s not based on an illusion or presumption or wishful thinking. Rather, faith sinks its roots deeply into God—*who He is* and *how He operates*, as described in Scripture. This kind of faith expresses itself as our complete dependence and responds through our faithful obedience. Yes, great faith is active. It doesn’t sit back passively. It steps out onto the solid rock of God’s character and promises.

The scene in our passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study presents a Canaanite woman believing that Jesus can help her daughter. As the scene opens, we hear a dialogue between this woman and Jesus, and we witness a rare moment in which Jesus commends the faith of a gentile.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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The woman lives in a territory most Jews would never enter, but to find what great faith looks like, we must go there with Jesus. Most Jews wouldn’t take time to even look at this woman . . . but Jesus did, and in the heart of this desperate woman, Jesus saw something truly special.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

*Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you. (Psalm 9:10)*

In your own words, affirm your trust in God’s character. Reflect on how the accounts in Mark’s gospel showcase Jesus’ deity and His magnificent power. Ask God to continue to build your muscles of faith as you open your heart to His timeless truths. And rest in the promise that He never forsakes those who search for Him—*He will never forsake you.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus withdrew to the region surrounding Tyre in the territory of Phoenicia. Locate Tyre on the map in the back of your Bible or online using the map titled “[Ministry of Jesus](#)” at [insight.org](#).

The Canaanites were an ancient race of people whom the Israelites attempted to exterminate, as God had commanded (Deuteronomy 7:1–6; 20:16–18). This woman who approached Jesus was a Greek-speaking, pagan descendant of the Canaanites—so hated by the Jews that she was considered no better than a “little dog.” Why did Jesus go forty miles away from Galilee? How did this woman feel when she heard that Jesus was in town? Let’s turn to our passage to find out.



Observation: Jesus Commends the Faith of a Gentile Woman

To observe [Mark 7:24–30](#), read it as if you’re in the house with Jesus and His disciples, listening to their conversation.¹ Also, to prepare for our Bible study, read the same incident in the parallel passage in [Matthew 15:21–28](#).

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Jesus’ fame preceded Him even in a gentile country! How would you describe the scene in Matthew 15:21 and Mark 7:24? What did Matthew and Mark say about this unnamed woman and her enormous need in Matthew 15:22 and Mark 7:25?

Now hear the dialogue in Matthew 15:23 and Mark 7:26. What did Mark specify about the woman’s plea, Jesus’ response, and the disciples’ reaction? How does Matthew bring out her persistence?

Summarize the conversation between Jesus and the woman in Matthew 15:24–27 and Mark 7:27–28. What similarities and differences do you see in the two gospel accounts? What points about Jesus and the woman was each writer making?

What did Jesus say to her in Matthew 15:28 and Mark 7:29? What happened when the Canaanite woman got home in Mark 7:30?

Without hesitation or doubt, she turned and went home. She believed Him. He said, “The demon is gone.” She doesn’t stay a while saying, “Is there some way You can prove that before I go back and check?” She confidently goes and finds the answer. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: The Characteristics of Great Faith

The context of this account is significant. Jesus had just confronted the Pharisees and scribes about external purity versus internal purity. Afterward, He went to unclean Canaanite territory and interacted with an unclean gentile woman—which, by the Pharisees’ standards, would have made Jesus unclean. And yet, in this place and in this woman, Jesus found more faith than in all the so-called “clean” Pharisees.

The Pharisees had rejected Jesus as Messiah. But, unlike the Pharisees, this woman perceived the messianic significance of Jesus. She got it! Her faith was based on her unwavering confidence in Jesus as the “Son of David” (Matthew 15:22). The disciples with their “little faith” were still struggling to grasp Jesus’ identity, but, once again, this woman got it!

She knew that Jesus was the only One who could help her daughter, who was tormented by a demon. Read the section “Demons during the Life of Christ” in the article “[Demon](#)” in *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* at biblestudytools.com. How would you explain her daughter’s situation?

We noted in Mark 7:25 the woman’s persistence despite Jesus’ silence. Read [Matthew 15:25–27](#) and [Mark 7:26–29](#) in the MSG and NET translations. What is the meaning of the metaphors “children,” “dogs,” “bread,” and “crumbs”? What is the significance of the “children” leaving “crumbs” uneaten and the woman’s willingness to eat them?

Don’t miss the last word. One rendering, “Let the children eat all they want—it wouldn’t be right to take the bread from children and toss it under the table for the dogs.” The woman hears that. And then she uses His words to turn His attention to her great need. She is focused. “Yes, Lord. I won’t argue with You about that. But, I mean, just a few crumbs?” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Look at Jesus’ commendation of the woman’s faith and her response in [Matthew 15:28](#) and [Mark 7:30](#) in the MSG and NET translations. How does her behavior demonstrate confidence in Jesus?



Correlation: Models of Faith in Scripture

Throughout Scripture, God is looking for people who trust in Him—who believe Him to *be* who He says He is and to *do* what He says He will do. What does the writer of Hebrews say about the role of faith in our walk with God in [Hebrews 11:6](#)?

For us to have faith, it is required of us that we believe God is who He says He is. And that, of course, means He’s unlike anyone else we’ve met or known. And second, that He will do what He says He will do. And may I add: in His way, in His time, and for His glory. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Model Great Faith!

We face enormous needs, impossible situations, and persistent troubles that crush and overwhelm us. Consider a child diagnosed with a chronic illness, a marriage falling apart bit by bit, or a sense of hopelessness that lingers after many counseling sessions. Though we turn these problems into prayer requests, we wonder how to increase our faith.

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Pastor Chuck shares four words based on the gentile woman’s example that will help us deal with the need weighing on our hearts today. The first word is *persistence*. How can you demonstrate persistence in bringing this need to the Lord?

Great faith begins with persistence. “Here I am again, Lord. I was here yesterday. I’m back today. I will not back off. I will not give up; I will not quit. I’m telling You, Lord, this need is huge, and I trust You like I trust no other.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The second word is *humility*. What attitude did the Holy Spirit communicate to your heart that you need to adopt to reflect the humility displayed by the Canaanite woman?

Crushed by troubles and overwhelmed by the need, we humble ourselves before our God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The third word is *focus*. What steps can you take during your prayer time to increase the focus on this need?

Specify one great need you’re living with that you ought to be bringing before God. That is your focus for the week. That’s what you’d name. You can’t handle it? You can’t change it? Your God can do both. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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A FINAL PRAYER

The last word is *confidence*. Conclude your time in the Word by expressing in a prayer your confidence in God’s faithfulness and goodness. Give your need to Him—the One you can believe in with your whole heart.

We ask that You, our Father, remind us of the value, not simply of faith but of great faith—a total releasing of our will to Yours, a full and unreserved trust in Your taking charge and bringing about the change that’s needed.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*” at insight.org.

For the 2026–2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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