

Conversations on
Mark 7:24–37

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! The story of a troubled teen finding her place among the outcasts at an art school is told in *Step Up 2* (PG-13; 2008). View her looking for a place in the cafeteria (19:20–20:53). What walls exist?

WHAT is important to know?

How can Christians appropriate this story? First, it reminds us of our debt to Israel. As Krister Stendahl proposed, in Paul’s view we Gentile Christians must consider ourselves “honorary Jews.” The Gentile woman humbly acknowledges the priority of the “children,” even as she presses her request to be fed from the same table. Second, the woman’s boldness inspires us to be bold in our prayers of intercession and petition. Even though our basic principle is “Your will be done,” we must not prematurely abandon our prayers for healing, thinking they are futile. (*Douglas R. A. Hare*)

- ✪ What debts should Christians recognize as owing to Israel?
- ✪ What new insights do you gain by thinking of Gentile Christians as “honorary Jews”?
- ✪ In what ways does the woman’s boldness inspire you in your prayers?

WHERE is God in these words?

To be the Son of God, the Messiah must suffer, not only at the hands of those of us who do not understand him, but also under the conditions of existence, the challenge of the human condition itself. To be otherwise would not allow Jesus to be fully human. Furthermore, according to the tenets of process and liberation theologies, if he is also “fully God,” Jesus cannot avoid this suffering either. Mark provides an interesting way of seeing how the divine and the human can be completely combined in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, a kind of “Ephphatha Christology.” Jesus is fully God and fully human only if he can faithfully “be opened” to both at the same time. (*Loye Bradley Ashton*)

- ✪ Why was it important that the Messiah must suffer?
- ✪ Why does the church maintain that Jesus was fully God and fully human?
- ✪ How are you able to hold the humanity and the divinity of Jesus together?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Perhaps it is too much to ask that a homeless person could interrupt the dinner of the president of the United States to ask a favor, but it is not too much to ask humanity to recognize that there are no walls made of withered hands, deaf ears, or troubled minds separating us from God or us from each other. Status is a product of our own imaginations, invisible to God. Once we acknowledge that there are no walls separating us, love and mercy flow unfettered, and all people are deemed equally valuable. (*Amy C. Howe*)

- ✪ What are ways to help others recognize walls that separate people?
- ✪ How can you begin to break down walls that separate people?
- ✪ What are ways you can support the equality of all people?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Most of us are reluctant to share our faith with others and we find very good reasons to keep quiet: we may believe that our actions speak more loudly than our words, we may be afraid of the inadequacy of our speech, or we may fear that we will make a mistake and alienate those to whom we are speaking. Yet the healed man is every bit as insistent as the Syrophenician woman. He and his companions give voice to God’s presence and power among them. The characters in both stories embolden us to share whatever glimpse of God’s mercy, love, and truth we have witnessed. Their stories and words remind us to focus our attention on God and to keep pointing others toward the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. (*Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm*)

- ✪ What are ways you can share your faith with others?
- ✪ How can you point to the reign of God as you interact with others?
- ✪ What glimpses of God’s mercy, love, and truth can you share with others?

God of mercy and love, open our eyes that we may be encouraged to work for equality for all people. Amen.