

# Mark 7 (Part 2): 24-37 • Faith that presses in and perseveres

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Verse 24 of Mark chapter seven goes like this, *"And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' 28 But she answered him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' 29 And he said to her, 'For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.' 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone."* (ESV)

Let's stop there for right now. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as always, we come before You with a humble attitude, asking You to speak to us through the Scriptures and to make them alive to our hearts. We understand, Lord, that this comes through a work of Your Holy Spirit. But it also is activated by faith and by the humility of our hearts that are willing to be taught.

So we pray, Father God, that our hearts would be receptive today. And that You would speak to us from the depth of Your understanding, that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of who You are. And Lord, most of all that we might put into practice the things that we learn in Your Word. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, amen.

This last section of Mark chapter 7, is basically 2 small stories. We read the first one here. We're told here that Jesus went outside of Israel to a place which is referred to as Phoenicia. We would call it Lebanon today. And it has two main port cities of Tyre and Sidon. And actually, we covered this story back when we did our study through the Gospel of Matthew. But since that was about three and a half years ago, I think we could probably... It's safe to go through and look at this again.

You can tell from the text, and we know from previous chapters, that Jesus had been trying for some time to get away with His disciples. And He had been thwarted every time. He would say to His guys, you know what? We just need to get away and just hang out and rest for a while. Because we were told they didn't even get time to eat most of the time.

And it seems like... And we're not told the specifics, but it seems like Jesus made the decision to go to Phoenicia, figuring probably wouldn't get the big crowds because this is not a Jewish area. Phoenicia was an area that was frankly, filled full of Gentiles, and pagans, and yeah it wasn't the kind of place you would expect there to be a big group of people that were just waiting for Jesus to show up.

But we're told that when He got to the region, He went to this house hoping that nobody was going to see Him. But once again, a mother who had a child in desperate circumstances, heard that Jesus was there. And made her way over to that house because of that situation. And were told in verse 25, this basic information: a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, that, of course, a term for a demonic spirit, came. And you'll notice the first thing she does is she fell at His feet; and we take note of that. And we are immediately, impressed with the woman's humility.

And as she humbled herself before the Lord, we read this passage. And right away, we're taken with this woman. And we think, that's good. That's a good way to start. We like this.

She didn't come with a haughty sort of a thing, or proud. She immediately humbles herself down on her knees before the Lord. And we think, okay that's good. This woman deserves to be helped. That's the way we think. She's humbling herself. She's crying out to the Lord. She deserves for the Lord to respond.

But Mark goes on and he tells us here in verse 26, that the woman was a Gentile. Your Bible may say Greek. And she was of Syrophoenician birth. No biggie there. I mean, He was in the area of Phoenicia. Why wouldn't He be confronted by someone who was born and raised in the area? That may not mean a whole lot to you and I, when we read that this woman is of Syrophoenician birth. But when you understand the history of these people, it takes on some greater significance.

The areas of Tyre and Sidon, particularly Tyre, were often friendly with the Israelites. You'll remember when Solomon built the temple and his own palace,

he imported a lot of wood from this regional area. But there were times, as the kingdom of God progressed in the Old Testament, that the pagan influence of the Phoenician kingdom became very pronounced.

Particularly when one of the kings of the northern region married a woman by the name of Jezebel. You guys remember Jezebel? Yeah, she was a real piece of work, let me tell you. She was a Phoenician princess. And she was almost solely responsible for popularizing the worship of Baal in Israel. And this is the kind of stuff that came out of that area. And the Jews were very, leery of the people there, and so forth. Probably would avoid them at all costs.

And yet here is a woman who comes from a pagan background. Who comes... And we're told in verse 26 here in the middle, that "*she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.*"

Now Mark gives us an abbreviated sort of a thing. He just says "*she begged him.*" And it just sounds like this woman came and spoke to Jesus, in a very pleading sort of a way. But Matthew tells us in his account that the woman kept begging, and kept begging, and kept begging and kept begging Jesus, to the point of embarrassment. To the point where the disciples finally said, Lord, send her away. She just keeps, she keeps begging, she keeps calling out after You, and so forth.

And immediately we're uncomfortable with what's going on in this thing because we don't like to see people having to be begging, and Jesus not responding. We like stories where Jesus quickly takes care of a situation. And we're not concerned that the woman is of Syrophoenician birth; it doesn't mean anything to us. We don't care. She's just a woman in need. Right?

And so we see this woman. She comes to Jesus. She falls on her knees before the Lord. There's this attitude instantly of humility and petition. Lord, please, please come and take care of my little girl. She's got this demon. She's horrible. She's tormented, Lord, would you please cast... But Jesus doesn't respond. Jesus goes a long time before He says anything. He just maintains His silence.

We don't like silence when it comes from God. At all. We're bothered when we have it happen to us. We're bothered when we see it happen to somebody else. Makes us wonder a little bit, what's going on here? Why did they even put this in the Bible? You know Lord, I don't know that I would have had this one written down because it doesn't really cast you in a very pleasant light. The kind of guy who would sit and listen to a woman, a mom...

You mothers—you know and understand that passion that you have for your children when they're sick, when your kids are suffering, when they've got something going on in their lives that's horrible. What do you... What's the first thing you say? I would gladly take this on myself. I would gladly suffer what my child is suffering with right now, if they would just be released from this. That's the way mothers think. That's that maternal sort of a protective heart of the mother. Jesus certainly knows that. And He's hearing this thing. Crying out over and over and yet, He responds with silence.

And it's not hard to read a story like this and take up offense for the woman in the way that she's being treated. And it only gets worse. You keep reading. Look at verse 27. And finally, when He does speak, what does He say? He says, nah, let the children be fed first, but it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Well, you're wondering here if Jesus, is having a bad day. Or something like that. (Pastor points to something/someone having a bad day, Congregation laughs) I'm sorry, I just had to say that.

You got to understand something about this term dogs. The Jews referred to the Gentiles as dogs, whether it was Samaritan or full Gentile. Samaritans are half breeds. But they called them dogs. And the typical word that they would use to describe a Gentile was a word that had a connotation that was very unpleasant.

We are very dog-friendly in our culture today. Some of you guys are big, dog people, God bless you. When we go to family camp, I get to meet all of your dogs and I hear them. I'm just kidding. No, I'm not. Anyway, we're just very dog-friendly. I saw this one lady's profile on Facebook. And she was just like, I love dogs, I want more dogs, I don't want a bigger house so I can have more dogs. And we... To us, dogs are man's best friend we say, or something like that.

In Jewish thought, the most popular term for dog was for a wild dog. And wild dogs ran in packs. And they were a big societal nuisance. They got into everybody's garbage and they were dangerous. And they would often attack people because they were wild. They were not domesticated. And there were issues. And that's the word that the Jews often used when they referred to a Gentile, as a dog.

Now, you do need to know, here Jesus uses a different word when He's talking to this Syrophoenician woman. He uses a word that really... If you have a New King James Bible on your lap, your Bible says "*little dog*" because it actually means puppy or house dog. It was a word that was used a little bit more geared to the domesticated version of a dog. He's softening it just a little bit. Still

doesn't sound wonderfully nice. But at least it's not the most negative connotation. But He's making a point here.

And here's the point: It is not proper when you go out and prepare food for your family, to take that food and then feed it to your animals, or your dogs, whatever, and let your children go hungry. And again, when it comes out to this woman who has this great need in her life, of Jesus's touch, we're taken aback by it. We're a little bit offended by it. And we're, do you have to say something like that? But you'll notice that it doesn't slow this woman down at all.

She hears this thing. She's not daunted at all. She comes right back and she starts off and her response is, "*Yes, Lord;*" You know what that means? I'm in agreement. This is a mother. And this woman knows the very principle, the very point, that Jesus is making: You don't take what's prepared for the children...

By the way, in the picture here, Jesus is saying "*the children*" refers to the nation of Israel. He's saying, I've set a table for Israel and it's their time to eat. It's their time to come up and feast and to accept and to embrace. Namely Himself, the Messiah. Now, there will come a time when this will be given to the Gentiles. When the Jews reject it, it will then be passed along to the Gentiles. But that time is not now.

It is not proper to take that which has been prepared for the children—for Israel—and to give it to their dogs. Her response is, "*Yes, Lord;*" You see? Isn't that interesting? As a mother, she knows and understands this principle: Yeah, you don't take what's for your children and give it to the dogs. I get that. But her response is so wonderful. She goes, even the dogs eat what's under the table. They eat the children's crumbs.

And I get to see this whenever I watch... Well, of course, I raised four kids of my own. But we never had a dog. We had cats. I don't know why we... I don't know why I still have a cat. But don't get me started. We didn't have dogs.

But my oldest daughter has a dog: a big dog, 90 pound dog, sled dog that they allow in the house. And she has three kids. It's funny, when meal time comes, this dog knows which kid is going to drop the biggest chunks. And he gravitates to the kid. And he'll sit right there. Just plant himself just right there and just wait for it to happen. Because it's going to happen. A six year old is going to...

Don't tell your kids, don't spill your milk. They will spill their milk. Don't tell them, you're going to get that all over the place. They already know that. I, at one point in my parenting, I just told my kids, now, be sure and spill your milk

because it took all the pressure off. Now, they were being obedient. Anyway, there's this picture. And she says, even that which is spilled under the table, the dogs eat up. She makes this wonderful statement to the Lord.

And we're told that His response is, for this - verse 29, if you look with me in your Bible, He said to her, *"For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."* And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone." We all breathe a sigh of relief. Turned out okay.

This woman that we wanted to get helped... I mean, she came with such an attitude of humility and cried out to the Lord. Again, Matthew tells us, repeatedly for a long period of time. And then finally when she is responded to, it sounds a lot like rejection.

And we're left to wonder why? Why all the drama? Why couldn't Jesus have just said, okay, shazam! There you go. Your daughter's healed..., or whatever. And why does He have to drag it out? Why make her cry out for this extended period of time? And then finally, when He does speak to her, why make a derogatory statement?

We're Americans. We don't like that. We get offended really easy, we Americans. And we're wondering why is this all really necessary? Well, I think this is a classic case of not being able to see the whole picture, like Jesus can see it.

And there are a lot of passages in the Bible, frankly, where Jesus confronts people, or heals people, or rebukes people in such a way that we're left scratching our head going, oh, that was weird. Why did You do it that way? And so forth. And because it doesn't make sense to us from our perspective, we tend to get confused by it all. And this example is one of those instances.

And one of the interesting things about this woman - Mark doesn't tell us but Matthew does—is that she actually knew who Jesus was from... At least she used all the right titles. Let me show you a passage from Matthew chapter 15, where he gives us this insight,

**Matthew 15:22 (ESV)**

*And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."*

*"And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, 'Have mercy' (Look at how she cries,) 'Have mercy on me. O Lord, Son of David; ...' Son of David is a Messianic title. And that was a title that many Jews were uncomfortable using around Jesus, because they all knew what it meant. It meant, You are the Messiah.*

But this Syrophoenician woman, who shouldn't know anything about Jewish understanding of the Messiah, she nails it. I mean, she just zings it right in there. *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David;"* And then goes on to explain the situation. That's impressive. And we read Matthew's account, and we're further impressed by this woman. Not only does she maintain this attitude of great humility; not only does she cry from the depth of her heart, but she has this thing about Jesus, all dialed in as to who He is.

And we're left with the conclusion, she deserves to be helped. And that's again a very American way for you and I to think about this. She deserves it. And that's why we're bummed she gets met with silence. And she's so deserving. And then He's quiet; just ignores her, talking to the guys. And she's just crying over here. And we don't even know if they're eating, or just chatting, or what they're doing.

And I have to wonder, how we would respond. I wonder how I would respond. I'll make it personal. If I was in this situation, one of my kids desperately needs help and there's nobody that can help this child except this Jesus. And I've heard about Him. And I believe, I believe that He could do something. I believe He can make a difference. But I go to Him, I seek Him out, I lay my petition before Him, and I get met with silence. And then after the silence, what I do get sounds very much like rejection. And I wonder, how would I respond beyond that point?

Would I walk away with my feelings hurt? Because you know what I think? It's very easy to get our feelings hurt. Some people, obviously more than others, are quickly hurt by the things people say or don't say. And let me tell you something, when we're crying out to God, and we're in pain, and we're met with silence. Wow! That is always a time of great temptation for us to give-in to the hurt of that situation. And start asking questions like, doesn't God know how hurt I am? Doesn't God know how painful this situation is? Doesn't He understand how I'm feeling? And we feel very rejected by it all.

And there are a lot of Christians who will enter a situation like that, where you cry out to God with all of your heart in the midst of your pain. And you are met with silence. And you are so hurt that sometimes we just give up. What is God doing in times of silence? What is He doing?

Well, people love to try to answer that question. I've read a lot of commentaries. A lot of people teaching even on this particular passage. And I've listened to a lot of believers talk about those times of life when God doesn't seem to answer. And people love to inject their ideas, here's what I think's going on... No, we're just guessing. We do that a lot. It's called speaking into the silence. And it's not a very wise thing to do. Because honestly, we don't know.

And what Jesus is doing in the life of this Syrophoenician woman, by holding off for the long period of time that He did. And then finally saying something that you and I would consider to be hurtful and offensive and part of a rejection sort of a thing. That's... I don't know. What's Jesus doing? I don't know. I don't understand?

But doesn't that happen a lot? You guys, don't you find that in the course of your Christian life things happen to you and to other people that you don't get? And you don't understand? And what are we going to do with that sort of a thing?

One of the things we have to remember - and this is something we learned last week in our first half of the study of Matthew chapter 7 - we learned that God always looks at the heart. And because He can see the heart clearly, you and I can't. We can't even see our own hearts. I mean, we think we know our hearts, but God sees our heart in a perfectly transparent way. And He knows how to best address situations and things in our lives. And if sometimes addressing that situation begins with a period of silence, that's His business.

Here's the question: Are you and I, going to get hurt? Are we going to get hurt feelings? Are we going to become angry? Are we going to become bitter? Are we going to close our Bible and say, all right, enough with that junk. I'm done with this. I don't think God cares. I don't think He's listening. And that is the very common and very often damaging sort of a response that people will have.

And just as we look at the passage here, I just got done telling you, I don't know what Jesus is doing exactly. I'll tell you what it looks like. But that's, again, this is going to be a guess. Okay? What it looks like He's doing is drawing out a genuineness of faith in her life, to see if she's going to persevere and press through. Even if after the silence and the appearance of rejection... It appears... And the woman comes through with flying colors. I got to tell you, this is a neat lady. I mean, if I want somebody interceding for me, I think I'd get this gal.

Because she's a mom for one thing. And she is bold for another. And she is full of perseverance and she doesn't let any of this thing stop her. This statement that



she finally makes, even in the face of this rejection, no, it's not proper to take what is intended for the children and give it to the dogs. Instead of going, well, forget you then buddy and walk storming out. She comes back with this incredible response of faith that says, yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table. And we're all just like, wow, that's incredible. What an amazing statement that she continues on, even in the face of all of this.

And it's such a statement of faith too, because she's basically saying, I don't need the meal. Give me the crumb, the crumbs enough, which is powerful in and of itself. But please don't miss this because I think this is really the point of the passage. She held on to faith, even in the midst of silence. Even in the midst of apparent rejection, she held on. And that is the lesson here.

She could have done what you and I have done, I dare say. And that is—be sent into an emotional tailspin when God is silent and doesn't respond according to our expectations. Believe me, I've been there. I can be just as emotional as you can. And feel just as disappointed when God doesn't respond. And she could have done that. She could have gotten mad. She could have given up.

But she maintained two very important things. And these are very important for us to see. First of all, she maintained her attitude of humility, even in the face of what she was receiving from the Lord, understanding her own unworthiness.

And then second of all, she maintained her faith and understood that if she persisted, ultimately, she believed Jesus would respond. I mean, why else keep talking? If you're convinced that it's not going to do any good, you usually shut up. Right? She kept talking, which suggests, well, more than suggests, tells us that she believed there would be a good conclusion to this situation.

Let me explain a little something about the difference between this woman and us. Let me tell you why we get angry at God. Let me tell you why we get sent into those emotional tailspins when God doesn't meet our expectations. You ready for this? Because we think we deserve it. We deserve better. We think we deserve better.

I've actually had unbelievers tell me when I'm sharing the Lord with them, they'll say, well, what's God ever done for me? I'll say, well, what do you deserve to have God do for you? And they're usually like, well... And because they're caught in the face of their attitude that, I'm entitled.

I mean, isn't good stuff what God does? Isn't He in the business of showering us with good stuff. How come I haven't gotten it? I called out to Him. I prayed. I

didn't get the good stuff. I'm... Forget God What does that attitude say? I deserve it. That's why we get mad. That's why we get disappointed. That's why we throw up our hands and say, I'm done with all this God stuff. I'm not going to be treated in this fashion.

Do you see that? Here's the deal with the Syrophoenician woman. Jesus not only has this protracted time where He ignores her. But then when He finally speaks up and He says to her, it's not right to give this stuff to the children's dogs when it's prepared for them. She's not even phased. She doesn't have any issues with her own personal worthiness. She's not sitting there going, I deserve this, Jesus. I have been here for how long now crying out to you. And what do you do? First you ignore me, then you insult me. I never sort of a thing. Right?

She doesn't do that. Why? The issue of worth isn't even on the table. She understands from the get go she's not worthy. She knows that. It's a foregone conclusion. We don't know that. We go into it thinking we are good. Hey God, I called; You answer. Because this is me calling, and I'm worthy. Right.

This woman didn't struggle with that. She wasn't trying to convince God of anything. She knew she wasn't worthy of a response. She knew she wasn't worthy. As a non-Jew, she knew. Say what you want. I don't care. It's not going to faze me because self-worth isn't on the table.

Now, listen, I understand some people actually have feelings of they don't feel worthy. I get that. We hear that, actually, quite often. People will say, I don't feel worthy of God's love. I know that some people feel that way.

But you know what? Those people are still talking. They're relating to God from the standpoint of worthiness or worth, self-worth. Even those people who feel unworthy are basing it on worth, and they're telling you by saying, I don't feel worthy of God's love, that it ought to be based on worth. You see, even though they're saying, I don't feel worthy of it, they're telling you, I should probably feel worthy because this isn't that how God treats us based on our worth.

Guys, do you get this? God does not treat us based on our worth. Okay? Get that out of your head! That's an Americanism that you have to excise from your brain and your heart. You have to get rid of it. The Syrophoenician woman wasn't even challenged by these things. It was like, hey, I just need your help. She couldn't be offended. She couldn't. She already knew she wasn't worthy. She got that part. I like this woman. She's cool.

Anyway, listen, your child may not be in the desperate situation that hers was in—possessed by a demon. But, they still may be in the clutches of the devil just the same. Here's my advice: Be like this mom. Be like this lady and don't let anything get in the way of bringing your cries before the throne of grace. Don't let anything get in the way, including silence. Because the silence of God is one of the greatest temptations that you and I deal with in terms of feeling rejected and hopeless. It is a huge temptation.

I'm saying to you, don't let that happen. Press in. And don't let how your life is going, or what has happened, color your opinion of God's love and His mercy.

I love the fact that during worship today we emphasized... Did you notice how much we emphasized the love of God? And how good He is? You're a good, good Father. We sing that. And those are great lyrics. And they're wonderful. But as soon as life starts going hard we start wondering if maybe, I don't know, it might not be true. It's pretty tough to say, God is good..., when things in your life are not good. Right?

So, when you're going to God and you're pressing in for an answer - you're coming to Him for a solution—what's going to keep you coming when you're met with silence? When you're met with what appears like rejection? What's going to keep you coming if you reject the idea, finally, that He is good? Well, there's going to be nothing. He meets me with silence. He rejects me, or at least it appears like it. My conclusion is, He is not good. You're done. I mean, you're in a hopeless scenario at that particular point.

I want you to notice how this woman did not allow what was happening to stop her from believing this Man has the answer, and if I continue to press in and if I continue to make my need known, He's going to do something. And I'm not going to let anything get in the way. I don't care how long He ignores me. I don't care what He may say that may sound like rejection.

I am staying here until this thing gets dealt with. You know why? Because He's good. And I may not feel like He's good right now, but I'm going to believe what He says in His Word. He is good. And I'm going to hang on to that. People, that's where faith really flies.

The final part of this chapter goes like this. Verse 31, *"Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, (finally) in the region of the Decapolis."* Stop there for a moment.

It's called the Decapolis because it was a region that was made up of 10 cities. And let me remind you here, that just a couple of chapters ago in Mark chapter 5 that Jesus went to this region. And when He got off the boat, you'll remember He was met with the man we call, the man of the tombs. Remember? The man who had all those demons that no one could control. And Jesus did a powerful work of releasing that man from that demonic possession.

And you'll remember that what happened in the midst of that situation was the demons asked permission to go into a herd of pigs. Jesus allowed them to. They freaked out of their brain, ran down the hill, and started floating in the water. I mean, they died. The whole herd of pigs. (Mark 5:11-13)

We're told the townspeople came out. They looked at the situation. The man was in his right mind. Pigs are now floating, and they basically said to Jesus, would You just go? They were like, just leave. Just leave. And He did. Right? (Mark 5:17)

But then you remember the last thing that happened was that the man who'd been set free said to Jesus, I want to come with you. Jesus said, no, you've got to stay here. You've got to go tell your family. You've got to tell your friends. I want you to go throughout this area. I want you to tell them what God has done for you, and he did. (Mark 5:18-20)

And now Jesus is back. It's months later now. And Jesus is back. He's at this same place. And I want you to see the attitude of this people has changed. Verse 32, we're told here that, *"And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him."*

Again, these are the people that just a little while ago were encouraging Jesus to leave their area. Now they're bringing sick people and saying, please, Lord, touch this man.

Verse 33 says, *"And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. (kind of gross) <sup>34</sup> And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," (which is an Aramaic word, by the way, and Mark gives us the translation) that is, "Be opened." <sup>35</sup> And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly."*

Great story. We like this. We like when people get helped right away. It's a story of a specific healing, but there are some unique things about this that I'll just throw out that you can take note of.

First of all, Mark is the only gospel writer who tells this story. Second of all, the word that is translated speech impediment is used here in Mark, and nowhere else in the New Testament. Interesting. And thirdly, this is a really weird way to heal somebody. I mean, ears, or fingers in your ears, and then spitting, and then touching his tongue.

But, you think about it, and what was the issue with the man? He was deaf. And he had a speech impediment. Obviously, he can't hear himself talk. These are the areas that need to be touched, right? And I think Jesus is communicating, first of all to him, what He's about to do. He goes through this very odd process of healing this man.

And I love that he is healed with a word, be opened. And the man is released. It says, his tongue was set free or released is what it means; his ears were opened, and so forth. And he began to speak plainly. And you know miracles are always fun to read. Because miracles are miracles and miracles are fun. And everybody likes to think about miracles. And we would love to see more miracles. And even have them going on in our own life.

But there's something else about this story that really it is cool. And that is what we read in verse 33. If you look with me there at the beginning of that verse, it says, "*And taking him aside from the crowd privately,...*" And I got to tell you something, I like that. I like it for a bunch of different reasons.

I love the fact that Jesus wasn't playing to the crowd. But I also love that Jesus often took people out of the public spotlight to do a very intimate and personal work in their lives.

And I'm sure this was probably done to the disappointment of some of the people who came. Because they were looky-loos and just wanted to go see a miracle sort of a thing. And yet Jesus pulls this man away from the crowd, gets alone with him, and does this work. And again, this is something we see in the Word of God, where Jesus withdraws from the crowds and so forth.

But you know when I think about my own life... And maybe you can take a moment to think yourself about some of the most powerful times that God has worked in your life. And I thought about this, as I was going through this passage. And it became very apparent to me, those times when God has most powerfully moved in my life, I've been alone with Him. It's not been around other people. It's been when I have just been forced for some reason or another to be alone.

And that's not to say I love being alone necessarily. I love being with you guys. I love worshipping with you. I love praying with you. But one of the reasons I like it so much is because it's easy. When the worship team is up here playing, it's easy to start singing and worshipping. I mean, like all of us, we're just start just singing. But before long, we're singing it to the Lord. And we're really pressing in. And we're really focusing on Him. At least I hope so.

And then when people begin to pray, don't you find it hard... Now, some of you guys are prayer warriors. God bless you. This doesn't apply to you. But for the rest of us, it's hard to pray alone. It's hard to just get going. And you're just thinking about what needs to be done.

And your mind easily can run after some other thoughts and stuff. And praying is hard. That's why I love to get together, with other people and pray. Because it keeps me on task. Keeps me on course. Right? It's easy.

But boy when you get alone, I don't know... Well, I don't know about you, but when I get alone, that's when things get very real, very quickly. And you stop pretending. We can pretend really easily. In worship I can have my eyes closed like this and be thinking about the ball game. I'm just admitting to you. Or what I'm going to have for dinner. Thank you, Lord, for dinner or whatever. I mean, I can do that. And you can, too.

I can be praying, or you can be praying, and I'm in the room and we're all holding hands. And you're praying and I'm thinking about something else. But boy, when you get alone with God, it's like there's no pretending anymore. It's just me and God. And He doesn't impress easily at all. And it's just us. Just me and Him. And that's a good thing.

Jesus often broke away from the crowds to just get alone with His Heavenly Father. And I've been always... I've been challenged by that, a lot. Thinking I really should cultivate that in my own life. It's a tough thing though. It's a difficult thing to do. But it really puts the personal in a personal relationship with God. Otherwise, if I only pray in front of other people and worship in front of other people, then I have a fairly public relationship with God.

It's like, God, I'll talk to You as long as there's other people around. I'll worship You as long as there's a band. As long as they strike up the tune, then I'm good to go. But, if I'm just alone in my car or in my bedroom or whatever, don't expect a whole lot out of me because I'm not really into that sort of a thing. Well, I think we need to get into that sort of thing. I think we need to generate and cultivate a personal walk with God.

But these last two verses are very interesting as well. It says in verse 36, *"And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, (it says. That, the things that Jesus was doing,) saying, 'He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'"*

And I want to just end by focusing on that last comment right there. That the people of this region—the region of the Decapolis—are saying to one another, He does everything well. He does all things well. That's a good thing to say.

I mean, these are the people who got very annoyed last time Jesus was there. Because He was interfering. We just want to raise pigs, okay? You guys get it? Pigs were unclean animals. Jews were not supposed to raise pigs. Unlawful, right?

But they're like raising pigs and they're living their own lives. And when we do that - when we're living our own lives, living for ourselves, I don't really care about what God's Word has to say. I'm just going to live my life and God comes into my life, that's an interference.

Have you ever had a Christian come up and start talking to you about Jesus when you didn't want to hear anything about it? And it's an interference. It's like, well, just go away. That's exactly what they said to Jesus the last time, just please go away. You're interfering.

But things have changed. There's been time. The man of the tombs has been out there doing a great job. And now the people, their hearts are open; their minds are open. They're looking at what Jesus is doing, this is good.

And this response, that this is good, He does all things well is something that we all must come to eventually. And we do, once we stop arguing with God. And once we stop trying to figure everything out and make Him explain everything to us. I just get mad at God, because He won't tell me what He's doing.

And that's me exalting my intellect over the top of His will and saying, listen, if You don't explain Yourself to me, we're not going to have a good relationship here.

But when I stop insisting on my own will, when I stop insisting on my own understanding being satisfied, and I begin to trust in the fact that He is a Good Father, things begin to change. My attitude toward Him begins to change. And I begin to see that He does all things well,... And eventually we can come to that

place like the psalmist. And let me put this up on the screen for you. This is from Psalm chapter 18. I've quoted it out of the NIV because I like it.

**Psalm 18:30 (NIV2011)**

*As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.*

*"As for God, his way is perfect: (Isn't that a great verse?) The LORD's Word, flawless; (Goes on to simply say) he shields all who take refuge in him."*

But I love that statement, *"As for God, his way is perfect..."*