

When A Woman Is A Dog

Introduction. Through the years many people have given up on the Lord completely or are no longer active in their congregation because someone hurt their feelings. Others carry lifelong grudges against the ones who offend them.

I guess everyone feels justified for their actions because their feelings have been hurt. Is this being overly-sensitive? Is it right to let your wounded feelings place your soul in danger of being lost? Everyone puts up with hurt feelings. It is nothing new. We know what to do to reconcile (Matthew 18:15-17), but my guess is we struggle when it comes to the right attitude. To help all of us, a study of a Syrophenician woman who needed the Lord's help to cure her daughter of a demon will be examined (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).

I. ***The Four Tests***

A. The first test.

1. This was certainly the time when one could get their feelings hurt because Jesus "answered her not a word" (vs. 23). This was a good time for her to have turned away and said, "Well, if that is the way you act, I will never ask you for anything else."
2. This woman did not let the silence of Christ turn her away. Did she not have feelings?
 - a) No, but she was a woman who needed something and she knew Christ was the only one who could supply that need.
 - b) The life of her child was in danger and she thought more of her daughter than she did of her feelings.

B. The second test.

1. Most of us would not have passed the first test, but the disciples now strike at her feelings by saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us."
2. This should have been enough to offend her, but her need was too great. If you turned back because your feelings were hurt, who is the one who loses?

C. The third test.

1. Having passed through two tests, she has more yet to face. Jesus, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
2. What would you do if someone said, "The blessings of the Lord are not for you"? Would your anger make you leave without them? Not this woman. The account said, "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."
3. Should we give up? Is it more important to reconcile and move beyond offenses or leave with our feelings hurt?

D. The fourth test.

1. She has one more test to face. Will it hurt her feelings and drive her away? Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."
2. Most of us would not have carried the conversation far enough to have heard this statement. But what would you have done if you were called a dog?
 - a) In the time of Jesus, the Greeks were recognized as the most intelligent nationality on earth. Socrates, Plato, and Pythagoras were Greeks. A Greek would never ask a Jew for help under any circumstances.
 - b) The term "dogs" illustrated the contrast of the privileged position of Israel and the less privileged Gentiles without any type of unkind insinuation.
3. This woman said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She knew she was unworthy, but she obtained the mercy she sought.

II. ***Important Principles***

- A. Christians never have an easy time, and honestly some of the worst times are in interactions among brethren. Testing, proving, or trying someone can be a very effective teaching technique, so can we learn any good principles from the Syrophenician woman about how to act when you are offended?
- B. There are six good principles for us to instill in our hearts when we have problems with each other.
 1. Non-retaliation (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:38-39).
 2. Kindheartedness (Colossians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:7).
 3. Forgiveness (Proverbs 19:11; Ephesians 4:32).
 4. Perseverance (Luke 9:62; Romans 2:7).
 5. Maturity (1 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:12-13).
 6. Unity (Romans 15:6; 1 Corinthians 12:25).
- C. This persistent, humble woman did not take offense and harden her heart. Will your brethren see you give up or will they see you act in a mature, godly manner?

Conclusion. We have seen how the tenderhearted should respond to sensitive situations. In judgment, will we let our feelings rob us of that welcome, "Well done"? When love is so shallow, it is easy to throw away people if it takes any effort at all to understand them and move beyond your offenses. Value people and be willing to reconcile with them when possible. True love takes a lot of effort. Loveless people are godless people.