

Mark 7:24-30 NIV
"She was a tough customer"

"Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.

⁽²⁵⁾ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.

⁽²⁶⁾ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ⁽²⁷⁾ 'First let the children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.' ⁽²⁸⁾ 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' ⁽²⁹⁾ Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.'

⁽³⁰⁾ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone."

Years ago, a tough lady in Utah made the news. The Associated Press reported:

"Seventy-five year old Betty Horton of South Salt Lake City, Utah, was putting groceries in her car Wednesday when she noticed her purse was missing. She saw a man running with the bag

under his arm. The 75-year-old woman ran after the man, who stole her purse. She ran past businesses and saw him in a residential area standing over the unzipped purse, she said. She threatened to shoot his ear off, although she didn't have a gun. She got her purse back and gave the guy a tongue-lashing - and \$3.

"Horton said she put money in his hand and told him, 'Now get the heck out of here.' Police arrived, but the thief—whom authorities described as a 40-year-old man was gone.

"Betty Horton said the man apologized to her and said he was broke. 'I said, "Why didn't you just ask me for some change? I would have helped you. I would have gladly given it to you.'"

"Seventy-five years old and I can still take care of myself," said Horton. "Good thing I had my running shoes on," she said."¹

I'd like to know if I could have outrun Betty at 75 years of age.



Betty Horton 1930-2017

In today's text, a strong woman impressed Jesus.

¹ SOUTH SALT LAKE, Utah (AP) 9-2-06.

We don't know what type of clothes she wore or whether she owned shoes.

But she was a resilient lady.

She excelled in godly qualities.



Wikipedia map showing Tyre area (upper mid-left).

This map helps illustrate the tiny comparative size of Israel.

- Caesarea Philippi (immediately east of Tyre) is 120 miles north of Jerusalem (the approximate distance from Los Angeles to San Diego).

- From the Salt (Dead) Sea (lower middle) to the Mediterranean Sea is about 48 miles.
- Sea of Galilee to Tyre—35 miles.

For many reasons, our Mark text excites me.

Both *Matthew* and *Mark* tell the incident.

Compare this *Mark* 7 account with *Matthew* 15.

Their basics agree but show subtle differences.

When I was in high school, two of my buddies and I drove from the Portland area, where we lived, to the Oregon coast, about 80-90 miles. We left on Friday after school, slept in my 1946 Chevy, and spent Saturday in Cannon Beach and Seaside, OR.

On the Seaside beach, we met three girls, who wore attractive straw hats. We felt we needed hats and also wanted to get better acquainted. When we asked the girls where they got the hats, they told us that they made them. “**Would you sell your hats,**” we asked. “**Sure,**” they said, “**Three dollars apiece.**” Each of us boys made his wallet thinner. We never saw the girls again, but we saw similar hats when we went to a shop in Seaside. There the exact same hats sold for \$1.50 each. Telling you this story somewhat embarrasses me.

Also I explained Seaside’s location, because I don’t know how many Iowans or our readers across the country have been to the Oregon coast. As you know, telling this “hat” story to residents of Venice, Italy, would have required far more explanation.

Variations between *Matthew* and *Mark* reflect what you’d expect when those who receive a letter come from differing backgrounds.



Matthew wrote to people of Jewish background, who were probably familiar with Israel’s history and the area.

Mark wrote to Romans, who were less acquainted with the geography.

Mark said the woman was a Greek (or Gentile) born in Syrian Phoenicia.

That geographical identification would make sense to folks elsewhere in the Roman Empire.

You likely remember that the Phoenicians lived near Tyre and Sidon, and were great ship builders and mariners.

***Matthew* and *Mark* show another difference.**

Matthew said the woman cried out,

“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

To Jewish people, the reference to Jesus as “the Son of David” likely meant; even though the woman was a Gentile, she believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Mark didn’t mention that detail.

The Romans, to whom Mark wrote, were more impressed with action than lineage.

Mark simply said the woman begged Jesus to drive the demon from her daughter.

The fact that she didn’t stop pleading made the disciples uncomfortable.

We have limited knowledge of demon possession.

I think that during Jesus’ ministry on earth, the Lord allowed some of Satan’s agents to control people so Jesus could demonstrate his power over the devil.

Sometimes people invited possession by their association with evil.

In the cases of innocent children, one of the parents may have committed vile behavior.

The effects were ugly and horrible.

In chapter nine, Mark described a demon-possessed boy.

The evil spirit threw the boy to the ground, made him foam at the mouth, gnash his teeth, and become rigid.

In attempts to kill him, the demon also threw the boy into fire and water.



Some folks think demon possession was epilepsy.²

Bible evidence does not support that conclusion.

For example, demon-possessed people often spoke with voices not their own.³

In other cases, demons kept people from speaking.⁴

In today's text, this woman's daughter suffered possession by an evil spirit.

The woman begged Jesus to help her daughter who was at home.

She heard Jesus was in the area and wanted to take advantage of the opportunity.

The woman displayed qualities Jesus commended.

What qualities does the Lord expect?

This woman possessed two vital attributes.

First, she absolutely believed that Jesus could help her daughter.

Do you have faith like that?

I grew up hearing preachers say that Jesus and the Apostles healed, but God doesn't miraculously heal people now.

Those same ministers prayed that God would be with the surgeons when they performed operations, but they never asked for the person to be healed, because "God doesn't directly heal people anymore."

I wonder if they ever thought through their logic. If God doesn't directly intervene in the world, how can he help surgeons operate more skillfully?

We should pray for miracles knowing that God can do anything he wants.

We should also pray for the doctors.

I doubt whether anyone alive can control miracles as Jesus and the Apostles had the power to do.⁵

Yet God can do anything he wants.

Only one thing can restrict God.

What keeps God from doing a mighty works?

Only our lack of faith.

² Older editions of the NIV used "The Healing of an Epileptic Boy" as a heading for verses Matthew 17:14-23.

³ Mark 5:1-20; Luke 4:41

⁴ Matthew 9:32

⁵ Jesus empowered his 12 Apostles to perform miracles (Matthew 10:1). The 12 could lay hands on others so they could perform miracle. Evidently those on whom the Apostles laid their hands, could not transfer that power to empower others. See Acts 8:4-24.

Jesus healed people and cast evil spirits from folks in Israel and beyond.

Jesus did not or could not perform mighty works in Nazareth because people didn't believe in him.

"They took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.'⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith."⁶

How great is your belief in Jesus, the Son of God?

This woman absolutely believed Jesus could help her daughter.

Do you have faith like that?

When we close our eyes to God's power, we err greatly.

This woman excelled in a second way.

Pride didn't hamper her loving, concern for her daughter.

The woman in today's text seemed devoid of worry about herself.

She wanted her daughter well and willingly suffered humiliation in order to help her.

Sometimes when folks help others, they're merely trying to make themselves look good.

We focus on God's power, his working, and give glory to him.

At first, Jesus' actions toward the woman might seem heartless and cruel, but he made sure the woman put her daughter's welfare first.

The Syrophenician woman easily passed the faith-humility test.

How would you do on that exam?

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⁶ Matthew 13:57, 58 NIV