

# When God Puts Us On Hold

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**Scripture: Mark 7: 24-37**

#### **Reflection:**

How many of you have experienced this: you're driving the speed limit, but on your way to an appointment, and the vehicle in front of you going way below the speed limit, they are busy on the phone, or talking to a passenger...but they have no regard for the vehicles behind.... So you have to slow down and wait...

Or you have to call the phone or cable or credit card company, and you have to follow 3 minutes worth of instructions... press 1 for English, press 2 for technical support, press 3 to speak to customer service, then you finally get there and have to WAIT another 10 minutes to speak to someone..

Or you go to the bank, and there are only two tellers working out of six, and there are 10 people in line before you.... Does that annoy you like it does me? I mean, you understand that there are somethings that you must wait for, and some situations require patience... but when you have to wait senselessly it seems to be all the more agitating...

We are constantly waiting whether we are at a traffic light, or stuck in traffic, or at the bank, or at the doctor's office....Wait! Wait! Wait!

But you know what I think? With the rise of high speed internet, sending and receiving money instantly by e-transfer, the use of microwave, where you could have your meal ready in two minutes and so on... it is becoming harder to have to wait on anything. Whenever we have to wait on anything we feel deprived...

But what about when we have to wait on God, to answer a prayer when we pray for something we deem to be of major importance and time sensitive? What do you do when you have to wait on God?

Certainly, the Bible says 'wait on the Lord' Psalm 27:14 that's easy to say. It's easy to preach, especially, if you are not the one waiting. Tell that to the person who has a certain illness and they have to wait for a specialist... or tell that to someone who is outside of the surgery room where their spouse is being operated on... Tell that to the child who has to live in the midst of abuse. It's easy to wait, if you are not the one having to wait.

What do you do when you have to wait? When you have to wait on God, and you're waiting for answers or a sign, or a miracle... and God puts you on hold? What do you do when God puts you on hold?

In our scripture today we read about a woman who did not immediately get her prayer answered. When Jesus was silent and did not immediately respond to her prayer request. I wonder how she felt...

Jesus went to the vicinity of Tyre? He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. "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 the dogs."

Wait... Jesus said... let me look after these children right here first, then I'll get back to you....

Just a bit of context... Jesus along with his disciples travel northwest about 50 miles to a town known as Tyre and another town called Sidon. It was in this area that they stop at a home probably

a relative or friend of one of the disciples. They were not in Jewish country. They were in Gentile country. The Jews and Gentiles did not have much to do with each other.

The Canaanites were long-standing enemies with the Jews. Here Jesus was with his disciples spending some time in enemy territory. And this woman comes into the very house, and begs for Jesus' help. She addresses Jesus with a title, that only the Jews would understand. She says, "O Lord, Son of David" That was a title for the Messiah. Gentile people did not have that kind of belief. She said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But Jesus, even with all that, told her that she had to wait.... Jesus put this lady, for the moment, ON HOLD! But what did the woman do? Well she pushed through. She remained calm, and decided that she would not give up, that she would trust that Jesus would do the right thing. Lord...," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

When God puts you on hold do you walk away with impatience? Do you lose faith and give up? When God puts us on hold, we've got to keep the faith, keep the trust... keep on trusting in the God Who has always been faithful in the past and who always comes through for us.

I don't know about this present thing I am praying for but I know that God has been there for me in the past. I know that God is a God who keeps promises, and that God has a plan for me and my life... so I must keep trusting that God will answer this prayer too... in his own way, on his own time.... So I trust you God...

The Syrophonecian woman was asked to wait... And she could have stormed away, yelling insults at Jesus, but She did not walk away. She kept on trusting in Jesus. She believed Jesus will eventually assist her daughter. And That's what we have got to do. We must keep on trusting in God because because He will eventually speak to our need. When God puts You on Hold....just remember.. God has not hung up, God has a word for you.

Hang on...stay on the line...You may not get that word immediately, but eventually, He will speak to your very need. Keep on praying, and keep listening, because in a matter of time God will speak to you.

Many of the people of the Bible wondered when God would speak to them.. We think of Job lost who lost everything, and who kept his ears peaked to God. Job kept listening to God for a reason why he had to endure all that he did. He wondered why God had put him on hold.

Then there There was Abraham. He was 100 years old before his first son was born. For many years Abraham wondered not why, but when? When will my son come? When will my wife Sarah give birth? For many years Abraham kept on believing God, even when God placed Abraham on hold. There are many whom God put on hold, but whom God eventually spoke to, and blessed.

When God puts you on hold, keep on trusting....

And a second thing, when God puts you on hold, be open to when when God starts to speak, and what God is saying to you...

So many times I think that we do not surrender to God's response to our prayers, because it may not take the exact form that we envisioned it would take. We already pictured what it is we want, and we expect God's response to match our vision.

On YouTube there are these men and women who call themselves dating coaches. They help people, especially women to find the perfect mate. But some of them suggest that you make a list of everything you want in a mate, you write it down in details, and you go on dates until you find that one person who fulfills all the items on list. And don't settle, keep dating until you find him or her... how exhausting is that? I think that I'd like someone whose values align with mine, and we could work the rest out...

We often have a vision like that dating list when we pray to God, and we expect that God's answer will correspond exactly with what we pictured. Perhaps God's answer to our prayers may look differently than what we asked for. Can we surrender to that? Can we be open to God's vision for our lives, even if it doesn't seem to match ours?

The woman in our story was willing to accept help from Jesus on Jesus' terms. She stayed the course and gently insisted that he help her daughter, even after he seemingly rudely put her on hold. She knew that she could count on his help, but did not know in what form the help would come.

She probably expected him to come home with her to put hands on her daughter to heal her. But instead he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." Because you have such faith and such trust, I am able to heal your daughter without the laying on of hands.

And did she question Jesus as to whether or not her daughter was actually healed? Did she say 'no Jesus, come to the house with me just in case this distanced healing did not work'...

Verse 30 says: 'She immediately went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.' She trusted God and she was open to how Jesus was going to work to heal her daughter.

How do you deal with being put on hold by God? What do you do when you have to wait on God to speak to you? Do you become impatient, do you become angry? Do you just give up? And when God does answer but the response doesn't match what you expected, do you become disillusioned, do you walk away from God?

In our story this woman showed great trust in Jesus, she exercised exemplary patience and faith. May she be an example to us in our own interactions with God, and May we be reminded of the Psalmist's advice for when God puts us on hold, to wait on the Lord, be of Good courage, and our faith and trust in him will be strengthened... May it be so..

## **Prayers**

O holy One, we thank you that we stand in a long line of believers who have been faithful through the ages. You have been leading your people through trial and difficulty and have always set before them hope for today and hope for a better tomorrow. We pray that you would bless us in our time as we seek to be as faithful as our forebears. May we too know the faith which is filled with hope in things not seen.

Give to us a faith like the grain of mustard seed which had small beginnings but which yielded large results. Give to us the faith to move the mountains of difficulty which come to each of us. Give to us the faith that sees a distant goal and is willing to work to achieve it.

Give to us a faith which has a vision of a new world where peace and love characterize the transactions of people and of nations and where war is no more. Give to us a faith such as Abraham's to move forward not knowing our destination but trusting in your guiding providence.

Give to us a faith which is able to endure those moments of personal disquiet and to trust that you are with us. Give to us a faith which sees the welfare of humankind as our business because it is the focus of your enduring love for your people.

Give us a faith like those who came before us, bless the members of our shutins list... bless those close to our hearts...

God, give us faith to walk with you through the ebb and flow and the victories and the defeats of life and to achieve victory and mastery of life. We ask all this in Jesus name, who taught us to pray...

Amen