



fellowship church

Sermon Discussion Guide

March 1, 2026 - Pastor Scott Allen

Mercy for Dogs (Matthew 15:21–39)

Summary

In Matthew 15, an untrained, unclean, undeserving Canaanite woman walked into a space where she absolutely did not belong to seek healing for her demon-oppressed daughter. After initially facing the deafening silence of Jesus, she persists in asking for help. She accepts her unworthy status as a Gentile "dog," and throws herself entirely upon the generosity of the Merciful Master, trusting that a crumb from the table of the Son of David is more than sufficient. Jesus praises her great faith and heals her daughter. Her example calls us to (1) *remember our desperate state*, (2) *throw ourselves at Jesus' feet*, and (3) *live like we have a seat at the table* (stop scavenging for crumbs of approval, comfort, or satisfaction from the world). Ultimately, *all who come to Jesus in humble faith get a seat at the King's table*.

Discussion Starter

- Did anything in this passage surprise you or make an impression on you? What was it, and why?
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Reflection Questions

- How does this passage subvert expectations—both those of the original audience, and our own?
- In writing his Gospel, Matthew has a discipleship agenda. Finish this sentence: *Matthew chose to include the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman so that...* (Discuss your answers together.)

- The Canaanite woman experienced both (1) feeling like an outsider, and (2) feeling like Jesus was responding to her prayers with silence. Can you remember a time in your life when you experienced one of those things? In retrospect, can you sense what God was up to during those times?
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Application Questions

- (Personal implications) There were three main points of application this week: (1) remember our desperate state, (2) throw ourselves at Jesus' feet, and (3) live like we have a seat at the table. Which point is the most important for you to focus on in your current season of life? Why?
- (Communal implications) What role are we called to play when others in our life seem to be going through a season of desperation or silence from God?
- (Missional implications) How does this surprising story shape our hearts and motives toward those who are “on the outside” in our lives?
- (Closing reflection & prayer) Read Ephesians 2:1–7 or 2:11–18 out loud together as a group. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the way he has rescued us, transformed us, and welcomed us into his family.

This week's guide written by: Riley Neal

Tips for Group Leaders

- DO ask open-ended questions. DON'T ask questions where a short "right" answer ends the discussion.
- DO encourage mutual participation by every group member. DON'T feel the need to respond or weigh in after every contribution. Avoid monologuing. As the leader, your goal is to facilitate mutual discussion between all group members (Eph 4:15–16).
- DO ask follow-up questions: "What do you mean by that?" "Tell me more!" "Has anyone else experienced something similar (or different)?"
- DO feel free to pick and choose questions that are a good fit for your group. DON'T feel the need to get through every question, and don't worry if you spend most of your time on a few questions that generate a lot of good discussion.
- DO keep the main thing the main thing. Steer your conversation toward the main theme of the sermon and the biblical text. DON'T get sidetracked on less important matters, theological debates, etc. A rabbit trail might sometimes be worth pursuing—if group members are wrestling deeply with the implications of biblical truth for their lives. Otherwise, steer conversation back to the main topic.
- DO get into the text. It could be helpful to read over the passage together or ask questions directly related to the text. Help group members engage the text for themselves and respond to what they see there.
- DO revisit important moments from the sermon—a memorable story, an impactful quote, a convicting point of application. "Remember when pastor X talked about Y? What impression did that make on you?"
- DO allow space for reflection, silence, and thoughtful answers. DON'T feel that you need to jump in or ask a new question just because the group has been quiet for a few seconds. A good rule of thumb is to wait until the silence gets awkward, then count silently to ten before jumping in.
- DO bring discussions home to practical, concrete everyday life. DON'T let discussion and application stay in the abstract realm. Steer discussion toward *what does responding to this sermon look like for me?* If comments are vague or general, ask "what would that look like, practically?"