

Mark 5:21-43 ~ Scripture Verses

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?”

³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Mark 5:21-43 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What is a synagogue ruler? (5:22) Is it like a Pharisee or Sadducee?
2. What was Jairus' attitude toward Jesus? (5:23) Why did he ask Jesus to "put your hands on her?" What did that mean? What does it mean today?
3. The story of Jairus and his dying daughter are interrupted in the next ten verses when a woman touches Jesus' cloak. Why was her condition so wretched? What would be like that today?
4. How was the bleeding woman healed? (5:27-29)
5. Why do you think the woman who was healed was initially afraid to admit that she had touched Jesus' cloak?
6. Have you ever felt afraid of God like the woman who touched Jesus? Why? In what way is it good to be afraid of God? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 28:15)
7. What kind of healing did Jesus provide to the woman in Mark 5:34?
8. Meanwhile, Jairus got word that his daughter died and his friends advised him not to bother Jesus any more. Have you ever been in that position where you feel that the worst has happened and there's no point praying any more?
9. Rank the effectiveness of the following prayers: A) pastor, priest, or leader prays out loud, B) group of 3 or 4 people; each one prays out loud, C) one person prays with another out loud, D) blessing before a meal out loud, E) individuals pray at a prayer meeting out loud, F) silent prayer in church, G) silent prayer by yourself (at home, in car, etc.) G) Lord's prayer, psalm, or scripture
10. What did Jesus say to Jairus? (5:36) In what situations in your life do you need to heed Jesus' words to "just believe?" Why is it hard to do?
11. How did people react when Jesus expressed confidence that the dead girl would be all right? (5:40) Have you ever laughed at someone who told you that "things will be all right?" Why do we tell people things will work out okay?
12. After Jesus cast out demons, he told the man to tell his family about it. Now, he tells everyone not to let anyone know about this girl. Why?

Mark 5:21-43 ~ Leader's Guide

1. What is a synagogue ruler? (5:22) Is it like a Pharisee or Sadducee?

A synagogue ruler is a layman (similar to a church deacon) who had administrative responsibilities such as looking after the building or supervising worship.

2. What was Jairus' attitude toward Jesus? (5:23) Why did he ask Jesus to "put your hands on her?" What did that mean? What does it mean today?

In the Old Testament period, the laying of hands had three meanings: 1) To confer a blessing as when Joseph blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. (Gen 48:13-20)

2) To transfer guilt from a sinner to a sacrifice as in Leviticus 1:4 – He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

3) To commission a person for a new responsibility as in Numbers 27:23 – Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the LORD instructed through Moses.

In the New Testament, the laying of hands had four meanings: 1) healing as when Jesus healed the leper in Mark 1:41 – Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

2) Giving a blessing as in Mark 10:16 – And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

3) Ordaining or commissioning: Acts 6:6 – They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

4) Imparting spiritual gifts: Acts 8:17 – Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Today, the laying of hands is most often done when praying over a person.

3. The story of Jairus and his dying daughter are interrupted in the next ten verses when a woman touches Jesus' cloak. Why was her condition so wretched? What would be like that today?

Her condition was especially wretched for several reasons. First, she had had the bleeding condition (we don't know exactly what disease it was) for 12 years. Second, she had been to many doctors and none could find a cure. Third, she had spent all her money on trying to find a cure. Fourth, she would have been shunned by other people, since anyone having contact with her was made ceremonially unclean. (Leviticus 15:25-33) "You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them." (Lev 15:31)

Being ceremonially unclean today is not a great issue but there are certainly many diseases which you can have for a long time, for which there is no known

cure, and for which doctors are happy to charge you lots of money to try and treat. Yahoo Answers has a list of 76 incurable diseases ranging from well-known diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's to rare diseases like Fucosidosis and Ebola. (<http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090318120826AAW1hN4>)

5. Why do you think the woman who was healed was initially afraid to admit that she had touched Jesus' cloak?

The woman might be reluctant to say anything because she knew she was ceremonially unclean. "If any of you touch these things (clothes, bed, etc.) you will be ceremonially unclean." – Lev 15:27 (Clean and unclean is described in a long section of OT scripture, Lev 11:1 to 15:33.) The woman certainly did not want to make the Jesus (the rabbi, the teacher) unclean, but the woman's faith convinced her that just by touching the fringe of his robe she would be healed.

The account says the healing took place "immediately," which is not always the case. If healing that you pray for does not take place immediately, does this mean that your faith is not strong enough? Or that you should lose faith?

This story is sandwiched between the beginning and end of the story about Jairus because Mark wants the two stories to help interpret each other. Both focus on the theme of faith as the important precondition for a miracle to occur. Note that when the woman confesses that she was the one who had touched Jesus' cloak, he commends her faith, not her honesty. In Verse 36, Jesus makes a similar point to Jairus: "just believe" (i.e., have faith like this woman did).

When Jesus suddenly stopped, turned around, and said, "Who touched me?" did this mean that Jesus was angry at whoever touched him? No, not at all, although it is possible that his disciples might be angry at her. They were clearly going someplace and she delayed their journey.

6. Have you ever felt afraid of God like the woman who touched Jesus? Why? In what way is it good to be afraid of God?

Several places in Deuteronomy we learn what God wants from us. In Verses 6:4-9 (the Jewish Shema) and in 10:12-13 we read, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your being, to keep the Lord's commands and his statutes that I charge you today for your own good?" [Alter]

If we do not fear the Lord and listen to him, what does he say will happen? In Deut 28:15, we read, "But if you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and do not obey all the commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you." [NLT]

7. What kind of healing did Jesus provide to the woman in Mark 5:34?

Most modern Bible translations read, "...your faith has healed you" or "...your faith has made you well" or "...your faith has made you whole." However, the Greek word used for heal, well, or whole actually means "saved" so Young's Literal Translation is one of the few that gets it right: "and he said to her, 'Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee; go away in peace, and be whole from thy plague.' "

So we see that Jesus gave her both physical healing ("be freed from your suffering") and spiritual salvation ("your faith has saved you. Go in peace...") Jesus provided the same dual healing to the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12.

8. Meanwhile, Jairus got word that his daughter died and his friends advised him not to bother Jesus any more. Have you ever been in that position where you feel that the worst has happened and there's no point praying any more?

9. Rank the effectiveness of the following prayers: A) pastor, priest, or leader prays out loud, B) group of 3 or 4 people; each one prays out loud, C) one person prays with another out loud, D) blessing before a meal out loud, D) individuals pray at a prayer meeting out loud, E) silent prayer in church, F) silent prayer by yourself (at home, in car, etc.) G) Lord's prayer, psalm, or scripture

10. What did Jesus say to Jairus? (5:36) In what situations in your life do you need to heed Jesus' words to "just believe?" Why is it hard to do?

³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

It is often hard to "just believe" for so many reasons. Perhaps a prayer has not been answered in the way you wanted. Maybe you've been praying for years (like the woman subject to bleeding) and nothing has come of it. Or people around you, like Jairus' friends, are urging you in another direction. Or you see a situation as just plain hopeless. Or you "know" from a practical sense that nothing can be done (for example, a computer disk drive physically fails and it has all your data on it – why pray for recovery when it's impossible?).

11. How did people react when Jesus expressed confidence that the dead girl would be all right? (5:40) Have you ever laughed at someone who told you that "things will be all right?" Why do we tell people things will work out okay?

People laughed at Jesus when he said the girl would be all right. And, of course, when she was all right, they were completely astonished. (5:42) Actually, their laughter was understandable. Until this point, Jesus had healed, cast out demons, and turned water into wine, but he had not brought anyone back to life. It was absurd to think that someone had the power to do that.

Furthermore, in those days, probably much like today, fathers and mothers would reassure their children after some calamity and tell them that “things will be okay.” The idea that “I’m an adult and I know better than you.” But sooner or later we find out that things aren’t always okay and they don’t always turn out all right. At the beginning of divorce proceedings, I tried to reassure my 10-year-old daughter that everything would be fine and work out all right. Boy, was I wrong! I don’t think she believed another thing I told her for years.

12. After Jesus cast out demons, he told the man to tell his family about it. Now, he tells everyone not to let anyone know about this girl. Why?

The same reason he didn’t want people telling about his healing: he didn’t want people following him just to see a miracle or to be healed. He was already popular which coupled with the growing opposition could have precipitated a crisis before his ministry was completed.

In addition, in this case, the crowds have shown no faith at all in their mocking laughter (“but they laughed at him” – v 40). They already have a very superficial explanation of what will inevitable be public knowledge of the girl’s health: she was simply asleep and not really dead at all. The true nature of the miracle that Jesus did can only be understood by someone who has faith. Jesus didn’t want it being broadcast in a mocking or simplistic way by those in the crowd who really didn’t believe.

At some point, I should probably discuss the nature of crowds. Not now, but if you want to delve into the subject, I recommend Chapter 3, “The Wisdom (and Madness) of Crowds” in the book by Duncan Watts titled, “Everything is Obvious (Once You Know the Answer).”