

A note from Kathy

This chapter begins with a delegation of opponents whose only purpose for coming to Jesus is to harass and discredit Him. This was an ongoing annoyance for Jesus as he traveled around. But the chapter has two beautiful stories that far outweigh the trouble makers: a Canaanite woman whose faith is beautifully displayed then rewarded, and the miraculous feeding of over 4000 people. Jesus is still meeting needs and answering prayers, even the ones that look impossible.

Observation

1. Jesus had been in the area of Gennesaret ministering to the crowds of people who came out of the towns to hear him teach and see him heal their sick friends and family. Matthew 15 opens with the Pharisees and scribes coming all the way from Jerusalem to see him. This was a very long journey for them (approximately 90+ miles). What was their purpose in coming to see Jesus?
2. What question did the Pharisees and teachers of the law ask Jesus?
3. What did Jesus ask them? If you are unfamiliar with this tradition, you might like to do some research on a Corban vow. You might also read Mark 7:1-13.
4. The disciples worried that Jesus might not realize how his words had affected the Pharisees. How did Jesus describe the Pharisees and teachers of the law?



5. The disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying, so Jesus went into greater detail. Jesus wanted them to understand that it was not the food a person ate that made them unclean before God. What was it that kept people from being a vessel God could use?

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things...*

Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'* "

6. Jesus left this area of the countryside and headed for the seashore, to the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Locate these cities on a map. A woman came looking for Jesus, and even though she lived in the area she was not an Israelite. How do we know she was a foreigner and not an Israelite?
7. This Canaanite woman did know some things about Jesus. Make a list of what you believe she knew about him based on Matthew 15:22 *"A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."*
8. What was Jesus' response to the woman in verse 23? Be very careful not to judge this response; remember, he knows the hearts of men and women, and his ministry is three-fold (Matthew 4:23).
9. What did the disciples want Jesus to do with her? Why?
10. What amazing qualities did she display that moved the heart of Jesus to grant her petition? Spend a few minutes considering your answer so that you can really view this woman's heart.

11. What was the outcome for this woman?

12. Jesus journeyed on and went up on a mountainside, which was a very common place for a teacher to sit before a crowd. That way more people could hear as he taught. Great crowds came once again to Jesus. What did they want?

13. According to verse 32, how long had the crowd been with Jesus?

14. What was Jesus doing? What was the response of the crowd?

15. Even though Jesus had already done so many amazing things for the crowd of people there, we see that he had compassion on them and did not want to merely send them away. What did he fear would happen if he simply dismissed the crowd?

16. How quickly the disciples have forgotten that little is much with Jesus. Fill in the chart below with the details of these two miraculous meals?

	Provision in hand	What did Jesus do	Those fed/satisfied	Leftovers gathered
Matt. 14:15-21				

Matt. 15:32-38				
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17. After this great miracle feeding of the crowd, what did Jesus do?
Locate this city on a map.

Application

1. The Pharisees and Scribes came from Jerusalem to investigate the things they had heard about Jesus. Their purpose was not one of further education or a desire to learn, but to find a way to trap him. Jesus knew their hearts better than they knew themselves. He questioned them in a way that made them have to face their true feelings about the Law of God and the traditions of men. He even quoted the prophet Isaiah to make his point. Do you believe it did any good? What did the disciples say about the reaction of the Pharisees to Jesus' words?

When we are doing a great work for God, can we afford to stop and fret when the world does not understand? Have you ever experienced something like this? You were doing what God had called you to do, and you faced opposition. How did you handle it? What did you learn from the experience?

2. What great work has God given you for which you must remain focused in order to finish your course? In 2 Timothy 4:7, the apostle Paul said, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* The Greek for these words "have fought, have finished, have kept," indicate a completed action with continuing results. Do you think of your ministry in this way? You will one day finish, but that the results will go on and on. What is your ministry?

3. The Pharisees thought of themselves as holy, set apart for God, yet what was missing? What was the truth about them?

4. What did you learn from Matthew 15 that will help you this week? This month? This year?

5. I love reading about someone like this Canaanite woman. Our churches are full of people just like this. They come not knowing Jesus, but they have heard there is one who can help them. They long for someone to show them mercy and relieve the suffering that is going on around them. Is Jesus still meeting people right where they are and blessing them when they humbly place their faith in Him?

6. The work of God really doesn't need more spectators. There are enough people in the crowd. Matthew 9:37-38 ... *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* What part are you playing in helping others come to Christ?

7. After studying this second miraculous feeding of thousands of men, women and children with only the most minuscule of provision, has your faith been challenged? Will you be doing anything different with the provisions that God supplies for your needs? What did you learn from Jesus example that could make a difference for you?