CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 15 — True Purity, Great Faith, and the Feeding of Four Thousand

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 14 ended with healing.

People at Gennesaret touched the edge of Jesus' cloak, and all who touched Him were made well.

Matthew Chapter 15 begins with a complaint.

Religious leaders come all the way from Jerusalem.

They have not come to be healed.

They have come to find fault.

Their complaint is about **hand washing.**

Jesus' disciples were not following the tradition of the elders.

They were eating without first washing their hands in the special religious way.

Jesus answers by turning the question around.

The Pharisees were breaking **God's** command to keep their **own** traditions.

They honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

Then Jesus teaches a powerful truth.

What makes a person unclean is not what goes into the mouth.

It is what comes out of the heart.

Then the scene changes.

Jesus goes into Gentile territory near Tyre and Sidon.

A Canaanite woman cries out to Him for her daughter.

At first, Jesus does not answer.

The disciples want her sent away.

But she keeps asking.

She kneels.

She says, **“Lord, help me!”**

And Jesus says:

“Woman, you have great faith!”

The religious leaders from Jerusalem had no faith.

A Gentile woman from Canaan had great faith.

Then Jesus heals great crowds on a mountainside.

And once again He feeds a multitude.

This time four thousand men, besides women and children, from seven loaves and a few small fish.

Matthew 15 therefore shows a sharp contrast:

Religious leaders with clean hands and dirty hearts.

And:

An outsider with nothing to offer but humble, persistent faith.

The central truth of Matthew 15 is:

God looks at the heart, not at outward religion, and Jesus welcomes all who come to Him in humble faith, providing for their needs with compassion.

I. LEADERS FROM JERUSALEM

Matthew 15:1 — Pharisees and Teachers of the Law

“Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked,”

These religious leaders came **from Jerusalem.**

Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life.

These were likely official investigators.

They had traveled a long way to Galilee.

Not to learn from Jesus.

But to watch Him and find fault.

Cross References

Mark 7:1

> Some Pharisees and some teachers of the law came from Jerusalem and gathered around Jesus.

Matthew 12:2

> When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Jesus, “Look! Your followers are doing something that is against the law to do on the Sabbath day.”

Mark 3:22

> The teachers of the law who came from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul in Him!”

Spiritual Principle

Some people come to Jesus looking for faults instead of looking for faith.

II. THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS

Matthew 15:2 — They Don't Wash Their Hands

“Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!”

This was not about germs or cleanliness.

It was about religious ritual.

The tradition of the elders was a large collection of rules passed down by Jewish teachers.

These rules were not in the Old Testament.

They were added by people.

One rule required people to wash their hands in a certain way before eating.

They poured water over their hands to remove any ceremonial uncleanness.

The Pharisees treated these traditions as if they were equal to God's Word.

Cross References

Mark 7:2

> They saw that some of Jesus' followers ate food with hands that were not clean, that is, not washed in the way the Pharisees required.

Luke 11:38

But the Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not wash His hands before the meal.

Colossians 2:8

Be sure that no one leads you away with false and empty teaching that comes from people, from the ruling spirits of this world, and not from Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Human traditions must never be treated as equal to God's Word.

III. BREAKING GOD'S COMMAND

Matthew 15:3 — For the Sake of Your Tradition

“Jesus replied, ‘And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?’”

Jesus answered with a question of His own.

“Why do you break the command of God?”

The disciples were breaking a human tradition.

But the Pharisees were breaking a **divine command.**

That is far worse.

They had made their traditions so important that they were setting aside God's own Word to keep them.

Cross References

Mark 7:8

You have stopped following the commands of God, and you follow only human teachings.

Mark 7:9

Then Jesus said to them, “You cleverly ignore the commands of God so you can follow your own teachings.”

Titus 1:14

Do not accept Jewish false stories and the commands of people who reject the truth.

Spiritual Warning

When tradition becomes more important than Scripture, we will end up disobeying God.

IV. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

Matthew 15:4 — God's Clear Command

“For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother must be put to death.’”

Jesus gave an example.

He quoted the fifth commandment.

“Honor your father and mother.”

Honoring parents included caring for them when they were old.

Providing food, shelter, and help.

Jesus also quoted the law about **cursing** parents.

This sin was so serious it carried the death penalty.

Notice how Jesus introduced these verses.

“For God said.”

These were not human traditions.

They were God's words.

Cross References

Exodus 20:12

> Honor your father and your mother so that you will live a long time in the land that the LORD your God is going to give you.

Exodus 21:17

> Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 5:16

> Honor your father and your mother as the LORD your God has commanded you.

Spiritual Principle

Caring for our parents is a command from God.

V. “DEVOTED TO GOD”

Matthew 15:5 — The Loophole

“But you say that if anyone declares what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’”

Notice the contrast.

God said...

But you say...

The Pharisees had a tradition called **Corban.**

A person could declare that his money or property was **“devoted to God.”**

It was set apart as a gift to the temple.

Once he said this, he could not use it to help his parents.

But he could often keep using it for himself.

It was a religious-sounding way to avoid caring for elderly parents.

Cross References

Mark 7:11

> But you teach that a person can say to his father or mother, “I have something I could use to help you, but it is Corban — a gift to God.”

Mark 7:12

> You no longer let that person do anything for his father or mother.

Leviticus 27:9

> If a person promises to give an animal that is accepted as an offering to the LORD, it becomes holy.

Spiritual Warning

Religious words can be used to hide selfishness.

VI. NULLIFYING GOD'S WORD

Matthew 15:6 — For the Sake of Your Tradition

“they are not to honor their father or mother with it. In this way you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

Jesus gave the result.

They are not to honor their father or mother.

Their tradition canceled God's command.

To **nullify** means to make something empty or useless.

Their rules had made God's Word powerless in people's lives.

Mark adds that this was only one example.

They did many things like this.

Cross References

Mark 7:13

> By your own rules, which you teach people, you are rejecting what God said. And you do many things like that.

Titus 1:16

> They say they know God, but the way they live shows they don't really know Him.

1 Timothy 5:8

> Whoever does not care for his own relatives, especially his own family members, has turned against the faith and is worse than someone who does not believe in God.

Spiritual Principle

Any teaching that cancels God's Word must be rejected.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When a rule lets you disobey God while looking holy, it is not from God.

VII. YOU HYPOCRITES!

Matthew 15:7 — Isaiah Was Right

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:”

Jesus called them **hypocrites.**

The word means **actors.**

They played the part of holy men.

But inside, they were not holy.

Jesus said Isaiah had **prophesied about** them.

Isaiah spoke these words seven hundred years earlier.

But they described the Pharisees perfectly.

Cross References

Mark 7:6

> Jesus answered, “You are all hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he spoke about you.”

Matthew 23:13

> How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You are hypocrites!

Matthew 6:2

> When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets so that people will see them.

Spiritual Warning

It is possible to perform religion without possessing faith.

VIII. LIPS AND HEARTS

Matthew 15:8 — Their Hearts Are Far from Me

“These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”

This is the heart of the problem.

Lips that honor God.

Hearts that are far from Him.

They said the right words.

They prayed the right prayers.

They sang the right songs.

But their hearts were somewhere else.

God is not impressed with words that do not come from the heart.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:13

> These people come near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me.

Ezekiel 33:31

> They come to you and sit in front of you as My people. They hear your words, but they will not obey them. With their mouths they show love, but their hearts are greedy.

James 1:26

> People who think they are religious but say things they should not say are just fooling themselves. Their religion is worth nothing.

Spiritual Principle

God wants our hearts, not just our words.

IX. WORSHIP IN VAIN

Matthew 15:9 — Merely Human Rules

“They worship Me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.”

In vain means **empty** or **useless.**

Their worship accomplished nothing.

Why?

Because **their teachings are merely human rules.**

They taught people's ideas as if they were God's commands.

Worship based on human rules instead of God's truth is empty.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:13

> Their worship of Me is based on nothing but human rules they have memorized.

Mark 7:7

> Their worship of Me is worthless. The things they teach are nothing but human rules.

Colossians 2:22

> These rules are only human commands and teachings. They are about things that are gone as soon as they are used.

Spiritual Warning

Worship can be busy and still be empty.

Key Truth

True worship is based on God's truth and comes from a sincere heart.

X. LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

Matthew 15:10 — Jesus Calls the Crowd

“Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, ‘Listen and understand:’”

Jesus turned from the Pharisees to the crowd.

He wanted everyone to hear this teaching.

“Listen and understand.”

This was important.

The Pharisees had confused people about what makes a person clean before God.

Jesus wanted to make it clear.

Cross References

Mark 7:14

> After Jesus called the crowd to Him again, He said, “Everyone listen to Me, and understand what I am saying.”

Deuteronomy 6:4

> Listen, people of Israel! The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only LORD.

Proverbs 4:1

> My children, listen to your father's teaching. Pay attention so you will understand.

Spiritual Principle

God wants His people to understand His truth, not just hear it.

XI. WHAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH

Matthew 15:11 — That Is What Defiles

“What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

This was a revolutionary statement.

The Jews had many laws about clean and unclean foods.

But Jesus said food does not **defile** a person.

To **defile** means to make someone unclean before God.

What makes a person unclean is **what comes out of their mouth.**

Words reveal the heart.

Later, God showed Peter in a vision that all foods had been made clean.

Cross References

Mark 7:15

> There is nothing people put into their bodies that makes them unclean. People are made unclean by the things that come out of them.

Acts 10:15

> But the voice said to him again, “God has made these things clean, so don't call them unholy!”

James 3:6

> The tongue is like a fire. It is a world of evil among the parts of our body. It spreads its evil through the whole body.

Spiritual Principle

The real problem is not outside us but inside us.

XII. THE PHARISEES WERE OFFENDED

Matthew 15:12 — Do You Know?

“Then the disciples came to Him and asked, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?’”

The disciples were worried.

“Do You know that the Pharisees were offended?”

These were powerful men from Jerusalem.

The disciples may have thought Jesus had gone too far.

But the truth often offends those who are proud.

Cross References

John 6:61

> Knowing that His followers were complaining about this, Jesus said, “Does this teaching bother you?”

Matthew 11:6

> Blessed is the person who does not lose faith because of Me.

Galatians 5:11

> If I still taught that circumcision is necessary, then the cross would not be a problem to people.

Spiritual Principle

The truth will offend some people, but it must still be spoken.

XIII. PULLED UP BY THE ROOTS

Matthew 15:13 — Not Planted by the Father

“He replied, ‘Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.’”

Jesus was not worried about offending the Pharisees.

He used a picture.

Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up.

The Pharisees and their traditions were not planted by God.

They were man-made.

And one day, they would be removed.

Only what God plants will last.

Cross References

John 15:1

> I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener.

Isaiah 60:21

> All your people will do what is right. They will receive the earth forever. They are the plant I planted, the work of My hands, to show My glory.

Psalm 1:4

> But wicked people are not like that. They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Spiritual Principle

Only what God plants will last forever.

XIV. BLIND GUIDES

Matthew 15:14 — Both Will Fall into a Pit

“Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

“Leave them.”

Do not follow them.

Do not worry about pleasing them.

They are blind guides.

They claimed to lead people to God.

But they could not see the truth themselves.

And when a blind person leads another blind person, **both will fall into a pit.**

Following false teachers leads to disaster.

Cross References

Matthew 23:16

How terrible for you! You guide the people, but you are blind.

Luke 6:39

Jesus told them this story: “Can a blind person lead another blind person? No! Both of them will fall into a ditch.”

Isaiah 9:16

The people who lead them lead them the wrong way, and the people who follow them are destroyed.

Spiritual Warning

Be careful whom you follow.

Key Truth

A guide is only as good as his ability to see.

XV. EXPLAIN THIS PARABLE

Matthew 15:15 — Peter Asks

“Peter said, ‘Explain this parable to us.’”

Peter spoke for the disciples.

He asked Jesus to explain what He meant.

The idea that food does not make a person unclean was hard for Jews to understand.

They had followed food laws all their lives.

Cross References

Mark 7:17

When Jesus left the people and went into the house, His followers asked Him about this story.

Matthew 13:36

Then Jesus left the crowd and went into the house. His followers came to Him and said, “Explain to us the meaning of the story about the weeds in the field.”

Mark 4:10

Later, when Jesus was alone, the twelve apostles and others around Him asked Him about the stories.

Spiritual Principle

Ask Jesus to explain what you do not understand.

XVI. STILL SO DULL?

Matthew 15:16 — Jesus Asks

“‘Are you still so dull?’ Jesus asked them.”

Jesus was surprised at their slowness.

“Are you still so dull?”

They had been with Him for a long time.

They had heard so much teaching.

Yet they still did not understand.

Jesus was patient.

But He wanted them to grow.

Cross References

Mark 7:18

> Jesus said, “Do you still not understand?”

Matthew 16:9

> Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves of bread that fed the five thousand?

Hebrews 5:11

> We have much to tell you about this, but it is hard to explain because you have become so slow to understand.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus wants His followers to grow in understanding.

XVII. INTO THE STOMACH

Matthew 15:17 — Out of the Body

“Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?”

Jesus explained simply.

Food goes **into the stomach.**

Then it passes **out of the body.**

It does not touch the heart.

Food cannot make the soul unclean.

Mark adds that by saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.

Cross References

Mark 7:19

> Food does not go into a person's mind. It goes into the stomach and then out of the body. (When Jesus said this, He meant that no longer was any food unclean for people to eat.)

1 Corinthians 6:13

> “Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” But God will destroy them both.

Romans 14:17

> In the kingdom of God, eating and drinking are not important. The important things are living right with God, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual purity is not about food.

XVIII. FROM THE HEART

Matthew 15:18 — These Defile Them

“But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.”

Now Jesus explained what really defiles.

The things that come out of a person's mouth.

And where do they come from?

The heart.

The mouth is like a faucet.

The heart is like the water tank.

Whatever is in the tank will come out of the faucet.

Cross References

Mark 7:20

> And Jesus said, “The things that come out of people are the things that make them unclean.”

Luke 6:45

> A good person has good things saved up in his heart, so he brings good things out of his heart. But an evil person has evil things saved up in his heart, so he brings bad things out. People speak the things that are in their hearts.

Proverbs 4:23

> Be very careful about what you think, because your thoughts control your life.

Spiritual Principle

The heart is the source of everything we say and do.

XIX. OUT OF THE HEART

Matthew 15:19 — Evil Thoughts and Evil Actions

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

Jesus listed what comes out of a sinful heart.

Evil thoughts come first.

Every sinful action begins as a thought.

Then He listed sins that break the Ten Commandments.

Murder.

Adultery.

Sexual immorality.

Theft.

False testimony.

Slander.

Notice where these come from.

Out of the heart.

The problem is not mainly our surroundings.

The problem is inside us.

We need more than clean hands.

We need new hearts.

Cross References

Mark 7:21

> All these evil things begin inside people, in the mind: evil thoughts, sexual sins, stealing, murder.

Galatians 5:19

> The wrong things the sinful self does are clear: being sexually unfaithful, not being pure, taking part in sexual sins.

Jeremiah 17:9

> More than anything else, a person's mind is evil and cannot be healed. Who can understand it?

Spiritual Principle

We do not become sinners by sinning; we sin because we are sinners.

Key Truth

The human heart needs more than reform; it needs a new birth.

XX. NOT UNWASHED HANDS

Matthew 15:20 — What Defiles a Person

“These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

Jesus brought the lesson back to the original question.

The Pharisees were worried about **unwashed hands.**

But unwashed hands do not make a person unclean before God.

A sinful heart does.

The Pharisees had clean hands and dirty hearts.

Cross References

Mark 7:23

> All these evil things come from inside and make people unclean.

Romans 14:14

> I am in the Lord Jesus, and I know that there is no food that is wrong to eat.

1 Timothy 4:4

> Everything God made is good, and nothing should be refused if it is accepted with thanks.

Spiritual Principle

God cares far more about a clean heart than about clean hands.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You can wash your hands a hundred times and still have a dirty heart; only Jesus can make the heart clean.

XXI. TYRE AND SIDON

Matthew 15:21 — Jesus Withdrew

“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.”

Jesus left Galilee.

He went north to **the region of Tyre and Sidon.**

These were Gentile cities on the Mediterranean coast.

After teaching that food laws do not make a person unclean, Jesus went to people the Jews considered unclean.

Cross References

Mark 7:24

> Jesus left that place and went to the area around Tyre. When He went into a house, He did not want anyone to know He was there, but He could not stay hidden.

Matthew 11:21

> If the same miracles I did in you had happened in Tyre and Sidon, those people would have changed their lives a long time ago.

Ezekiel 28:2

> Human, say to the ruler of Tyre: This is what the Lord GOD says: You are proud, and you say, “I am a god.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus goes to people others consider outsiders.

XXII. A CANAANITE WOMAN

Matthew 15:22 — “Son of David, Have Mercy on Me!”

“A Canaanite woman from that area came to Him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.’”

Matthew calls her **a Canaanite woman.**

This is surprising.

The Canaanites were the ancient enemies of Israel.

They were the people Israel drove out of the Promised Land.

She was a Gentile.

A woman.

An outsider in every way.

But listen to what she said.

“Lord.”

“Son of David.”

She knew who Jesus was.

She called Him by the Jewish title for the Messiah.

“Have mercy on me!”

Her daughter was **suffering terribly** from a demon.

She was desperate.

Cross References

Mark 7:26

> She was Greek, born in Phoenicia, in Syria. She begged Jesus to force the demon out of her daughter.

Matthew 9:27

> As Jesus was leaving there, two blind men followed Him. They cried out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

Genesis 10:19

> The land of the Canaanites reached from Sidon to Gerar, as far as Gaza.

Spiritual Principle

A parent's love brings them to Jesus for their children.

Key Truth

The religious leaders from Jerusalem did not recognize the Son of David; a Canaanite woman did.

XXIII. JESUS DID NOT ANSWER

Matthew 15:23 — Send Her Away

“Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged Him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’”

This is one of the most surprising verses in the Gospels.

Jesus did not answer a word.

Why would Jesus be silent?

Jesus was testing her faith.

He was also teaching His disciples.

The disciples were annoyed.

“Send her away.”

“She keeps crying out after us.”

They wanted her gone.

But she would not stop.

Cross References

Psalm 22:2

> My God, I call to You during the day, but You do not answer. I call at night. I am not silent.

Luke 18:39

> The people in front scolded the blind man and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more.

Isaiah 65:24

> Before they call to Me, I will answer. While they are still speaking, I will hear them.

Spiritual Principle

God's silence is not always God's refusal.

Application

When God seems silent:

- Keep praying.
- Keep trusting.
- Remember that He hears.
- Let your faith grow stronger.
- Do not give up.

XXIV. THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

Matthew 15:24 — Sent Only to Israel

“He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’”

Jesus finally spoke.

But His words seemed to close the door.

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

During His earthly ministry, Jesus' main mission was to Israel.

God's plan was for the gospel to go first to the Jews, and then to the whole world.

But Jesus' words also tested whether the woman would keep coming.

Cross References

Matthew 10:6

Go instead to the people of Israel, who are like lost sheep.

Matthew 9:36

When He saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jeremiah 50:6

My people have been like lost sheep. Their shepherds led them the wrong way.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan has an order, but His grace reaches beyond every boundary.

XXV. “LORD, HELP ME!”

Matthew 15:25 — She Knelt Before Him

“The woman came and knelt before Him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.”

She did not give up.

She came closer.

She **knelt before Him.**

Her prayer became even simpler.

“Lord, help me!”

No arguments.

No long speeches.

Just a humble cry for help.

Cross References

Mark 7:25

A woman whose daughter had an evil spirit in her heard that He was there. So she quickly came to Jesus and fell at His feet.

Psalm 121:1

I look up to the hills, but where does my help come from?

Psalm 46:1

God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble.

Spiritual Principle

Humble, persistent prayer moves the heart of Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Sometimes the best prayer is the shortest one: “Lord, help me!”

XXVI. THE CHILDREN'S BREAD

Matthew 15:26 — Tossed to the Dogs

“He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.’”

Jesus' answer sounds harsh.

The children were Israel.

The dogs referred to Gentiles.

Jews sometimes called Gentiles “dogs” as an insult.

But Jesus used a softer word that means **little dogs** or **house pets.**

He was not calling her a wild street dog.

He was describing a family scene.

The children eat first at the table.

The family pets are under the table.

Jesus was continuing to test her faith.

And He was showing His disciples what real faith looks like.

Cross References

Mark 7:27

> Jesus told the woman, “It is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs. First let the children eat all they want.”

Matthew 7:6

> Don't give holy things to dogs, and don't throw your pearls before pigs.

Philippians 3:2

> Watch out for those who do evil, who are like dogs.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus sometimes tests faith in order to strengthen it.

XXVII. EVEN THE DOGS EAT THE CRUMBS

Matthew 15:27 — “Yes, Lord”

“‘Yes it is, Lord,’ she said. ‘Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.’”

Her answer is one of the greatest answers of faith in the Bible.

She did not argue.

She did not get offended.

She agreed with Jesus.

“Yes, Lord.”

Then she used His own words.

“Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.”

She was saying:

I know I am not part of Israel.

I know I do not deserve a place at the table.

But even a crumb from Your table is enough.

She understood something the Pharisees never did.

Jesus' power is so great that even a crumb of His grace could heal her daughter.

Cross References

Mark 7:28

> But she answered, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table can eat the children's crumbs.”

Luke 16:21

> He wanted to eat only the small pieces of food that fell from the rich man's table.

Judges 1:7

> Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to eat scraps under my table.”

Spiritual Principle

True faith does not demand; it humbly trusts in God's mercy.

Key Truth

She did not ask for the whole loaf; she believed that a crumb of Jesus' power was enough.

XXVIII. GREAT FAITH

Matthew 15:28 — Healed That Very Hour

“Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed at that very hour.”

Jesus praised her.

“Woman, you have great faith!”

Only two people in Matthew's Gospel are said to have **great faith.**

The Roman centurion in Matthew 8.

And this Canaanite woman.

Both were Gentiles.

Both were outsiders.

Jesus often called His own disciples **“you of little faith.”**

But He called this woman's faith **great.**

“Your request is granted.”

And **her daughter was healed at that very hour.**

Jesus healed the girl from a distance, without even seeing her.

Cross References

Mark 7:29

> Then Jesus told her, “Because of your answer, you may go. The demon has left your daughter.”

Matthew 8:10

> When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. He said to those who were following Him, “I tell you the truth, this is the greatest faith I have found, even in Israel.”

Matthew 9:22

> Jesus turned and saw the woman and said, “Be encouraged, dear woman. You are made well because you believed.” And the woman was healed from that moment on.

Spiritual Principle

Great faith is humble, persistent, and trusts completely in Jesus' mercy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The woman who called herself a dog under the table left with a seat at the King's table.

XXIX. UP ON A MOUNTAINSIDE

Matthew 15:29 — He Sat Down

“Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then He went up on a mountainside and sat down.”

Jesus returned to the area around **the Sea of Galilee.**

Mark tells us He went through the Decapolis, a Gentile region east of the lake.

He **went up on a mountainside and sat down.**

This was the position of a teacher.

Cross References

Mark 7:31

> Then Jesus left the area around Tyre and went through Sidon to Lake Galilee, to the area of the Ten Towns.

Matthew 5:1

> When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a hill and sat down. His followers came to Him.

Mark 3:13

> Then Jesus went up on a mountain and called to Him the people He wanted, and they came to Him.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus makes Himself available to those who seek Him.

XXX. LAID AT HIS FEET

Matthew 15:30 — He Healed Them

“Great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them.”

Great crowds came.

They brought people with every kind of need.

The lame.

The blind.

The crippled.

The mute.

And many others.

They **laid them at His feet.**

This shows humility and trust.

They brought their broken ones and placed them before Jesus.

And He healed them.

Cross References

Isaiah 35:5

> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear.

Mark 7:32

> While He was there, some people brought a man to Him who was deaf and could hardly talk. The people begged Jesus to put His hand on the man to heal him.

Matthew 11:5

> The blind can see, the crippled can walk, people with skin diseases are healed, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life, and the good news is told to the poor.

Spiritual Principle

Bring your brokenness and lay it at Jesus' feet.

Application

What can you lay at Jesus' feet?

- Your pain.
- Your sickness.
- Your fears.
- Your family members.
- Your friends who are hurting.
- Your sin and shame.

XXXI. THEY PRAISED THE GOD OF ISRAEL

Matthew 15:31 — The People Were Amazed

“The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.”

The people were **amazed.**

They saw:

The mute speaking.

The crippled made well.

The lame walking.

The blind seeing.

And they **praised the God of Israel.**

This phrase suggests that many in the crowd were Gentiles.

They were praising Israel's God, the one true God.

Jesus was bringing the nations to worship the God of Israel.

Cross References

Isaiah 35:6

> Crippled people will jump like deer, and those who cannot talk will shout with joy.

Mark 7:37

> The people were completely amazed and said, “Jesus does everything well. He makes the deaf hear and those who can't talk able to speak.”

Luke 7:16

> All the people were filled with fear and began praising God. They said, “A great prophet has come to us!” and “God has come to help His people!”

Spiritual Principle

The works of Jesus lead people to praise God.

XXXII. THREE DAYS WITH NOTHING TO EAT

Matthew 15:32 — “I Have Compassion”

“Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, ‘I have compassion for these people; they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.’”

The crowd had been with Jesus for **three days.**

They had run out of food.

Jesus said:

“I have compassion for these people.”

Jesus cared about their spiritual needs.

He also cared about their physical needs.

He did not want them to **collapse on the way** home.

This time, Jesus brought up the problem before the disciples did.

Cross References

Mark 8:2

> I feel sorry for these people, because they have already been with Me for three days, and they have nothing to eat.

Matthew 14:14

When He arrived, He saw a large crowd. He felt sorry for them and healed those who were sick.

Deuteronomy 8:3

He humbled you by letting you get hungry, and then He fed you with manna.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus cares about every part of our lives, including our daily needs.

XXXIII. WHERE COULD WE GET ENOUGH BREAD?

Matthew 15:33 — In This Remote Place

“His disciples answered, ‘Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?’”

This is a surprising answer.

The disciples had already seen Jesus feed five thousand men.

Yet they asked:

“Where could we get enough bread?”

They had forgotten what Jesus had done before.

It is easy for us to forget God's past faithfulness when we face a new problem.

Cross References

Mark 8:4

Jesus' followers answered, “How can we get enough bread to feed all these people? We are far away from any town.”

Numbers 11:13

Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep crying to me, “We want meat!”

2 Kings 4:43

Elisha's servant asked, “How can I feed a hundred people with this?”

Spiritual Warning

It is easy to forget what God has already done.

Key Truth

The God who provided yesterday will provide today.

XXXIV. SEVEN LOAVES

Matthew 15:34 — And a Few Small Fish

“‘How many loaves do you have?’ Jesus asked. ‘Seven,’ they replied, ‘and a few small fish.’”

Jesus asked a simple question.

“How many loaves do you have?”

“Seven, and a few small fish.”

Once again, it was far too little.

But once again, it would be enough in Jesus' hands.

Cross References

Mark 8:5

> Jesus asked them, “How many loaves of bread do you have?” They answered, “Seven.”

Matthew 14:17

> They said to Him, “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish.”

Matthew 16:10

> Or the seven loaves of bread that fed the four thousand? Remember how many baskets you filled then?

Spiritual Principle

Jesus always starts with what we have.

XXXV. SIT DOWN ON THE GROUND

Matthew 15:35 — Preparing to Be Fed

“He told the crowd to sit down on the ground.”

Jesus told the people to **sit down.**

Before they were fed, they had to sit and wait.

They had to trust that Jesus would provide.

Cross References

Mark 8:6

> Jesus told the people to sit on the ground.

Matthew 14:19

> Then He told the people to sit down on the grass.

John 6:10

> Jesus said, “Tell the people to sit down.” This was a very grassy place.

Spiritual Principle

Faith waits for God's provision.

XXXVI. HE GAVE THANKS

Matthew 15:36 — He Broke Them

“Then He took the seven loaves and the fish, and when He had given thanks, He broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people.”

Jesus did the same things He did before.

He took the bread.

He gave thanks.

He broke it.

He gave it to the disciples.

These are the same actions Jesus would do at the Last Supper.

Jesus gave thanks for something small.

And God multiplied it.

Cross References

Mark 8:7

> The followers also had a few small fish. After Jesus gave thanks for the fish, He told His followers to give them to the people also.

1 Corinthians 11:24

> He gave thanks for the bread, broke it, and said, “This is My body; it is for you. Do this to remember Me.”

Matthew 26:26

> While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it and broke it. Then He gave it to His followers.

Spiritual Principle

Thanksgiving opens the door to God's provision.

XXXVII. SEVEN BASKETS

Matthew 15:37 — All Ate and Were Satisfied

“They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.”

They all ate.

They were satisfied.

And there was more left over.

Seven basketfuls.

In the first feeding, there were twelve baskets.

Here there are seven.

The word for **basket** here is different.

These were large baskets, big enough to hold a person.

Paul was later let down over a wall in a basket like this.

Jesus provided more than enough again.

Cross References

Mark 8:8

> All the people ate and were satisfied. Then His followers filled seven baskets with the leftover pieces of food.

Matthew 14:20

> All the people ate and were satisfied. Then the followers filled twelve baskets with the leftover pieces of food.

2 Kings 4:44

> Then he served it to the people, and they ate and had some food left over, as the LORD had said.

Spiritual Principle

God's provision always overflows.

XXXVIII. FOUR THOUSAND MEN

Matthew 15:38 — Besides Women and Children

“The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children.”

Four thousand men.

Besides women and children.

Altogether, perhaps twelve to fifteen thousand people were fed.

This was a different miracle from the feeding of the five thousand.

Different place.

Different crowd.

Different number of loaves and baskets.

The first feeding was mainly for Jewish crowds.

This feeding seems to have included many Gentiles.

Jesus provides for all people.

Cross References

Mark 8:9

> There were about four thousand people who ate. After they ate, Jesus sent them home.

Matthew 14:21

> There were about five thousand men there who ate, not counting women and children.

Exodus 12:37

The Israelites traveled from Rameses to Succoth. There were about 600,000 men walking, not including the children.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the Bread of Life for Jews and Gentiles alike.

XXXIX. TO MAGDALA

Matthew 15:39 — He Got into the Boat

“After Jesus had sent the crowd away, He got into the boat and went to the region of Magdala.”

Jesus **sent the crowd away.**

They were fed and ready to go home.

Then He **got into the boat** and went to **Magdala.**

Magdala was a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

It was the hometown of **Mary Magdalene**, a faithful follower of Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 8:10

Then right away He got into a boat with His followers and went to the area of Dalmanutha.

Matthew 14:22

Immediately Jesus told His followers to get into the boat and go ahead of Him across the lake.

Luke 8:2

Some women who had been healed of sicknesses and evil spirits were also with Him: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' ministry moves on to new places and new people.

XL. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 15

1. Tradition Must Not Override God's Word

Human customs can never replace divine commandments.

Principle:

Test every tradition by the Word of God.

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2. True Purity Is from the Heart

What we say and do reveals whether we are clean or unclean before God.

Principle:

God wants clean hearts more than clean hands.

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3. Faith Crosses Boundaries

The Canaanite woman's persistence shows that genuine faith moves the heart of Jesus.

Principle:

No one is too far outside to receive God's mercy.

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4. Jesus Welcomes the Broken

The blind, lame, and hurting were healed when laid at His feet.

Principle:

Whatever is broken, lay it at Jesus' feet.

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5. Jesus Provides in Abundance

With a few loaves and fish, He fed four thousand, showing His compassion and provision.

Principle:

The God who provided before will provide again.

XLI. CLEAN HANDS, DIRTY HEARTS

Matthew 15 shows two very different kinds of people.

The Pharisees

- From Jerusalem, the holy city.
- Experts in religion.
- Careful about washing hands.
- Honored God with their lips.
- Their hearts were far from God.
- Left offended.

The Canaanite Woman

- From a Gentile region.
- An outsider with no religious standing.
- Humble and desperate.
- Called Jesus “Lord” and “Son of David.”
- Her heart reached out to Him.
- Left with her daughter healed.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The insiders missed Jesus because of pride; the outsider found Him through humble faith.

XLII. THE MARKS OF GREAT FAITH

The Canaanite woman shows us what great faith looks like.

Great Faith Recognizes Jesus

She called Him **“Lord, Son of David.”**

Great Faith Is Desperate

She cried out for her daughter.

Great Faith Is Persistent

She kept asking even when Jesus was silent.

Great Faith Is Humble

She knelt and accepted that she did not deserve His help.

Great Faith Trusts God's Mercy

She believed even a crumb of His grace was enough.

Great Faith Is Rewarded

Her daughter was healed that very hour.

Key Truth

Great faith is not proud faith; it is humble faith that will not let go.

XLIII. TWO FEEDINGS, ONE SAVIOR

Matthew records two great feeding miracles.

The Five Thousand (Matthew 14)

- Five loaves and two fish.
- About five thousand men.
- Twelve baskets left over.
- Mainly Jewish crowds.

The Four Thousand (Matthew 15)

- Seven loaves and a few small fish.
- About four thousand men.
- Seven large baskets left over.
- Many Gentiles in the crowd.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the Bread of Life for all people — Jew and Gentile alike.

XLIV. WHAT MATTHEW 15 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 15 presents Jesus as:

The Defender of God's Word

He exposed traditions that canceled God's commands.

The Searcher of Hearts

He knew that true uncleanness comes from within.

The Lord of All Foods

He declared that food does not make a person unclean.

The Son of David

Even a Canaanite woman recognized Him.

The Tester and Rewarder of Faith

He tested the woman's faith and then praised it.

The Healer of the Nations

He healed Gentiles who praised the God of Israel.

The Compassionate Provider

He fed thousands who were hungry.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who sees through religious masks also sees the faith in a humble heart.

XLV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was the tradition of the elders?

It was a collection of rules added by Jewish teachers over many years.

They were not part of God's law, but the Pharisees treated them as if they were.

Question 2

Why were the Pharisees upset about hand washing?

It was not about germs.

It was about a religious ritual they believed made a person ceremonially clean.

Question 3

How were the Pharisees breaking God's command?

They allowed people to declare money “devoted to God” so they would not have to use it to care for their parents.

This broke the command to honor father and mother.

Question 4

What does it mean to honor God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him?

It means saying the right religious words without truly loving or obeying God.

Question 5

What did Jesus mean when He said food does not defile a person?

Food goes into the stomach, not the heart.

It cannot make a person spiritually unclean.

What makes a person unclean is the sin that comes from the heart.

Question 6

What comes out of the heart, according to Jesus?

Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.

Question 7

What did Jesus mean by “blind guides”?

The Pharisees claimed to lead people to God, but they could not see the truth themselves.

Following them would lead to disaster.

Question 8

Why is it surprising that the woman was a Canaanite?

The Canaanites were the ancient enemies of Israel.

She was an outsider in every way, yet she recognized Jesus as the Son of David.

Question 9

Why did Jesus not answer the woman at first?

He was testing and strengthening her faith.

He was also teaching His disciples what real faith looks like.

Question 10

What did Jesus mean by the children's bread and the dogs?

The children were Israel, and the little dogs were Gentiles.

Jesus' main mission at that time was to Israel.

He used a gentle word that pictures family pets under the table.

Question 11

Why was the woman's answer so remarkable?

She humbly agreed with Jesus and said that even the dogs eat the crumbs.

She believed that even a crumb of His power was enough to heal her daughter.

Question 12

Who are the two people in Matthew said to have great faith?

The Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman.

Both were Gentiles.

Question 13

Why did the disciples ask where they could find enough bread?

They had forgotten that Jesus had already fed five thousand.

It is easy to forget God's past faithfulness when facing a new problem.

Question 14

How is the feeding of the four thousand different from the feeding of the five thousand?

It happened in a different place, with a different number of loaves, people, and baskets.

This crowd seems to have included many Gentiles.

Question 15

What should Matthew 15 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 15 should cause believers to live:

- Testing traditions by God's Word.
- Caring for their parents and families.
- Worshiping God from the heart.
- Guarding their hearts and their words.
- Being careful whom they follow.
- Praying with humble persistence.
- Welcoming outsiders.
- Laying their needs at Jesus' feet.
- Remembering God's past faithfulness.
- Giving thanks for what they have.

XLVI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 15 asks several important questions.

Do I Value Any Tradition More Than God's Word?

Am I Using Religious Excuses to Avoid My Responsibilities?

Am I Caring for My Parents and Family as God Commands?

Do I Honor God with My Lips but Not with My Heart?

What Is Coming Out of My Mouth, and What Does It Say About My Heart?

Am I Following Blind Guides?

Do I Keep Praying When God Seems Silent?

Am I Humble Enough to Ask for Crumbs of God's Mercy?

What Broken Thing Do I Need to Lay at Jesus' Feet?

Have I Forgotten What God Has Already Done for Me?

XLVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Crumbs from the Master's Table”

The Pharisees came from Jerusalem.

They had the Scriptures.

They had the temple.

They had every religious advantage.

And they left offended.

The Canaanite woman came from the region of Tyre and Sidon.

She had no religious standing.

She was from a people who were Israel's enemies.

And she left with her prayer answered.

What made the difference?

The Pharisees thought they deserved a place at God's table.

The woman knew she did not.

She asked only for crumbs.

And Jesus gave her everything she asked for.

This creates a powerful principle.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

The person who thinks they deserve God's blessing will often miss it.

The person who knows they do not deserve it, but trusts in God's mercy, will receive it.

Principle:

Those who come asking for crumbs of mercy find a full table of grace.

XLVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 15 is a chapter of contrasts.

Religious leaders from the holy city.

A Gentile woman from a pagan land.

Clean hands.

Dirty hearts.

Lips that honor God.

Hearts that are far from Him.

A mother who will not stop asking.

Disciples who want her sent away.

Crowds of broken people laid at Jesus' feet.

Thousands of hungry people fed with a few loaves.

And through it all, Jesus shows what God truly cares about.

Not outward ritual.

But the heart.

Not religious pride.

But humble faith.

Matthew 15 therefore reminds us:

Our traditions must bow to God's Word.

Our hearts matter more than our hands.

God's mercy reaches beyond every boundary.

And Jesus still has compassion on the hungry, the hurting, and the helpless.

The story of Matthew 15 does not end with:

Offended religious leaders.

Confused disciples.

Or an empty hillside.

It ends with:

A healed daughter.

A praising crowd.

And baskets of leftovers.

The same call still stands:

Honor God with your heart.

Let His Word rule your traditions.

Guard what comes out of your mouth.

Keep asking in faith.

Lay your needs at His feet.

Remember His faithfulness.

Give thanks.

And until He returns:

Keep your heart clean.

Keep praying.

Keep trusting His mercy.

Keep coming to His table.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that You look at the heart.

Forgive us for the times we have honored You with our lips while our hearts were far away.

Keep us from empty worship.

Help us worship You in spirit and in truth.

Show us any tradition or habit we have put above Your Word.

Help us obey Your commands, even when it is inconvenient.

Teach us to honor and care for our parents and families.

Lord Jesus, You know what is in our hearts.

Create clean hearts in us.

Guard our thoughts and our words.

Keep evil thoughts from taking root in our minds.

Protect us from blind guides.

Give us wisdom to follow those who truly follow You.

Thank You for the Canaanite woman and her great faith.

Teach us to pray like she prayed.

Help us keep asking when You seem silent.

Make us humble enough to ask for crumbs of Your mercy.

Thank You that Your grace reaches beyond every boundary.

Thank You that no one is too far outside to receive Your help.

We lay our broken places at Your feet.

Heal what only You can heal.

Thank You for Your compassion for the hungry and the weary.

Help us never forget what You have already done for us.

Teach us to give thanks for what we have, and to trust You to multiply it.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed at that very hour.” — Matthew 15:28

Central Truth

God looks at the heart, not at outward religion, and Jesus welcomes all who come to Him in humble faith, providing for their needs with compassion.

Matthew 15 in One Sentence

Jesus exposes religious leaders who honor God with their lips but break His Word for their traditions, teaches that true uncleanness comes from the heart, praises the great faith of a humble Canaanite woman, heals great crowds, and feeds four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fish.