Lesson Six
Two Desperate People: Relying On Jesus

Focal Text
Mark 5:22-43

Background
Mark 5:21-43

Main Idea
Both Jairus, whose daughter was dying, and the woman who was desperate to be healed relied solely on Jesus for help.

Question to Explore
Where is Jesus when we need him?

Quick Read
When we bring our problems to Jesus by faith, he gives us what we ask or whatever is best.

Commentary
Have you ever been driving down the freeway when someone zoomed by you traveling twenty miles an hour over the speed limit, weaving in and out of traffic, and you said, Where’s a policeman when you need one?

J. B. Phillips, one of the best-known theologians of the twentieth century, suggested that many of us view God as a law enforcement officer who should be available whenever we want him. His classic book Your God Is Too Small describes the various inadequate ways
we envision God; its first chapter is titled, “Resident Policeman.”1 Many of us want a God who will bring law and order to the universe as long as his enforcement benefits us.

However, the Lord seldom operates on our schedule: “‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8-9). God does not always give us what we want, but he always gives us what we need (Philippians 4:19). But there’s a catch: God can give only what we will receive, and lead only those who will follow.

This week we’ll continue our study of Jesus’ relationships in the Gospel of Mark, watching as he heals a young girl and an older woman. Their life situations spanned the social spectrum of his day. He loves us as much as he loved them. Will we allow Jesus to be our Healer and Lord, or only our Policeman?

**Bring your pain to Christ (5:21-28)**

Mark’s narrative resumes: “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” (Mark 5:21). He and his disciples returned by boat to the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. By this time it was presumably daylight, and a “large crowd” gathered around Jesus. During this phase of his ministry, he generated such a response often.

Presumably Jesus was teaching them, as he so often did, when “one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet” (5:22). “Synagogue ruler” translates archisynagogon, referring to the president or leader of a local synagogue; in this case, he was likely from Capernaum. If so, he had witnessed Jesus’ remarkable healing ministry in that city (see 1:21-34) and gained confidence to bring his crisis to the Lord.

As a “synagogue ruler,” he presided over the operations of the local synagogue. He was in charge of arranging the services and providing for upkeep and programs. He would enlist rabbis to teach, procure scrolls for Scripture reading, and designate readers and those who would lead in prayer. We might think of him as a chairman of deacons in a small pastorless church or executive pastor in a larger congregation.

His name, “Jairus,” meant he enlightens or he awakens. Mark provided this detail to lend historicity to his account, and perhaps because Jesus brought both meanings to reality in the man’s life. (Note that Mark named only one other person in his narratives prior to the passion week—Bartimaeus in 10:46). When Jairus saw Jesus he “fell at his feet,” a typical Oriental expression of supplication and submission (see 7:25; John 11:32).
From his knees, Jairus “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’” (Mark 5:23). He “pleaded earnestly” (parakaleo polys, meaning to exhort, entreat, implore much) concerning his “little daughter” (thygatrion). Note that he called her “little,” although she was twelve years of age (5:42), indicating how precious she was to him. Luke adds that she was his only daughter (Luke 8:42).

She was “dying” (echei, or at the point of death). Jairus knew that Jesus was his only hope for saving her life and believed that his touch could cause her to “be healed and live.” As Jesus often laid hands on people to heal them (see Mark 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25), this desperate father begged him to do the same for his little girl. (For similar narratives in the Old Testament, see 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37.)

Responding to Jairus’s urgent request, “Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him” (Mark 5:24). As Jesus and his disciples went to Jairus’s home, a “large crowd” (polys ochlos) “followed” (ekolouthei, or came along, accompanied) and “pressed around” (synthlibo, meaning to crowd around, to press together) him. The imperfect tense indicates continued action. This was not the first time Jesus faced such pressure from a crowd (see 3:9).

Mark included this line to explain what came next: “And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years” (5:25). As Jairus’s daughter has experienced twelve years of life (5:42), so she had experienced twelve years of suffering. “Bleeding” translates rhysei, the typical word for menstrual flow. Hers had not stopped in more than a decade, however, leaving her anemic and severely weakened. Mark would later describe her condition as “suffering,” from mastix, which means scourge, whip, lash, torment (5:29).

In addition, “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” (5:26). She “suffered a great deal” (polys pascho, meaning to experience much evil) and “spent” (dapanesasa, or to waste, destroy, wear out) all her money, but her health continued to decline. The cures prescribed in the Jewish Talmud—carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a cloth, for instance—only made things worse.

In addition, her condition rendered her ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:19-27). She had not been to a house of worship in twelve years, and likely had never been able to marry or have children. Imagine her feelings of isolation, helplessness, and hopelessness.

While she could not go to the temple of God, she could go to the God of the temple: “When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak” (Mark 5:27). Some see this as a sign of humility, not wanting to stop or disturb the
Master. More likely, it was the only way this unclean outcast thought she could approach a noted rabbi and healer.

Like Jairus, she was confident in Jesus’ abilities: “because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed’” (Mark 5:28). She was not the last person to believe this: “Wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed” (6:56). Her intention was to touch just the edge of his garment (Matthew 9:20; Luke 8:44), perhaps one of the four tassels at the corners of his prayer shawl (the tallit). She knew that by touching Jesus, she would defile him as well (Lev. 15:26-27); perhaps she believed that she could brush the hem of his cloak in the crowd without detection.

Both Jairus and the unnamed woman did the right thing—they brought their pain to Jesus. Like any physician, Jesus can heal only those who submit to him. James warned us that “you do not have, because you do not ask God” (James 4:2). What pain is Jesus waiting to touch in your life today?

**Receive Jesus’ grace by faith (5:29-34)**

Mark’s narrative continues: “Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering” (Mark 5:29). “Immediately” (euthys) is one of Mark’s favorite words, indicating the swift action for which his Gospel is known. The woman’s “bleeding” (pege, or spring, menstrual flow) “stopped” (exeranthe, or dried up, withered, analogous to a spring drying up) and she “felt” (ginosko, or knew, comprehended, understood) that she was “freed” (iaomai, meaning cured, healed) from her “suffering” (mastix, or whip, torment). Mastix was used to describe the whip that Paul endured (Acts 22:24; Hebrews 11:36).

The woman probably wanted to fade into the crowd, but “at once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’” (Mark 5:30). “At once” again translates euthys, meaning immediately. Jesus “realized” (ginosko, or to know, understand, the same word as with the woman’s knowledge that she had been healed) that “power” (dynamis, meaning strength, ability, force) had “gone out” (exelthousan, meaning to leave, depart, escape) from him. In the same way, “power was coming from him and healing them all” (Luke 6:19).

In that moment, Jesus turned in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” Interpreters over the centuries have wondered about the meaning of this question. Some suggest that the Father healed this woman without the knowledge of the Son, whose knowledge of some issues (such as the timing of his return; see Matt. 24:36) was limited during his incarnation. More likely, Jesus asked the question in order to engage the
woman in further ministry. Just as God asked Adam and Eve questions to which he knew the answer (Genesis 3:9, 11, 13), Jesus asked the woman to identify herself. In a moment, we’ll see why.

His disciples did not understand his motives, however: “‘You see the people crowding against you,’ his disciples answered, ‘and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?”’” (Mark 5:31). Perhaps they were remarking at his sensitiveness in feeling a touch in such a crowded situation, but more likely they were objecting to the logic of his question. With so many pressing around him, why would he ask his question?

Jesus ignored their response, perhaps indicating that his question was not directed at them: “But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it” (5:32). He “kept looking around” (periblepo, or looking after, to hunt) for the person who had touched him and been healed.

As a result of Jesus’ persistence, “the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth” (5:33). She was “trembling with fear” (tremousa, meaning to quiver with awe) as she fell at his feet, repeating the actions of Jairus just moments earlier (5:22). Had she seen the synagogue ruler fall at Jesus’ feet and receive what he requested? She then “told him the whole truth” about her situation and action.

Now our Lord came to the gift he had wanted to give the woman: “He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering’” (5:34). As Jairus had grieved his daughter’s illness, so Jesus had been burdened for this “daughter.” Her faith had “healed” (sozo, or to save) her; whenever this word is found in conjunction with “faith” (pistis), it conveys spiritual as well as physical healing (see Luke 17:19) and is the normal word for saving from sin. Jesus had healed her body, but he wanted to heal her soul. When she came to Jesus in honesty and humility, her faith positioned her to receive the eternal gift he wanted to bestow.

Note that the spoken Hebrew and Aramaic term translated by Mark into sozo was yashaw, a variant of Yeshua, translated Jesus. He had fulfilled his name, the One who would “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). He then told her to “go in peace,” a blessing that meant she was right with God, others, and herself. After twelve long years, she had been restored to life in all its fullness.

The woman’s faith did not save her. Rather, it positioned her to receive what Jesus intended to give by grace. This pattern is repeated throughout Scripture: The priests’ faith in stepping into the flooded Jordan River (Joshua 3:15-17) did not cause the river to stop; it positioned them to receive the miraculous grace of God. The Jews’ marching around
Jericho did not cause the fortified city to collapse; it positioned them to experience the power of God in its destruction (Josh. 6:20).

So it is with us: we are saved not by faith but by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we bring our pain and problems to God, believing that God can help us, we then receive all that God intends to give.

Is God waiting on a step of faith in your life today?

**Trust God to do what is best (5:35-43)**

In that moment, our first story resumed: “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?’” (Mark 5:35). “Bother” translates skylleis, meaning to harass. Their announcement of the death of Jairus’s daughter was delivered in a most cruel way. In that moment, Jairus must have thought that the time Jesus spent with the woman had cost him the life of his precious child.

But Jesus knew better: “Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe’” (5:36). “Ignoring” translates parakouo, or disobey, reject. He asked the ruler to “just believe” (monom pisteue, or to continue believing). As Jairus had trusted Jesus when he came to him, so he should trust him now.

As with the Mount of Transfiguration (9:2) and Gethsemane (14:33), “He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James” (5:37). Always the master teacher, Jesus used this crisis to teach his inner circle more about his miraculous power and gracious compassion.

Their group now reduced in number, “When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly” (5:38). They witnessed a “commotion” (thorybos, or noise, clamor, confusion, uproar) at the house, with people “crying” (klaio, or weeping, bewailing) and “wailing loudly” (alalazo polys, or extensively wailing or clanging; used of clanging cymbals in 1 Corinthians 13:1).

These were the mourners, already arrived at the home. They were a professional guild, required at funerals and often engaged at the time of death. They wore garments torn to the heart but not beyond the navel, employed flute players, and cried aloud. Their presence was intended to help the family and community express its grief.

Jesus immediately “went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep’” (Mark 5:39). “Asleep” translates katheudei, meaning to
sleep or die; the word is a biblical metaphor for the physical death of God’s people (see 1 Thessalonians 5:10).

The professionals, hardened to death’s reality, responded sarcastically: “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” (Mark 5:40). They “laughed at” (kategelon, or ridiculed, laughed to scorn) Jesus, their rejection costing them the opportunity to witness the miracle to come. So Jesus “put them out” (ekballo, meaning to drive out, expel, remove) of the house, and took the parents and his inner circle to the room where the dead girl’s body lay.

As with the sick woman, Jesus’ touch was sufficient to bring life: “He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha koum!’ (which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’)” (5:41). Jesus “took her by the hand” as he had done with Simon Peter’s sick mother-in-law (1:31). Such an action would render Jesus ritually unclean for the second time this day. Then Jesus spoke to her in Aramaic (probably her first language), “Talitha koum!” His tender words could be translated literally, Arise, lamb. (The fact that Mark had to translate for his Roman readers demonstrates their unfamiliarity with Palestinian life and customs.)

At Jesus’ touch and word, “immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished” (5:42). “Immediately” (euthys, used once again to describe urgency and quick action) the dead girl “stood up” (anistemi, or rose up, rose to life) and “walked around” (peripateo, meaning to walk about) the room. Mark’s indication of her age added further historical merit to this miraculous event. As women were typically married at thirteen, she had died just before her wedding day.

Not surprisingly, all those present were “completely astonished” (ekstasei, or to be out of their minds with amazement). This was not the first or last time Jesus’ miraculous powers would evoke such a response (see 2:12; 6:51).

Then “he gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat” (5:43). Jesus gave “strict orders” (diastello polys, or significant commands) to her family and his disciples that they not tell others about this miracle. Perhaps Jesus wanted the girl to be able to resume her normal life. Also, Jesus did not want the crowds to respond to his resurrecting power in a way that would threaten the authorities or hinder his ministry. Remember that when Jesus healed a leper, Jesus warned him not to tell others what had happened to him. However, “he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places” (1:45).
His second order was that they “give her something to eat,” demonstrating his concern for her practical health as well as proving that her resuscitation was complete. If she could walk and take food, she was fully well.

Jesus was able to heal Jairus’s daughter because the synagogue ruler trusted him to do whatever was best for his family. We should do the same. Jesus will not heal every physical suffering (see Paul’s “thorn in my flesh,” 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Jesus will not always do what we want him to do. But if we trust Jesus completely, he will give us what we ask or whatever is best. We may not understand his ways on this side of glory (see 1 Cor. 13:12), but one day we will understand what we cannot comprehend now.

What need should you trust to your Father’s perfect will today?

Conclusion
The comparisons between the two females healed by Jesus are remarkable. The older woman suffered from a terminal condition, while the younger died from one. The older was sick for twelve years, while the younger had lived that long. The older woman was ostracized from the synagogue, while the younger was the daughter of the synagogue ruler. The older woman would likely have been turned away by Jesus’ disciples if she had come openly to him, while the mourners at Jairus’s home wanted to turned Jesus away from the dead girl. Both were healed with Jesus’ touch. And both received grace as the result of faith.

An anonymous Confederate soldier wrote,

I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn to serve. I asked for health, that I might do great things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things. I asked for wealth, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might earn the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life; I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing I asked for, but all I hoped for. Despite myself, my prayers were answered. And I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

So can we be. This is the promise, and the invitation, of God.
BaptistWay Press®

See www.baptistwaypress.org for additional study materials on

The Gospel of Mark: People Responding to Jesus

and more than forty-five other Bible studies by BaptistWay Press®,
or call 1-866-249-1799 (M-Fri 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. central time).

A recent book by Dr. Denison,
The Bible—You Can Believe It: Biblical Authority in the Twenty-First Century,
is also available from BAPTISTWAY PRESS®.
The price is only $4.95 each plus shipping and any applicable taxes.

This book is also available in a Kindle edition. Go to www. Amazon.com/kindle and
do a search for “BaptistWay.” You then should see this book by Dr. Denison as well
as all the other Kindle editions of BaptistWay books.

A Teaching Guide for The Bible—You Can Believe It: Biblical Authority in the Twenty-
First Century is available for only $1.95 plus shipping and any applicable taxes.

♦

DENISON FORUM
ON TRUTH AND CULTURE

To receive Dr. Denison's free daily e-mail, “Denison Forum on Truth and Culture,”
see www.denisonforum.org. The brief essay discusses current events and issues in
light of God’s word and provides practical applications to life.

Twitter @JimDenison

♦