

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Nobody likes this story. The disciples don't come across well: "Send her away!" they say to Jesus, "She's bothering us." Jesus himself doesn't come across well. We can live with Jesus's sternness toward those who are arrogant, hypocritical or unkind, but here he is denying to her face a request for help from someone in deep personal trouble. How can we explain this to our children?

Jesus' wonders are secondary to his preaching: they are, as John describes them, "signs" of God's saving presence among us. Without that context, they will be misinterpreted; they will lose their whole purpose. But Jesus himself seems to be torn two ways in regard to his own healing power. Often, "moved by compassion," he allows himself to be deflected from his intention of preaching or of spending time in solitary prayer, and instead gives his whole attention to healing. At the marriage in Cana, though he first says, "What has this to do with me? The time is not right," yet ten minutes later there he is, saving the party by turning the water into wine. And the woman has merely to show that she does know something about the God of Israel, and he changes his mind: "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you have asked."

What does this mean for us? When our prayers are granted, have we passed some kind of test? When they are denied, have we failed? Both of these are risky conclusions to draw, particularly with children, turning what should be a dynamic relationship with the living God into a series of set situations, with a right and wrong way to act. A better lesson is that each of these encounters in the Gospel is unique, showing a slightly different facet of Jesus' personality, a different context, a different individual approaching him. Our own situations are similarly unique. Our most important work in prayer is coming to know God simply for himself. He is not just a Force or a Source; he is a Person, with a distinct personality and style. Just as in any relationship of love, he may surprise us, baffle us, or seem to rebuff us; he will not always give us what we want. But, as the woman said to Jesus, he has enough love for all of us; and he wants us to keep asking.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year A
PROPER 15
TRACKS 1 and 2



JESUS WAS IN A PLACE CALLED SYRO-PHOENICIA.

The woman begged him, "Help me! My daughter is very sick."



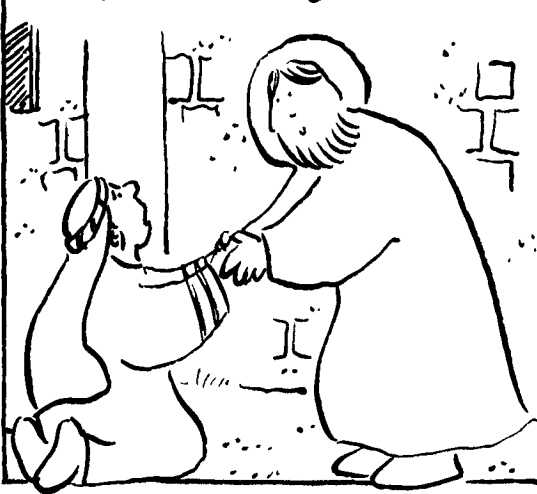
Jesus said, "I'm here to help the people of Israel. They know about God, but your people do not."



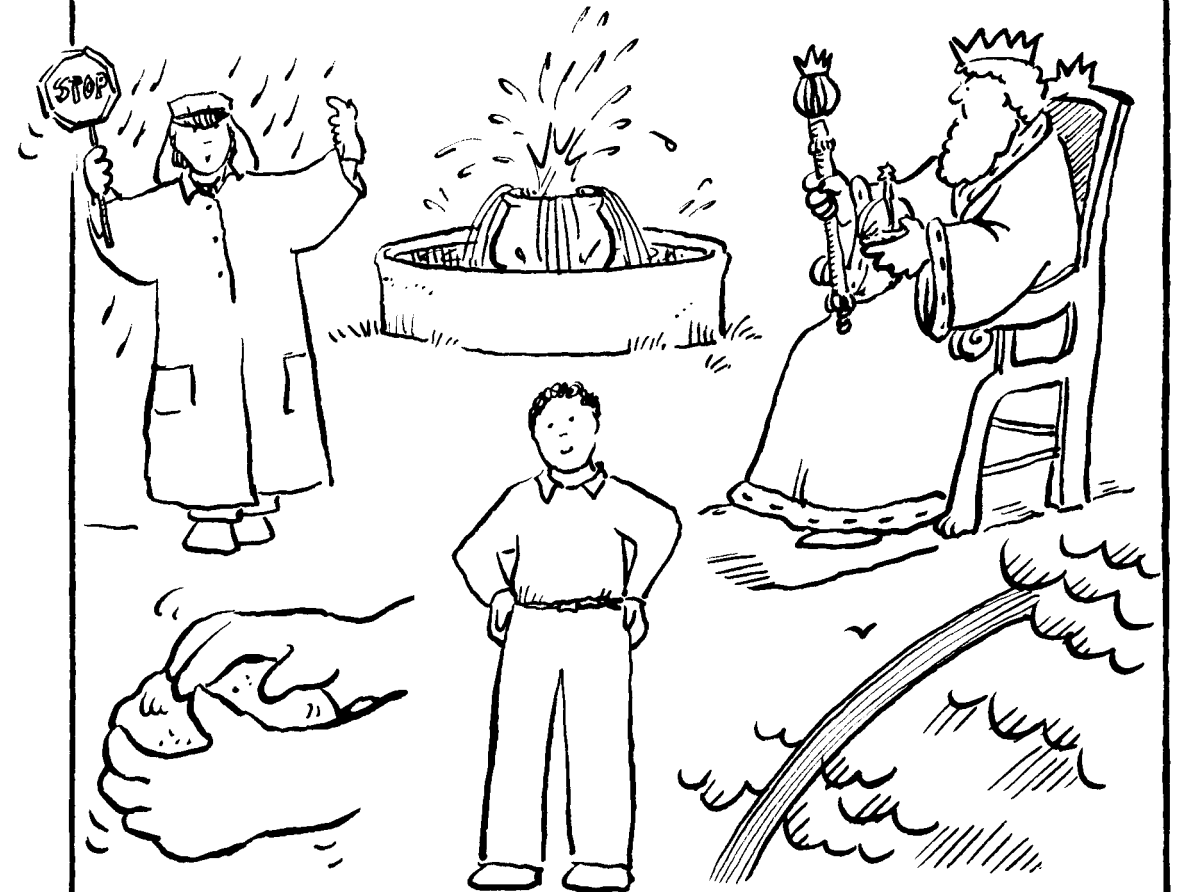
The woman said, "I know this about God: he has enough love for me too."



Jesus said, "You do know about God. Your daughter will get well."



Jesus did not want people to think he was just a magic man who could do amazing wonders. He wanted them to see that the wonderful things he did came from God's love. If they did not believe in God, they might not understand that. But the woman showed that she did understand!



Which of these pictures give good ideas of God?

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Year A
PROPER 16 TRACK 2

As Jesus went around the country, telling people about God's Kingdom, and healing sick people, he became more and more famous. People wondered whether he was the Messiah. Jesus did not say, "I am the Messiah." Instead, he called himself "the Son of Man." "Son of Man" means "human being," but it is also used in the Bible to mean someone special with mysterious power from God. Jesus wanted people to decide for themselves who he was!

WHAT PETER SAID

Matthew 16:13-20
JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE STAYING IN A TOWN CALLED CAESAREA PHILIPPI!



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The name "Peter" means "rock." The Bible says that God is like a rock—strong and firm and sheltering. God promises to take care of us. When we believe God's promises, our faith in him can also be like a rock. It can help us do God's work!

ISAIAH 51:1-2
God says, "Remember the faith of your ancestors. They are the rock you are carved from"

PSALM 138:9
"The Lord will make his plans come true... Lord, take care of us forever!"

ROMANS 12:2
"Do not follow the way of the world. Change your mind and follow God's way!"