

Women in the Gospels

Seeing Jesus from their perspective.

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The Widow of Nain and Peter's Mother-in-Law

Introduction

Jesus healed a lot of people while he was here on earth. Today we're going to look at two women who experienced Jesus' miracle healing touch.

Peter's Mother-in-Law

Though we don't know her name, we do know she was personally known by Jesus because of her relationship with Peter. Just before this healing, Mark tells us about another person Jesus healed that day

Mark 1:21 – 28

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

²⁵"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." ²⁸News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Jesus begins to teach and he taught as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

Matthew 9:6: *But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home."*

Matthew 28:18: *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

If someone has all authority, what does that mean?

Jesus has all authority. If and when you surrender to his authority in your life, that means he has authority over:

- What you say
- What you think
- Where you go
- Your attitude
- Your money
- Your decisions
- Your desires

Jesus has all authority—and he's good! You can totally trust him.

Once they heard Jesus speak and realized he spoke with authority, they listened to him. Do you purposefully and intentionally and regularly listen to Jesus?

- Stop the noise. Learn to like silence. How?
- Prayer
- Reading the Bible
- You have the mind of Christ

1 Corinthians 2:11 - 16

For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments,¹⁶ for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

What does it mean that "we have the mind of Christ"?

Peter's Mother-in-Law

Matthew 8:14-15: *When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.*

Mark 1:29 – 31: *As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her.³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

Luke 4:38 – 39: *Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.*

This woman is the first female character we encounter in Mark's Gospel. The phrase "sick with a fever" is a general descriptor of healing for a range of illnesses. Luke observes that she was suffering from a *high* fever.

Jesus takes the woman by the hand and lifts her up from her sickbed. His touch is the medium of healing.

The story ends with the woman's response: she serves him. Do you think this story is trying to emphasize and reinforce that a woman's role was to serve in the home? The Greek verb *diakonew* is used to describe her serving. But consider this:

Mark 10:41 – 45:

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus uses that situation to teach them—and us—a very important principle. What is that principle?

This story of Peter's mother-in-law is not only a healing story but a story of her call to discipleship. Have you ever wondered why this story is included in three of the four Gospels? Could it be that Peter's mother-in-

law was healed to serve, and that is the example for us, too?

How does our culture feel about serving?

This statement by Jesus—"whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant"—was counter-culture in his day, and it definitely is in ours, too.

Here's the hidden truth: Helping others is a benefit to us. Help others to help yourself.

If you want to be miserable, focus on yourself all day every day. Make everything all about you, and you will be sick like Peter's mother-in-law.

After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, when the sun went down and Shabat was over, many brought people to Jesus to be healed.

Matthew 8:16 – 17: *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."*

Isaiah 53:4 – 5: *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

"When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for all our sin. But he also burst open the door to God's coming new creation, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Jesus *Through the Eyes of Women* p. 108).

Why doesn't God heal everyone today like Jesus did when he was on earth?

First, Jesus didn't heal everyone when he was on earth.

Second, Jesus still has the power to heal today, but sometimes he uses illness as a way to teach and grow faith, not necessarily to always grant physical healing immediately upon request.

Third, Do you think that all the people Jesus healed on earth believed in him and accepted him as Messiah and served him all the rest of their days?

Suppose that as disciples of Jesus Christ some of us had the power from God to heal people like Jesus did. Do you think that we would see many more people come to Jesus and become a true disciple because they were physically healed?

The Widow of Nain

This story is most unusual.

Luke 7:11 – 17:

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.¹² As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

¹⁴Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people."¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

What's different about this healing—this resurrection from the dead?

Jesus somehow knew that this mother was weeping, and that she was a widow. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Our God has always been a God of compassion:

Deuteronomy 10:17 – 18: *For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.*

Psalms 68:5: *A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.*



"The Lord Jesus' compassion for the bereaved widow, as she follows the corpse of her son out of Nain, is perfectly aligned with the character of God" (*Jesus Through the Eyes of Women* p. 111).

Why doesn't Jesus heal today like he did when he was on earth?

References are from the book, *Jesus Through the Eyes of Women* by Rebecca McLaughlin