

STUDY 15

The Power of Faith

- 1. In his letter, James warns his readers not to be unstable and double minded (*James 1:1-8*). Why do you think Jesus felt free to change His mind on His initial response to the Syrophonecian woman's request and how would you explain this to James?**

James' words were written in the context of asking God for wisdom and remaining steadfast in the confidence that He would provide it. The issue here is the dependability of God and His willingness to help.

Jesus' words to the Syrophonecian woman were designed to provoke her to show what kind of person she was. Her reply showed both her faith and her humility, and Jesus was impressed. For that reason He changed His mind.

Changing our minds about people and situations, and the willingness to be flexible, is something we should be willing to do as we learn more. It is a strength. First impressions are provisional and may be misleading.

Sometimes when we pray for something, having a clear idea of what we expect, things work out differently and we can see with the benefit of hindsight that God did answer but in a different way. But the underlying conviction that God is trustworthy should not change. Being open-minded is not the same as being double-minded.

- 2. If God were always to give us what we want at the first time of asking, what do you think the result would be?**

We would probably treat God's blessing casually and become rather like spoiled children. We might regret some of the things we asked for.

We need to remember when we ask God for things that prayer is not a matter of getting God to do what we want (a typically pagan approach) but rather us aligning ourselves with God so that He can give us what He wants and we need.

- 3. Thinking about some of Jesus' other miracles, which can be seen as spiritual parables and what is the message Jesus is giving?**

- Jesus restores sight - He enables people to really see God and truth.
- Jesus heals the deaf - He enables people to hear God.
- Jesus raised Lazarus - the dead will be raised.
- Jesus feeds the hungry - He gives spiritual nourishment.
- Jesus turned water into wine - He gives new life - there will be a Messianic banquet when He returns.
- Jesus casts out demons - Jesus will completely overthrow Satan and his kingdom.
- Jesus stills the storm - He is Lord over nature.

4. To what group of people does the thought of the miracles of Jesus as foretastes of the resurrection body give special encouragement and comfort?

- People with a disability or injury
- The aged and infirm.
- Those who have suffered the death of loved one.