



Matthew: New King, New Kingdom

Cell Notes 2020

STUDY 5. The Inclusive Kingdom

Aim. To reflect on Jesus as saviour not just to the Jewish minority, but to us all, and consider how we can be as inclusive as possible as a faith community.

To Start With: When have you been glad to be included in something?

Engaging with the text:

1. Read Matthew 15.21–28 and in groups of two or three people discuss the following characters, including both your initial impression and if/how that changes as the story progresses:
 - the Canaanite woman
 - the disciples
 - Jesus

Now express your opinions to the group using a graph, drawings, facial expressions, mime or any non-verbal method!

2. Many people are confused by how Jesus behaves here. Below are some theories about what is going on, which are you convinced by? (If none then how do you read it?)

Theory 1. Jesus sees his mission to the Jews as exclusive and so doesn't want to be distracted by those from other ethnic groups – particularly Canaanites with whom Israel had an ancient animosity. However, her determination challenges that, and persuades him to overcome his reservations.

Theory 2. Jesus is saying out loud what the disciples were thinking i.e. Gentiles were considered inferior and called 'dogs' by Jews (in part because they had no dietary restrictions). In doing so he is challenging their prejudices and assumptions with her faith i.e. he is creating a learning point for them and showing God's inclusivity.

Theory 3. Given that she is an enemy of God's people (a Canaanite) Jesus is testing her faith to see if she is worthy of his help.

3. Ultimately, Jesus does not exclude her from God's kingdom but honours her faith. She parallels two other women in his history. (Rahab and Ruth, listed in Matthew 1).

How do you react to that and what does this tell us about God's plans for humanity?

(You may wish to read/refer to: 1 Peter 2.9–10, Romans 4.13, Galatians 3.26–28)

4. What things in your faith journey have helped you to know you are welcomed by Jesus?



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5. Given that we now know that ALL who put their faith in Jesus are welcome in the Kingdom of God, who do you think may feel excluded, or in reality find themselves excluded from the church for some reason?
6. A. How might we, either consciously or unconsciously, be excluding people from knowing Jesus today?

B. How can we try to overcome those barriers which prevent people from knowing they are welcome and embracing the gospel?

Response: Take time to pray in small groups on the topics of tonight's conversation. You might want to thank God for inviting us into his saving plan, and/or to pray for his spirit of inclusivity to grow in us and to be visible in our church family.