

A man was going up to bed, when his wife told him he'd left the light on in the garden shed. She could see it from the bedroom window. But he said that he hadn't been in the shed that day. He looked out himself, and there were people in the shed, stealing things. He rang the police, but they told him that no one was in his area, so no one was available to catch the thieves. He said "ok," hung up, counted to 30 and rang the police again. "Hello. I just rang you a few seconds ago, because there were people in my shed. Well, you don't have to worry about them now. I've just shot them all." Within five minutes there were half a dozen police cars in the area, an armed response unit. They caught the burglars red-handed. One of the policemen said to this man, **"I thought you said you'd shot them!"** He replied, **"I thought you said there was no one available."**

Sometimes you feel like you just need to get someone's attention. That's half the battle. If someone knew what was going on, then they would be effective. We even feel that way about God.

A woman was worried about her daughter. Have you ever been worried about one of your children or someone you love? Have you ever spent a lonely night at a bedside **watching a child struggle in pain?** Ever spent the evening peeking through the curtains waiting on a young one to return home?

Children can put us to our wit's end in a multitude of ways. John Rosemond, a family psychologist who is director of the Center for Affirmative Parenting, Gastonia, North Carolina tells about a young man who was a major behavior problem both in school and at home. He was disruptive, disrespectful, and disobedient. His fifth-grade teacher, principal, counselor, et al. repeatedly suggested that the young man had attention deficit disorder (ADD). They reassured the parents that ADD is genetic--therefore, his behavior wasn't their fault. They said he needed medication to help him control his impulses. The parents resisted this well-intentioned recommendation for months. "Finally," says the mother, "we reached the limit of our tolerance for his shenanigans. He came home from school one day to discover a padlock on the door to his bedroom, which houses his television, computer, video-game unit, sports equipment, models, and so on. We told him he'd be allowed in his room for 15 minutes in the morning to dress for school and for 15 minutes in the evening to get ready for bed, which was going to be 7:30 every night, seven nights a week. He was going to sleep on the sofa in the living room."

The boy was stunned, to say the least. When he threatened to report his parents for child abuse, they reminded him that he would be properly fed, properly protected from the elements, and would sleep in a bed that was much safer than his own. After all, he could only roll out of one side of it!

"But please!" his parents said. "'Tell whomever you like how abused you are."

This austere state of affairs would last a minimum of six weeks, they told him. During this time, he would not be allowed to participate in any after-school activity, have friends over, use the phone, watch television, or go anywhere except to accompany his parents. Furthermore, every single incident of misbehavior at school or home would add a week to his "exile," and no amount of good behavior would shorten it.

"It was amazing," his mother continued. "His teacher called us several days later to tell us he'd become a completely different child. She'd never seen so much improvement so quickly. He became a model child at home as well--polite, cooperative, talkative, a general pleasure to be around."

Six weeks later, the padlock was removed from his door with assurances that it would be re-attached at the first hint of relapse. It's been almost a year, and the youngster has yet to fall off the wagon.

Children can drive you crazy. *Behavior problems. Relationship problems. Worry because they have too few friends. Worry over the price they pay to have friends. Alcohol abuse. Drug abuse. Bullies at school. Driving the car for the first time.*

Most kids are good kids. But even good kids can drive you up the proverbial tree sometimes.

A woman comes to Jesus who is worried about her daughter. **"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** she cried out. **"My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."** I've seen some kids whom I thought were demon-

possessed. Not really. Most kids are good kids. We're wrong to jump to conclusions of anybody--particularly young people--based on first impressions.

Michele Davis, Palm Harbor, Florida was visiting Las Vegas with her husband. They saw a group of teenagers standing outside their hotel. These young people seemed to be bothering passing tourists. Michele became apprehensive when she saw their spiked hair, chains, black clothes and various pierced body parts. But as she and her husband got closer, Michele noticed they were laughing and joking with the crowd. It was then that she saw the homemade sign at their feet. It read, **"Take Your Picture with Us-- \$3."**

We can make mistakes when we judge people based on appearance. We do not know what this mother meant by **"demon-possession."** Obviously, her daughter was a very troubled young woman. So troubled that this woman would not take "no" for an answer. She cried after Jesus to the point that she was making a disturbance. The disciples urged him to send her away. Jesus turns to the woman and says, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."** *You see, this woman was a Canaanite.* She was a lost woman as far as Jewish believers were concerned. Her people worshiped pagan gods. Religious divides can be very deep, can't they?

Even Jesus seems to have been affected by religious friction. When the woman persists in seeking his help, Jesus says something to her so out of character that it takes our breath away. Jesus says, **"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."** **Was he calling this woman a dog?** I refuse to believe that. More likely he was citing a common expression of his time. Perhaps he shrugged his shoulders in a hopelessness way as he said it. Maybe there was a playful expression on his face. We don't know. The Scripture does not record body language. However Jesus stated his reluctance, this woman was not put off. **"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."**

If this woman felt rebuffed by Jesus' words to her, she does not let it show. To me that is the best evidence possible that she did not sense that Jesus was rejecting her on the basis of her ethnicity. **But Jesus was impressed by her answer. "Woman," he said, "you have great faith! Your request is granted." And immediately her daughter was healed.**

You and I can learn some important lessons from this lady who was concerned about her daughter. There may come a time when we need help for someone we love. It may be a daughter, a son, an aging parent or a spouse. We might even need help for ourselves. It may be a physical problem or a problem of emotions. Whatever our need or the need of our loved one, it can be frustrating getting anyone to listen. We may feel that the entire system is against us. **Let's learn from this mother who would not be turned away.**

AFTER THE WOMAN HAD JESUS "ATTENTION," SHE WAS "PERSISTENT." Too many people give in and give up without getting the help they need.

When Henry Ward Beecher was a young boy in school, he learned a lesson in self-confidence which he never forgot. He was called upon to recite in front of the class. He had hardly begun when the teacher interrupted with an emphatic, **"No!"** He started over and again the teacher thundered, **"No!"** Humiliated, Henry sat down. The next boy rose to recite and had just begun when the teacher shouted, **"No!"** This student, however, kept on with the recitation until he completed it. As he sat down, the teacher responded, **"Very good!"** Henry was irritated. **"I recited just as he did,"** he complained to the teacher. But the instructor replied, **"It is not enough to know your lesson, you must be sure. When you allowed me to stop you, it meant that you were uncertain. If all the world says, "'No!' it is your business to say, "'Yes!' and prove it."**

Commenting on this story, an unknown commentator has said, **"The world says, "No!" in a thousand ways:**

"No! You can't do that." "No! You are wrong." "No! You are too old." "No! You are too young." "No! You are too weak." "No! It will never work." "No! You don't have the education."

"No! You don't have the money." "No! It can't be done." And each "No!" you hear has the potential to erode your confidence bit by bit until you quit altogether. *Though the world says, "'No" to you today, will you determine to say, "Yes!" and prove it?"*

This woman was persistent.

And she was not easily intimidated--even by Jesus. *"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs,"* said the Master. *"Yes, Lord,"* she said in reply, *"but even the DOGS eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."* Good for her. Too many people are intimidated by authority figures--doctors, psychologists, teachers, principals, police, etc.--**to get the help they really need.**

Doctors are especially difficult for some of us to confront. Most doctors are remarkably dedicated individuals, but still they are human beings. They have even been known to be wrong sometimes. Someone, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, has come up with a **"A Code of Ethical Behavior for Patients."** Some of the items in this code are both humorous and painful. **Let me read the first four:**

1. Do not expect your doctor to share your discomfort. Involvement with the patient's suffering might cause him to lose valuable scientific objectivity.
2. Stay cheerful. Your doctor has a demanding life and needs all the kindness and reassurance you can offer.
3. Try to suffer from the disease for which you are being treated. Remember that your doctor has a professional reputation to uphold.
4. Do not complain if the treatment fails to bring relief. You must believe that your doctor has achieved a deep insight into the true nature of your illness, which transcends any mere permanent disability you may have experienced.

That's the way some people approach their doctor. Some people are intimidated by authority figures--so intimidated that they do not get the help they need. Not just doctors, but teachers, government figures, IRS agents, etc. This woman was persistent. She did not give up even in the light of Jesus' apparent rebuff.

AFTER GETTING JESUS "ATTENTION," & BEING "PERSISTENT," most significantly of all, she BELIEVED THAT JESUS COULD "HELP HER."

She could not know very much about this carpenter from Galilee, but there was something about him that gave her confidence that he could heal her daughter. And he did heal her daughter. She came to him for help and she received help. And so it is with us. **When we turn to Christ with our needs, he hears and he responds.**

A story came across the Radio about a family of ducklings that fell down a sewer grate in Vancouver. Their mother did what any parent would do. She got help from a passing police officer. The mother duck grabbed the policeman by the pant leg while he was on foot patrol. The policeman shoved what he thought was just a goofy duck away, but she persisted, grabbing his leg again when he tried to leave, and then waddling to a nearby sewer grate where she sat down and waited for him to follow and investigate. The policeman came to where she sat and saw eight little baby ducklings in the water below. Police removed the heavy metal grate with the help of a tow truck and used a vegetable strainer to lift the ducklings to safety. Mother and offspring then departed for a nearby pond.

That mother duck did what the Canaanite woman did. She persisted in seeking help until she got it. And that is just what Jesus wants us to do. **BE PERSISTENT IN GETTING THE HELP YOU NEED. Do not be intimidated by authority figures.** And remember, **we have a Friend who can help us even when human efforts fail.**

Christ is waiting to help you—REACH OUT TO HIM TODAY!!! Amen.