

# Knowing that God Hears Me

*Mark 5:24-34*

## RELAX AND REFOCUS (*SILENCIO*)

Inhale and exhale a few times. Let go of distractions. Quiet your thoughts and open yourself to God.

*Optional*—If you need to focus a little more, you might ask yourself to consider the last time you felt truly heard by someone.

## READ (*LECTIO*)

Read the passage to yourself. Then read the notes below it about the key words and phrases. Consider how these details affect your understanding of the story. Then read the passage aloud slowly. Take time to let the words “fall on your ear.”

## REFLECT (*MEDITATIO*)

*Questions and cues to help you enter the story.*

1. *Cultural background: Wholeness for the Jews.*
  - *Legality:* When someone was healed they went to the priests, who were the health inspectors. The priests certified the healing and declared the person clean. Being healed in public eased that process, since there would be witnesses to the healing.

## Mark 5:24-34

<sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with *him*.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been *subject to bleeding for twelve years*. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, "If I just *touch his clothes*, I will be healed." <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "*Who touched my clothes?*"

<sup>31</sup>"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

<sup>32</sup>But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

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*him* This pronoun refers to Jairus, the synagogue ruler who had begged Jesus to come and heal his daughter, who was dying.

*subject to bleeding for twelve years* This bleeding would have made the woman ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:25-27) and excluded her from social contact with others, including attendance at the synagogue.

*touch his clothes* Skin contact with Jesus would have made him ceremonially unclean. She may have thought that by touching his clothes she wasn't putting him at risk, or that even if she did, at least he wouldn't know it.

*Who touched my clothes?* Jesus may not have known who did it, or he may have known but wanted to meet her face to face. He knew it was important that she present herself to him.

- *Public interaction:* The woman would have been shunned for all these years. She would not have been able to go to the synagogue or the market. She would not have been able to embrace her family.

- *Societal restoration:* After her healing, she was not only free to mix in public, but she would have been a local celebrity because Jesus complimented her faith publicly: “Daughter, your faith has healed you” (verse 34). The crowd would have noticed that Jesus used the term, “Daughter,” which was a term of endearment.

2. This woman had many reasons to be desperate:

- She had visited many doctors. The Talmud gives eleven cures for continuous hemorrhaging—tonics, astringents and even superstitions, such as carrying an ostrich egg in a linen rag in the summer and in a cotton rag in winter.<sup>1</sup>
- She had spent all she had.
- She had gotten worse instead of better.

When have you felt desperate? Did it lead you to do something extraordinary? If so, what?

3. *Fly on the wall cue:* Picture the woman telling the whole truth. It would have taken some time for the woman to tell Jesus “the whole truth” (verse 33), which may have included that she had been the one who touched his clothes. She may also have told Jesus

- why she touched his clothes instead of talking directly to him (that she had kept him from becoming “unclean” through contact with her);
- her medical history (how many doctors she’d seen, how much money she’d spent);
- her feelings of being looked down upon as unclean and unable to join in worship; and
- the social and psychological effects of having been unclean for twelve years.

Perhaps the woman had debated within herself whether she should approach Jesus. Here are a few possible arguments for and against:

AGAINST APPROACHING JESUS	FOR APPROACHING JESUS
Timidity (What if she got caught? What if someone recognized her?)	Superstitious thinking that his clothes might be wired with power
Embarrassment at speaking about such an ailment in a public crowd	Sneaking up behind him and touching his clothes might not be detected
Concern that Jesus would have become unclean by interacting with her	Touching her but her touching his clothes would be alright
He was in a hurry to help Jairus's daughter	She could touch his clothes without delaying him)
Other:	Other:

4. You might picture the woman falling at Jesus' feet (verse 33) but it's likely that by the time she told her story, they had significant eye contact as she spoke. Perhaps it happened this way:

From the moment Jesus was face to face with the woman, there seems to be nobody there but He and she. It happened in the middle of the crowd; but the crowd was forgotten and Jesus spoke to that woman and treated her as if she was the only person in the world.<sup>2</sup>

If you wish, put yourself in the woman's place. Close your eyes and see yourself standing or sitting face to face with Jesus. He is listening to you tell your "whole truth." It's as if there's nobody there but you and him. This picture in your mind reflects the reality of God attentively listening to our prayers (Psalm 65:2; 66:19; 102:17; 145:18, 19). Reflect on this in silence for a few minutes.

5. Based on all of the above information, what sort of facial expression do you think Jesus had as he listened to her?
6. *Cultural background: The cloak.* Men wore an inner garment close to their skin and an outer garment wrapped at the waist with a wide cloth or leather belt, called a girdle. According to Jewish law, this outer garment was supposed to have two fringes hung at the bottom and two hung over the shoulders where the cloak folded over

(Numbers 15:37-40; Deuteronomy 22:12). The woman probably touched the fringe of Jesus' cloak. In addition, great teachers whom the Jews considered rabbis (Jesus was called *rabbi*—see John 1:49; 6:25) also wore a *tallit*—a rectangular or square outer garment worn over the top of the body. This had a tassel or fringe at each of its four corners.<sup>3</sup>

**Reflect on the invitation.** Read the passage aloud again. Picture what the scene would look like. Hear the words clearly. Feel the pressure of a noisy, teeming crowd. Their nostrils were full of the smell of sweat.

- As you picture the passage, what moment, action or phrase stands out to you?
- As you watch the action unfold, what do you see? What does this cause you to think and feel?
- Why might God have caused that moment, word or phrase to stand out to you?

**Reflect a little further.**

- How does this passage connect with your life?
- Is there some idea, feeling or intention you need to embrace from it? If so, what?
- What might God be inviting you to be or know or understand about yourself or someone else?

**RESPOND (ORATIO)**

Take a few minutes to respond to God about this. You may wish to tell God your “whole truth” about something, remembering that God listens attentively when we speak.

**REST (CONTEMPLATIO)**

Soak in the picture of Jesus interacting with the crowd and then the woman. What is most significant to you about Jesus? How does Jesus seem to you?

Spend a few minutes resting in the thoughts that have come to you. This may take the form of worship or simply resting in God's presence.

**TRYING IT ON (*INCARNATIO*)**

Look for someone in your life who needs to be heard. In the moment when you sense this, ask God to give you a sense of presence that pays careful attention to that person. Consider this is exactly what Jesus was like.