**WHAT'S YOUR INSISTENCE QUOTIENT (IQ)?** | *15 Minutes Read*
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"Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

His response sank through her heart like a dagger.
For those who know, turning down a Gentile was one of the hardest parts of being Master.
Until that day, no Gentile has stood long enough to argue with the Master or to convince Him to grant a request.
Most folks either turn away indifferent or outright angry.

That day, however, the Master met his match…
…not in a long-bearded pharisee or a scroll-wielding scribe. But in a desperate mother from present-day Lebanon.

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You see, when the Syrophoenician woman trailed Jesus' entourage and begged that he saves her daughter from (the grip of) an evil spirit, it was her last resort.
For 3 agonizing years, Justa, as historians call her, has thrown her daughter into the arms of crude exorcists who whipped, marked and almost disfigured the 'poor' girl's frame; all to extricate demons.
Asides the shots of strong concoctions that tortured her intestines daily, the young girl had learned to cope with the horrible odours from incenses that the exorcists claimed would keep the demons away.
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More so, she observed austere rules that were robbing her of her childhood.
When the other girls go out to play, Berenice stayed indoors where the incense was stronger.
If she had to go out, her mum smeared thick mixtures all over her body. Mixtures that attracted flies but "kept demons away".
On the days she sneaked out to go swimming with the other girls, the demon seizes and strangles her until she's blue in the face.
For her mom, this cannot continue.
Not anymore!
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After a streak of tours and crowdy crusades, Jesus and his disciples were thrilled to be out of the public eye for a while.
Finally, they get to have some time to themselves.

For their short vacation, they chose a picturesque seaside lounge in the region of Tyre and Sidon.
This was the perfect spot.
According to the vacation planners—Bartholomew and Judas—not too many folks in Tyre would recognise the Master up-close.
They could spend as many days as they want without getting noticed.
Or so they thought.
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It was not long after they landed shore that the reality hit home.
True, not too many folks recognised the Master, up-close. But the few who did were hell-bent on letting the others know.
It has not even been a day and the vacation is tipping on its head already.
Although the 12 men managed to 'smuggle' the Master into their hideaway, their effort was far from perfect.
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Justa was on the seashore that day to do some bulk buying when she heard the multiple whispers.
As the whispers brewed into a mini chorus, she snapped her head to the side to see where it was all coming from.
Her gaze fell on a small group of men hurrying to get out of sight as their tunics billowed in the wind.
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"It's them! It's the Nazarene and his men." The voices echoed.
She had heard so much about the Nazarene. Especially stories that chronicled His encounters with unclean spirits.
"With one command he sends them out and they dare not delay," the raconteurs would say.
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She abandoned her raffia shopping basket and sprinted in their direction.
Her espionage led her to a posh, serene residence.
She needn't knock.
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The disciples were stunned to see a woman storm into the house.
No peace greetings. No courtesies.
She knelt before whoever looked like the leader, begging for her daughter's life.
"She is in pain. She is in great pain. Pl…ease help us." She cried with stuttering lips.
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“I’m sorry woman, I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,” came the reply from someone facing the open window.

It’s Him!

She inched closer as the disciples tried to stop her.
The Master, now facing her, motioned them to let her be.
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“Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”
It was too much to compare her to a dog.
To the Jewish ear, that was enough slap to make you turn and leave.
They called it “Self-respect”.
But you see, where Justa comes from, dogs were no taboo. In fact, the sound connotes endearment.
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She inched even closer as her maternal instincts took over.
She could see flashes of the sleepless nights her dear Berenice have had to endure at the hands of an unseen foe.
She recalls the deprivation of a normal life. The pale look on her daughter’s face each time the demon strangles her to pulp.
She could turn back and leave in protest, but her daughter’s life hung in the balance.

“That’s true, Lord.”

She called Him “Lord.”
“Perhaps if I massaged his ego,” she thought “He might grant my request.”

“I agree that dogs don’t belong to the dinner table, yet they eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”
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The Master gave her a deep stare, as though to get a better glimpse of her face.
Such a comeback!
“Dear woman,” he said (smiling) “your faith is great. Your request is granted. The demon is out of your daughter. Go in peace.”
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Normally, it would take half a stroke on the sundial for Justa to get home. But now it took less time.

She returned home to a sleeping daughter. The girl had not slept for that long in years.
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Over two thousand years later, the story of the Syrophoenician woman still holds profound lessons for us.
Perhaps the most obvious being the power of persistence. But that's hardly all there is.

**Here are 5 profound lessons we can pick.**

1. *Be Clear About What You Want*
Nothing kills your chances for success like lack of clarity. The Syrophoenician woman was clear about what she wanted from the Master.
She must have had a thousand issues troubling her soul, but when she stood face-to-face with Jesus, only one thing matter.
If you're not clear about what you want from life, you may not recognise your opportunity when it comes, let alone maximize it.

2. *Handling Rejection*
After settling the clarity question, look out for those who have what you need. People whose present mirrors your future.
If your goal is big enough, chances are that these people are not in your league. You must reach out.
The first thing you will realise is that these people "don't have your time". You may send out 100s of emails, text messages or even calls. And all that echoes back is silence.
If you're like most people, you could drown into the bitterness trap. Don't!

3. *Manage Your Propensity for Offense*
The bitterness trap would make you give up in anger or frustration. To escape this trap, you must manage your propensity for offence.
An unreplied message, unreturned call or worse, a rejection letter is neither a death sentence nor a spit on your face. Don't take it personally.
In our day, the woman in the story would have dragged Jesus to court for racial slur. But she did not give in to the temptation.
Of course, there's a caveat to this. It does not mean you'll make yourself a doormat. It only means that you must keep your goal in perspective.
In the end, it's not what is said or unsaid. It's what you hear.

4. *Go Beyond Normal*
If the woman waited for an official crusade before approaching Jesus, perhaps she would never have gotten her chance.
Sometimes, you don't have to wait for a so-called perfect time to shoot your shot.

You could pitch your ideas even when they are no longer taking applications. Who knows? Your boldness could win you a response like, "We don't usually do this but…"

*5. Be Persistent*
Know when it's time to withdraw. But until then, never take "no" for an answer. Woo them with your cultured persistence.
Let them see their younger self in you. Impress them with your excellence and positive attitude.
Just be sure you're not posing a nuisance to anyone.

What other lessons can you draw from this story?
*Share in the comments!*

**— Stephen Angbulu**