

# Encounters with Christ

Week 7 — **The Bent Woman** — Luke 13:10-17

## Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

*<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. Psalm 139:1-4*

**Begin...**by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

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Record in detail what you learn about the “bent” woman.

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Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

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## Memory Verse for the Week...

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” Psalm 122:1*

## A little background...

**The Jewish leaders needed to know where they stood before God in terms of their “rightness.”** They debated among themselves down to the most minute detail as to what constituted work on the Sabbath. One *Beth*—house or school of thinking—would consider a particular action work on the Sabbath while another would allow it.

Take the following for example, which is found in the Jewish Talmud (a collection of oral teachings of the rabbis):

The Beth (“house” or “school” of thinking) of Rabbi Shammai said: Ink, dye material, or fodder (for animals) shall not be put into water (on Friday) unless there is still time for them to soak through while it is day. The Beth (house or school of) Rabbi Hillel, however, permits this.

Beth Shammai prohibits putting bundles of linen thread (to bleach) into the oven unless there is sufficient time left for them to become heated through while it is yet day, or wool into a dye-kettle unless there is still time for it to be soaked through the same day. The Beth Hillel permits this.

The Beth Shammai says: Traps shall not be set for animals and birds, or nets for fishes (on Friday), unless there is still time for them to be caught before sunset. The Beth Hillel permits this.

You get the picture!

## And Jesus says....

<sup>8</sup>“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>9</sup>They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” Matthew 15:8-9

## Breaking the rules

**Jesus always seemed to be “breaking” Jewish rules—or rather traditions—which is one of the reasons he was always in trouble with the Jewish leaders!** He fraternized with sinners, he allowed a sinful woman to touch him, his disciples didn’t “wash their hands” before eating, etc. In healing this woman, Jesus once again broke rules. In this encounter, he broke at least six strict cultural rules:

**1. He spoke to a woman.** In civilized society, Jewish men did not speak to women. Notice in John 4 where Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman at the well, the woman was shocked because

## Let’s take a closer look...

1. Luke tells us that this “bent” woman had been crippled by an evil spirit for 18 years, unable to stand straight at all. (Note: she was not possessed by an evil spirit, rather her illness was attributed to an evil spirit.) What do you think life would have been like for her—physically, emotionally, socially?

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2. How is her encounter with Jesus different from other accounts of sick people and Jesus? (See Matt. 9:2; Matt. 14:35-36; Matt. 15:30; Luke 17:12.)

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3. Although this woman was severely afflicted, she was in the synagogue. What does this say about her?

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4. Jesus is teaching in the synagogue. Most likely he was invited to speak there by the synagogue leader who was responsible for securing teachers. Jesus notices this bent woman, stops teaching, calls her over and dramatically heals her on the Sabbath. Certainly Jesus knew his actions would cause a stir. So, why did he do it? First, let’s take a look at his breaking of the “Sabbath rule.”

a. What was God’s purpose in setting up the Sabbath? Read Exodus 20:8-11.

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b. What had the Jewish leaders done to God’s commandment? (See “A little background” in the side bar.)

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c. What does Jesus say about their rules and regulations in Matt. 15:3-6; 9.

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d. What does Jesus say about himself and the Sabbath in Mark 2:27?

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e. So, why do you think Jesus did it?

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5. The synagogue leader, as well as the other religious leaders, thought that the way to “keep the Sabbath” was to adhere to a strict set of rules and regulations that defined what it meant to keep the Sabbath. If they followed these, then they would know that they were right with God. They kept their traditions, but what did they miss?

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6. What does God really want? (See Matthew 15:7)

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7. Jesus says the woman was “held in bondage by Satan.” Who else in the synagogue was in “bondage” and in need of being freed? Read also Matthew 23:15. Romans 3:9-20.

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8. Jesus was always breaking the “rules” which had been set down by the religious leaders. That is what got him into a lot of trouble! Here in the synagogue, Jesus broke more than the “Sabbath” rule. Read “Breaking the rules” in the sidebar. In light of this, how do you think this woman was transformed by her encounter with Jesus?

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9. What does this encounter with Jesus have to say to us today?

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10. This woman was “bent” physically, but not spiritually. There are physically handicapped Christian people who have not been healed physically from their affliction, yet have a solid, dynamic relationship with God. In one way or another, we are all bent people. Sometimes we find ourselves crippled by life—bent over from failures, disappointments, guilt, failed plans, self-doubts. In what ways are you a “bent” person?

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11. How does your “bentness” affect your relationship with God?

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12. Like the bent woman, you too are a daughter of Abraham. Romans 11:17 “...you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree.” What does this mean for you?

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13. Look back at your responses on page one. Are there questions you still have that are unanswered?

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**A final thought...**This woman did not allow her condition to keep her from going to the synagogue to worship. In spite of her suffering and infirmity, she found her way to the place where the day and the word of God were honored. And on this day, she received a rich reward! She came sorrowing and went home rejoicing. The conduct of this suffering woman may well put to shame many strong and healthy professing Christians who often allow frivolous reasons to keep them from church.

a Jew was speaking to a Samaritan, the disciples were shocked because Jesus was speaking to a woman. In this encounter with the crippled woman, Jesus threw out the male restraints on women’s freedom.

**2. He called a woman to the center of the synagogue.** In the synagogue, women were usually separated from men. By placing her in the middle of the synagogue, he challenges the notion of a male monopoly on access to knowledge and to God.

**3. He touched her.** In doing this, he revokes the “holiness” code which protected men from a woman’s uncleanness and from her sinful seductions.

**4. He called her “daughter of Abraham.”** This is revolutionary because it was believed that women were saved through their men. To call her a daughter of Abraham is to make her a full-fledged member of the nation of Israel with equal standing before God.

**5. He healed on the Sabbath.** Here, Jesus broke a tradition not a commandment. In healing the woman, Jesus demonstrated his lordship over the Sabbath and God’s compassion for people over rules. He reclaimed the Sabbath for the celebration of God’s goodness.

**6. He challenged the ancient belief that her illness is a direct punishment from God for sin.** He asserts that she is ill, not because God wills it, but because there is evil in the world.

Adapted from: <http://mickeyanders.com/Sermons/Sermon200110819.html>

### One sufficient reason

“One of the afflictions of pastoral work has been to listen, with a straight face, to all the reasons people give for not going to church: “My mother made me when I was little.” “There are too many hypocrites in the church.” “It’s the only day I have to sleep in.” There was a time when I responded to such statements with simple arguments that exposed them as flimsy excuses. Then I noticed it didn’t make any difference. If I showed the inadequacy of one excuse, three more would pop up in its place. So, I don’t respond anymore. I listen...and go home and pray that that person will one day find the one sufficient reason for going to church, which is God.” —Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*.