

## Desperation!

Luke 8:40-56

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Summary: We hate interruptions in life, don't we? A coworker interrupts our preparation, our children interrupt a moment of quiet, life interrupts our time constantly. Jesus too faced interruptions during his ministry, but He often turned these seeming distractions into divine opportunities. Stephen Davey takes us to the streets of Israel, where Jesus is on a mission, but a divinely appointed interruption is just around the corner.

If you look up the word *desperation* in Noah Webster's original dictionary, published in 1828, he defines desperation as "the giving up of hope; a [state of] hopelessness and despair."

That definition is still true to this day.

I have heard it said that you can live for forty days without food, eight days without water, four minutes without air, but not very long at all without hope.

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* (Word Publishing, 1998), p. 274

Hopelessness and desperation would describe two people we're about to meet in the record of Scripture.

One of them becomes hopeless rather suddenly, and the other has been losing hope over the course of several years, little by little, and we meet her when she is just about out of hope entirely.

Jesus and His disciples have now sailed back across the lake—the sea of Galilee—having delivered a demonized man.

They now return to Capernaum and find that this massive crowd has been waiting for them; we're told in verse 40 that they welcomed Him.

But Luke now focuses on two newcomers that have made their way into that crowd of people—verse 41:

*And there came a man  
named Jairus, who was a  
ruler of the synagogue. And  
falling at Jesus' feet, he  
implored him to come to his  
house, for he had an only  
daughter, about twelve*

*years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.*

*Luke 8:41-42*

It would be easy to miss the fact that it was total desperation that would make Jairus invite Jesus to his home.

And Luke gives us this man's resume, so we don't miss it. We're told here that he was, literally, an *archone* (αρχων) of the **synagogue**. You could translate it ruler or president of the synagogue.

The high priests managed the temple system, but the local synagogues were managed by the local community. And the people elected a president—a ruler—who would manage that synagogue, preside at public meetings, and determine who would read the Scripture.

David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 367

He would personally exhort the congregation to be faithful to the law; he would even select the rabbis to teach on the Sabbath.

Ibid

His election meant that he was one of the most highly respected, highly visible men in the Jewish community.

Adapted from Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible: Luke* (Tyndale House, 1997), p. 220

He was a living example, so to speak, of someone who was experiencing the favor of God for his faithful life.

And let me add this—which raises the drama here: he was also responsible to

warn the assembly of any heresy or false teacher they needed to avoid.

And he would have been aware of Jesus and what the Jewish leadership thought of Him.



**What did you sacrifice when you followed God? Was it an easy choice for you, or did you face hardship and loss as a result of your salvation?**

Jairus would have been aware that Jesus had only recently been thrown out of a nearby synagogue because He claimed to be the Messianic fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

In fact, Jairus and the members of this synagogue would have known that after that claim, Jesus had been forced out of the synagogue and taken to a nearby cliff where they tried to throw Him off. But Jesus had miraculously escaped.

Jairus was no follower of Jesus. He had probably warned his flock already that Jesus was out of bounds and should be avoided at all costs!

But things have changed; he has a 12-year-old daughter, and she's dying.

From what we're told, she has no more than a couple hours left to live.

Matthew's account records that she has already died. The discrepancy is the

result of Matthew condensing the story into one conversation. Luke gives us the fuller account which indicates a period of time between Jairus' first arrival to Jesus and later on after Jesus stops to heal this woman.

So, get the picture: Jairus is at this moment so desperate that he is willing to throw away his public reputation; he will no doubt be removed from office; his favor with the religious elite is toast—it's gone.

**Verse 41** tells us that he falls on his face before Jesus. That verb depicts someone prostrating themselves before an honored person and even kissing the hem of his robe.

R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: Volume 1](#) (Crossway, 1998), p. 316

This is shocking. There's no doubt in my mind that the crowd sort of backs up and watches this with amazement. Jairus is throwing caution to the wind; his reputation is immediately in deep trouble. So what? None of that matters anymore; he's begging Jesus—a false teacher, someone to avoid—to come to his home.

This is an act of desperation. Jesus is his last hope.

Maybe that's what people think of you. You threw everything away when you fell at the feet of Jesus; you lost your friends, business clients, family members.

But you came to understand—perhaps because you came to the end of yourself—that His grace and His gospel were all that mattered. He was your only

hope between life and death, and none of that other stuff really mattered anymore.

According to Jewish tradition, a 12-year-old girl was entering her first year of womanhood; for boys it was 13 when they were considered young men.

Adapted from Garland, p. 367

We always knew that girls matured faster than boys! Well, here's your proof; it's true.

The daughter of Jairus was entering her future as a young woman, everything in life lay in front of her and everything about Jairus indicates his love for his daughter. Frankly, she is still his little girl; he will set aside everything and everyone and ask Jesus to heal his little girl.

Jesus evidently agrees to go to his home.

The middle part of **verse 42 tells us that as He went, the crowds were pressing Him**. Keep that in mind, by the way, as we watch what happens next—**verse 43**:

*And there was a woman  
who had had a discharge of  
blood for twelve years, and  
though she had spent all  
her living on physicians, she  
could not be healed by  
anyone.*

*Luke 8:43*

Mark's gospel adds what Dr. Luke left out. Mark writes, "and she spent all she had on doctors, and they only made her worse."

I can hear Luke saying, “Thanks a lot, Mark.”

Legend has it that her name was Veronica, but we really don’t know.

G. Campbell Morgan, The Great Physician (Revell, 1938), p. 170

What we do know is the irony of 12 years in this account. This woman got sick the year Jairus’ daughter was born. Jairus and his wife have had 12 years of gladness, while this woman effectively loses her family relationships when Jairus and his wife began their family.

This woman has experienced 12 years of unique desperation.



Does it seem fair that God allowed this woman to suffer for 12 years, while this man prospered? How was God working for His glory even in situations that may seem unfair to our human understanding?

And that’s because her disease could be translated “**she was hemorrhaging**”, or “**she had an issue of blood.**” This is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—for menstruation in Leviticus 15.

She had begun suffering from bleeding that never completely stopped.

By the time of Christ, an issue of blood was superstitiously connected to infidelity; in other words, the Jewish

leaders considered it the judgment of God, which of course was not necessarily true.

But as far as her world was concerned, this disease was the hand of God; it was proof of her secret sin; she had been found out.

As a result, she would have been shunned, ostracized, and barred from worshipping God both in the temple and in the synagogue.

R. Kent Hughes, Luke: Volume 1 (Crossway, 1998), p. 315

The Mosaic law specified in Leviticus 15 that anything she touched in her condition—any bed she lay on, any chair she sat on—would become unclean. The law also recorded that anyone who touched her would be unclean and would have to wash their clothes and bathe in water.

Basically, this all means that people will refuse to be near her. If she was married, that relationship was effectively over; if she had children, she couldn’t hold them; if she were a devout follower of God, she was barred from the temple and the synagogue.

She has lived 12 unbelievably lonely years. She is the epitome of desperation!

And she’s done everything she can to get well: one doctor after another. Why? Because she knows she wasn’t unfaithful; she knows she hadn’t sinned in that manner. It had to be something other than the judgment of God.

But Luke adds here in **verse 43: she couldn't be healed by anybody.**

In other words, she had tried everything. Everything had failed.

In her day and time, medicine and superstition often ran together. I purchased a book for my library and read pages of medical practices during the first century. Let me tell you, you might not like the medical costs today, but our world of medical advancements is amazing.

For instance, one first century physician prescribed for a woman suffering from an issue of blood: "Take the gum of Alexandria the weight of a small silver coin; of alum the same; of crocus petals the same. Let them be crushed and mixed with wine. If this does not cure her, add three pints of onions; boil them in wine and give that to her to drink. If that does not cure her, set her at an intersection where two roads meet and let someone come up behind her and frighten her, saying, "Be healed from thy flow."

Ibid

Literally, scare it out of her.

That's like trying to cure the hiccups by scaring someone. I tried that on my kids too. They just hiccupped louder.

She has tried everything and none of it worked.

And get this: no one would believe her innocence.

And this is where these two people's lives now intersect, and you cannot imagine two people more different in this encounter:

He's a leader in the synagogue; she's ostracized from the synagogue.

He's got an impeccable reputation; she lost her reputation.

He is the walking illustration of the favor of God; she is a walking illustration of the disfavor of God.

He has a family; she lost her family.

He's had 12 years of gladness; she's had 12 long years of sadness.

And they both meet Jesus at the same time because they are both out of options. Jesus is their last hope.

Notice **verse 44:**

*She came up behind him  
and touched the fringe of  
his garment, and  
immediately her discharge  
of blood ceased.*

*Luke 8:44*

Now stop for a moment; don't read ahead.

This fringe is significant. This is not a side-bar detail.

This is a reference to a rectangular cloth slung over the shoulder of a God-fearing Jewish man in these days with blue tassels attached at the corners.

It was called a *kraspedon* and that's the word Luke uses here, translated fringe.

It represented a Jewish man's commitment to keeping the law of God; and if anybody deserved to wear it, it was Jesus. He alone had never broken the law of God.

The verb here for touch is to "clutch; to grasp momentarily." She reaches out and literally clutches one of the tassels on this *kraspedon* dangling off the back shoulder of Jesus.

Now watch this: she's going to violate the Levitical law regarding uncleanness by reaching out and clutching the tassel that represents faithfulness in keeping of the law.



Why was this woman's gesture of faith in desperation more important than the spiritual symbolism of her touching the tassel? What does this moment tell us about the relationship between the law and God's grace?

Why? She could have touched his back or his robe just as easily. Why risk raising her hand up to His shoulder?

I believe she was throwing herself on the mercy of God; she knew she hadn't been unfaithful to God's law. She knew her only hope was in the fact that God knew her. She's essentially offering a silent prayer that God would vindicate her ruined reputation and heal her body to prove that she had not been unfaithful to His word.

This is an act of desperation, but I believe this was an act of faith in the word of God. I trust His word.

She no doubt feels this healing change now coursing through her body. She lets go and attempts to slip away unnoticed.

But at this moment, Jesus stops and asks, **verse 45:**

*"Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!"*

*Luke 8:45b*

I love Peter. "Lord, are you kidding? Who hasn't touched you?"

**Verse 46:**

*But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."*

*Luke 8:46*

Now this doesn't mean that Jesus lost power as if He were a battery—like the

batteries you forgot to buy this Christmas. You need 4 C batteries for that remote controlled car, so you run to Lowes, get the batteries and they lasted for 10 minutes.

That's not the idea here. The power of Jesus is constant, even when He demonstrates power, He does not lose power. He is never less powerful one moment than at another.

Adapted from Garland, p. 368

Jesus effectively says here, "Someone touched me differently; it wasn't the press of the crowd, it was the reach of faith.

Jesus knew the difference between being touched accidentally or being touched intentionally.

William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Luke (Baker, 1978), p. 4577

And Jesus knew all along anyway. He's about to stop for a reason.

But don't miss the fact that this interruption is only deepening the desperation of Jairus?

One author said that this is like an ambulance caught in heavy traffic.

Hughes, p. 317

Jairus needs to get Jesus to his home to heal his daughter. Every second counts. He's probably thinking, "Why are You stopping? Who cares who touched You?"

Has it ever occurred to you that what we call interruptions defined the ministry of Jesus Christ?

He was interrupted while teaching (Luke 5:19). He was interrupted while talking to His disciples (Luke 12:13). He was interrupted while sleeping (Luke 8:24). He was interrupted while eating (Luke 7:37). He was interrupted while praying (Mark 1:37).

But here's the convicting thing: to Jesus, interruptions were opportunities; to Him they were not interruptions, they were invitations.

And He is modeling something for us.

None of us move from one planned event to the next; real life and service to Christ is often moving from one interruption to another; one distraction to the next.

From Jairus' perspective, Jesus is being delayed; He must not understand the urgency or maybe He doesn't care.



Is there a time when you asked God to act with urgency, but He delayed? What came from that situation? Did God reveal to you why He delayed, or has that remained a mystery to you?

But from the Lord's perspective, Jairus has something new to learn that will change his life forever.

And the Lord has something to teach this woman as well.

Even though she was done with Him, He was not done with her—**notice verse 47:**

*And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.*

*Luke 8:47*

This moment just turns into a testimony meeting.

She explains her disease, her violation of the law, her hopeless condition, her desperation in reaching out in faith to touch Jesus. Get this phrase: **she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched Him.**

And notice His response in **verse 48:**

*“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”*

*Luke 8:48b*

This is the only time Jesus personally called a woman by that name—*Daughter*. She’d lost her family; she’s been alone for more than a decade. Her husband, her parents, and all her extended family were long gone.

Jesus says to her, “You’re now in My family! You’ve got a new family now; you are now My daughter in the faith.”

Notice again:

*“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”*

*Luke 8:48b*

That verb is *sozo* (σωζω). “Your faith in Me has saved you—rescued you.” She wanted to be healed; she is now redeemed. Jesus says here, “Now go back into your life now, no longer in desperation, but in peace.”

Now don’t forget, she’s been excommunicated for 12 years from the synagogue. And who happens to be standing here biting his nails in frustration? The ruler of the synagogue.

“Veronica, I’d like to introduce you to Jairus, the ruler of the local synagogue. Since you’ve not been in the last 12 years, you might not know him. And Jairus, you can expect to see her this coming Saturday. Why don’t you save her a seat? People will want to meet her. She’s a walking miracle and better yet, she’s now my daughter—a member of the family of God.”

You see, by calling this woman forward, Jesus has the opportunity to announce her cleansing to her entire world and the news will spread that she is no longer unclean.

Okay, now back to Jairus.

Just imagine: you’re in your car following the ambulance that’s carrying your loved one to the hospital; their life is on the line; there’s no time to lose; lights are flashing,



sirens are sounding; you are racing down interstate 64 toward Wake Medical Center. Your loved one might not make it in time.

But suddenly the ambulance pulls over on the side of the interstate. There's a homeless woman who's fallen; she's waving for somebody to stop and help her up.

The EMS team gets out and walks over to her; they bend down and help her up, they clean off the blood and bandage the scrape on her knee and talk with her for a few moments.

Imagine you're back there in your car, pleading, panicking, internally screaming with frustration but suddenly, the back door of the ambulance opens and one of the EMS staff jumps out and walks back to your car and says, "Hey, I'm sorry about this, but your loved one has just died; we were too late; we're going to turn off the siren and the lights. There's no need to hurry any longer."

Your desperation would turn to rage, confusion, and pain. "Why did we have to stop?"

***That's exactly what's happened here—verse 49:***

*While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more."*

*Luke 8:49*

No need to hurry any longer.

Why not hold off on this terrible news until Jairus got home? It's quite possible that this messenger wanted to get to the message to Jairus as soon as possible to keep Jesus from arriving at his home.

This would rescue Jairus' already damaged reputation. He's reached out to a false teacher—a blasphemer. He's not been thinking straight. Let's end this little episode as quickly as possible and get Jairus back on the right path.

***Verse 50:***

*But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."*

*Luke 8:50*

Jairus evidently did because they continued and it took some time to finally arrive, because by the time they get there, **verse 51 says:**

*And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping."*

*Luke 8:51-52*

Jesus is both telling the truth, while at the same time talking in riddles. He knows

her spirit is alive, but her body is dead—as if asleep. It was common in this day to refer to the deceased body as sleeping, but He’s speaking in riddles because He apparently doesn’t want His resurrection power to take center stage in this encounter, and we’re never told why.

He’s effectively putting these people off without any explanation either. Verse 53:

*And they laughed at him,  
knowing that she was dead.*

*Luke 8:53*

This is a reference to the professional mourners who’ve already arrived. They’re already wailing and singing songs to the sound of a reed flute. They’re already in full tilt in their wailing and music.

Jesus hasn’t even seen her yet; they have, they know death when they see it.

Adapted from Garland, p. 369

They just don’t realize that the Resurrection and the Life has just shown up; they don’t realize they’re laughing at the Creator who rules over life and death.

**Verse 54:**

*But taking her by the hand  
he called, saying, “Child,  
arise.” And her spirit  
returned, and she got up at  
once. And he directed that  
something should be given  
her to eat. And her parents  
were amazed, but he  
charged them to tell no one  
what had happened.*

*Luke 8:54-56*

This was only for the parents and a few disciples.

The crowd wasn’t interested in Jesus, but Jairus has already placed his life in the hands of Jesus.

Jesus Christ took this ruler of the synagogue from believing that He was a healer, to seeing with His own eyes that He was the Resurrection and the Life.

He could have healed this woman much earlier, by an invisible hand, but she would never have met Him personally and found spiritual peace along with physical healing.

Their delay in life was a doorway into an even greater discovery.

Some of the deepest truths are found when we rest in His ability, when we wait and trust.

In the form of one principle, let me put it this way:

**Unwanted interruptions and unexpected trials are designed to make us wait, in order to deepen our walk, with God.**

The question for us today is simple: are you willing to wait? And trust? Even in desperate times?



What are you willing to wait for God to do  
in your life today?

Perhaps for you, the Lord has brought desperation into your life to invite you to Himself. It's time to turn to Him, to give your life to Him. He's not just your last option, He's your only option. He must be your Lord and Savior.

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