

CHEERIOS

My little grandson is just under a year old and is learning to feed himself. After he has been fed his pureed vegetables and fruit, he gets a handful of Cheerios on his tray. He has become adept at picking them up one at a time and getting them into his mouth, but his little hands get wet and sticky. More often than not, in the course of a meal, several will drop to the floor. The family dog Samson has noticed this new phenomenon and is always hovering nearby, ready to scarf up these stray Cheerios.

My grandson has also noticed Samson's activities under his highchair and now takes great delight in purposefully dropping Cheerios on the floor for him. It's a fun game, although he is unaware that too much people food isn't good for dogs or that he could possibly run out of Cheerios and wish he'd eaten more himself.

This little vignette came to mind when I read the story of the Gentile woman who came to Jesus asking for help for her demon-possessed daughter (see Matt. 15:21-28). He replied that it wasn't right to give the children's bread to their dogs. She could not deny the fact that she was unworthy to receive anything from Him, but still found faith enough to note to Him that the dogs do get to eat the crumbs that fall from the table. Jesus commended her faith and granted her request.

As those who represent Christ in this world, what can we learn from these two stories? First, and most encouraging to me, is that crumbs generally fall from the table unnoticed. The people around us, the cashier at the grocery, the hairdresser, the neighbors, business associates, the people we pass on the street, are there and they are watching for crumbs from Jesus (whether they know it or not). As we live our lives in Christ, putting into practice His command to love others as ourselves and to care for "the least of these," we scatter His crumbs indiscriminately. We do not know and will never know when a simple act of kindness, a smile, or a word of encouragement will be just the bit of nourishment someone needs to restore his faith.

Second, and most challenging to me, is the thought that we should be joyfully intentional in dropping our crumbs. Are we watching for and discerning who of those crossing our paths might be needing what we have to offer? Sadly I am far too often too caught up in my own little world to have an eye open for an opportunity to share even a crumb of what I have so abundantly received. Shouldn't we, who have received so much, take great delight in dropping our spiritual Cheerios everywhere and often?

And finally, while too much people food isn't good for dogs, there is no fear that too much kindness, love, or encouragement will harm anyone. And while it's possible to run out of Cheerios and remain hungry ourselves, we can never exhaust the unfathomable riches of God's grace.