

Mark 6:30-56 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

³⁷ But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! [a] Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Jesus Walks on the Water

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

⁴⁷ When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.
⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

Footnotes:

a. Mark 6:37 – Greek: take two hundred denarii

[New International Version, NIV, 1984]

Mark 6:30-56 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Where had the disciples been? (Mark 5:6) What did they do when they returned? Why would they have wanted to be alone with Jesus?
2. In what situations do you really want to be alone (or with a small group of friends)? How do you feel when you are forced to be with a crowd?
3. What did the apostles want to do with the crowd? If you had been an apostle, how would you have reacted to the crowd's overwhelming need?
4. Why did Jesus say in Verse 37, "*You give them something to eat*"? Is this fair?
5. The feeding of the 5,000 is one of only three events recorded in all four Gospels (the others are Jesus' baptism and His death and resurrection). What does this tell you about it? Why is it so important?
6. What does Jesus' response to the crowd tell us about Him? What does it tell us about the disciples? What does it tell us about how we should live *our* lives? There are many deep lessons in this simple story; what are some of them?
7. Why did Jesus make his disciples go on ahead of him? (6:45) Why do you think Jesus, the son of God, spent time in prayer? What does this say to us?
8. What's wrong with these idiot disciples? They think that Jesus is a ghost and are terrified of him (6:49-50). Then they're amazed when the wind dies down (6:51) even though Jesus had done it once before (4:37-41). And they didn't understand how he fed the 5,000 (6:52). Of course, we'd never be like that, right?
9. When has God done something for you that was completely amazing to you? What was it? Why are we sometimes surprised at God's goodness? Should we be?
10. Have you ever been terrified? Have you been terrified even though you know God loves you and answers your prayers? Have you seen God act in your life once, but have doubts that he'll do it again? Why?
11. What does the fact that "all who touched [Jesus] were healed" tell us about the people's attitudes and belief? What does this tell us about human nature? Answer this again, but think ahead to Jesus entering Jerusalem and his crucifixion. What can you learn from this?

Mark 6:30-56 ~ Leader's Guide

1. Where had the disciples been? (Mark 5:6) What did they do when they returned? Why would they have wanted to be alone with Jesus?

Jesus had sent the disciples out—two by two—to villages in the country to heal, drive out demons, and preach that people should repent (Mark 6:7, 6:12-13). Apparently, they were successful to a degree and wanted to report to Jesus (Mark 6:30) and wanted to be alone with Jesus to discuss what they had done on their very first discipleship mission, and also to get some rest. Some historians identify this as Jesus' third preaching tour in Galilee.

2. In what situations do you really want to be alone (or with a small group of friends)? How do you feel when you are forced to be with a crowd?

3. What did the apostles want to do with the crowd? If you had been an apostle, how would you have reacted to the crowd's overwhelming need?

The disciples wanted to send the crowd away, back to their homes or into the surrounding towns where they could get some food by themselves.

4. Why did Jesus say in Verse 37, "*You give them something to eat*"? Is this fair?

Jesus already knew what He was going to do. In John, He asks Philip "Where shall we buy bread to feed these people?" He asks this to see if he knew, to stretch him. Is this deceitful or misleading? No. It is like asking your son, "OK, How are we going to fix the bike?" You know how you are going to fix the bike, but you want your son to use his head, come to some conclusion and act on it. In Mark, Jesus questions Andrew as to the amount of money to buy food. He replies "eight months wages," which clearly the disciples do not have. Jesus is showing them that there is no way they can solve the problem on their own.

This was a test designed to teach. Jesus wants them to deal with their own thoughts and their own solutions before He shows them what He is going to do. It seems that His goal was for them to come to Him and ask Him to do it.

5. The feeding of the 5,000 is one of only three events recorded in all four Gospels (the others are Jesus' baptism and His death and resurrection). What does this tell you about it? Why is it so important?

Obviously, this is a very important event and it is a story that is told over and over. Some details: the barley loaves of Biblical days were much smaller than current loaves of bread; kind of the size of a pita. They are small and flat and a person could easily eat several in a single meal.

Having the people sit in 50's and 100's recalls the order of camps during the Exodus in the desert. The count of 5,000 people is literally males; Matthew emphasizes this point in 14:21 by adding "besides women and children." So the crowd is probably more like 15,000. Some people have tried to explain away this miracle by suggesting that Jesus and his disciples shared their food and the crowd followed their good example. Not so. For Jesus, who is truly God, the miracle presents no difficulties. Back in Ezekiel 34:23-31, the Lord said that when the true shepherd came, he would bless them and provide for them. Jesus is that shepherd who provides for all of our needs so we lack nothing. As David wrote in Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."

6. What does Jesus' response to the crowd tell us about Him? What does it tell us about the disciples? What does it tell us about how we should live *our* lives? There are many deep lessons in this simple story; what are some of them?

- What do we learn about Jesus? Jesus is the bread of life who can provide life and supply it for the world.
- What do we learn about the disciples? They are human and have human responses and weaknesses. What was their failure? They didn't recognize their resource in Christ.
- What is the lesson for us? The biggest need that we have is spiritual (faith in God), not physical.

Other Lessons:

- Nothing is too small for God to use it. The disciples didn't think that five small loaves and two fish would be any help at all.
- Beware of limited thinking when we have the greatness of **God at our disposal**.
- Everyone got more than enough to eat and the leftovers were gathered up for future use.
- Jesus' strength is made perfect in our weakness. He wanted them to recognize that He was the resource. This is Jesus' 19th miracle, and the disciples are telling the crowd to go away. When are they going to catch on? But do we do the same thing? We see God work in our lives but then when things get tough again, we have to go through the same process of trying to do it on our own, failing, being broken and then finally trusting in God.
- The example set by Jesus may have caused others who had some food to share it as well, which was a good thing to do (but that wasn't what fed the crowd).

7. Why did Jesus make his disciples go on ahead of him? (6:45) Why do you think Jesus, the son of God spent time in prayer? What does this say to us?

Jesus wanted time alone to pray. If there is one common complaint that virtually all men have it is that they didn't spend enough time with their fathers.

Jesus had taken on truly human form; why do we think he would not want to spend as much time as he could with his father? But the bigger message here is that the Lord God is the heavenly father to every single person on the planet. Why would we not want to spend all the time with him that we can?

8. What's wrong with these idiot disciples? They think that Jesus is a ghost and are terrified of him (6:49-50). Then they're amazed when the wind dies down (6:51) even though Jesus had done it once before (4:37-41). And they didn't understand how he fed the 5,000 (6:52). Of course, we'd never be like that, right?

The fourth watch (6:48) is 3:00-6:00 a.m., the time when everyone is at their lowest ebb. Seeing Jesus walking in the very low light, it is not difficult to see that being half asleep they may have thought he was a ghost or a water spirit. It was a popular Jewish superstition that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster, so we can't ridicule them entirely.

On the other hand, it seems that having seen several prior miracles and now the feeding of the 5,000 first hand, the disciples would have understood that it was a real, honest-to-goodness miracle. But Mark says (and, remember, he's reporting what Peter has told him—and Peter was there!) that “their hearts were hardened.” (6:52) Thus, they were showing themselves similar to Jesus' opponents, who also exhibited hardness of heart.

9. When has God done something for you that was completely amazing to you? What was it? Why are we sometimes surprised at God's goodness? Should we be?

10. Have you ever been terrified? Have you been terrified even though you know God loves you and answers your prayers? Have you seen God act in your life once, but have doubts that he'll do it again? Why?

11. What does the fact that “all who touched [Jesus] were healed” tell us about the people's attitudes and belief? What does this tell us about human nature? Answer this again, but think ahead to Jesus entering Jerusalem and his crucifixion. What can you learn from this?