

Mark

Lesson 9

Chapter 6:30-44

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

David R. Steele

This lesson is a free download from Leader Guide Bible Studies and is not for resale.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version®
NIV®

Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Feeding of the 5000

Lesson 9; Mark 6:30-44

Prayers

Setting:

The feeding of the 5000 is Jesus' only miracle cited by all four gospel writers. It occurs after the beheading of John the Baptist as Jesus seeks to withdraw to a solitary place (Bethsaida) with his disciples to mourn John's death. The Apostle John writes that it was near the Passover (John 6:4) when crowds would have been gathering for a trek to Jerusalem. This is the second reference to Passover in John's gospel, indicating one year has passed in Jesus' ministry. However, many scholars interpret the unnamed feast in John 5:1 as a Passover, making this the beginning of the third year of Jesus' ministry. In either interpretation, Jesus is at the height of his popularity, but the death of John the Baptist forebodes that Calvary's approach is unstoppable and drawing near.

The location of Bethsaida is disputed. The most common locality cited is now a ruin about 2 miles from the coast of the Sea of Galilee and 3.5-4 miles from Capernaum. It was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip.

As we read the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, consider that it is a fulfillment of scripture – Jesus is the Good Shepherd of Ezekiel 34:11-12, 14-16. Jesus has compassion for his people, he knows their needs, and he is sufficient to meet them.

Eze 34:11 “ For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.

Read Mark 6:30-44 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand [additions from Matthew 14:13-21, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-18]

Mk 6:30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

Mk 6:31 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.”**

Mk 6:32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. [And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. ^{Luke 9:10}]

Mk 6:33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

Mk 6:34 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.

Mk 6:35 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.

Mk 6:36 Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

Mk 6:37 But he answered, **“You give them something to eat.”** [He said to Philip, **“Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”** Jn6:9]

Jn 6:6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Jn 6:7 Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages³⁵ would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” [They said to him, “Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” Mk 6:37]

Jn 6:8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up,

Jn 6:9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Mk 6:39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

Mk 6:40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Mk 6:41 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 [and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. Jn 6:11]

Mk 6:42 They all ate and were satisfied, [he said to his disciples, **“Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”** Jn6:12]

Jn 6:13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Mk 6:44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Jn 6:14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

Jn 6:15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

1. There were two significant events before the feeding of the 5000. King Herod beheaded John the Baptist, and the disciples returned from their first mission trip without Jesus. The disciples had just experienced preaching repentance, casting out demons, and healing in Jesus’ name. What was Jesus seeking in his travel to Bethsaida with his disciples?

Jesus was seeking solitude with his disciples so they could reflect on all that had happened. Their emotions would have ranged from celebration to mourning.

2. What did they find instead of a solitary place?

They found a massive crowd of 5000 men plus women and children. The time for private prayer and listening to the joy of his disciples in their ministry would need to wait.

3. Mark 6:33 - How did the people get there before Jesus and his disciples arrived by boat?

The crowd followed Jesus' boat from the shore for about two miles. Imagine being in a boat not far from shore to set off to a private retreat only to see a great mob following you along the coast- the first account of paparazzi!

4. Mark 6:34-37 - Compare Jesus' response to the crowd's hunger and that of the disciples.

Both the disciples and Jesus had concern for the people. The disciples knew that they could not provide food for them through their means and thought it best to send the crowd to Capernaum to find food. Capernaum was only an hour away. Jesus saw the people through the eyes of a caregiver, a good shepherd, and would provide for their needs.

5. Jesus specifically questioned Philip about where to buy bread for the people to eat. Jesus asked this question because Philip was from Bethsaida, and if anyone should know where to buy food, it should have been Philip (or Andrew and Peter, who were also from Bethsaida). Philip said the right thing – that it was impossible. Why then did Jesus tell them, "You give them something to eat"?

This was a teachable moment! The disciples had already witnessed many miracles by Jesus. They had even cast out demons and healed others. Jesus was testing and increasing their faith in him so that they could learn that they could also trust him to provide for their needs as they served others. He wanted them to recognize their resources were insufficient, but instead of focusing on their inadequacy, they should turn to Christ, who was all-sufficient that day and every day of their lives.

6. How had Jesus already tested their faith?

The disciples had heard the testimony of John the Baptist and had witnessed many miracles by Jesus, including raising a dead girl to life. Jesus specifically tested their faith by sending them out to preach, cast out demons, and heal the sick (Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-5, Matthew 10). He tested their faith by leaving them in a sinking boat during a storm while he slept in the back of the boat! (Mt 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25).

7. The feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle recorded by all four gospel writers. How was this miracle different from the others the disciples witnessed?

This miracle demonstrated Jesus' power of multiplication of a few things to provide for the daily needs of many. It was about the sufficiency of Christ, but the people saw him as one who could satisfy their physical appetite.

8. What was Jesus teaching his disciples in this test?

The disciples had been ministering to these very people in the days/weeks before the miracle. They preached repentance from sin, cast out demons, and healed them in Jesus' name (Mark 6:8-11, Luke 9:1-6). Now, the disciples needed to learn to add compassion for the people to their ministry skills. Although the disciples witnessed all manner of miracles from Jesus, including healing, command over wind and waves, and raising the dead, this was the first miraculous demonstration of Jesus' sufficiency for their daily needs.

This miracle also sets the stage for Jesus' teaching that would follow in John 6, our lesson 10; he was the bread of life who descended from heaven so that they could have eternal life. He offered his life to bring life to a dying people. Unfortunately, most rejected him.

9. If Jesus were testing you. How would you complete his questions, "You give them something to _____?"

10. What examples did Jesus set concerning the meal?

There are three examples in the meal. 1) The meal was orderly – the massive crowd was seated into groups of fifties. 2) Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fish. The word for thanksgiving is "eucharist," the same word used in celebration of the sacrament. 3) Nothing went to waste. The leftovers were collected; one basket of leftovers for each disciple to remember the lesson of Christ's sufficiency.

11. John 6:14-15 - What was the crowd's response to the miracle? And their motives (John 6:26)?

Jesus performed this miracle at the height of his popularity. They began to think that Jesus must be Messiah and wanted to make him their king so that he could feed them and heal them. They did not understand that he did not seek to establish a political kingdom but a spiritual kingdom of redemption so that God's reign would rule over their lives.

Read Matthew 14:22-36 Jesus Walks on Water, Another Test

14:22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night [between 3 and 6 a.m.], he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

14:28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Note: Mark 6:52 Says that the disciples' hearts were hardened after Jesus stepped into the boat. Their hearts were not set in opposition to Jesus and his ministry but were hardened in spiritual understanding. They failed to grasp the purpose and full meaning of the miracle of bread and fish and the stilling of the storm.

Discuss

12. Compare this encounter with a storm to the disciples' previous test by a storm (Matthew 8:23-27).

Matthew 8:23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

The disciples strained against both storms, fearing they would perish in the first storm. We are not told their thoughts in the second storm, only that the storm trapped them in the middle of the lake from evening to near morning. In the first storm, they learned that Jesus was Lord over his creation, even the wind and sea obeyed him. In the second storm, Jesus revealed that anything was possible for him – he could even walk on water. What was even more extraordinary was that he invited Peter to join him!

13. What does Matthew 14:28 reveal about Peter's faith since the previous test?

Peter walked on water!! Peter was learning that he could do anything if Jesus were with him and that he would sink if he took his eyes off Jesus! Peter had several more lessons to learn. He would learn to forego his self-reliance and learn that he could also do anything in Jesus' name when Jesus was not present. Jesus' tests and demonstrations of his power were effective; the disciples worshiped him as the Son of God when he got into the boat.

14. Jesus worked miracles. What events are you encountering that seem too much to take to Jesus in prayer?

Closing Prayer and Blessing