

A Study of Mark's Gospel

Week Nine

Mark 6:30-56

Day One

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.

vs. 30&31 – The apostles came home for a debriefing with Jesus, having done what He commanded them to do—heal and teach. It is always a good feeling to come home from successful ministry, but ministry can be exhausting. Jesus wanted to hear from his team and have them get some rest. The demands of ministry were so great, however, that they could not do this. In fact, they could not even find time to eat. It can also be hard to take care of your basic needs when you are in ministry, because ministry is all about taking care of hurting and needy people. How can you say no to someone who comes for help, or at least that is how we think?

Yet Jesus showed a willingness to get away from the people and their needs. This would be a good model to follow for anyone who is in ministry. Rest is not a luxury, it is a necessity. **Are you finding time to rest? Do you know how to relax? What do you do with your free time? Do you have any?**

I am a fine one to ask, for I keep a full schedule. I try to stay busy with things that energize me and I am still learning how to replenish my energy levels when they are depleted.

v. 32 – The team went away in a boat to a solitary place, but still the people saw them and followed them. They didn't just follow them, but anticipated where they were going and got there ahead of the apostles and Jesus. I told you that it's hard to rest when you are in ministry. "I know it's your off day, pastor, but is there even a few minutes when I can meet with you?" How can you say no to such a request?

Day Two

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."

v. 34 – Jesus looked at the crowd that had assembled and knew that His time alone with His disciples wasn't going to happen. Yet He didn't get angry or frustrated, as I probably would have done. Instead He had compassion on them. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd, wandering and looking for how their needs could be met. His compassion motivated Jesus to engage the crowd and not fuss at them for ruining His plans. Jesus was flexible and spontaneous where the needs of people were concerned. We need to be the same.

My problem when I was a pastor was that my compassion was often lacking. I had to ask God to help me love people and to increase my sensitivity toward their needs. At the same time, I could not operate in my own strength as I tried to meet those needs that my compassion led me to meet. I find it interesting that Jesus taught the people out of compassion. He wasn't just healing them, but He was equipping them to avoid spiritual problems by obeying and serving God.

I have done a lot of counseling in my career, but counseling can only be done one-on-one. You are limited as to how many people you can meet when you do that. I have tried to be a more effective teacher so that I could help more people without neglecting the one-on-one. So I teach seminars on purpose and have taught thousands, but I have also met with 1,600 people in the last six years in one-on-one sessions (I know because I generate reports from those sessions on my computer).

Don't underestimate the power of teaching people as a means of helping them. If you are going to teach, however, be interesting and effective. When you teach, watch the people. If they look bored, then they are bored—and you are responsible for that as the teacher. You can learn to take matter-of-fact material and make it interesting.

vs. 35&36 – The disciples often served as ushers of sorts and in this case they were concerned about how the people were going to be fed. The people were so excited to follow Jesus that they had neglected to bring provisions. Now the ushers wanted to send the people away. This isn't the only time that the disciples were more interested in sending people away and not bringing them closer. On another occasion, they tried to prevent little children from coming to Jesus. Then there was the time that they tried to silence a blind man who was crying out from his roadside location for Jesus to heal him.

I have often pointed out that ushers need to bring people *in*, bring people *to* Jesus and not drive them *away*. I fail to see what we have so many ushers in some of our churches. Is crowd control that big of a problem? Is security that big of an issue? Often we have so many ushers because we don't know how to get people involved in the work of the church. And many of the ushers we use are unfriendly and unwelcoming. **If you are an usher, do you spend more time bringing people to or keeping people away from Jesus?**

v. 37a – The ushers wanted to send people away. Jesus put the burden on them to meet the needs of the people. He challenged the disciples to feed the people. The only option they saw was to send people home. Jesus wanted them to see another option, one that faith could create. **Do you see how their preconceived notion of the issue and problem prevented them from seeing a unique solution? Is there any situation in your life, business or ministry in which you are doing the same thing? Are you limiting what God can do because you aren't looking through the eyes of faith?**

Day Three

They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages ^e! 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.

v. 37b – The disciples responded to Jesus by saying in so many words, “What, are you crazy?” The men made some quick calculations and determined that food for that size crowd would require almost a year’s salary! That was just too much for their limited faith to comprehend. They determined that if the crowd’s needs were going to be met, they had to meet them from their own resources. That conclusion led them to reject Jesus’ proposal as impossible. If you have compassion but try to meet people’s needs from your limited resources, you will burn out or fail. If you are moved by compassion and then ask God for His help and ideas to meet the needs of the people, then you will be successful in ministry. It is that simple.

v. 38 – Jesus didn't have the men focus on what they needed or what they didn't have. He had them focus on what they did have in their possession and that was five loaves and two fish. **What do you have right now that God can use to help meet the needs of other people? Can you write? Then allow God to use your writing skills, no matter how limited, to help others? Do you have a small home or flat? Don't wait for a bigger one. Use the one you have to host people and promote fellowship.**

The lesson here for me is that too often we wait for more before we attempt to help others and meet needs with what we have. Jesus showed them in this case how to parlay what they had into enough to meet the needs of many through creative faith. **Where can you apply that lesson right now? Where have you been limiting God because you didn't think you had enough?**

vs. 39&40 – First, Jesus had the people assemble in groups. I heard a man once teach that God brings discipline before He brings provision, using this verse as an example. I'm not sure if that's true or if Jesus simply needed to do that because there were so many people. Without that step, the people would not have received their food in an

orderly manner. God is not opposed to organization, but organization should not be for our convenience only but rather to help meet the needs of people. Organization should not be an end but a means to an end.

v. 41 – Jesus took the bread and fish and gave thanks for what they had. He then acted in faith and had the disciples distribute the bread and fish to the people. The disciples distributed what Jesus provided. That is still our role today. God is the source; we are the channels. **Are you positioned to distribute what God gives you? Are you positioning yourself to meet the needs of people as the Lord provides?** I am trying to do a better job of that in my life right now.

Day Four

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. 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.

vs. 42&43 – The people just didn't receive a snack; their hunger was satisfied. When God provides, He does so in abundance. If you are going to trust the Lord for a miracle, believe for a complete one. **If you need a home, trust Him for an adequate home and not a shack. If you need a vehicle, why not believe for a new one and not a used junk heap? It is no harder for God to provide a new car than a used one. The problem isn't God—it's your faith. Do you have new car faith or used car faith?** That is a critical question, for you exercise the same kind of faith when it comes to meeting the needs of people.

The loaves and fish teach us that there is an unlimited supply of everything in God. Our God is the God of abundance. **Are you tapping into that abundance as you do God's work?** I hope you are, for that will enable you to be more effective in helping others. Notice that God didn't just provide enough; there were twelve baskets of surplus. Do you have surplus, just enough or not enough? Your answer to that question is determined by your faith. Don't worry that your miracle is taking something away from someone else. There's plenty to go around in God.

v. 44 – Wow! Five thousand men were fed! That means there were at between 50 and 100 groups assemble on the grass and all their needs were met. The loaves and fishes were passed through that many smaller groups and there was enough to go around for everyone to eat their fill. There is no limit in God or in His ability to meet the needs of large groups of people. **Can you have faith for Him to use you to do that?**

v. 45 – Jesus was ready to move His disciples onto the next lesson, since this one was done. So having had their retreat interrupted, He directed them to go to Bethsaida and wait for Him there. I don't know if they left a boat for Him or if they even gave much thought to how He was going to get there. If they were worried about that, Jesus was

not! He had perfect confidence that He would get where He needed to go by whatever means the Father provided.

I can be so uptight when I travel, but Jesus was calm and collected. He took care of the people's needs and then it was time to pray. When He was done praying, He would address the next need and that was to catch up with the disciples. *Help me, Lord, to stay that focused and confident as I do one thing at a time.*

v. 46 – Jesus wasn't able to get time alone with His disciples because of the crowd, but He made sure He got time alone with His Father. He sent everyone away and went up on the mountain to pray. **How much time have you been spending in prayer lately? Enough? Are you journaling and writing down your impressions from your prayer times? If I asked you what the Lord was saying to you lately, could you answer? Are you prioritizing your schedule to pay attention to your devotional life? If Jesus did, then you and I need to as well.**

Day Five

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."

vs. 47&48 – If you have been to Galilee, you would know that there are hills all around the lake. It would not have been difficult to Jesus to spot the disciples' boat. What's more, the waves and winds must have kicked up again, for the men were straining to make progress.

It is interesting that Jesus sent the disciples into this tough situation where they were exerting a lot of energy but not making a lot of progress. **Why would He do that?** He was obviously setting up this next faith encounter for them. God knows what He is doing where you and I are concerned. We are never alone or abandoned, even when it seems like we are. When they were tired and it was dark, suddenly Jesus appeared, walking on the lake!

I wonder if Jesus got wet when He walked on the water? Did He sink down a few inches with each step, or did He just skim the surface? I know, it's not important.

Jesus acted like He was going to walk right past them. **I wonder why He gave this impression?** What's more, He came to them some time between 3 and 6 AM! They must have been laboring for a long time. I also wonder how Jesus found them, for it would have been pitch dark, unless they had some kind of lighted torch with them. I have a lot of questions about this story, but let's stick to the main lesson. Here were the disciples struggling in the middle of the night, doing what they had done many times as

fishermen, and along came Jesus, strolling on top of the water right before sunrise. They were exhausted but Jesus was energized from his time of ministry and night of prayer.

Lord, I want and need Jesus' energy. I want His focus that enabled Him to put His plans aside to meet the needs of people, then to put His physical needs aside to pray, and then to embark on a walking tour of the Sea of Galilee.

v. 49 – Notice that the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost! How could it be His ghost when Jesus was still alive? They thought it was apparition and it was really Jesus. The people had some strange beliefs, such as the thought that Jesus was John the Baptist that we studied earlier. But I'm not sure what I would have thought if I had seen my rabbi walking to me on the lake. That wasn't what they were expecting to see. When you aren't expecting to see something, the surprise can cause you to miss the event entirely because it wasn't what you were looking for.

v. 50 – I find this story humorous. Jesus came walking on the water, the men were terrified at the sight of this unusual phenomenon and Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. It's me!" I think I identify with the disciples on this one. It's like someone sneaking up on you and saying, "Boo!" When you jump, they would then say, "Why did you jump? It's only me."

I suppose the lesson here is not to let the unexpected that is so common with Jesus unnerve or scare you. We should expect the abnormal to be normal as we walk with Him. **That's easier said than done, don't you think?**

Day Six

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.

v. 51 – Jesus got into the boat with them and here we have a **wow 8**. They were totally amazed. Remember that we are counting the number of times in Mark where the people were awestruck, amazed, terrified or bewildered by Jesus and His actions. I am trying to show that walking with Jesus is anything but "business as usual." It is business **unusual** when you follow Jesus. And what's more, the wind immediately died down, which was the second weather intervention of which Jesus had been part in this gospel account. I don't get it. **What was Jesus trying to do? Why this seemingly unrelated circumstances that were so bizarre and unusual?** For the answer, read on.

v. 52 – Their hearts were hard! That's it! Jesus was confronting their hard hearts! They had actually been out on their own to teach and heal. They had already seen Jesus do great and magnificent things. What's more, they knew that Jesus had taken five loaves and two fish and fed thousands. They were the ones who had counted the raw

materials and then inventoried the leftovers in twelve baskets. Yet their hearts were hard! Jesus was trying to get them out of their ordinary thinking, which was spiritually subnormal, to some level of faith for more and the unexpected.

As I write this, we will soon celebrate Easter Sunday, which is the day when more people go to church than any other Sunday of the year. Millions will attend church service, some for the only time of the year, and declare that Jesus was raised from the dead. Yet they will go right back to their lives and that belief will have absolutely no impact on their daily existence. Why? Because their hearts are hard. They will believe that God raised the dead Jesus, but they won't believe that the same power can be part of their walk.

If God can raise the dead, He can do anything! **Yet do we act like He can do anything? Do you say that Jesus is alive, and don't believe you can go on a missions trip because it costs \$2,000? Do you get a report from the doctor of a potential problem and go into depression? Do you say we can't do this or that because we can't afford it, don't have the know-how, time or education? If you do, then you are in the same boat that the disciples were in.** Jesus has shown you His power and you think it was a "ghost" – some freak of nature or unusual work of God. Don't judge the disciples too harshly until you examine whether or not you are in the same boat with them.

It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their *disobedience*. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not *harden your hearts*." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath — rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of *disobedience* (Hebrews 4:6-11 emphasis added).

The people did not enter the land because of unbelief, which is equated with disobedience in these verses from Hebrews. The disciples could rest from their laborious rowing because they had hard hearts due to unbelief. **Do you have a hard heart? Don't answer too quickly.**

Day Seven

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.

v. 54 – Jesus was famous, a point I’ve made on several occasions. He did not seek the spotlight, but He did not shun it either. We need to learn to do the same. **If God wants to use you to help people and give you a reputation that you can do so, who are you to say that you don’t want that? If you have given your life to Him, then doesn’t He have the right to use it as He sees fit? Are you shunning fame because of some false sense of humility, that somehow it isn’t right to do so?** When I think of fame and notoriety, I think of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

[And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment \(1 Corinthians 12:23\).](#)

Some parts of the body are made to be seen and some are made to be hidden. If you are a part of God’s body that is made to be seen, then there’s nothing wrong with acknowledging that. I have often said that some members need applause and notoriety; others don’t. If you need that or if it is part of the purpose that God has for you, don’t fight it.

v. 55 – Jesus didn’t have much time when He arrived, for a healing service began spontaneously. The people ran to and fro to gather their sick so they could be exposed to Jesus’ healing power. The people didn’t ask permission or seek Jesus’ approval; they just did it. **What happens to you that, well, just happens?** You don’t have to work to make it happen. That’s a strong indication of your purpose. My purpose is to create order out of chaos. I never have to go looking for chaos. It comes looking for me. So I don’t fight it; I help make it happen by positioning myself close to chaos. **What is your purpose? What situation seems to find you wherever you are?** Don’t fight it; thank God for it.

v. 56 – Perhaps word had spread of how the woman with the issue of blood was healed by touching Jesus garment. Or maybe the people were simply so desperate that they settled for any part of Jesus with which to come in contact. At any rate, they were not disappointed. If a sick person was able to touch Jesus garment, that person was healed.

Do people feel better when they “touch” your life? What’s more, do you judge how some people do God’s work? I think that touching a garment may be a little extreme, but it isn’t about what I think is appropriate. I think that God can do His work through and to people by whatever means He chooses. We see in Acts where God released healing power through similar means:

[As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by \(Acts 5:15-16\).](#)

[God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them \(Acts 19:11-12\).](#)

Perhaps the thing we should wonder about is not how or why these healing scenarios took place then, but why more of them don’t take place now. **Why don’t I have**

enough resident power of God that can transfer to others through something that has come in contact with me? It's worth considering, don't you think?