



## HEART PROBLEMS

MARK 6:30-56

NOVEMBER 8, 2020 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



**GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER** (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

**1** When you need a place to get away from the crowd, where do you go? What do you do there?

**2** What do you enjoy or dislike about picnics?

Jesus and His disciples had a gigantic picnic, and 5,000 people were invited. An enormous crowd of hungry people were gathered to hear Jesus teach, and Jesus told His disciples to feed them all. Jesus again showed His power as He provided more than enough for those present to eat. As we take a look at that story and the account of Jesus walking on water, we'll see Jesus' great love and compassion for us.

**QUICK REVIEW** (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

**DIG DEEPER** (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

**1** Someone read **Mark 6:30-44** in their Bible.

**What is the difference between the way Jesus looked on the crowd and the way the disciples viewed them?**

**Why did Jesus tell the disciples, "You give them something to eat" instead of just going ahead and providing food for them (v. 37)? How did the disciples respond? How would you have responded in that situation?**

**What can the church today learn through this story?**

Miraculously, the five loaves and two fish fed everyone not meagerly, but abundantly. As in the scene with Elisha (2 Kings 4:44), there was more than enough to go around, accenting God's lavish generosity. This feeding, like the Lord's Supper, is a foreshadowing of the feeding of all God's people at the Messianic banquet.

**2** Someone read **Mark 6:45-56** in their Bible.

**Why do you think Jesus chose to separate Himself from the crowd and disciples after this miracle of feeding the five thousand? What does this teach us about ministry to people?**

**Why do you think Jesus wanted to “pass by” the disciples in the boat as He walked on the stormy waters? When the disciples saw someone walking on the water, what was their reaction? Why (see v. 52)?**

In the multiplication of the loaves, the disciples had not seen what that incident revealed about who Jesus is. They had not understood that He came from God, and that He was their true King, the Messiah. When the disciples cried out in fear, Jesus did not rebuke them, but compassionately alleviated their fears by saying, “It is I,” which literally means, “I AM.” “I AM” was a phrase used by God to describe Himself (Exodus 3:1-14). In the context of Jesus’ ongoing revelation of Himself to the disciples, this was a telling phrase. Jesus was not just a new Moses, or the new king in the line of David. He was - and is - the Son of God. Like the feeding of the five thousand, this miracle was intended to be a sign of Jesus’ divine identity.

**What may have led to the disciples developing a “hardened heart” as we see them described in v. 52?**

The disciples thought they were just fine in how they were following Jesus, but as we can see in v. 52, there was a lot they still didn’t understand about Jesus. Hardness of heart prevents us from seeing God’s hand at work in all things. There can be no genuine gratitude or repentance with a hard heart.

**Can you think of any situations in your life that were similar—where you thought you were good with Jesus, but in reality, you weren’t? What about the opposite—where you thought you weren’t good with Jesus, but actually were? If so, explain.**

#### **LIVE IT OUT** (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

- 1** How does it affect a person who claims to trust in Christ if he or she does not grasp Jesus’ identity as Messiah? His power? His love and compassion?
- 2** How have you been personally reminded of Jesus’ love and compassion for you lately?
- 3** Considering all we have experienced in 2020, would you say you have a heart towards God that is **hard** (like the crowd—approaching Jesus with your agenda, or like the disciples—experiencing God’s constant faithfulness and forgetting every time when circumstances are difficult) **or humble** (humbly confessing your shortcomings to God and living with a confidence that is not tied to your surrounding circumstances)?

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Close your time in prayer with your group.

#### **NEXT WEEK:**

Read **MARK 7:1-23** before Sunday and your home group. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

## **PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS** (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

## **TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER**

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

**PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME:** Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

**PRAY MORE THAN ONCE:** If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

**KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE:** Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

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### **How to Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and living like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content during your group discussion or to hit on all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit [cpmodesto.org/groupleaders](http://cpmodesto.org/groupleaders) to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit [cpmodesto.org/homegroups](http://cpmodesto.org/homegroups) and use the Home Group Finder!

## **COMMENTARY**

### **MARK 6:30-56**

**6:30-31.** With this verse, Mark resumes his narrative about the disciples whom Jesus had sent out. The disciples returned and they had an exciting tale to tell. But the crowds were increasing by such large numbers (partly due to the disciples' actions) that they had not even had a chance to eat. The large crowds suggest that Jesus and His disciples were probably in Capernaum.

Jesus knew how tiring ministry can be. He knew what it felt like to heal people, to have the press of the crowds upon Him, to preach from town to town until His voice was hoarse, to get so caught up in God's business that daily needs were forgotten. His compassion reached out to the disciples, and He encouraged them to come away from the crowds to get some rest.

**6:32-34.** They got into a boat and tried to reach a quiet place. Luke 9:10 implies that they were going to the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee. But too many people saw them leave, and they ran to catch up with them. This was a distance of four or five miles on foot, and it would not be hard to meet the boat on the other side, particularly if the boat was sailing into a strong wind. Jesus did not view the crowd as an inconvenience. Although there may have been some disappointment and weariness on the part of the disciples, Jesus felt compassion for the people, viewing them as sheep without a shepherd.

No animal is as dependent upon a shepherd as a sheep. Without the shepherd, sheep wander aimlessly and get lost. Without the shepherd to show them to the good places to graze, sheep do not eat. Without a shepherd to lead them to water, sheep die of thirst. Without the shepherd, wolves can devour the sheep. Jesus viewed the people as helpless sheep. Herod and the religious leaders could have viewed their followers like this and granted them good guidance, but they were lost themselves. Because of Jesus' compassion, He began teaching the crowds.

**6:35-36.** By this time, it was getting late in the day. The disciples became concerned about the people being in this remote spot. But it was not so remote that the people could not leave and get something to eat in the nearby towns.

**6:37.** Jesus' command to feed the people probably startled the disciples. They immediately began to calculate that it would cost approximately two hundred denarii to feed all these people. They had already forgotten that they had just returned from a mission trip that saw much success.

**6:38.** Jesus asked the disciples to count their resources. They were woefully inadequate. The parallel passage in John 6:8-9 reveals that the loaves were not the bread loaves that we would typically see in the supermarket. They were small barley cakes—not much bigger than a roll—generally eaten by poor people. The disciples must have thought there was no way these meager provisions would feed a crowd. But when we are with Jesus, we do not have to rely on human means.

**6:39-40.** Jesus told the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups. This would make for an orderly distribution of food. At least, the disciples had faith enough to obey Christ's instructions.

**6:41.** The Jewish people normally looked downward when asking a blessing, taking a stance of humility. But this was not a normal meal. Jesus was doing more than thanking God for provisions. "[It is] an appeal to the Father for the extraordinary power necessary to meet the people's need" (Stock, Mark, p. 195). This also prefigured the day when Jesus Himself would be the bread that is offered up and broken to meet people's need.

Jesus blessed the bread and the fish. He wanted to make sure that those witnessing the miracle remembered that God provides. Some interpreters believe the people did not know where the food was coming from. This seems in disagreement with John 6, where the people, after the miracle, were ready to seize Jesus and make Him king. The disciples participated in Christ's work by handing out the food. They had recognized the need and were used by Jesus in meeting the need. God uses people who put themselves at His disposal.

**6:42-44.** There was enough food for everyone to be satisfied. Kingdom resources do not run out. Mark notes that five thousand men were fed. Matthew notes that there were also women and children. The number is a rough estimate based on the number of people in each company.

Some interpreters have noted that the twelve baskets of leftover bread correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. But this may communicate a deeper message. There were twelve disciples, and each disciple had a basket. Cole notes that

this was probably the disciples' provision for the next day. Christians must be good stewards of God's gifts and not waste anything.

**6:45.** After this miracle, everyone was exhausted. Jesus sent the disciples in the boat on ahead to Bethsaida. He dismissed the crowd—no small feat, considering there were at least five thousand people—and they flocked to Jesus like moths to a light. There may be another explanation for His sending the disciples away. In John's record of this miracle, the people tried to seize Jesus and make Him their king. They had seen miracle after miracle, but none like this. They reasoned that if Jesus could feed this many people on a few pieces of bread and fish, He must be the Messiah. Jesus may have sent the disciples away to keep them from getting caught up in the middle of this nationalistic spirit regarding the Messiah.

**6:46.** Jesus needed to get away by Himself for prayer to His Father. Luke's Gospel tells us that before this miracle occurred, John the Baptist's disciples had come to Jesus and told Him of John's death. Jesus' mind would have been filled with sorrow for the death of His cousin and friend. There was much to pray about.

**6:47-48.** In the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Mark notes that the people sat down on "green" grass (v. 39). The grass is green in Palestine only in mid-April. That point becomes important now. This was the time of the Passover, which was always held during a full moon. The full moon let Jesus see clearly what was happening on the lake. He could see the disciples struggling with the oars against the crashing waves. Jesus was filled with compassion for them. He left his prayers and his own troubles behind and set out to help them.

**6:49.** The phrase pass by them does not mean that Jesus was going to pass by and ignore His disciples in the boat. The phrase is also used in the Old Testament when God "passed by" Moses, revealing himself to him. Jesus' appearance would serve as a reassurance to the disciples. He had sent them out on the water; He would see them through their troubles.

But the disciples feared they were seeing a ghost. Sailor stories about ghosts and supernatural figures were numerous. There was a Jewish superstition that ghosts seen at night foretold destruction and disaster. No wonder the disciples were afraid.

**6:50-51.** Jesus did not let them labor long in their distress. He immediately spoke a word of comfort. The wind died down and the sea became calm. The parallel story in Matthew tells of Peter getting out of the boat and walking toward Jesus. If Mark was the recorder for Peter, why is this not mentioned here, in Peter's Gospel? Perhaps Peter wanted the focus of the story to be on the actions of his Lord rather than Peter's actions.

**6:52.** The disciples did not understand Jesus' miracles. If they had understood the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, they would have understood Jesus walking on the water. They should have understood that Jesus is the Lord of creation. He had primacy over the Sabbath, the purity laws, the bread they ate, and the water upon which they sailed.

**6:53-56.** Mark notes that when they landed, they were again besieged by people. Jesus could not go anywhere now without being recognized. They went through the countryside, telling everyone that Jesus was present. The sick were brought out in droves for Him to touch or for them to touch Him. News of Jesus' previous miracle had preceded Him.