

Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 5.5.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 6:30-44

How to use this guide: This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. **Share about a time you received a timely yet unexpected gift. How did that experience make you feel?**
2. **Now think about a time you expressed generosity to another person. What prompted you to give? Do you feel it made a difference for you and for the other person?**
3. **Do you think most people want to give? What are some reasons why they don't give more regularly?**

Hospitality, of which generosity was a part, was a very important practice in Jesus' day. Most people would agree that giving is a good thing, in theory. The practice of generous giving in the way Jesus taught, however, is uncommon. We love seeing others give generously to people in need and hearing stories about random acts of kindness. So, if we agree giving is a good thing, then what is holding us back from being more generous ourselves?

READ MARK 6:30-33

Jesus welcomes the disciples back from their mission assignments and they eagerly share with Jesus what happened on their journeys. Jesus recognized that they needed to take care of their physical needs which they had put aside in the excitement of their return and ministering to the large crowd that had gathered.

1. **What can you learn from the description of disciples' return from their missions? How can you apply this to your ministry for the Lord?**
2. **How is it that Jesus is still in Capernaum and this large crowd seems eager to hear Jesus teaching in contrast to what we learned about Jesus' "hometown" friends reaction that we studied last week?**

READ MARK 6:34-44

3. **What obstacles did the disciples see as greater than the opportunity to give that Jesus presented to them?**
4. **Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they had instead of simply telling them what to do? What lesson do you imagine the disciples learned that day?**
5. **What are some objections or obstacles we might encounter when we consider living generously?**

Even when we are aware of God's kingdom purposes, sometimes we don't think we can give because the obstacles seem greater than the opportunities. This was the case for Jesus' disciples here. We can't let the barriers keep us from living the life God made for us. Jesus didn't want His disciples to focus on what they lacked, rather, He simply wanted them to give what they could. When we give what we can and trust God with the rest, He blesses the gift and also the giver as we begin to discover the joy of living generously.

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

6. **What have you learned about the need of those who do God's work and their needs? What can you do to encourage them to take care of themselves?**
7. **What steps can you take to become more aware of needs, both spiritual and physical, and begin looking for opportunities to be generous daily?**
8. **How do the passages we read today challenge you in regards to the obstacles or hang-ups you have about living generously?**
9. **Would outsiders look at our group and know we live generously? Name some practical ways we can be generous this week (these can be non-financial.)**

COMMENTARY MARK 6:30-44

Verses 30-44 Ministers should not do anything or teach anything unless they are willing to do so for their Lord. Christ notices the frights of some, and the toils of others of his disciples, and provides rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified.

The people sought the spiritual food of Christ's word, and then he took care that they should not want bodily food. If Christ and his disciples put up with mean things, surely, we may. And this miracle shows that Christ came into the world, not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish spiritual life; in him there is enough for all that come. None are sent empty away from Christ but those who come to him full of themselves. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he teaches us not to waste any of God's bounties, remembering how many are in want. We may, sometime, need the fragments that we now throw away.

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.

6:34. 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.

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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. 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.