

The Gospel of Mark

Part 26


Jesus Feeds the 4,000

TALKING WALKINGPOINTS

Leaders' Guide

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 Pastor Doug noted that "meaningful ministry begins with compassionate seeing." Tell us about a time when someone saw a genuine need you had and compassionately met it.
- 3 He further noted that an important part of our training involves learning not just to look, but actually to **see** people's distress and be moved by compassion to do something about it. And Jesus repeated the lesson of feeding the multitude because, like the Twelve, rarely do we "get it the first time". Tell us about a lesson regarding compassion that God has needed to teach you more than once.
- 4 Since meaningful ministry begins with compassionate seeing, tell us about a "breakthrough" in seeing.
- 5 Compassion—**wanting** to relieve suffering—is one thing, but having **adequacy** to do so is another! Read 2 Corinthians 2:14—3:6, and circle the four occurrences of the word "adequacy/sufficiency". What does this passage teach you about our adequacy?
- 6 Paul figuratively calls our ministry "an aroma of the knowledge of Jesus in every place" (2:14). How does 2:15 identify the two groups who "catch a whiff of our perfume" (our ministry)?
- 7 According to 2:16, how does each perceive our single, identical message?
- 8 Is one of those aromas a "success" and one a "failure"? How does 2:14 reflect on our efforts? What light does 3:6 shed on our efforts?
- 9 Jesus involved the Twelve in this miraculous feeding, using the meager food they had on hand (Mark 8:5). Tell about a time when God used your meager resources to make a big difference. What lessons did you learn from that experience?

- 1 Just get the discussion going with this (or a similar) soft-ball opening question.
- 2 This ought to be easy for others to answer, but be ready with your own answer if necessary.
- 3 Now **this** one probably could be tough for others to answer so be ready with your own answer—but don't rush it. It would be better for a group member to give his response.
- 4 ditto.
- 5 Believers **are indeed** adequate for playing our role in New Covenant ministry—but our adequacy comes totally from God.
- 6 “those who are being saved” vs “those who are perishing”
- 7 Those who are perishing think our message stinks. Those who are being saved love it. The message does **not** differ; only the condition of the heart of the hearer.
- 8 No—as long as we share the genuine gospel, God **always** leads us in triumph—irrespective of people's responses. We are sufficient and the message is sufficient (Romans 10:13).
- 9 You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)

Sermon Summary

You might be thinking, “Haven’t we already studied an incident in Mark like this?” Yes we have (Mark 6:31-44), but a close examination of the details makes clear that these are not the same event:

Mark 6:31-44	Mark 8:1-9
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• took place in Galilee, near Bethsaida; among Jews• five loaves and two fish• 5,000, who had been with him one day, are fed• twelve small baskets of left-overs collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• took place in the Decapolis; among Gentiles• seven loaves and a few fish• 4,000, who had been with him three days, are fed• seven large baskets of left-overs collected

Clearly these are two different events but they teach the same basic lesson. Why did Jesus repeat this lesson? Because rarely do **we** get it right the first time! It takes multiple exposures for things to stick. We are often slow to learn. We need to be reminded of truths and lessons we have previously been exposed to (2 Peter 1:12). The goal of our instruction is that we be **established** in the truth, not merely **exposed** to it. You would think that seeing a miracle would make an indelible impression on their minds—but it didn’t! There is a lesson to be learned here: ministry always flows out of seeing with compassion. Jesus saw a need, he felt compassion, and then he acted to remedy the problem. We disciples don’t yet see as Jesus did. There are needs all around us, but oftentimes we fail to see them. It’s like we have tunnel vision. And too often, even when we do see needs, that seeing is not matched with compassion. But God sees and He cares—about you! He demonstrated that through Jesus Christ. When Jesus looked out, he didn’t just see a crowd, he saw individuals with needs, both spiritual and physical. And as the Bread of Life, he sought to meet these needs. And that is exactly what he was trying to teach his disciples to do. An important part of that training involves learning not just to look, but to see. Not just to observe spiritual emptiness and physical and emotional distress, but to be moved by compassion to do something about it. Have we learned that lesson—or are we like the disciples?

Jesus was concerned that the crowd might faint if they were not fed, but the disciples were in favor of sending them away hungry. “Not our problem,” they thought. Yet Jesus—the Bread of Life—is standing right there. They didn’t learn anything from the feeding of the 5,000. But let’s not be too quick to judge—we keep committing the same sins, often seeing needs but doing nothing. Too often we give ourselves a pass. But meaningful ministry begins with compassionate seeing. It begins when we open both our eyes and our hearts to the needs around us—and do something about it! The disciples saw the need, they assessed their capabilities, and concluded, “Mission impossible.” And in one sense, they were right. God wants us to understand that our mission is humanly impossible. We share the gospel, but we know that it requires a miracle for them to respond positively. We know that people’s problems and brokenness are so bad it requires a miracle. God wants us to learn that our adequacy is from him (2 Corinthians 3:5). God did not intend that we be adequate in ourselves. If we attempt only the tasks for which we are adequate, we won’t attempt much for God. We are inadequate—but our God is not! The things that are impossible for man are possible with God. It is only when you know that it’s going to require a miracle that Jesus will begin to work in and through you. Only then will you walk in dependence. Only then will you abide in Him.

Jesus asked his disciples to offer him what they **did** have—a few loaves and fish. Then he wants us to trust Him and move forward in faith. Jesus took what the disciples had to offer, He blessed it and multiplied it. Jesus involved them, but if a miracle was going to transpire, Jesus—not us disciples—is the one who gets the glory. God calls us to be agents of compassion and grace in the world. He wants us to minister to people’s spiritual and physical needs in the power that he provides. But Jesus didn’t just meet their physical needs—remember, he first taught them. He gave them physical bread for their bodies and spiritual bread for their souls. Jesus’ miracles both point back to the way the world originally was, and forward to the new heavens and new earth which Jesus brought about at infinite cost to himself. This great cost was symbolized by the bread and wine at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19–20). The atonement paved the way for the coming kingdom of God where everything will be restored to its original condition. After ministering to the crowd he sent them away to minister to others. Likewise, we see needs and minister God’s love and grace to a hurting world.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see below) is useful for studying any topic.
Let's use it to explore God's compassion—to and through us...*

Monday—Read Isaiah 30:18

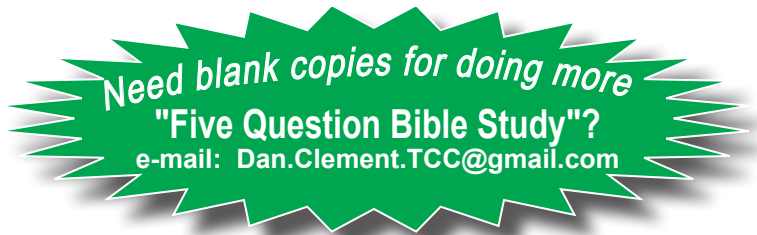
Tuesday— Read Isaiah 49:10

Wednesday— Read Isaiah 49:13

Thursday— Read Isaiah 49:15

Friday— Read Isaiah 54:7-10

Saturday— Read Isaiah 55:7



Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would *this text* answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]