

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 8-12-18

To Adult Teachers:

August 12 we will study John 6:1-14. Discussion questions are:

1. What examples can you think of that illustrate the human hunger for power?
2. What is the significance of this miracle being the only miracle other than the resurrection recorded by all 4 gospel writers?
3. What is the significance of all 4 gospels telling of this miracle witnessed by at least 15,000 people?
4. What is the connection between the manna given to Israel and Jesus feeding the 5,000?
 - a. Where manna was concerned there was to be no leftovers. With the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus makes a big deal out of leftovers. What is the message here?
5. Paul prays in Ephesians 1:19 for us to know the incomparably great power of God. Would you say that you...
 - a. Have come to know that power through _____.
 - b. Are still longing to know that power.
 - c. Don't have a clue what he's talking about.
6. Why is Jesus not content for us to merely know that he has great power?
7. What might Andrew have been expecting of Jesus when he spoke the words of vs. 9?
8. Why did Jesus ask Philip where to buy bread?
9. What is the significance of this statement: "Jesus doesn't want you to know about his power, he wants you to know his power."
10. Did the illustration of a good singer sitting behind you help you understand what Jesus wants to do through you?
11. How do you become a channel of God's power?
12. Which of the following best describes where you are in becoming a channel of God's power:
 - a. "I need to see my own powerlessness clearly."
 - i. How did Jesus help Philip discover his own powerlessness?
 - ii. How has God done that for you?
 - b. "I need to put everything I have into his hands."
 - i. How would you go about doing this?
 - ii. Was there a point in time when you discovered that God's power was for you?

Sermon: *Harnessing The Power Of God*

John 6:1-14

Power - everybody wants it. Economists speak of "buying power." Sir Francis Bacon coined the phrase "Knowledge is power." Newcomers to a city will often inquire as to

what groups of people have the power in town. Abraham Lincoln said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." In this passage today Jesus talks about a power that makes all our political connections, our storehouses of wealth, our nuclear armament look impotent.

This passage demonstrates the power of God. The power of God in the Bible is connected to our helplessness. In the Bible believers become both the objects of and the channels for the power of God. Think about this passage. A little boy, a poor little boy, with the most meager of lunches becomes the channel of God's awesome power. You know this little boy is poor because he has barley loaves. In Jesus' day barley was the bread of the poor. God could not have chosen a more insignificant human in that day through whom to do his mighty works. But in the hands of Jesus the insignificant becomes significant. In the hands of Jesus the insufficient becomes sufficient. In the hands of Jesus the impotent becomes potent. In the hands of Jesus little loaves become a feast for an entire city.

This is one of those great teaching miracles of Jesus. He wasn't just feeding a first century crowd. He was teaching us. If you let him teach you in this passage today, you will never be the same again. What Jesus teaches us is: (1) The sufficiency of his power. (2) How we can become channels of that power.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF HIS POWER

Other than the resurrection this is the only miracle recorded by all 4 gospel writers. Why? 5,000 men were there plus their families. That means a minimum of 15,000 people present. So think of the entire city of Ada gathered. They fill Norris Stadium and stand shoulder to shoulder on the football field and the parking lot. That many people witnessed this miracle. If you have a fender bender at crazy corner and you get that many eye witnesses to go to court and say the other driver was at fault, you will win the case without argument. The gospels were being circulated around the Mediterranean within 40 years of the time this happened. Imagine that a great miracle happened in Ada 40 years ago in 1978 and someone came along today and questioned it. Imagine all of those remaining of the 15,000 eyewitnesses gathering to tell the questioner they saw it with their own eyes. That's incredible evidence, is it not? The case for the legitimacy of the miracles of Jesus is testified to by an incredible number of eyewitnesses. Christianity started and bloomed where this miracle happened. 15,000 people saw the miracle.

This miracle was Jesus' way of announcing who he was. In the Old Testament God gave bread to Israel in the wilderness, in a dead place. Picking up on the motif the prophets said the Messiah, when he comes, will feed us with bread from heaven. When Jesus feeds bread to people in the wilderness he is serving notice as to who he is – the Messiah. Paul prays in Ephesians 1 that they would know the *"incomparably great power of God which God used when he resurrected Jesus from the dead."* Death is the number one enemy we have. And the message of Christ is, "I have put death to death." Jesus has death-breaking power.

Do you remember in the Old Testament there were never any leftovers from Manna? God instructed Israel to gather only one day's ration at a time. If they even tried to gather more than one day's ration, it would spoil. No leftovers! Yet Jesus goes out of his way to insist they not only notice the leftovers but also inventory them. How in the world do you feed 15,000 people and have more food leftover than when you started? I absolutely love homemade ice cream. Every year at the 4'th of July ice cream social here at the church I notice the same thing at the end of the social - all the ice cream is gone! Wouldn't it be something if we all stuffed ourselves with all the ice cream we could hold then went to take our empty freezers home only to discover they were full to the brim plus you had an extra freezer full of ice cream to take home along with the one you brought. I'm telling you that would expand the borders of one's faith in miracles! Matter of fact, if you can pull that off, I'll come join your church!

Jesus' first miracle was to create the best wine anyone had ever tasted. The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 says, "I'm going to stuff you so full you won't be able to eat another bite and then I'm going to send you home with leftovers." No wonder Paul prayed in Ephesians 1, "*I pray that you would know the incomparably great power of God.*" No wonder they were always saying of him, "*Who is this that even the winds and the waves obey him?*" That is the sufficiency of his power. Now the question is, "How can we become channels of his power?"

HOW WE CAN BECOME CHANNELS OF HIS POWER

It's very clear that Jesus doesn't just want us to know he is powerful. He gets no joy out of that. Humans enjoy power but Jesus doesn't. Humans drop names, make power plays, research the "buying power" of various age groups, read books on the art of gaining power, and accept as healthy, platitudes like, "It's not what you know but who you know that counts." Humans love power. Jesus didn't. Look at vs. 5 & 6: *When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.* If Jesus already had in mind what he was going to do, why did he ask Philip for his ideas on what to do? He was trying to get Philip involved just as he tries to get you involved. Remember that phrase in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1, "*O that you would know his power.*"? Jesus doesn't want you to know about his power, he wants you to know his power. Some of you came here this morning with a small appetite. All you want is just a little inspiration to help you through the week. Jesus wants to give you so much more than that! He wants you to know his power.

Those of you who don't sing very well, have you ever sat in front of someone who sings very well? Have you noticed that they sing through you? You are singing the way you always do but you never sounded so good. One of the reasons I never sit on the back row at church is there is no one behind me to sing through me. Jesus is not interested in your merely knowing he has power. He wants to channel his power through you. Jesus is saying, "Will you let me come stand behind you and will you let me sing through you? I want you to know my power. I want you to let it surge through you." And that's why he doesn't say, "Hey Phillip, Andrew, little kid with a lunch, watch this!" He says, "Philip,

what are we going to do?” Phillip says, “I don’t know.” Andrew says, “Beats me.” The little kid just stands there, bewildered. And Jesus says, “Let’s use what you have. I’ll stand behind you and sing through you.” And he just flows like a river through them!

Let me share with you a couple of principles about becoming a channel of Jesus’ power:

YOU CANNOT BE A CHANNEL OF HIS POWER
UNTIL YOU SEE YOUR OWN POWERLESSNESS

That’s why he presses to get Phillip to say, “I don’t know what to do.” Look carefully at what Jesus does with these disciples. He leads them into despair. He leads them to see that they have no chance, no human resources, no power. Until you know your powerlessness you can’t be a channel of his power. That’s a rule! You folks who have been through a 12-step program, what’s the first step? You are powerless over your problem! Millions of people have been helped by that first step. It is crucial. Why is that? Because until you see your own powerlessness you will not see the need to tap into any other power.

Some of you who are young adults are very gifted. You received a great education. You are succeeding in your career and the future is bright. You have come to believe that you can handle life pretty well because you are such a capable person. Listen to me. I’ve seen this over and over. There will come a day, my self-made friend, my successful friend who got where he or she is by your talent and your hard work, there will come a day when your relationships will collapse. You can’t manage a marriage by your own power. You can’t manage children by your own power. You can’t make friends by means of your skill and power. As time goes on you will gradually begin to feel powerlessness over your emotional life, even if your professional life is marvelous. Then there will come a day when you discover you are powerless over your spiritual life. There will come a day when you will stop and ask yourself, “What am I doing everything for?” And at that point most people just pour themselves into their work because that is the one area of their lives where they think they have power. If that is how you are feeling, don’t despair. Jesus is doing to you this morning, the same thing he did to Philip. He is trying to get you to see how much you need his power to flow through you.

That’s the first step – see your own powerlessness. The second step is scary.

YOU HAVE TO PUT EVERYTHING YOU HAVE INTO HIS HANDS

Listen to the scariest phrase in this passage. It’s verse 11, “Jesus then took the loaves...” Here is this little kid out in the desert with 15,000 hungry people and he’s the only one with a lunch. He has to be feeling a little paranoid. Andrew sniffs him out and brings him to Jesus. How do you think that kid is feeling? Wouldn’t you sort of tuck your lunch under your coat and hang on with both hands? Then Jesus takes his lunch! That’s the way some of you feel when the contribution basket is passed isn’t it? When that little boy surrendered control of his lunch to Jesus what happened? He ended up eating far more lunch than he could have possibly carried with him. And he took home a doggy

bag! And not only is the little kid filled but he becomes a source of blessing to 15,000 people that day and millions of people down through the ages. Great things happen when you let Jesus flow through you!

What does it mean to put your loaves in Jesus' hands? First it means to obey. But to obey with a knowledge of his power. Some folks really struggle here. They ask, "Does God want me to move to another city? Does He want me to change jobs? Does he want me to marry this person?" Listen, there is little profit in spending time musing over the part of God's will you do not know. Spend your time on the part of God's will you do know! You know he wants you to be honest, to be sexually pure, to be generous, to love unlovable people. You know that is God's will. Spend your time there, not trying to figure out what God has not spelled out.

First, to put your loaves in Jesus' hands means to obey with a knowledge of his power. Secondly, to put your loaves in Jesus' hands means to realize that God's power is for you. Some of you do not experience God's power because you do not believe it is for you. When everyone was attacking Jesus at his trial, how did he stay so calm? Remember what he said to Pilate? *"Any power that you have has come to you from my Father."* Jesus understood that the only power Pilate had had been delegated to him by God and it was working for Jesus' benefit. Do you remember what God said to Paul when Paul just poured his heart out about wanting the thorn in his flesh removed? God said, *"My power is made perfect in weakness."* He was saying, "Paul if you are willing to trust me through this. If you endure in faith, one day you will have great wisdom and faith, and patience and insight into the kingdom.

Give God your little lunch and it will come back as a feast for you. As you leave here today put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water. Put your hand in the hand of the man who calmed the sea.