

Power to Provide

Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14

Matthew 14:13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶ But Jesus said, “They need not go away; **you give them something to eat.**” ¹⁷ They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” ¹⁸ And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Mark 6:30-44

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered them, “**You give them something to eat.**” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii^[a] worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Luke 9:10-17

¹⁰ On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. ¹¹ When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. ¹² Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, “Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get

provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.”¹³ But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.”¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.”¹⁵ And they did so, and had them all sit down.¹⁶ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.¹⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?”⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.⁷ Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii^[a] worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.”⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.”¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

1. **Read the three passages, what are some of the differences? Similarities? How does this demonstrate accuracy of the accounts?**
 - a. Differences & Similarities – not necessarily major differences, just perspectives.
 - i. Some reference their arrival by boat, some do not.
 - ii. Some reference Jesus teaching first, John goes right to the hunger
 - iii. John is the only one that mentions the 5 loaves and 2 fish come from a little boy.
 - b. Eyewitness observers will always differ because of the perspective. God was guiding them in their remembrance of the details and their interpretation of the facts, but inspiration is not necessarily at the exclusion of the authors personality and perspective.
2. **What is the purpose of the passage? Why did God choose to incorporate this story into all four of the Gospel narratives? Read John 6:26-27 & 35 – do these verses help us to understand the significance of this miracle and the reason that God incorporated this in all of the Gospels?**
 - a. Jesus does have power to provide. This is evident in this story and most all of the narratives of the Gospels, but to look at this passage as a story of Jesus' power to provide physically is missing the point of the passage. The entire rest of John 6 explains the purpose of the passage. The crowds and Jesus' followers took this display of power as a sign of Jesus ability to provide and wanted to make Him king for it. The thought that this was all physical provision. Jesus rebukes them for following him for physical satisfaction in vs. 26-35

*²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" **(They are looking for works based salvation)** ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the **work** of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³² Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

Jesus even turns away the crowds that are following him for what they can get from him. When a great crowd of people are following Jesus for the wrong reasons Jesus

turns them away. He is not come to provide specifically for us physically, but for us spiritually. Look at John 6:60-66

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

3. What phrase does Jesus say in 3 of the 4 gospel accounts? How does this direction to his disciples demonstrate faith?

- a. "You give them something to eat." – Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13
- b. Jesus commands the disciples to something that is impossible for them – they know it and their response is to entreat Jesus to provide a solution. God promises to always provide us what we need to accomplish His purpose. Often God places us in situations that we cannot escape from or gives us needs that we cannot satisfy so that we turn to Him for our provision or satisfaction.

4. Jesus provided enough bread and fish as the disciples were distributing it – not in advance. They were required to take action on faith that Jesus would provide. Read Hebrews 11 and list other men and women who took risks based on faith that God would provide.

- a. Noah – built an ark on dry land
- b. Abraham – journeyed to the land God promised.
- c. Abraham – offered Isaac – "God will provide a sacrifice"
- d. Joseph – spoke of the exodus of Egypt 400 years after his death
- e. Moses - followed God's commands and led the Israelites out of Egypt.

God often provides just what we need as we need it. We don't always know the outcome, or the solution, but God tells us that we need to trust and obey and He will provide the solutions. Sometimes we don't see the mighty work of God because we arrange our lives so that we don't need God to mightily influence our situations.

Romans 16:3-4 ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

5. Read 1 Kings 17. How does the widow's demonstration of faith mirror the direction that Jesus provides his disciples?

- a. This is the story of Elijah and the widow at Zarephath. Elijah had told king Ahab that because of his disobedience there will be no rain for 3 years. This was an agricultural community and had disastrous consequences on the people of the northern kingdom. 1 Kings 17 tells of a widow who was going to prepare her last meal for her and her son when Elijah finds her. Elijah asks for some bread and water. The widow gives them to him and Elijah tells her that the flour and oil that she has will not dry up or be empty until God sends rain.
- b. The widow had to give away her last pieces of food for God to fulfill His promise, and in the same way, the disciples had to distribute 5 loaves and a few fish to 5 thousand people for Jesus to work. Sometimes faith means we step forward without any idea how God is going to provide, and He promises us that He will. (Luke 12:22-40)

²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,^[a] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

But don't just read vs 27, vs

³¹ Instead, seek his^[e] kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

6. Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 – What does that say about the poor and what our response to them ought to be?

⁷ "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸ but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. ⁹ Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly^[a] on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. ¹⁰ You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. ¹¹ For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

- a. The poor will always be with us. God commands us to provide for them, and to honor Him in our provisions. We are to give to them freely and without holding back. By

doing this we are doing the work of God. There will never cease to be poor and needy in the land.

7. **After all of the people ate, the disciples were told to gather up the remaining food, to let none of it go to waste. There were 12 baskets full, one for each disciple. What message was Jesus conveying by making sure that there was extra food? Does our answer to Question 2 help us to see the significance of this?**

John 6:30-40 ⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:67-69 ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

- a. The Bible does not tell us the significance of the 12 baskets left over, or where these 12 baskets went to. WE can only speculate as to the disposition of this food, but the parallel seems quite clear that Jesus was demonstrating His power and provision to the disciples, and the rest of the chapter shows us that Jesus IS the bread. This is not about provision; it is about Jesus being enough for us in all things. He is all we ever need, and His sacrifice is sufficient for us for all of our needs.

Philippians 4:11-13 ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.