

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 21, 2022

Day 1: John 6:5-6

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.

Bread was (and is) not only a staple in the Holy Land but was a means used to demonstrate hospitality and unity. Bread was used in sacred functions as well as a filling for the stomach. The request for Philip to buy bread was a kind of test, as the scripture implies. Jesus is not testing Philip's resourcefulness but his belief that Jesus can do extraordinary things with the ordinary. Even if Philip had somehow believed that Jesus could do something about the situation he would never have thought that the solution would be in such abundance. God can do so much more than we ever think possible.

Question: Can you think of a test you were given but you didn't know what the test was?

Challenge: Think about each person getting 8-12 oz of bread each. How much would it require for all to eat and have leftovers?

Scripture: Exodus 16:1-18

Day 2: John 6:7 Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Philip was correct, it was a kind of test. When I am nervous about doing something difficult I stall for time. I think that Philip was stalling for time. He had been with Jesus long enough to know that he was going to be asked to do something about feeding all the people. Philip did not want to be on the spot. When you are on the spot, it is always good to point out that it is an impossible task. In the church and in life we are often faced with a task that is impossible. Jesus wants to know – What will we do?

Question: Did Philip pass the test? Why or why not?

Challenge: Do some research to see how much 8 months' wages were in that time.

Scripture: Exodus 16:19-36

Day 3: John 6:8-9

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Andrew, trying to help out his friend Philip, points out that there is someone with a lunch that could be shared. I think that Andrew wanted to say something for fear that he might be asked next to do the impossible. He points out that the amount is so small that nobody will get even a little.

Question: Did Andrew pass the test? Why or why not?

Challenge: Let's say everybody ate 6 oz of fish. How big would the two fish need to be?

Scripture: Psalm 78:11-25

Day 4: John 6:10

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them.

Jesus knows that there was no way for the disciples to come up with any rational way to feed 5,000 people in the middle of the country. I believe he wants to teach two lessons: 1) that some things can only be done by God and 2) God does not ask us to be successful, just faithful. In this context it means to try to feed the 5,000 with whatever you have and not be discouraged by the little you have. If you have food for 10 and 100 show up then feed as many as possible. Just do the job and leave the success to God.

Question: Do you think there were women and children?

Challenge: Let's say there were just men there; why were there no women and children?

Scripture: Mark 8:1-8 (this is a different multitude that involved 4,000)

Day 5: John 6:11

Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Jesus is demonstrating with this sign that He and the Father are one. The Father gave life in Genesis and gave manna to the Israelites in the desert thereby giving them life in the form of food. Jesus has the same power to give life. Jesus, in His prayer of thanksgiving, acknowledges that all things come from God. If this was an account of how resourceful the disciples could be then they would have come with five loaves each weighing about 375 lbs (enough for each to have 6 oz of bread) and two fish each weighing about 468 lbs (3 oz per person). But it is not an account of how the disciples can problem solve; it is an example of God's grace. God's grace comes in amounts that are unbelievable.

Question: Do you pray before you eat?

Challenge: Write a meal prayer for each of the three meals we usually eat in a day.

Scripture: Luke 22:7-23

Day 6: John 6:12

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

The twelve baskets are symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus is demonstrating that He is the bread of life. The sign is that the impossible is done through God's power. Jesus will go on to say in this chapter that if you take all of Him into yourself then you will know that you are connected to God and that you cannot be separated from God. If you are in Christ you are in God.

Question: How long do you think it took to gather up all the leftovers?

Challenge: What do the twelve baskets of leftovers symbolize?

Scripture: Exodus 39:13-15, Joshua 3:11-13, Ezra 6:16-18, Matthew 19:27-29, Revelation 21:11-13