

GOOD NEWS FROM THE KING
A Study of the Gospel According to Mark
Mark 8:1–21

Holy Bible, New International Version ©2011

"I have compassion for these people...." Mark 8:2

Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to his word.

Read through this week's passage and jot down any thoughts and questions you may have.

Read Mark 8:1–10.

1. While still in "the region of the Decapolis" (7:31), "another large crowd" (v. 1) has gathered around Jesus. Why does he feel compassion for them? (vv. 1–4)

2. How does Jesus enlist the aid of the disciples in providing for the crowd? (vv. 5–7)

3. The disciples' response in verse 4 "was one of sheer bewilderment. Their own resources were so small that they had never even thought of them as a possibility; and once again they had not taken Jesus into account."¹ What do the disciples seem to have forgotten? (Mark 6:35–43)

4. What is the nature of Jesus' prayer before he distributes the food? (vv. 6b–7)

How might this shape your prayers as you bring your needs before the Lord?
(Philippians 4:6)

5. How have you, like the disciples, seen the power of Jesus at work in a seemingly impossible situation, and later, when another "impossibility" presented itself, forgotten or doubted what Jesus is able to do?

6. Read the following promises in Scripture. Write them down and keep them in a prominent place as a reminder of both the power and the compassion of Jesus. What other passages would you add to the list?

Psalm 111:2–5

Proverbs 3:5–6

Ephesians 3:20–21

7. The crowd has been intently focused on Jesus for three days. How is Jesus' provision a vivid illustration and fulfillment of God's promise in Matthew 6:31–33?

8. After the crowd is satisfied, the disciples gather up "seven basketfuls of broken pieces" (v. 8).
- a. What might be Jesus' purpose in leaving behind tangible, visible evidence of the miracle? (See also Jesus' miracle in John 2:1–11.)

- b. What else might he want to illustrate by this over-abundance of food? (Psalm 23:5–6; Matthew 7:9–11; 1 John 3:1a)

Read Mark 8:11–13.

9. The Pharisees ask Jesus “for a sign from heaven” (v. 11).
- How does Jesus respond to their request? (vv. 12–13)
 - Why do you think Jesus doesn’t accommodate their request? (Hint: Read the box.)

A Sign from Heaven

“‘A sign from heaven’ does not refer to the author of the sign – a sign from God. Signs by their very nature came from God, so that the phrase ‘a sign from God’ is redundant. The Pharisees specifically ask for a sign ‘from heaven’...something that will signal Israel’s deliverance from her enemies and their crushing defeat. A sign from heaven is something that ‘is apocalyptic in tone, triumphalistic in character, and the embodiment of one of the “mighty deeds of deliverance” that God had worked on Israel’s behalf in rescuing it from slavery.’”²

“Ironically, this request comes after the miraculous feeding, a miracle that pointed to the blessing, not the destruction, of Gentiles. Jesus refuses to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven because God has sent him to give his life on the cross for all humanity, not to smash the enemies of Israel or to give the nation political mastery of the world. He will not give in to pressure to take a course of action different from God’s purposes. ... Jesus will offer this generation no noisy sign from heaven, only the wind whistling through an empty tomb after his crucifixion.”³

Read Mark 8:14–21.

10. In verse 13, Jesus and his disciples board their boat once again and cross over to the other side of the lake.
- What do the disciples have on their minds? (vv. 14, 16)
 - What is on Jesus’ mind? (vv. 15, 17)
11. In verse 15 Jesus warns his disciples to “watch out for the yeast of the Pharisee and that of Herod,” which is their false teaching (Matthew 16:12). Why do the disciples need this warning? (vv. 17–21)

Yeast and Leaven

In ancient times bread was made light and airy by using leaven, similar to our modern yeast. The process involved setting aside a dough mixture to be used later so that it could ferment. This practice, similar to our sourdough, has many health risks because the process can cause the mixture to spoil at any point and then spread poison not only into the current loaf of bread, but also into all others made from that dough.⁴

12. Why must we as individual believers, and as the church collectively, guard against the “yeast” of false teaching? (1 Corinthians 5:6–8; Galatians 5:1, 4, 7–9)
13. Jesus helps the disciples to think through what they have seen of him and his deeds in order to spur them to understanding and a life of faith. Where do you see a need for this in your own life?

Pray that Jesus will enable you by his Spirit to understand what he has done for you and to live a life of faith.

This lesson on Mark’s Gospel is adapted from “Life of a Servant” by New Life Glenside Women’s Bible Study, 2002–2003.

¹ R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 197.

² David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 308 (referencing and quoting Jeffrey B. Gibson, “Jesus’ Refusal to Produce a ‘Sign’ (Mark 8.11-13),” JSNT 38 (1990):53).

³ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 310.