

Matthew 15:29-16:12 • On Whose Terms?

Introduction

What is holding you back from becoming more involved in ministry? What is preventing you from meeting other's needs, even when they're "great" or "overwhelming" problems you don't feel equipped to deal with? Is there a legitimate excuse for not "being involved"?

²⁹Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. ³⁰And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. ³¹So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

³²And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way."

³³The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?"

³⁴And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?"

And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish."

³⁵And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; ³⁶and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ³⁷And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. ³⁸And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

³⁹And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region

[Read v.29-31]

Q: It's important to note: Where is Jesus in relation to the people?

A: He's alone, gone up onto the mountain by Himself.

Q: How did the lame, crippled, blind, mute, etc. find Jesus?

A: They were **BROUGHT** to Him by the physically healthy members of the large crowds.

Point #1: There are 2 types of people in the crowd: Those with spiritual needs and those with **BOTH** spiritual and physical needs. Both types were in need of healing, either spiritual, physical, or both.

Point #2: Jesus never undertook a "healing crusade". Healthy people brought people in need to Jesus. The "healthy" realized that Someone greater than their self was needed to meet the need. It's just like the example of when Lazarus was raised from the dead: All we can do is roll away the stone – the dead must respond to His voice.

Q: How do we measure the success of this event? (And any ministry, for that matter.)

A: "...and they glorified the God of Israel." They came to Jesus and in the course of their need being met, came face to face with God.

[Read v.32-39]

Q: What is the condition of the people at this point? What does this indicate?

A: Having sought and found One greater than their self that has met their need by restoring them to God, they don't want to leave. They're no longer seeking a temporary fix for their personal problems but desire to continue in the presence and teaching of God.

Q: How does their present need contrast to the original?

A: Originally they sought out Jesus without thought of the consequences of where they were or the remoteness of the location. Now Jesus recognizes that in order for them to be empowered to take back and share with others what has happened, that they'll need to be strengthened. It's a practical example to us of Jesus' instructions to us in the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make **disciples** of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19) Jesus meets eternal needs in the course of meeting temporary, present conditions and sends them back into the world as His ambassadors.

Q: Beginning in v.33, who has a great, temporary need?

A: The disciples. They are commanded by Jesus to do what appears to be the impossible.

[Continued on next page.]

of Magadan.

Q: What are the major points the disciples are trying to make?

- We're too few.
- They're too many.
- We're in the wrong place.
- Even if we were in the right place, we don't have the resources.
- We'll never be able to do this with what we've got, where we're at.

Q: Note that Jesus never says outright that their observations are wrong. What is His response?

A: Basically, "What do you have?"

Application: *The crowds came to Jesus with great spiritual and physical needs which, on the surface, He had insufficient resources to address. Yet what was provided by the Father was enough. Are we hesitant to personally get into ministry or meet others' needs because we believe we're not sufficiently equipped or prepared? How does Jesus' response, "What do you have?" mean to you?*

Q: What is the application of the seven large baskets left over after all the people present were fed? Was Jesus just showing off?

A: Once we submit what we have to God for His use, it multiplies on our behalf so that we can continue to meet even more people's needs.

Q: So when did Jesus return the people to their homes, their regular lives?

A: After He met their need, provided them a sustaining view of God through Him, and gave nourishment to continue as witnesses and examples to the world of what God had brought about in their life.

[Read v.16:1-4]

^{16:1}The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.

²But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away

Q: What's wrong with these knuckleheads? Wasn't the healing of hundreds, if not thousands, of people topped off by feeding them all enough of a sign?

A: But they weren't part of the crowd. They did not seek Jesus out as the crowds did for Someone greater than their self to meet their need and show them the way to the Father. They are interested only in their self, seeking Jesus on their own terms.

Q: How would you describe the condition of the Pharisees and Sadducees based on Jesus' response to them?

A: They only believe God works in exactly the way that they want Him to work. They don't recognize or acknowledge everything (or anything) attesting to the proof of God's working: Changed lives. Whereas the crowds came to Jesus as they were, seeking Him and willing to leave the old life to seek God's new life, these men refuse to move an inch from their prideful self and expect everything to occur on their own terms.

Q: What is significant in this regard to Jesus' conclusion regarding their condition, "...and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah"?

A: Although a "sign" occurred in the life of Jonah in the ordeal with the fish, Jonah never performed a sign in the course of his ministry. God's message to Nineveh through Jonah was enough to bring repentance. Thousands of lives were changed based solely on accepting God's Word. Jesus is saying that they're going to have to make a decision based on faith through hearing His message and seeing its effect – not on the basis of a sign or miracle provided in their immediate presence.

⁵And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

⁷They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring any bread.”

⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? ¹¹How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

¹²Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[Read v.5-12]

Q: Get out your seminary degrees. ;-) *Based on Jesus' explanation to the disciples of the true meaning of "leaven", what is the real message behind the feeding of the crowds? What does it all REALLY represent?*

A: The bread is God's Word and the leaven is the multiplying power of His teaching. It's all about the fact that we've already got enough to meet everyone's needs, regardless of how many people or the size of the need, through imparting His Word. The leaven of Christ will multiply what is on hand, His teaching transforming lives and bringing about a visible witness of the power and presence of the kingdom of God.

Q: How does this parallel the leaven of the Pharisees?

A: The Pharisees represent **FALSE** teaching. It can appear to meet people's needs but ultimately fails in that it does not actually reveal the Father. The individuals making up the crowds need to be fed the True Word of God or false teachers will come in our place to provide their own bread/teaching to fill the void.

Q: What does the leaven teach us in regard to our feelings – sometimes just like the disciples' feelings – that we're not equipped to meet the overwhelming demands and needs of others?

A: It is **CHRIST** Who is the leaven, which causes the bread to rise and multiply, not us. What we have on hand is enough to be used and multiplied by Him. It's not our responsibility to effect the miraculous – that comes as the result of simply yielding whatever we have to Him.

Application: *Feeling overwhelmed? Not sure you have what is needed to face not only the personal issues of life but your responsibility to those around you? Do you understand from this teaching that you already have what is needed? It's really an issue of whether you're going to turn over what you have to Jesus, or continue (like the Pharisees) to demand that He take care of things on your terms.*