

Central Church of Christ - Sunday, 2/13/2022 – Questions Jesus Asked #3



Jesus's Question: **Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Phillip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" (John 6:5 NLT).**

## INTRODUCTION

Actress Lily Tomlin once said,

*"I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific."*<sup>1</sup>

I love that quote. Not only is it humorous, it hits close to home with me. Growing up, I always hoped that I would be somebody one day. My family members used to constantly ask me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And although my answers changed and varied from year to year, I always hoped that I would make something out of myself. I envisioned myself graduating college, getting a great job, starting a family, enjoying a successful career, and making my parents proud. For most of my life growing up, my world revolved around me—I was pretty much the only person that I cared about. But I believed that I would make my mark in this world.

And then I started college. Miraculously, I somehow scraped by to make it through my freshman year. Focusing, studying, and learning were not my strong suits! And I thought, "If college classes are any indication of what the real world is like, I've lost *all* confidence in my ability to make my mark in this world!"

Then something happened the summer after my freshman year. I was a chaperone with my old youth group at summer camp. The last night of camp, God got ahold of my life and began to flip my priorities upside down. I've never been the same since then. I began to realize that my life wasn't just about me. It was about loving God and loving other people.

My sophomore year, I randomly found myself in numerous situations where other students at my college were asking me for advice, prayer, or spiritual direction. It was crazy to me because I had only turned my life over to God a couple of weeks prior. I felt totally unqualified to give *anyone* direction in their life.

I called an older friend from my parent's church. I explained what was going on. He said, "God is giving you influence." I said, "I don't want influence!" He suggested that I start a Bible study. And even though I felt totally unqualified, I agreed to try it.

It didn't go great. It's hard to lead a Bible study when you don't know anything about the Bible! I struggled my way through it, but I loved it. And in the process, a crazy thought crept into my mind:

Maybe, just maybe, God might be able to use me for good.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/lily\\_tomlin\\_109612](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/lily_tomlin_109612)

## TENSION

Since then, I've had seasons where I believed that God could use me, and I've had seasons where I thought, "There's no way that God could EVER use a messed-up guy like me." If you're anything like me, when it comes to the idea of God using you, the first thing you think about are your qualifications.

- Am I good enough to be used by God?
- Do I know enough for God to have an impact through me?
- Have I made enough good decisions in my life to be able to help anyone else?
- Why would anyone want to follow *my* lead?
- What if I try to help people and I lead them down the wrong road?

**The problem with looking at qualifications is that we rarely feel qualified.** We almost always feel too broken, too inadequate, and not wise or holy enough to help someone else.

Another issue we have with God using us is that we have enough problems and challenges of our own. If we're honest, we feel like other people need to help us! Our schedules are busy with work, kids, sports, family, friendships, church, exercise, doctor visits, and car repairs. If we had a break from all of that, we'd want to focus on our own self-care. We'd want some space for our own spiritual, physical, and mental development. After all, we need it more than other people! But that doesn't matter because we really don't have the time.

And one last thing: **often it doesn't even cross our minds that God could use us.** It's not that we're being selfish, we just don't wake up and think, "I wonder how God could use me today?" We don't look for opportunities to be used by Him—not because we don't care, but because we're simply trying to survive our own lives. We're talking it one day at a time, and there's nothing left in the tank to help others.

In this series, we're talking about questions Jesus asked that stretch our faith. In the highly dramatic scene that we're going to look at today, Jesus asks an interesting question. And I think that question will be helpful to all of us when it comes to considering the idea of being used by God for the good of others.

---

## TRUTH

We're going to go back to the Gospel of John—a book that we looked at in week one of this series. John was a disciple who travelled and worked alongside Jesus. In fact, when Jesus died on the cross, He asked John to take care of His mom. Which means that John knew Jesus pretty well. They spent a lot of time together, and Jesus trusted John. So we can read these words knowing that they were written by an eyewitness who was trusted by Jesus.

When He was on Earth, Jesus traveled from town to town with His disciples. Crowds almost always gathered around Him. Maybe they had seen or heard about Jesus' miracles. Maybe they had some physical ailment they wanted Him to heal. Maybe they were just curious and wanted to see more for themselves. People wanted to be near Him, often because they wanted to get some benefit for themselves.

This particular day was no different. Check it out.

*After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. (It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) (John 6:1-4 NLT).*

Jesus went to a less-populated side of the sea. He had recently learned that His cousin had been killed, and it's possible He wanted some time alone to rest and grieve with His disciples. But the people found out where He was and came after Him.

And then came the interesting question that Jesus asked.

**Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" (John 6:5 NLT).**

Philip had seen Jesus perform miracle after miracle. Jesus told blind people to open their eyes, and all of a sudden, their sight was restored. Jesus told people who had never walked to stand up and get moving! And now Jesus was asking a *disciple* what they were going to do?

But the point wasn't for Philip to come up with an *actual* solution. The point was for Philip's faith to be stretched. Check out what John wrote next.

*[Jesus] was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do (John 6:6 NLT).*

Out of Jesus' love for Philip, He wanted Philip to grow through this experience. This is how Philip responded:

*Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7 NIV).*

Philip answered Jesus with the physical and the practical concerns. Like an accountant, he calculated that it would take about eight months' worth of paychecks to make a dent in the bellies of the hungry crowd.

So often you and I respond to God in the physical. We tell Him all the reasons why He can't use us . . .

- We're unqualified.
- We don't have time.
- We have too many problems.

**But God doesn't operate in the natural. He can do the supernatural.** He's God! He's capable of doing things that we can't see with our physical eyes. Instead of looking at the situation through the eyes of an accountant, Jesus wanted Philip to look at the situation through eyes of faith. Philip *should've* responded by saying, "You, Jesus, are the great miracle worker. You are God. YOU tell me what we should do!" So often we ask, "What should I do? How can I do this?" when we should be asking, "God, what do You want to do in and through this situation?"

Then:

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?" (John 6:8-9 NLT).*

Interestingly, barley bread was known as the food of the poor. It was low-class bread.

Still, Jesus now had something to work with.

*"Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.*

*When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!" (John 6:10-14 NLT).*

Consider how this miracle unfolded:

- The boy didn't have much, but he brought what he had.
- Andrew listed out their resources, which were nothing but a poor boy's food.
- Jesus made something incredible out of very little.
- Philip witnessed a miracle and it stretched his faith.

That's what you and I can do: **we can offer what we have and do what we can.** Instead of listing all of the natural and practical reasons why God can't use us, we need to follow the example of this young boy. Because:

**Faith is about bringing what you have to the One who can use it.**

You may not feel like you're qualified. You may not feel like you have many resources. You may feel limited in time, talent, and connections. Just bring what you can to the miracle worker—the One who can turn the natural into the supernatural!

## APPLICATION

So let's put this into practice. How can this ancient miraculous story have an impact on us today? A few suggestions . . .

Ask yourself this question: **What could I bring to the table?** What could I take to the hillside? For example:

- Maybe you don't have much free time during the week, but you have some open time on Sunday afternoon. You could spend some time that day investing in someone younger.
- Maybe you feel totally unqualified to lead or volunteer, but you could help with maintenance work or gardening around your church grounds.
- Maybe you're already at church on Sunday mornings. Why not volunteer in the children's ministry once a month?
- Maybe you already go to your kids' elementary school to have lunch with them each week. Maybe you could mentor an underprivileged kid at your kids' school and have lunch with him or her once a week.
- Maybe you don't want to lead or teach anyone, but you are a great cook. You could have college-aged students at your house once a week for dinner.

There are opportunities everywhere, you just have to look for them—which brings me to the next point.

**Open your eyes for opportunities.** Andrew noticed a boy who brought his food. The boy simply noticed that the crowd needed food. Maybe now is a good time for you to pray and ask God to show you opportunities where you can bring what you have to the hillside. You and I may be surprised at the opportunities that God will present to us.

---

## LANDING

God wants to partner with you in accomplishing things that go beyond what you can imagine. If you trust Him to work through you—as broken and unqualified as you feel—I believe that you will look back years from now and say, “That was amazing! God, I don't know how You did it, but I'm so grateful that I was able to be a part!” Because **faith is about bringing what you have to the One who can use it.**

# Small Group Discussion



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is something you've done in your life that you felt completely unqualified to do?
2. Read John 6:1-6. John tells us that Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread in order to test Philip. What aspect of faith do you think God was trying to test in Philip? Are there other people tested in the Bible?
3. How do you think Philip felt when Jesus asked him where they would be able to get food for everyone?
4. How do you think Philip felt when he saw Jesus multiply the bread and fish?
5. How have you seen Jesus multiply your efforts in your life?
6. Why do you think God chooses to use us to show the world who He is?
7. Knowing that God is going to amplify what you bring to the table, what are some practical ways you think God might want to work through you?