

Two feeding miracles

The two feeding miracles of the ministry of Jesus were obviously exceptionally important events. Jesus wanted His disciples to learn from them that He was abundantly capable of caring for His people.

1. Jesus gives His disciples a second chance

1. **Jesus gives His disciples a second chance to learn about the abundance of His care for His people.** Once again, opportunity was given to the disciples to see the abundance of Jesus' provision. This time it was in an area where there were many more Gentiles. The need is even greater than before. This time they have been without food for three days^{☞1}. Jesus mentions the plight of the people to the disciples^{☞2}. Again they think only of the practical difficulties in the way of helping the people^{☞3}. They have no expectation of another feeding miracle.

☞1 8:1-2
☞2 8:3
☞3 8:4

Abundant provision

Again Jesus chooses to use the supplies which the disciples can find and multiply them miraculously^{☞1}. The people are miraculously fed^{☞2} and seven basketfuls of extra food are collected^{☞3}. Four thousand men were involved in the feeding^{☞4}.

☞1 8:5
☞2 8:6-8a
☞3 8:8b
☞4 8:9a

Miraculous provision

2. The lesson of the feeding miracles not yet learned

2. **Yet shortly after that, they again reveal that they have not learned the lesson of the feeding miracles.** They cross from the eastern side of the lake and reach Dalmanutha^{☞1}. The precise place is unknown but it is obviously on the western side of the lake. The Pharisees request a sign from Jesus but their request is refused^{☞2}. This leads shortly after to Jesus giving His disciples a warning about the subtle influence (*the "leaven"*) of the Pharisees and of Herod^{☞3}. Because they have forgotten to take bread for their journey, the disciples do not get the point of His warning at all and think He is saying something about the forgotten bread^{☞4}. But this only reveals that they have not learned the lesson of the two feeding miracles^{☞5}. They still have not seen the abundance of Jesus' care for His people.

☞1 9:9b-10
☞2 8:11-13
☞3 8:14-15
☞4 8:16
☞5 8:17-21

3. A miracle to show the need of more spiritual understanding

3. **Jesus works a miracle that lets them see that their spiritual understanding needs to be further healed.**

The next miracle is related to their slowness to see. It is unprecedented to have a miracle that takes place in two stages. The story must not be used to prove that Jesus' miracles may be half-successful, and therefore half-successful miracles may be expected today. Surely the event is deliberately intended to give the disciples a picture of themselves. Their slowness to see the greatness of Jesus is like that of a blind man half-cured.

A healing in two stages

The man is brought to Jesus in Bethsaida^{☞1}. Jesus heals him but the healing seems to be only half-successful, for the healed person sees other people like trees walking around^{☞2}. Then the man gets a second touch from Jesus^{☞3} and is fully healed^{☞4}. He is warned not to go into Bethsaida where he might tell of what Jesus has done^{☞5}.

☞1 8:22
☞2 8:23-24
☞3 8:25a
☞4 8:25b
☞5 8:26

A hint to the disciples

In the particular situation in which Jesus and His disciples find themselves, the way in which the miracle is performed is surely a hint to the disciples that they need a *second touch* from Jesus. They have seen much of Jesus' miraculous powers and they have His teaching, but there is much that they have not yet seen. Jesus had told them that although they "*have ears*" they still needed to hear.

They had seen and heard enough to know who Jesus was and to

Preaching Through the Bible - Chapter 16 Mark 8:1-26

appreciate His great power. They should now know Him sufficiently to know that He is capable of abundantly caring for and providing for His people. Yet they are like a man who is half-healed and sees people as if they were trees walking around.

Sufficiency for every situation

People who have not had a *second touch* tend not to see how sufficient God is for every situation. The disciples had been in a situation before where Jesus had fed thousands. One might expect them to be ready for Jesus to do something similar again. But people who have not had a *second touch* (in which they see clearly the greatness and abundance of God's provision) tend to think that when God has done something amazing, like feed the five thousand, it was just *luck* and is not likely to happen again. Jesus wants His disciples to know that He is **always** planning to abundantly provide for the needs of His people.

Jesus is always planning abundant provision

The disciples were meant to be ready for **abundant** provision. When Jesus acts, there are likely to be baskets and baskets of His supplies left over. He does not provide in a mean or stingy manner. He provides abundantly.

The disciple who has had a *second touch* knows of Jesus' mercy and concern for His people. Such a disciple will not panic easily, will not struggle with God's delays, will not grumble in adversity.

A second touch – seeing things properly brings transformation and release

Have we had a *second touch*? It is wonderful to know that Jesus is merciful and willing to give grace and help to us. But with a *second touch* we see much more. We see everything properly. We discover how Jesus has taken responsibility for us. We see how faithful He is. We see His compassion, His unconditional acceptance of us despite all our weaknesses. We see His abundant provision. He is the Saviour who performs miracles of abundant provision for us in His time and in His own way. But He does it more than once. He is always an abundant provider. If God touches our eyes, we shall see things properly. Despite all that Jesus has done for them the disciples have a limited perception of the goodness and the power of Jesus and the greatness of His provision for His people. They are half-healed. If they get from God a *second touch* and see things as they really are, they will become transformed people. They will be released into a life of total confidence because they have seen how much Jesus' abundant provision is ever at hand.

Total confidence

Study 16

A Second Touch

Read Mark Chapter 8:1-26

Read: **Preaching Through the Bible: Mark**, Chapter 16

A. Jesus gives His disciples a second chance

1. What did Jesus expect the disciples to learn from the two healing miracles?
2. What word describes Jesus' provision for His people? A.....
3. This time the miracle took place in an area where there were more G.....
4. For how long had the people been without food?
5. **True or false?**
 - a. Jesus mentioned the plight of the people to the disciples.
 - b. The disciples expected another miracle.
 - c. The disciples had learned from the previous occasion.
 - d. Jesus multiplied the food that the disciples had found.
 - e. There were twelve baskets of food left-over after the people had eaten.
 - f. 4000 men were fed.

B. The lessons of the feeding miracles not yet learned

1. Jesus and His disciples crossed to the w..... side of the lake.
2. What did the Pharisees ask for?
3. How did Jesus respond?
4. Jesus warned the disciples about the subtle influence of the Pharisees. He described it as l.....
5. The disciples missed the point. What did they think Jesus was referring to?

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6. What did the disciples still not properly understand?
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C. A miracle to show the need of more spiritual understanding

1. The next miracle recorded by Mark is described by Michael Eaton as *unprecedented*⁸. What does that mean?
2. What is different about this miracle?
- 3. True or false?**
 - a. The story illustrates that sometimes we should expect half miracles.
 - b. The story is intended to give the disciples a picture of themselves.
 - c. In some ways the disciples were rather like the blind man.
4. The disciples were s..... to see the greatness of J..... .
5. In what way was the blind man half-healed?

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6. What happened after the man had a *second touch* from Jesus?

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7. Why did Jesus warn him not to go into Bethsaida?

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8. Although the disciples had seen Jesus do many wonderful things and heard His teaching, there is still m..... that they have not s..... .
9. Although they ‘h..... e.....’, they still needed to h.....
10. They should now know Him s..... to know that He is capable of a..... caring for and p..... for His people.
11. The disciples needed to know that Jesus is a..... able to provide for e..... s..... for His people.
12. The disciples needed to know that Jesus’ provision is a..... .
13. Disciples who know these things will not p..... in difficult situations nor gr.....

when things are d..... .

14. True or false?

- a. When we have had a *second touch* we see so much more.
 - b. When we have had a *second touch* we see things properly.
 - c. A *second touch* brings freedom from worry about provision.
 - d. When we have had a *second touch* we are transformed.
 - e. Jesus provides for us in His time and in His own way.
15. Jesus wants us to have t..... c..... in the matter of provision.

D. For further thought and discussion

- 1. Why do you think Jesus chose the word **“leaven”** as a teaching illustration?
- 2. Michael Eaton speaks of a *second touch*. What about a third, fourth and fifth touch? Do you think this is something that Christians should seek and expect?
- 3. It is sometimes said that *“The Lord helps those who help themselves.”* Is there any truth in this and how does it fit with the teaching Jesus gives here?
- 4. Read *Philippians chapter 4*. Are there any conditions, stated or implied^g, attached to God’s promises relating to provision?
- 5. Why do you think Michael Eaton, in expounding and applying this passage, wrote that Jesus provides for us, ‘...*in His time and in His own way.*’

*Responses to these discussion questions are discussed in the **Leaders’ Handbook**.*

E. Notes

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