

Week 50
Matthew 14-18

Theme: God provides both spiritually and materially.

Conversation Starter

What action option did you choose to do after our discussion last week? What went well? What did not go well?

What questions do you have from the reading this week?

Weekly Review/Intro

Our weekly readings continue through Matthew. The readings took us through more of Jesus' earthly ministry, and our section started with the murder of John the Baptist and Jesus performing another miracle.

Have you ever felt inadequate to do something?

What was it and why did you feel that way?

There may be times where you feel like you are incapable of doing something. You may feel like a diet is too tough or a task at work is beyond your reach. Why people feel inadequate can vary from person to person. We are going to start this week and look at an example where the disciples felt inadequate, but Jesus used them to do a great work.

Read Matthew 14:12-17

What were the disciples asking Jesus to do in verse 15?

Do you think they were practical in asking Jesus to send them away?

The disciples saw the large crowd and asked Jesus to send them away to go get food. Most churches normally take this approach as people leave afterwards to get their own food.

Instead of sending them away, what did Jesus ask the disciples to do instead?

How would you feel if you were asked to feed over 5000 people with no notice?

How did the disciples respond in verse 17?

Instead of sending the people away, Jesus told the disciples to feed them instead. If you were them, you might begin to feel inadequate for the task of instantly feeding that many people. There are very few people who could do that. The disciples respond by telling Jesus what they do have.

Was the amount of food adequate for feeding that many people?

Read Matthew 14:18-21

How did Jesus respond to the disciples' inadequacy in verse 18?

Did Jesus rebuke them because they did not have enough food?

What did Jesus do instead of rebuking them?

Instead of rebuking the disciples for not having enough food, Jesus simply asks them to give him what they have. He then blessed it, and he gave it to the disciples to pass it out.

Did the disciples fulfill the command that Jesus gave them in verse 16?

Could they have done it without Jesus?

Even though Jesus blessed the food, he specifically gave it to the disciples in verse 19 and the disciples are the ones that fed the crowds. This fulfills the command that Jesus gave them in verse 16. However, this act would not have been possible without Jesus being present.

(Rhetorical) What does this mean for us?

Have you ever felt like God has asked you to do something that you felt inadequate to do? What was it?

How can you follow the examples of the disciples?

Can God still use you to fulfill his commands even when you feel inadequate? Can you do this by your own strength?

One of the many takeaways from this section of scripture is that God can use us even when we feel inadequate to do what he asks of us. The disciples were incapable of feeding the 5000 with just the loaves and fish. However, they willingly presented what they had to Jesus. We need to

do the same. We need to present to God what we have and let him work through us. By the power of Jesus, we too can fulfill the commands that God gives us.

Application

Interestingly, Chapter 14 was not the only place where Jesus fed a large crowd with nothing. Jesus repeated the same miracle in Chapter 15. We are going to compare and contrast these similar miracles and see how these two feedings apply to our lives.

Read Matthew 15:32-38

Who started the conversation of feeding the people in Chapter 15? How does this compare to Chapter 14?

Why did Jesus want to feed the people? Did Jesus say anything similar to this in Chapter 14?

The beginning of the feeding of the 4000 starts differently from feeding the 5000. Instead of the disciples asking Jesus to send them away, Jesus tells the disciples that he has compassion and wants to feed the people.

How do the disciples respond to Jesus' desire to feed the people?

Do you think the disciples question in verse 33 comes from a place of doubt or forgetfulness?

The disciples respond to Jesus by asking the question "Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?" One could make the argument that this question came from a place of doubt or that it came from a place of forgetfulness.

Have you ever been in a situation like the disciples? Have you ever been asked to trust God in the same situation multiple times?

Did you always respond in that situation the way you should have?

What was the situation that you repeated and how did you respond?

Before we give the disciples too much grief, we can also find ourselves in a similar situation. We can also be put in similar circumstances or situations as a way to test our faith. If you notice that the same situation keeps coming, it may be that God is trying to teach you something.

Instead of rebuking the disciples, what does Jesus do?

Do you think Jesus should have rebuked the disciples?

What do you think this tells us about the patience of God?

Instead of rebuking the disciples, Jesus simply asks them how many loaves of bread they have. We do not know the actual time between the different miracles of chapters 14 and 15. However, we can surmise that chapter 14 did happen first. Jesus has already done this miracle once, so the disciples should know that he is capable of doing this. This shows us that God is patient with us even when we are slow to catch on sometimes. However, in Chapter 16, we see that Jesus will rebuke when he feels like it is needed.

Read Matthew 16:5-12

What is the scenario that is playing out here?

What are the disciples worried about?

Once again, we find the disciples in a situation where they need food. They went in their boat, but they forgot to bring bread.

What was Jesus trying to tell them while they were worried in verse 6?

Why did Jesus rebuke them in verses 8-12?

In verses 1-4 of this section, we see Jesus rebuking the Pharisees and Sadducees. In verse 6, Jesus is warning the disciples about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Instead of hearing what Jesus was saying in his warning, the disciples thought he was talking about food.

How would you feel if you were Jesus in this situation? Do you think it would be frustrating that your disciples were worried about food when you had already miraculously provided food twice before?

How can our concern for the material things (food, clothing, money) get in the way of us hearing what God is trying to tell us?

Our concern for the material can get in the way of our spiritual life. That is a lesson that the disciples needed to learn. Jesus had already miraculously provided food twice for the disciples, but they still lack faith in Jesus. Because of their lack of faith, they miss an opportunity to hear from Jesus and to learn from him. We are guilty of the same thing.

Have you ever been guilty of worrying about possessions so much that you ignore God?

How does knowing that Jesus fed the 5000 and the 4000 help you have more faith in God's providing power?

How do you need to change your view on possessions so you can be more open to hearing from God?

Week 50
Reflection

During this week, you are being charged with answering these questions about yourself and your walk with God. Hopefully these will force you to pray and consider what God wants you to do in your life.

- 1) Have you ever felt inadequate in your ability to serve God?
- 2) How can you make yourself open to serving God regardless of your inadequacy?
- 3) Have you ever doubted God when put in similar circumstances?
- 4) Has God been putting you in similar situations to test you? How are you doing?
- 5) Are you more concerned about your possessions than you are with knowing God?

Week 50
Action

Choose one of the following actions to do as part of your walk this week.

- 1) Read Matthew 6:25-32 and reflect. How do you need to change your view of possessions so you can be more open to hearing from God?
- 2) Go to a trusted believer and confess how you feel inadequate to serve God. Pray together on this and pray for an opportunity to serve God.
- 3) Get out of your comfort zone and serve God. Pray for what he wants you to do and go do it regardless of how inadequate you feel. Trust in God to help you. Document how it went so you can talk about it with your group.