



**GROWTH GROUP STUDY GUIDE**





April 16, 2023

## Session 1 | A Bunch of Folks Came Back to Life

As we begin this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

**Surely he was the Son of God!  
Matthew 27:54b**

Matthew is the only Gospel to record the resurrection of “many holy people who had died” in conjunction with the death and resurrection of Jesus. In five brief passages, he includes this detail along with the temple curtain tearing, the ground shaking, rocks splitting, tombs breaking open, and the Roman soldiers’ response to these events. To understand the significance of the resurrection of “many holy people” we need to ask why. Why did this happen and why did Matthew choose to include this detail in his Gospel? The simplest answer to “why” could be to show God’s power over all of creation. While we, as Christians, believe this is true, it fails to address the deeper question, but why this?

CompellingTruth.Org points to verse 54 as the answer to “why this.” In this verse we read that the Roman soldiers overseeing the crucifixion witnessed these things and concluded that, “Surely he was the Son of God!” The writer goes on to suggest that the resurrection of “many holy people” shows us that Jesus’ power over life and death is not limited to Himself or to those whom he individually raised back to life during His ministry on Earth. In addition, Matthew included this detail in his Gospel because it was a powerful proof to the people of Israel that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

**When you read these passages...,  
what do you believe?**

GotQuestions.Org suggests that it is the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and is a glimpse into the promised bodily resurrection of believers when Christ returns in final victory.

When you read these passages in Matthew, what do you believe?

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:50-54

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?

2. What challenged you about this sermon?
  
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### **Questions from the Bible:**

1. What do you envision when you read about the miraculous events in Matthew 27:51-53.? Explain.
  
2. In verse 50 it states that after Jesus had cried out, “He gave up His spirit.” Does wording it this way have significance to you? Explain.
  
3. Why do you think it would have been important to Matthew to include these four events (curtain torn, earthquake, tombs broken, dead rising) upon the death of Jesus?
  
4. Why do you think that only holy men and women were raised from the dead?
  
5. What does this week’s scripture mean for Christians who have already died when Christ comes again?
  
6. Why is it important to note that the many holy people that were raised from the dead came out of their tombs “after Jesus’ resurrection”? (Ref: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
  
7. Do you think the “many holy people” that were raised from the dead have already ascended into Heaven? (Ref: 1 Timothy 6:16)

## Questions for Application:

1. What was your initial reaction when reading the Matthew passage for this week's sermon? What "stuck out" or resonated with you as you read it?
2. What does the statement by the Roman guards that "Surely he was the Son of God!" mean to you?
3. How would it impact your faith if you witnessed holy people being raised from the dead? Even though we were not present in Jerusalem when this miracle occurred, should it have any less impact on our faith today?
4. What do you find most challenging about this miracle? Why is it essential to our faith that we believe it?
5. How would you explain to a non-believer a miracle such as holy people being raised from the dead?
6. With the way you are living now, will you, like Jesus, be able to give the victor's shout that you have finished the work God gave you to do, on your deathbed?
7. Has the tearing in two of the veil of separation had any impact on your relationship with God?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

Miracles (28 days): <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/19268-miracles>

Miracles (10 days): <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/24802-miracles>

## Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

## Growth Challenge:

Discuss what you believe about miracles in general, and these miracles in particular, with a member of your study group or a trusted friend. Try to focus on why you believe what you do.

# NOTES

April 23, 2023

## Session 2 | Jesus Kept the Party Going

As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.



### Background:

**What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.**  
**John 2:11**

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

The changing of water into wine is the first recorded miracle of Jesus. At the end of the first chapter of John, we read that Jesus had started calling His disciples and then in chapter two we read that Jesus was with his mother and those first disciples at a wedding in Cana. Why did John give us this apparent interlude in his account of the ministry of Jesus?

In her article on Jesus' first miracle, Bethany Verrett shares her thoughts on the significance of this story. It is an account of Jesus participating in the ordinary events that occur in life, specifically the wedding celebration of someone who would probably have been a member of His extended family. Jesus frequently used the images of bride, groom, and wedding in His parables because they were something with which everyone could easily identify.

**Do whatever he tells you.**  
**John 2:5b**

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, found out that the family had run out of wine for the celebration, she turned to Jesus. We might be surprised, even disappointed by the response of Jesus. If this were happening today, He might say something like “And I care because?” But Mary, knowing her son and that He did care, instructed the servants to “Do whatever he tells you.”

In the time of Jesus, a wedding celebration customarily lasted a full week. The thought of running out of food or wine during the celebration would have been horrifying. It would show a lack of hospitality on the part of the host family and the resulting embarrassment could last for years. By stepping in and taking action, Jesus demonstrated love and compassion. The act of making wine out of water was done without fanfare, known only to the servants, Mary, and His disciples. John tells us that this was the first recorded instance of Jesus showing His divine nature to His disciples and that they “believed in him.”

Through this miracle, a powerful demonstration of His divinity, we get a first look at the glory of God that Jesus brought to us during His life and ministry. When given a sample to taste, the master of the banquet noted that the best wine had been brought out later. This gives us a glimpse of the bountiful goodness that awaits us at the wedding feast of Christ and His church (Revelation 19). Like much of what we read in the Bible, there is a lot we can learn when we take the time to fully encounter the Word.

**Scripture:** John 2:1-11

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

## **Sermon Reflection:**

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

## **Questions from the Bible:**

1. Why was it important to not run out of wine? What would have happened to the party?
2. Why do you think Mary turned to Jesus when the wine ran out?
3. What was Jesus' response when Mary tells him that the wine has run out? Why do you think he responded this way to His mother?
4. When Mary instructs the servants to "Do whatever He tells you.", why do you think Jesus responded as He did?
5. Turning water into wine wasn't a show-stopping extravaganza, yet In John 2:11, it states that "his disciples believed in him." What do you think they believed after witnessing this miraculous event? What do you believe was the purpose in performing this miracle?



6. John is the only Gospel that tells us of the wedding in Cana. How is this significant?

### Questions for Application:

1. In John 2:11, it states that “his disciples believed in him.” What do you believe about Jesus after reading John 2:1-11?
2. What does this miracle (changing water into “choice wine”) teach us about Jesus?
3. Why do you think that John felt it was necessary to include this account in his Gospel?
4. Think about a time when you turned to Jesus for help. If you are comfortable, please share your experience.
5. Are you looking for opportunities for Jesus to bring new wine into your life? Explain.
6. How would you explain to a non-believer a miracle such as changing water into wine?
7. Jesus wants to turn our lives from plain to the best. What miracle is He performing in you?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

Got Water – A Serving Devotional: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/778-got-water-a-serving-devotional>

New Wine: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/26429-new-wine>

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

### **Growth Challenge:**

If we look, there are miracles all around us. Make of point of looking for the miracles, both large and small, in the world around you this week.

## **NOTES**

# April 30, 2023

## Session 3 | Fake Snake Real Venom

As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.



### Background:



*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

The Israelites are wandering in the desert near Canaan—the land God promised to them as His chosen people. They are fresh off a huge victory over the Canaanite king of Arad, achieved because God answered their pleas for help following an attack by the king. Despite this, and the many other ways God has provided for and protected the Israelites, they are having a tough time trusting Him and accepting their desert fate; they grumble and complain and insist they would have been better off dying in Egypt.

Finally, God has had it with His people and their grumbling, so He sends venomous snakes among them. Many Israelites are bitten and die. The Israelites realize they have sinned against God and ask Moses to pray for God to remove the snakes.

Have you ever noticed how God’s answer to prayer does not always come as we anticipate? The answer the Israelites receive is no exception. Rather than removing the snakes, God has Moses make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Whenever one of the Israelites was bitten by a snake, they needed only to look to the snake to be healed. But wait, doesn’t that smack of idol worship, the second of God’s 10 Commandments? Generations later, God’s chosen people would be told there was but one way to experience salvation...

**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.**  
**John 3:14-15**

**Scripture:** Numbers 21: 4-9

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Questions from the Bible:

1. What prompted God to release venomous snakes on the people? Why might He have chosen snakes? Where in the Bible does man first experience snakes?
2. How did the people respond when the Lord sent poisonous snakes among them? What did Moses do on their behalf?
3. In Numbers 21:4-9 the Israelites' impatience is a sign of faithlessness. How has their behavior changed during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness?
4. Consider these words from author Steven J. Cole, *"God didn't remove the snakes, but He provided the cure... Each person had to believe God's promise and look at the uplifted snake if he or she wanted to live. There were no delays. He didn't need to accumulate enough good works to merit healing. The instant he looked, he was miraculously healed."* Why do you think God would use something resembling an idol to bring healing to the Israelites? Why didn't God just remove the snakes?
5. Read John 3:14-15. In reference to this reading, it says in the Smith's Bible Dictionary, *"The comparison used by Christ, adds a deep interest to the scene. To present the serpent form, as deprived of its power to hurt, impaled as the trophy of a conqueror was to assert that evil, physical and spiritual, had been overcome, and thus help strengthen the weak faith of the Israelites in a victory over both."* Do you think Jesus would agree with this assertion? Please explain.

6. Eventually, the Israelites made it to the Promised Land, and they brought the bronze snake along with them. In 2 Kings 18:4 we learn that they called it Nehushtan and had begun to burn incense to it. They had twisted what God had given them into something evil. Can you think of other examples where our society has twisted God's meaning?
  
7. How would you explain to a non-believer why God would send venomous snakes to His chosen people?

### Questions for Application:

1. Why does what we believe about miracles matter?
  
2. What do you think about God's response to the grumbling of the Israelites? Do you think grumbling still matters to God?
  
3. Hebrews 13:8 says, "*Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and today and forever.*" Does our grumbling and complaining affect our relationship with Jesus? If so, why?
  
4. Has there been a time in your life when you found yourself grumbling against God? If yes, how was it resolved?
  
5. What is the opposite of grumbling? Which does God receive more of from you?

6. How is God asking you to grow your faith today?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic.

“Why Believe the Bible,” by Mike Novotny. Three-day plan. <https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/19021-why-believe-the-bible>

**Additional Resources:**

“In Case You Missed It,” <https://www.pursuegod.org/icymi/>  
<https://bible.org/seriespage/27-snake-saves-numbers-211-9> author Steven J. Cole

**Question for Discussion:**

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, and service?

**Growth Challenge:**

Make an intentional effort this week to catch yourself when you begin grumbling about something. See if you can instead offer God a praise or thank you.

**NOTES**

May 7, 2023

## Session 4 | Infinite Supply of Daily Needs

As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

**So he did what the LORD had told him.**

**1 King 1:5**

**She went away and did as Elijah had told her.**

**1 King 1:15**

During the time of this week's Scripture lesson, King Ahab was the king of Israel. Over the years, there were many evil kings of Israel, none worse than King Ahab. King Ahab married a woman named Jezebel. She was the daughter of the king of Sidon, where the people worshipped Baal and Asherah. Over time King Ahab began to serve and worship Baal; he also erected a pole that was used to worship the goddess named Asherah. The Israelites followed the leadership of King Ahab, and the land of Israel became full of idol worshippers. God sent his prophet Elijah

to speak out against Ahab and his worship of false gods, and to turn the hearts of His people back to Him.

Elijah has appeared before King Ahab as God's messenger and pronounced there will be no rain or dew until such time as he gives the word. God sends Elijah into hiding in the wilderness, to the Kerith Ravine where he is to drink from the brook and be fed by ravens—a bird God had previously declared unclean for the Israelites (Leviticus 11:13). Some time later, the brook has dried up because of the lack of rain. God then sends Elijah to Zarephath of Sidon where he is told a widow will feed him; even though God had instructed the Israelites in Exodus 22:22,24a: “Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword.”



Upon arriving at Zarephath, Elijah encounters the widow who is gathering sticks to build a fire. When Elijah asks for bread, she tells him she has none, only supplies enough to make one final meal before she and her son die. Elijah instructs her to first make a small cake of bread for himself out of her meager supplies and bring it to him before making anything for herself and her son. He tells her that the LORD, the God of Israel, has said her supplies will not run out before the rains come if she will do as He has said. Israel is suffering years of drought brought about because of their faithless idol worship. Will the widow do as the God of the Israelites has instructed?

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 17:1-16

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?

2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### **Questions from the Bible:**

1. What is the significance of Elijah having said, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve...”?
2. What events in this story do you find miraculous?
3. What was Elijah’s response to being told to hide in the Kerith Ravine to be fed by ravens and drink from a brook?
4. We know from verse 7 that some time has passed before Elijah meets the widow at Zarephath. When he meets her, she is preparing for something. What is she doing? What has happened to lead her to this fate?
5. Where is Zarephath? Why might this be a cause for concern for Elijah?
6. Why do you think the Lord sent Elijah to the widow at Zarephath instead of to an Israelite widow?



7. In verse 12, why does the widow say: “As surely as the LORD your God lives...” Is the God of Elijah her God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. The widow was obedient to Elijah’s request. Her obedience is a demonstration of what?

### **Questions for Application:**

1. Several times in today’s reading it says, “the word of the LORD came to” Elijah. Does God still speak to His people? Have you ever heard Him speak? Please share if you are comfortable doing so.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. God chose Elijah to bring change to Israel. Who has God put in your life to bring change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Has the Lord brought you through a drought in your life? If so, explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Have you been in a situation where you were convinced that you did not have sufficient resources but went forward in faith? How did it turn out?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Is it possible to be used by God for His purposes and not listen for His voice?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How is God asking you to grow in your faith today?

7. How would you explain to a non-believer the miracle of the infinite flour in the jar and olive oil in the jug?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic

*The Life of Elijah, Faith in the Living God*, <https://bible.com/r/83L>, 9-Day Plan by David Guzik

*Elijah*, 5 Day Reading Plan with Priscilla Shirer <https://bible.com/r/5xZ>

*God of the Impossible*, a 7-Day Devotional with Lincoln Brewster <https://bible.com/r/32r>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

### Growth Challenge:

At the beginning of each day this week, ask God the following question:

*“How may I demonstrate Your love and goodness today?”*

If God gives you an assignment, do your best to respond obediently as soon as possible.

## NOTES

May 14, 2023

## Session 5 | The Donkey that had Something to Say



As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.

### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

A talking donkey! It is hard to believe. Let’s look at more of this amazing miracle.

The children of Israel had left Egypt, and after wandering in the wilderness for 38 years they continued their trek towards Canaan. This brought them to the plains of Moab. Balak (the king of the Moabites) was scared. He felt threatened because the children of Israel were blessed by God, and with this blessing they had successfully fought the southern Canaanites, the Amorites and the Bashanites. Was Moab their next conquest? He decided he needed to hire Balaam to put a curse on Israel.

**God can speak to us through unexpected sources**

Now, Balaam considered himself a soothsayer (i.e. a prophet that could foresee the future) and he had knowledge of Israel’s God. As a pagan, Balaam had knowledge of many gods, and for the right price he felt he could manipulate these gods to his own advantage. But Yahweh said to Balaam “You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.” So Balaam declined. Then Balak replied “Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely”. Balaam desired these riches that Balak promised, so he convinced himself that he had outsmarted God and agreed to travel to Moab to place a curse on Israel (even though Yahweh had said “go with them, but do only what I tell you”).

Now this angered God, and as Balaam was traveling to Moab on his donkey, three times the Angel of the LORD stood in his way bearing a drawn sword. Balaam did not see the angel, but the donkey did and tried to avoid him. Balaam beat the donkey to get her to move forward. After the third beating, the LORD had the donkey speak, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?” Balaam responded by threatening to kill her. Finally, the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes so that he could see the angel. Balaam fell facedown before him, and the angel said “I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me” and if your donkey hadn’t turned away “I would certainly have killed you”.

**What is preventing you from hearing God’s message for you?**

Why would God have the donkey speak to Balaam? After all, Yahweh spoke directly to this pagan prophet and told him not to curse Israel. He had placed an angel in Balaam’s path three times that was ready to kill him to stop him from going to Moab. But Balaam was focused on what he needed to do to receive the riches that he had been promised, and didn’t heed these warnings. Ultimately it was the lowly beast that spoke and saved the life of the man who felt he could manipulate God.

**Scripture:** Numbers 22:1-33

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

## **Sermon Reflection:**

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

## **Questions from the Bible:**

1. What was Balaam's response to the initial request by the officials of King Balak of Moab?
2. Balaam makes a dramatic refusal (Numbers 22:18). What was his motivation?
3. What did Balak offer to Balaam that finally convinced him to go to Moab?
4. Why do you think the Angel of the Lord was sent to intercept Balaam after the Lord had instructed him to go Moab?
5. Why is the donkey able to see the Angel of the Lord, but not Balaam?
6. What did the donkey say to Balaam?

7. What did Balaam say he would do to his donkey (Numbers 22:29) even though the donkey had been a faithful servant? How does he justify this statement? Is Balaam a faithful follower of the one true God?
8. What does Balak want Balaam to do, ultimately? What does this reveal about his view of the relationship between man and God? How does his view differ from Balaam's?

### Questions for Application:

1. How would you explain to a non-believer a miracle such as a talking donkey?
2. Balak became frightened by the large number of Israelites approaching his border. Can you think of similar events of hostility toward believers in more recent years?
3. Why do you think Balaam, who claimed to serve the LORD, would consider going with the officials of Balak? Have you found yourself in a similar situation in your life?
4. What do you believe as you read the account of Balaam's donkey? Explain?
5. The exchange between Balaam and his stubborn donkey (Numbers 22:28-30) seems comical. Why is it significant that we believe it happened?
6. Have you ever experienced the LORD opening your eyes to see something? People refer to light bulb moments. Are these the same types of things? Why or why not?

7. Are you like Balaam or his donkey? How so? When have you suddenly and stubbornly found yourself opposing God, much to your surprise? How did He point out your error? How many run-ins with God's angel or road blocks did it take before He opened your eyes?
8. How has God blessed you?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic.

Don't Be a Fool, Learn from the Donkey <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/13264>

Chasing Donkeys: What to Do When God Redirects Your Steps <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/35807-chasing-donkeys-what-to-do-when-god>

### **Question for Discussion:**

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, and service?

### **Growth Challenge:**

This week, pay attention to the little miracles that God places in your path to keep you faithful.

## **NOTES**

May 21, 2023

## Session 6 | The Sun Stands Still

As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

**Surely the Lord fought for Israel that day. Joshua 10:14b**

Moses has died and left Joshua in charge of the Israelites. After crossing the Jordan into the land that God had promised them, the Israelites had struggles everywhere they went. Battles were waged. There were victories (Jericho) and defeats (the first encounter with Ai).

Many of the Kingdoms feared Joshua and the Israelites. The Israelites made friends with the Kingdom of Gibeon. The Israelites returned to Gilgal, their base station. Meanwhile the Kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon had heard what Joshua’s men had done at Ai. They were very worried. They wanted to join forces and defeat Joshua’s army. They are headed to Gibeon. The people of Gibeon sent messengers to Joshua for help. The entire army of Israelites marched about **20 miles** all night to get to Gibeon by morning. The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; there shall not be a man of them to stand before you.” (vs. 8) The Israelites ambushed the forces, and God threw their opposition into a panic. They started running and the Israelites followed. God is credited with the “chasing, slaying and smiting.” (vs. 10) His heavenly forces (vs. 11) cause the greatest casualties. In verses 12-14 Joshua prays to God to “let the Sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon”(vs. 12 b), allowing the Israelites to completely defeat the enemy. Please note that Gibeon is east of Aijalon, so that prayer would have been made in the morning.

**The Lord said” Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; there shall not be a man of them to stand before you.”  
Joshua 10:8**

**Scripture:** Joshua 10:1-15

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### **Questions from the Bible:**

1. How did Joshua react to the request from the Gibeonites?
2. Why do you think that God granted Joshua's request?
3. Why did the five Kings join forces to attack Gibeon? Why would they assault Gibeon first rather than going after the Israelites?
4. How did God intervene with the combined armies?
5. How does Joshua react when the Lord spoke to him in Joshua 10:8?
6. Who does the passage credit with the victory over the Amorites?

### **Questions for Application:**

1. What are you struggling with? What are some ways that God is helping you?



2. Does your struggle seem insurmountable? Who can help?
  
3. What is chapter 10 trying to teach us?
  
4. How would you explain to a non-believer why God would fulfill Joshua's request to make the sun stand still?
  
5. In the New Testament, there is an example of the sun not shining at midday. What was happening at the time the sun went dark? (See Luke 23:44-45)
  
6. How does what you believe to be true shape how you live your everyday life?
  
7. There is more than one miracle in this story. What are the miraculous acts of the Lord that you see in this account?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

Refined Under Pressure; Military bible challenge 2. <https://www.bible.com/en/reading-plans/21812>

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

## **Growth Challenge:**

Be on the lookout this week for ways to help others.

# **NOTES**

May 28, 2023

## Session 7 | No One Goes Hungry in Jesus' Presence



As we continue this sermon series on “Believing the Hard to Believe”, it may be helpful to provide some details on the intent of this sermon series. It is not our intent to explain or explore how these miracles were done, rather we will be looking at what happened, why it happened, and why we, as Christians, believe what we are reading.

### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

**The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’  
Matthew 25:40**

Our scriptures this week tell of two miracles where Jesus feeds large crowds of followers with a small amount of food. The first miracle begins with “When Jesus learned what had happened...” which is referring to King Herod having John the Baptist killed. John was a prophet and evangelist that preached the Gospel, but he and Jesus were also cousins. Jesus intended to find a quiet place to reflect on this news, but this was difficult in a small, densely-populated region such as Galilee, and the crowds continued to follow Him. Still Jesus showed them compassion, and healed the sick. At the end of the day, the

disciples came to Jesus and asked that he send the crowds away to go find food. Jesus saw it differently. He showed them compassion and fed the crowd by blessing five loaves and two fish. With God this was enough food to feed 5,000 men plus women and children. In the second scripture reference, we see a similar miracle where Jesus fed 4,000 men plus women and children.

**Jesus saw it differently.**

What can we learn from these miracles about Jesus and His ministry? First, that His desire is for us to have compassion for one another, and to share with others how much God loves them. Second, He shows us that with God’s help we can do what seems impossible, and will often exceed our expectations (evident in these miracles by the baskets of food that were left over). And third, it shows us that we are to be His hands and feet serving others.

**Scripture:** Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 15:29-39

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Questions from the Bible:

1. Does the crowd respect Christ's desire to be alone? Why do you think that was?
2. What motivated Jesus to help the people who were looking for Him? What was His response?
3. What was the disciples' response to the crowds when it was getting late (Matthew 14:15)? What attitudes do you think this demonstrates?
4. In Matthew 15:32, Jesus tells us the crowds had been assembled for three days. How do you suppose Jesus and the disciples were feeling at this point? What does Jesus announce He wants to do?
5. The disciples' concern was for the physical needs of the crowd. Was this the first priority for Jesus?
6. Why do you think Matthew included two separate accounts of Jesus feeding a multitude of followers? What makes each account unique?
7. Why do you think Matthew included the specifics of the amount of food gathered after the multitudes had eaten their fill?

8. What do you think the atmosphere would have been like in this crowded, isolated location?

### Questions for Application:

1. How would you explain to a non-believer a miracle such as feeding thousands of people with a few loaves of bread and fish?
2. What can you learn about putting others first from the parable of loaves and fishes?
3. What do you believe as you read these accounts of the multitudes being fed and the bounty of leftovers?
4. Why do you think it was important to Jesus to feed the crowds? Who do you think He was teaching through these miraculous acts?
5. After all that the disciples had witnessed, why did they still need help to understand what Jesus was capable of? Why do we still have questions?
6. What difference does it make whether we believe the miracle stories? Can we believe in Jesus Christ and not His miracles? Why or why not?
7. Are you willing to walk many miles to follow Jesus?

8. Are you relying on God to feed you both physically and spiritually?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

Find Your Miracle <https://www.bible.com/en-GB/reading-plans/3172-find-your-miracle>

Signs, Wonders & Miracles <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/22286-signs-wonders-and-miracles>

### Questions for Discussion:

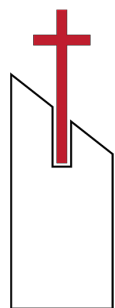
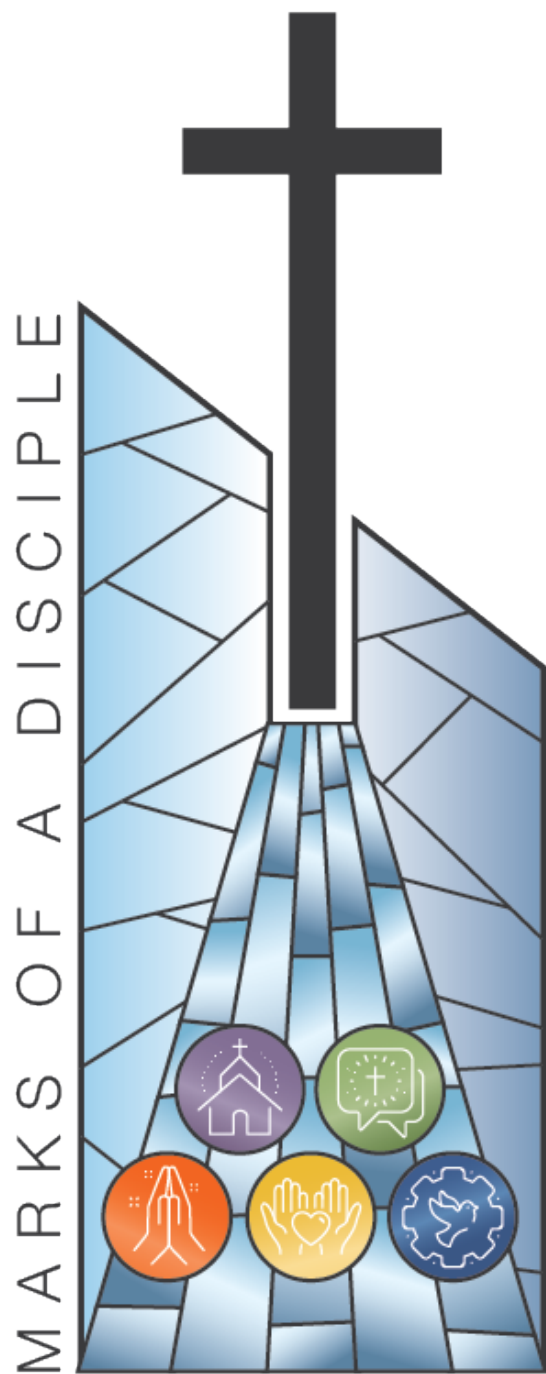
1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

### Growth Challenge:

Make time each day this week to spend some quiet moments with God.

## NOTES





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