



Mark 6:30-44

Memory Verse: Mark 6:42

Jesus satisfies by providing for our needs.

George Muller served as a pastor in Bristol, England. As he grew in his faith, he learned that he could trust the Lord to provide any resources he needed as he ministered to others. Across the years of his ministry, that lesson became an unwavering conviction. As a result, he lived in complete certainty the Lord would be faithful as he carried out Kingdom tasks, whether that be Christian education, Bible distribution, missionary support, or a massive ministry for orphans.

An episode recorded in Mark 6:30-44 also validates the Lord's faithfulness. The account involves a daunting need for food and the faithfulness of Jesus to satisfy the need. As you study this session, think about where you put your trust—and what you might be trusting more than God. Remember that Jesus is your ultimate Provider. He always satisfies.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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Discontented people are dangerous people. Their hearts are prone to actions that might possibly harm themselves or others. Even a cursory glance at the general public reveals a dangerous discontentment. Sometimes the slightest life disruption—or threat of such—results in unwise and unstable reactions. A lack of satisfaction in one's marriage, family, job, and spiritual life creates vulnerability to temptation. A wise person will stop and consider the level of satisfaction within his or her heart. (PSG, p. 37)

How satisfied are you really with the current state of your life?

Understand the Context (Mark 6:1-56)

Mark recorded how Jesus demonstrated His power over so many of the things that people truly fear. In addition to teaching with authority, His miracles reinforced His message about the kingdom of God. And His disciples had been firsthand witnesses to it all.

They had heard Jesus's parables and even received extra instruction that others did not (4:1-20). They had seen Him calm a ferocious storm with a spoken word (4:35-41,) and He had cast demons out of a madman (5:1-13), proving that He was Lord over both the natural and the supernatural. Peter, James, and John had even been present when Jesus did the unthinkable— He raised someone from the dead (5:35-43).

Along with the acclaim, Jesus also faced rejection, even in places where He should have been embraced. Mark 6 opens with the account of His homecoming to Nazareth. What should have been an inspiring "hometown boy makes good" story turned into a sad account of hard hearts and closed minds.

Instead of seeing Jesus for who He is, the residents of Nazareth could only see Him for what they thought He should be. To them, Jesus was the kid they had seen grow up. He was Mary's son and the brother of their neighbors. He could not possibly be all that He was claiming to be.

Their mental framework had no room for a Messiah from Nazareth. They could not reconcile those ingrained feelings with Jesus's claims about the kingdom. So, they stuck with what they knew. As a result, Jesus sadly moved on because their belief essentially handcuffed His ability to make a difference in their community. He did a few miracles in His hometown, but that was all.

After leaving Nazareth, Mark described how the disciples were challenged to put what they had learned into practice. Mark wove two stories about the apostles—one about being sent out (6:7-13) and another about feeding a multitude (6:30-44)—around an explanation of John the Baptist's death (6:14-29). In each situation, Jesus's closest followers got a taste of what their future would be like as ministers of the kingdom. While they consistently showed that they did not understand all that Jesus was and all that He was about, they saw how effective serving in His name could be.

Mark 6 concludes with more miraculous healing accounts (6:45-56), while Mark 7 opens with a familiar image—Jesus at odds with the religious leaders about His interpretation and application of the law (7:1-23). This would not be the last time Jesus would deal with the stubborn hearts of the men who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of Israel.

As you read Mark 6:30-44, look for examples of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction within the characters mentioned.

GROUP PLAN

ENGAGE

\mathbf{X}	PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Conduct an online search for marketing images or a video clip that encourages dissatisfaction with what people have so that they will want to buy a different product. Prepare to display the images or video to the group.
SUMMARIZE:	Show the marketing images or video clip to the group. Ask: How do marketers encourage dissatisfaction with your life? Read the introductory paragraph in First Thoughts (PSG, p. 37). Ask: In what ways might a person be tempted to experience dissatisfaction in everyday life?
DISCUSS:	Talk about some reasons why it's so easy to become dissatisfied with life.
TRANSITION:	In today's session, we're going to look at how Jesus is the only One who can truly satisfy our needs.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Play the song "Give Me Jesus" by Jeremy Camp. Invite the group to meditate on the words as they listen. Encourage them to think about how only Jesus provides ultimate satisfaction for our needs. Lead them to consider why we need Jesus more than anything the world can offer—and how they can learn to trust Him more deeply to meet those needs. 30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while." For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. 32 So they went away in the boat by themselves to a remote place,

(v. 30) *Apostles:* The term **apostles** originally was given to the twelve men whom Jesus chose to walk beside Him during His earthly ministry. Later, Jesus would commission them to start the church. Because of his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul could also lay claim to the title of apostle (Acts 9:1-9; 1 Cor. 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 11:5-15; Gal. 1:1-2,11-24).

Since the Greek wording literally means "sent one," this commissioning is key to the role and ministry of apostles. Historically, one requirement of being an apostle has been physically seeing Jesus, along with receiving His calling. This physical interaction sets apostles apart from other disciples. Mark only referred to the apostles twice, here and in Mark 3:14.

(v. 30) *Reported to him:* Earlier in Mark 6, Jesus had sent the disciples out to do ministry in the surrounding towns and villages. As mentioned, being sent is a primary part of an apostle's role. For this mission, Jesus had given them the authority to preach and act in His name. The apostles were preaching a message of repentance, casting out demons, and healing people.

Later, they came back together to share their experiences with Jesus. By allowing the disciples to report back to Him, Christ provided a way for them to celebrate how they were being used to further the kingdom of God. Testimonies often provide encouragement to others, as well as to those who are sharing their experiences with Jesus.

(v. 31) *Come away by yourselves:* Once the apostles returned from their ministry experiences, Jesus invited them to get away from the demands of the crowds. Mark noted that their hectic schedules meant they hadn't even had time to eat. Jesus recognized that they needed a break from their mission.

(v. 31) *Remote place:* They found an out-of-the-way place where they could rest and recharge, though we are not told the exact location. Even those that minister in Jesus's name need time to get away. Jesus set the precedent here with the disciples, just as He had set the example for finding solitude with the Father earlier in Mark's Gospel (Mark 1:35).

(v. 31) *Coming and going:* The crowds of people buzzing around Jesus and His disciples validated the effectiveness of their ministry. However, they also posed a problem. The constant demand left little time for anyone to address their physical or emotional needs. Proper diet and proper rest are important to maintaining balance in life. Jesus recognized this and sought ways to pull away from the crowds when possible.

(v. 32) *Boat:* Jesus and the apostles needed a quick way to escape from the crowds, and a **boat** would have been the best vehicle to accomplish that. Since many of the disciples were fishermen, it seems reasonable that they would have access to such a boat. Regardless, Mark noted again that they were heading toward a **remote location**.

Most scholars believe that they traveled to the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee (Lake Gennesaret). That particular region would have also been safe for the disciples because it stood beyond the reach of Herod's authority. Herod's role in the execution of John the Baptist likely cast a troubling shadow on their safety (6:14-29). The isolated nature of the area also provided a measure of safety from the Jewish leaders who were already planning ways to rid themselves of Jesus (3:6).



Sea of Galilee

The Ministry of Jesus Around the Sea of Galilee

Get an aerial view of the Sea of Galilee and the location of notable events in Jesus's earthly ministry.

EXPLORE Mark 6:30-32

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APPLICATION POINT: Believers should make sure they and others find rest.

CONTEXTUALIZE:	Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 38) to provide an overview of Jesus's ministry leading up to chapter 6. Refer to Pack Item 1 (<i>Map: Jesus's Ministry in Mark's Gospel</i>) to review the locations of Jesus's Galilean ministry. Remind the group about the places where Jesus ministered around the Sea of Galilee. Distribute copies of Pack Item 10 (<i>Chart: Miracles of Jesus's</i> <i>Authority</i>). Encourage adults to reflect on these miracles as
	they think about His authority during this session.
READ:	Invite a volunteer to read Mark 6:30-32.
	Encourage edults to work in point to read verses 20.22 in their

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to work in pairs to read verses 30-32 in their PSG (p. 39) and to talk about why the disciples needed rest. After a few minutes, highlight that the disciples had given of themselves to ministry, and now they needed rest.

ASK: How can we recognize when we are exhausted? What impact can that have on the way we minister to others?

- DISCUSS:On the board or a large sheet of paper, write the words:Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual. Encourage the group
to list ways believers can find rest in each of these ares of life.
- **TRANSITION:** Though Jesus tried to give the disciples the opportunity to rest, the crowds kept coming. We need to see how Jesus responded.

Jesus's Ministry in Mark's Gospel

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th Gentle wennet's despiser	Mark 7,24-30	Demona, slong with revealing his scramigsty over every nation.

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Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 40). Provide several index cards for each person in the group. Direct them to write Mark 6:31 on the cards and encourage them to place them in visible locations so that they will see them throughout the week. Lead them to set a goal of setting aside at least five minutes each day to rest.

33 but many saw them leaving and recognized them, and they ran on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

(v. 33) *Recognized them:* Jesus and the disciples were familiar faces to many in the region. As a result, they did not have the luxury of taking an anonymous retreat, even to a remote area.

(v. 33) *Ran on foot:* The Sea of Galilee is actually a large lake. Mark recorded that the crowds saw Jesus and the disciples got into their boat and headed across the water. In response, the crowd **ran on foot** around the lake and arrived at the landing spot before Jesus and the apostles did.

It is possible that the boat encountered a strong head wind that would have slowed their progress. Regardless, the initial plan to enjoy some rest and relaxation was put on hold. The crowd was waiting on the shore when they arrived.

(v. 33) Arrived: Mark did not share details about where Jesus and the disciples landed their boat. However, Luke indicated that they came ashore near the city of Bethsaida on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 9:10). This was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21).

The exact location of the town has remained a mystery. Some archaeologists suggest that Bethsaida was on the western side of the Jordan River as it flowed south into the Sea of Galilee. Others speculate that the town was located on the eastern side of the river. If that's the case, the crowd would have needed to cross the Jordan River in order to make their way to Jesus and His disciples when they came ashore.

Whatever the situation happened to be, the determination of the people in the crowd to catch up with Jesus said something about their eagerness to be with Him. Their eagerness to be with Him prompted them to push through the challenges of outrunning His boat.

(v. 34) Had compassion: Mark noted that Jesus had compassion on the crowd. To have compassion implies that Jesus saw and felt their needs and their hurts. This was more than sympathy. It reflected empathy for them. Just as He had shown the Twelve compassion and invited them to come away and rest, He showed similar love and concern for this multitude of people. While the disciples wanted to send them away, Jesus chose to put the people's needs above His own desires and His disciples' opinion.

(v. 34) Sheep without a shepherd: Sheep are interesting animals. They cannot defend themselves against predators like other animals. They also have a hard time finding the necessary food and water for their survival without help from a shepherd. Mark compared the **crowd** to **sheep without a shepherd**. Jesus recognized that those in the crowd were spiritually desperate and helpless. Matthew also indicated that they had physical needs, as Jesus healed many of them.

Mark's wording suggested that Jesus was, in fact, the only Shepherd who could guide them and save them from a life of destruction. Jesus wasn't just interested in providing physical food, though He would do that soon enough. He was primarily interested in providing spiritual food and spiritual leadership. Whether the people realized it or not, that was their greatest need.

(v. 34) Teach them many things: As evidence of His concern for their spiritual health, Jesus began teaching those in the crowd. While none of the Gospel writers shared the exact content of Jesus's message on this occasion, it is reasonable to assume He was telling them about the coming of God's kingdom, the need for repentance, and the hope of eternal life.

Key Word

Compassion

Two Greek words in the New Testament are translated "compassion." *Eleos* relates to the act of compassion. This was something Jesus challenged His listeners—including the religious leaders—to nurture (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). Meanwhile, *splanchnizomai* (used in Mark 6:34) referred to a person's bowels or entrails, similar to the pit of your stomach. It was a deep emotional response grounded in love. It was also used to describe courage in the first century. *How does showing compassion sometimes require courage?*



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Group Activity Option

Pray

Lead the group in silent prayer. Give the group the opportunity to quietly meditate for a few moments on finding satisfaction and rest in Jesus. Encourage them to reflect on what God is speaking to them through this session. Invite them to consider what changes they would need to make because of what God has shown them. 35 When it grew late, his disciples approached him and said, "This place is deserted, and it is already late. 36 Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat." 37 "You give them something to eat," he responded. They said to him, "Should we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?" 38 He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they found out they said, "Five, and two fish."

(v. 35) *Grew late:* While the text doesn't state how long Jesus and His disciples had been ministering to the crowd, the day was apparently slipping away.

(v. 35) *Deserted:* Eventually, the disciples told Jesus that the crowd was getting hungry. Since they were in an isolated area, the options for getting food were limited. From the disciples' perspective, sending the crowd away to the neighboring towns and villages was the best option for everyone involved. The people would be able to get something to eat, and the disciples would finally be able to get some peace and quiet.

(v. 37) You give them something: Much to the disciples' surprise, Jesus would not be sending the crowds away as the disciples suggested. Instead, He turned the tables and gave them the responsibility of finding food for the people. The Greek wording includes an emphatic personal pronoun here to make it clear that they would be the ones supplying the food. The disciples who had just completed an intense time of ministry were called into action again.

(v. 37) *Two hundred denarii:* The disciples were surprised by Jesus's response and wanted to know if they should use their own money to go and buy the food. One denarius was basically equivalent to a day's wage, so **two hundred •denarii** would have amounted to several months' worth of pay. As the apostles did the math, they realized that even that amount wouldn't have been enough to feed the crowd before them.

In addition, it is doubtful the nearby villages would have enough provisions for a crowd that size. They had seen God do amazing things during their time in ministry, but now their faith felt more shaky. The fact that Jesus had placed the responsibility on their shoulders likely increased their level of tension and frustration.

(v. 38) *How many loaves:* Initially, the disciples really didn't know what resources they had at their disposal. Jesus turned their attention from looking at what they didn't have to understanding what they could use. As they went through the crowd, they still

didn't find much—just a meager five loaves and two fish. In his Gospel, John described the bread as barley loaves (John 6:9). A barley loaf was a small, flat piece of bread. An average person could easily eat several of them at a single meal. The fish were more than likely dried fish and would have been small as well.

John was also the only Gospel writer who revealed that a young boy was the source of the bread and fish. That could explain the meager amount. It wouldn't take as much to satisfy a boy. Still, while it didn't look like much, Jesus had provided all the resources needed to accomplish what He had asked them to do.

Key Cross Reference

Feeding the Multitudes

Aside from Jesus's resurrection, only one other miracle is mentioned in all four Gospels: the feeding of the multitudes. While each account includes the major details, each one also provides insights that you cannot find in the others. Read the following parallel passages and identify some of the unique information offered by each writer:

- Matthew 14:13-21
- Luke 9:10-17
- John 6:1-15

In addition, Matthew and Mark both describe Jesus feeding another multitude (Matt. 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). On this occasion, Jesus fed 4,000 people with seven loaves and, according to Matthew, a few small fish. While the numbers were different, the results were the same: Jesus satisfied their needs.

facing a challenge



What kind of resources were necessary to solve each ASK: problem? Who did you enlist to help?

Read Mark 6:35-38 again and invite a volunteer to identify the **COMPARE:** problem the disciples presented to Jesus. Ask: What steps would you have taken to solve this problem if you were one of the disciples? Lead the group to compare the disciples' solution to Jesus's solution. Ask: Why do you think Jesus told the disciples to give the crowd something to eat? (Possible answers: to remind them of their previous work, to strengthen their faith, to show Jesus as the ultimate Provider, and so forth)

those issues. Allow a volunteer to share what they discussed.

Point out that the disciples were focused on the problem, **EXPLAIN:** while Jesus was focused on the solution. Ask: Why are we prone to focus on problems instead of considering what God can do? (PSG, p. 42) What practical things can we do to trust Jesus more when we have a problem that seems impossible to solve?

NOTES

READ:

DISCUSS:

Group Activity Option

Draw

Provide each adult with a sheet of paper and some colored pencils. Invite them to read Mark 6:35-38 and to sketch an image of something that highlights the way Jesus provides for our needs. Direct them to write Jesus Provides above the image and encourage them to keep the drawing in a place where they will see it often.

39 Then he instructed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves. He kept giving them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 Everyone ate and was satisfied. 43 They picked up twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish. 44 Now those who had eaten the loaves were five thousand men.

(v. 39) *Green grass:* Mark shared that the grass was green. This has led some to believe this event probably took place in early spring or late winter in Galilee. It also could have been part of Mark's wilderness theme since the wording used to describe this area is similar to how Mark described the wilderness area of Jesus's temptation earlier in his Gospel.

In Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, the wilderness was the place where God intervened on behalf of His people and provided for them in a supernatural manner. Although not specifically stated in the text, the growth of **green grass** in the desert may have been a miracle in itself. This blooming desert also could have been an allusion by Mark to Jesus as the Messiah (Isa. 35:1-2).

Some draw a connection between the grass and the earlier reference to sheep and shepherds (v. 34). Jesus's compassion led Him to provide for this "flock" just like a shepherd would lead his sheep to the best source of nourishment. (See Ps. 23:2.)

(v. 40) Sat down: The crowds were grouped into clusters of fifty and one hundred so that the food could be distributed in an orderly fashion. We know that the overall number (5,000) referred to the men in the crowd, so it would have been larger when women and children were added. To feed 5,000 people was quite incredible in itself since the nearby towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida only had a combined population between 2,000 and 3,000 people.

(v. 40) Hundreds and fifties: As noted, some commentators see Old Testament symbolism in this story, especially in relation to Israel's wilderness wandering. For example, when Jesus directed the crowd to group in an orderly way, this could serve as a reminder of the way Moses was called to organize the people's camp in the desert (Ex. 18:21,25).

(v. 41) *Blessed:* The Greek wording refers to speaking well of someone or something. It is the source of our English word "eulogy." In this context, it means to confer or pass on a benefit. While we tend to think of

this as Jesus "saying grace" over the meal, it carries much more theological weight. As God the Son, Jesus was bestowing His blessing on the food. This was key to the multiplication of the resources, but also to the satisfaction of the people who would receive the bread and fish.

(v. 41) *Kept giving:* Jesus multiplied the food to provide for all the people. It is reminiscent of when God supplied manna for the Israelites daily in the wilderness. Elisha also multiplied food in 2 Kings 4:42-44. Needless to say, the provision was miraculous and affirmed Jesus as the Messiah.

(v. 42) Satisfied: The word here for satisfied literally means "to be filled" and was often used in regard to fattening animals. The crowd didn't just have something to curb their hunger. They experienced an abundance to the point that every person was full. Again, the sheer numbers involved—five loaves, two fish, and 5,000 men (plus women and children)—are staggering. The miracle illustrated Jesus's authority over resources and His power to provide for those in need.

(v. 43) *Twelve baskets:* The term "basket" often described a wicker food container. These baskets may have come from people in the crowd who were carrying their provisions. The text doesn't explicitly state how big these baskets might have been, but it is significant that the disciples collected **twelve baskets** of leftovers. Jesus had provided for the crowd; and with the food left over, He provided for the apostles. In this, Jesus fulfilled His initial plan from verse 31.

Key Doctrine

God the Son

God the Son now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord. (See Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 13:8.)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson

Secure five small croissants and a can of sardines. Show the items to the group and ask them to imagine this amount of food feeding more than 5,000 people. Point out that this could have driven the number toward 15,000 people or more. Ask: *How do you think the disciples felt witnessing this miracle? What would that do to your faith?* Encourage adults to think about the needs in their lives right now. Provide a few minutes for silent prayer so they can ask God to meet those needs and to give them the faith to believe He will do it in His way and in His timing

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:	Review these points from Apply the Text on page 45 of the Personal Study Guide:
	 Believers should make sure they and others find rest. Believers need to feed their souls with the truth of God's Word. Believers can look to God to provide when facing a challenge. Believers should find satisfaction when Jesus uses them.
ASK:	Which of these of these four application points creates the most difficulty for you right now? What principle from today's session can you use to resolve that issue in your life?
CHALLENGE:	Give each adult an index card and a pen. Direct them to write down one way ithey can seek rest this week. Encourage them to flip the card and to record one area where they will seek satisfaction in Jesus alone this week. Urge them to use the card as part of their prayer time this week.
PRAY:	Invite the group to pray together in groups of two or three, asking God to help them find satisfaction in Jesus and to take time to be refreshed through intentional rest in Him.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by examining your own life to determine whether you are satisfied in Jesus. Contact the group through email or text, encouraging them to look to Jesus for satisfaction in life this week.

LEADER EXTRAS

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For free bonus introduction and application ideas that connect to a current news event, go to goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras.

