

TALK IT OVER

ADD A ZERO — DARING FAITH, PART 3

GETTING STARTED.

1. When have you been at an event where free food was served to the public? What was served? If you planned an event (and cost was no object), what would you serve?

EXPLORE THE PASSAGE. Read **Mark 8: 1–10**.

1. Compare this second miraculous feeding with the first one, in **Mark 6: 30–44**. How large was the crowd? What food is available at the start? How much is collected afterward?
2. The first feeding takes place in Galilee, west of the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee (**Mark 6: 45**). The second takes place on the opposite side in the Decapolis (**Mark 7: 31**). For the most part, Jews lived in Galilee, while Greek-speaking Gentiles lived in the Decapolis. Using a study Bible, locate both regions on a map. What does it say about Jesus' ministry that crowds of Gentiles came to hear him?
3. In each feeding story, Jesus says what causes him to feel compassion. What are they?
4. Who brings up the crowd's hunger in each feeding story? How is it described?
5. How do the disciples object in the first story and in the second? How long did the disciples have to think about the food problem in the first story? How long did they have to consider it in the second one?
6. Compare the disciples' question to Jesus (**Mark 8: 4**) with **Exodus 16: 2–4, 13–15**. The Exodus story was a central feature of Jewish national identity. Which would be harder to forget: a story about what God had done that you'd heard over and over again since childhood—or—something you'd watched Jesus do a few weeks ago back in Galilee?
7. What do the disciples contribute at the beginning of each of the miraculous feedings? What role does Jesus give his disciples as each miracle unfolds?

APPLY THE LESSON.

8. Are you likely to avoid making big requests of God (world peace), or small ones (parking spots)? How about spiritual needs vs. human needs? Is there a category of prayer that God is less willing to answer?
9. What's the biggest request you've ever taken to God? How could it have been bigger?
10. Part of the disciples' problem was a blind spot: assuming that God didn't care about Gentiles and wouldn't help them—or—that the Gentiles wouldn't know about or want God's help. What are some assumptions that Christians today make about lost people?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

MONDAY

Reread **Acts 9: 10–19**. What part of God’s mission did Jesus call Paul to serve? (v. 15) How have you benefited from Paul’s work? What part of God’s mission are you serving?

TUESDAY

Read **Galatians 2: 1–10**. How long after the Resurrection did Paul meet with the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem? From what you know about the early church (**Acts 2–12**), what are some of the difficulties the church faced during that time frame? What relief did Paul give them? What problems is your church facing in its mission? This passage suggests that churches can help each other by having a clear sense of their role in God’s mission and focusing on that work. How is your church’s role distinct from the role of other churches in your mission field?

WEDNESDAY

Read **Exodus 16: 13–15**. What does the word “manna” mean? What are some ways that people can misunderstand God’s blessings because of how they appear, or where they came from, ...? What are some examples of that in everyday life that you’re familiar with?

THURSDAY

Compare the Exodus passage (above) with **Numbers 11: 4–6**. How has the attitude of Israel changed since manna was first provided to them? How do you suppose they felt about it after forty years? Read **Lamentations 3: 22–23**. How is its writer showing a type of spiritual maturity that Israel did not in Exodus? What are some ways you can develop (and maintain) the attitude displayed in that part of Lamentations?

FRIDAY

Read **Isaiah 64: 1–4**. What does the prophet ask God to do? How is this prayer different from Israel’s complaining in Numbers? How has God answered the prophet’s prayer in Jesus? When have you wanted God to do something earth-shaking, something that no one would ever have expected? How did God respond?

SATURDAY

Read **Ephesians 3: 18–21**. What does the apostle ask? Is his request more like Isaiah’s or the people’s request in Numbers? How have your hopes and prayers been limited more by your own imagination than by God’s capabilities?

