

THE COMPASS

MYTH PERCEPTIONS: Straight From Jesus' Mouth

MYTH #2: God is not really going to meet my needs

Déjà Vu All Over Again

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Did you ever have déjà vu? That feeling that you've been here before — exactly this situation, exactly this moment?

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OK, sorry, I'm just messing with you.

Actually, I think Jesus must have had déjà vu one day.
Let me tell you why.

Maybe you've heard of the Bible story called "The Feeding of the 5,000."

This is actually a fact of history. You can read about it yourself, in the historical accounts of the Bible (**John 6**).

I'll give you the highlights.

Jesus and his guys are sailing on the Sea of Galilee, they dock at the north end, and a huge crowd of people — about 5,000 people — are there to meet them because they've heard that Jesus heals the sick.

At the end of the day, the people are hungry, Jesus is concerned about them, so he asks his disciples, "Where can we buy dinner for these people?"

And one of the guys, Philip, kind of flips out.

"Eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for each one of these people to have a single bite a piece!" he says.

But then another of the disciples, Andrew, finds this little boy, who has brought his lunch with him: five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish — not much, but Jesus takes this little meal, sits the people down, and has his disciples start doling out bread and fish.

And miraculously, the food just keeps coming — until all 5,000 people have been fed, and there are 12 baskets full of leftovers.

The end.

But now let me tell you another true story (**Matthew 15:29-39**) — this one happened a few weeks, maybe a few months, after the feeding of the 5,000.

Jesus is still traveling around the edges of the Sea of Galilee, he goes up on a mountainside to sit down, and once again huge crowds track him down: 4,000 men, give or take, plus women and children.

This time there are blind people, people who can't speak, people who can't walk — and

he starts healing them.

But after three days of this, the crowd isn't going away. They're thrilled by all this stuff. And Jesus says to his guys, "Hey, I feel badly for these people. Three days — they're out of food. If they head home now, they'll collapse along the way."

But they're miles from the nearest convenience store — the disciples are like, "Where in the world are we supposed to find food for 4,000 people?"

Finally they turn up 7 loaves of bread and a few small fish.

And once again, Jesus sits the people down, orders the disciples to start feeding them. Everybody eats their fill, they pick up 7 baskets full of leftovers.

Now wouldn't *you* feel like it was déjà vu?

In fact, down through the centuries, a lot of people have learned about the feeding of the 5,000 — if you attended Sunday school as a kid, you probably know that story.

But hardly anybody has ever heard about "The Feeding of the 4,000."

What's up with this?

Why would Jesus do the same kind of miracle again?

Well, actually, the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 are only similar on the surface: two big groups of people getting free bread and fish.

But there are other distinctions.

The 5,000 were fed with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.

The 4,000 were fed with 7 loaves, and "a few fish."

The 5,000 produced 12 baskets of leftovers, but the 4,000 only leave 7 baskets.

Also, the 5,000 were fed in the springtime.

But by the time the 4,000 get fed, it's summer.

The 5,000 were with Jesus just 1 day before they got hungry, because they had gathered more or less on the fly.

They had heard about Jesus' miracles, and they came running.

But the 4,000 are with Jesus for 3 full days before they get hungry.

This indicates that they brought provisions with them.

They planned ahead.

This was more like a seminar or a conference than the impromptu meeting of the 5,000.

And there's another detail: The Bible says those first 5,000 responded to Jesus with intensity — they actually tried to make him their political king. Jesus had to bail out of the situation to keep these 5,000 people from going crazy on this idea.

But the 4,000 people didn't have any such fanatical response.

Why would these 4,000 people have so much more measured of a response to Jesus?

They gather intentionally, they bring their coolers and their picnic blankets, and when it's over they disperse quietly.

Why are the 4,000 behaving so differently from the 5,000?

Well, let's look at where these people come from.



The 5,000 were fed in Galilee, near Bethsaida; so that was a Jewish crowd. Galilee was the region where Jesus grew up. But after feeding the 5,000, Jesus heads north. (Here's a little geography lesson for you.)



He heads north toward the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, into present-day



Lebanon.

He goes up there to get away from the feds — since by this point in his ministry, the political and religious leaders are gunning for him, because Jesus isn't sticking with the approved regulation organized-religion program; his teaching doesn't square with what the people in power want the unwashed masses to hear. So the religious leaders are in his face every chance they get. And to avoid them, after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus heads north to the Lebanese cities of Tyre and Sidon.

Now, however, several weeks later, he's coming back down toward the Sea of Galilee, back to his home turf.

So now, it's the end of a 3-day healing crusade, with 4,000 people in attendance, and the people are hungry.

And you would think, after the feeding of the 5,000, which happened just recently up in Bethsaida, the disciples would be the ones to say, "Hey, Captain, how about whipping up a few thousand loaves of bread and fry up a few thousand fish?"

But no.

They seem to have figured that the earlier miracle was a one-shot deal.

It never occurred to them that something like that could be expected to happen again.

They may not have thought it was a miracle at all.

When the bread and fish started being passed around, they may have figured Jesus had scored some major donors; he may have simply found people with food that the disciples hadn't been able to identify.

The Bible (**Mark 6:52**) simply says that the disciples "did not understand about" the feeding of the 5,000 back in Bethsaida.

So Jesus takes them down the same path again.

In fact, if you read the transcript in the Bible, you see that he actually reviews the same concepts that he went over with them in the previous situation.

It's almost as if you scheduled a counseling appointment with me, and we sat down together, and you described what you were going through, and I said, Whoa, wait a minute, I taught on this on a Compass DVD about 6 weeks ago! You were

there!

And you say, Yeah, well, but I'm also going through blah-blah-blah, whatever, and you describe some other situation, and I say, Whoa, wait a minute, I taught on this on a Compass DVD about 8 weeks ago! Didn't you see that?

Well, yeah.

Weren't you listening? Weren't you paying attention?

Well, yeah.

Weren't you filling in the blanks in your message notes? Weren't you applying this to your own life?

Did you think this was all just for the guy sitting next to you?

So here, after feeding the 4,000 people, Jesus actually takes his disciples on a little tour of what they've experienced with him over the past several weeks.

He walks them back through their experiences(**Mark 8**).

19 "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand," he asks them, "how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.

He might have added, Is that good math?

20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."

And he might have added again, Is THAT good math?

So **21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"**

In other words: Guys! There's a pattern here!

Take note of the pattern.

It MEANS something when there's a pattern.

What are the patterns here?

Well, let's see. What evidence do we have?

Jesus didn't rely on conventional math, he wasn't bound by the laws of nature, with the 5,000 people.

He didn't rely on conventional math and he wasn't bound by the laws of nature with the 4,000 people.

Hey, I think there's a pattern here:

Maybe he's not GOING to rely on conventional math, maybe he's not GOING to be bound by the laws of nature!

First pattern: ***God is never bound by the laws of nature.***

The things that I'm subject to, like the laws of nature, Jesus has power over!

In other words, I CAN COUNT ON CHRIST'S CAPABILITY.

Okay, what else? What other evidence do we have?

Well, Jesus loved the 5,000 people enough to meet their needs.

And, he loved the 4,000 people enough to meet their needs.

Hey, I think this might be another pattern:

Maybe he's going to KEEP ON loving people enough to meet their needs — so if we forgot to bring food, but we remembered to bring Jesus, we really don't have to worry!

Second pattern: ***Jesus is committed to meeting my needs.***

I may be uncomfortable in a certain situation, but Jesus is inclined to meet my needs.

His preference is not to leave me unhappy, struggling, confused, suffering.

His preference, if it can be done without diminishing my spiritual health, is to meet my need NOW. TOTALLY. FULLY.

In other words, I CAN COUNT ON CHRIST'S COMPASSION.

But wait, I think there's one more pattern.

Here's the evidence:

When Jesus fed the 5,000, the disciples didn't get it.

When Jesus fed the 4,000, the disciples didn't get it.

Uh-oh. I'm afraid I see the pattern here.

When Jesus says, "Do you still not understand?", I hear frustration — but I also hear patience.

I hear the spirit of Christ saying, *I am going to keep taking you down this road until you learn it by heart.*

I will keep finding ways to open your eyes until you actually get the God's-eye view.

I hear Jesus saying, *My priorities are not going to change; your perspective is going to have to change.*

What Jesus demonstrated to his disciples here — feeding 5,000 people and then turning around and feeding 4,000 people — was that he doesn't change.

His priorities are not different from day to day.

He is just as COMMITTED to meeting my need, and just as ABLE to meet my need, when I'm in the middle of a great big messy problem today, as he was when I was doing great, problem-free, yesterday.

Jesus is going to keep on doing what he has been doing all along.

Hebrews 13:6,8 declares:

"...We say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

I actually think, if the disciples hadn't gotten it here, after the feeding of the 5,000, and the feeding of the 4,000, Jesus would have found 3,000 people, or 8,000 people, or some other number of people to feed, until the disciples GOT IT!

Let's get it: Jesus doesn't change.

I CAN COUNT ON CHRIST'S CONSISTENCY.

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When I get into a difficult situation, do I become one of these disciples?

Do I scratch my head and say, Hm, what complicated lesson does Jesus intend to teach me?

Jesus isn't looking for me to "figure out" what he wants me to learn in a new situation. He's looking for me to learn to lean back and trust his love, trust his compassion, trust his power, REGARDLESS of what new situation comes my way.

I see Christians trying to do a mental telepathy number on God; they want to "get God's will."

They want to figure out what God is saying to them through a situation.

Mark 8:16 says the disciples got their heads together and held a discussion group to figure out what Jesus wanted to communicate to them.

Now sure, sometimes you get into a confusing situation and you have to get alone with God and just ask for clarity, ask for direction; or you have to seek godly counsel from wise Christian friends.

But how often, while I'm trying to psychoanalyze God, do I miss the SIMPLEST of truths: I need to trust Jesus to love me enough through this situation to give me his best.

I need to trust Jesus to be able to work it out, even if I can't see how it could possibly happen.

When I get in a tough situation, I need to have "déjà vu all over again": "Hey, I've been here before! God helped me get through that; he'll help me get through this! He had compassion with me before; he was capable before. He will be again!"

A lot of us have a tendency to trust Christ's compassion, but not his capability. We know he cares about us, but we're stressing out trying to figure out how to solve the problem under our own power.

We may SAY we trust God, but in fact we don't.

(Look, you're never going to fully understand the power of God, his supernatural ability to solve even the most complicated problem.

So don't even try to understand it. Just trust it.)

Others of us have the opposite tendency:

We trust Jesus' capability, but not his compassion.

Sure, God could help me, but he's not going to, because I haven't been good enough, or God is trying to punish me, or whatever.

(Hey, you're never going to be able to deserve God's love and mercy; it's a gift. Just trust it.)

If we grasp the fact of Christ's absolute CONSISTENCY, then we realize that his capability AND his compassion are going to be at work in our situation no matter how our situation looks or feels.

We can rest. We can relax.

Jesus is absolutely, irrevocably committed to **Romans 8:28,29** — growing me according to his best for me:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose ... conformed to the likeness of his Son....

So no matter what kind of situation I'm in, he's going to use it for my ultimate good.

No matter what happens to me, no matter what crummy junk comes my way, that's his bottom line.

That's his end game.

That's his purpose.

That's his goal.

If I can embrace that, if I can get the mind of Christ in that way, I can move on.

Let's ask God to help us see Christ's love for us in every situation, and trust Christ's power in every situation, because Jesus truly is consistently, faithfully at work in every situation!

