

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 8, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

YOU AND YOUR PROBLEMS “The Problem of Facing Impossible Circumstances” *John 6:1-14*

“We’re all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations” – Dr. Charles Swindoll

Quote Questions:

1. What do you think Dr. Charles Swindoll had in mind with this quote?
2. What do you think is meant by the words “impossible situations”?
3. What do you think is meant by the words “great opportunities”?
4. Do you agree or disagree with this quote? Why or why not? Based on what?
5. Why do you think, we so often fail to see “impossible situations” as God’s opportunities?

Life includes situations that seem impossible to solve. Being determined and persistent, we do everything we know to work them out. Often the result... we’ve made matter worse. At the same time, we create a basis for frustration and worry. Still trying to handle the impossible, we add to our worry all sorts of human ingenuity, burning up energy in great quantities. The impossibility become our Waterloo of sorts, when all the while God wanted to use it as a bridge to Himself. He designs these impossibilities with you in mind. Here we are going to observe a miracle(s) that will give us some necessary insight into our own responses when faced with the impossible.

I. THE SPECIALIST

The proper perspective is dependent upon an accurate view of God’s ability. He’s a “Specialist” in working with the impossible. Thanks to the Biblical writings of both Jeremiah and Luke, God’s ability is described.

4 Biblical Affirmations of Our Specialist in Impossible Situations:

1. **Jeremiah 32:17** – ¹⁷ “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”
2. **Jeremiah 32:27** - ²⁷ “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”
3. **Luke 1:37** - ³⁷ “For nothing is impossible with God.”
4. **Luke 18:27** - ²⁷ “Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’”

II. THE SETTING (John 6:1-5)

John's text deals with men facing an impossible situation. There are some interesting things about this familiar story that bear deeper inspection.

3 Facts with Implications: There are several interesting facts about this miracles that may have some significant implications for our discussion on facing impossibilities.

1. **This miracle is the only miracle of Jesus that is mentioned in all four of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)** – This fact tells us a couple important things. For one thing it tell us that it was significant enough and stood out enough in the hearts and minds of Jesus' disciples (Matthew and John) and close followers (Mark and Luke) that they remembered it and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded it for us. It is the only miracle of Jesus that bears that distinction. Each one felt inspired by this miraculous account to share it and two of the writers we know actually witnessed the miracle as disciples present. In all likely hood both Mark and Luke may have likewise, witnessed this event. Both were close companions of Peter. Second, the Bible is the inspired word of God. Given by inspiration of God. It is significant that God would include a story repetitively 4 times. *Do you think He might have wanted us to pay attention to it? Why?* One effective teaching method often used is repetition. We might get it if it is said once. If it is said twice we should hear it. If it is repeated a third time we ought to wright it down and remember it. If it is repeated a fourth time it most certainly will appear on the final exam. Right?
2. **This miracle is the only account in Scripture in which Jesus asked the advice of someone else** – *Why do you think this might be significant?* Verse 5 of our passage says, ⁵*When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?'* Let me “Buddy-phrase” it if you will. Essentially Jesus asked, “So, how do you guys think we are going to feed all these hungry people?” Or maybe it was more like, “Guys, there are a lot of hungry people here. We are going to feed them! Now, where is the nearest H.E.B. store?” *Again, why do you think Jesus asking their advice on this matter might be significant, especially given the fact that this is the only place in Scripture when He asked advice of someone else?* Did you notice verse 6, ⁶*“He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.”* Interesting! You men God tests us sometimes? *What could he possibly be testing them on?* Like I said a minute ago, “If it is repeated a fourth time it most certainly will appear on the test.” Could it possibly be that he was testing them on how to handle impossible situations that they were sure to face? Could it possibly be that He told us this story 4 times over, plus the many other impossible story in Scripture, to show us how to handle impossibilities in our lives? Wow! He is good! Isn't He?
3. **This miracle is the only time Jesus performed such a miracle before a sizable crowd** – John's account in verse 10 tells us that there were 5,000 of them there. In Matthew's account tells us that there were 5,000 men plus women and children. Mark's gospel says there were 5,000 men. And Luke's gospel tells us there were 5,000 men. So how many was it? Traditionally in Jewish society, when a census or count of people was taken only the men were counted. So in this setting, we are told there were 5,000 men, and Matthew tell us there were also women and children present, therefore most Biblical scholars place the crowd at anywhere from 10,000 (a conservative estimate) to

15,000 strong (a more liberal and perhaps more accurate estimate). Dr. John MacArthur place the total at 20,000. ***Why do you think it might be significant that this is the only miracle performed before such an enormous crowd of people?*** Perhaps for the crowds benefit, but most likely in a crowd this large many may not have realize nor been able to see the miracle take place. Certainly they benefited from the great miracle physically (the were fed) and spiritually when the words spread throughout the crowd it would have validated who Jesus claimed to be... the Messiah, the Son of God. But most likely the crowd was a part of the test and lesson for Jesus' disciples. Remember verse 6 says, ⁶ ***He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*** Do you think it might have had something to do with facing impossibilities in life? What to do when you face what seem to you to be huge, insurmountable impossibilities? Remember our passages above; **Jeremiah 32:17 - ¹⁷ "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."**, **Jeremiah 32:27 - ²⁷ "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"**, **Luke 1:37 - ³⁷ "For nothing is impossible with God."**, **Luke 18:27 - ²⁷ "Jesus replied, 'What is impossible with men is possible with God.'"**

Setting Specifics Worth Noting:

- 1. Facing the impossible challenges that come with being His and serving Him -** John's account of this miracle is preceded by five other chapters in which we find that Jesus chose His disciples and sent them out for ministry. Serving and living daily for the Him poses impossible challenges itself. ***What are some of those impossible challenges?*** Jesus had called them to leave the lives and occupations they knew... to leave the familiar and venture into the unfamiliar... to step out on faith and live by faith. That itself can seem like an impossibility! You mean you want me to move? You mean you want me to give up my job? You mean you want me to trust you to get by on less than what I was making there? You mean you want me to reach out to that one who doesn't want anything to do with you? You mean you want me face this impossible disease and these treatments? You mean you want me to face this incredible loss in my life?
- 2. Facing the impossible challenge of physical and emotional exhaustion -** After a time of aggressive preaching, they returned to their master exhausted and emotionally worn thin. The Lord desired to be alone with them as they rested. Isn't it true that often we have to slow down and stop in order to really learn and see what God is up to in our lives. We go at such a hurried pace so much of the time, often running ahead of God and getting ahead of Him... trying to do it all on our own, that we rarely stop long enough hear Him, to let Him work. It can even be good things that we are doing or trying to do and accomplish. It is "impossible" to really do His work, without Him! We may try, and make some semblance of effort, but all of our efforts are really meaningless and devoid of lasting value independent of His power and presence.
- 3. Facing the impossible challenge imposed on us by a world in need -** They left the crowd and crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, finding a place on the mountain to rest and enjoy solitude and privacy. An enormous crowd followed the men, plus women and children. They were in a barren place and without food, and the large group grew hungry and had needs. Christians, have the impossible challenge of

holding out tangible hope in a hopeless world! It is overwhelming... the lostness of man is overwhelming... the hurts around us every day are overwhelming... the death and agony of people we know is overwhelming... the disease and sickness is overwhelming... the poverty and destitution of many in our world today is overwhelming... lets face it the needs of this world are overwhelming. The needs follow us everywhere we go... our Christian worldview causes them to tail us everywhere we go. You can't get away from them.

All of this... that's the way Christ wanted it. He had explained to His disciples that He was God's Son and God in the flesh. Now was their chance to see Him in action... to move from theory to reality. To know that not only does He claim to be the God of the impossible, but that He indeed can do the impossible. We need the same! Don't we?

III. THE TEST (John 6:5-9)

In order to see what His men had learned while being with Him, He gave them a test. Upon seeing the approaching multitude, again Jesus asked the question in **verse 5,**⁵ *When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?'* We see a couple of responses from two of Jesus' disciples. These responses reveal perhaps how we usually respond to impossibilities, but how Christians should avoid responding to those impossibilities?

How not to respond to impossibilities faced?

1. **Philips response teaches us... don't focus on what you can do, but what God can do** - Verse 7 reveals Philips response. Verse 7 says, *Philip answered him, 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'* (A denarius was worth about .17 cents and equaled a man's daily wage) The depth of Philips faith was quickly ascertained. Philip only saw the size of the problem, not the size of his Master's ability. He didn't even answer the question really. The Lord asked, "Where do we go?" Philip answered, "How much?" Wrong answer! Right? Jesus wanted His man to say, "With me it's impossible, but it is nothing to You. I can't but you surely can! I'm going to see what You are going to do. I'm staying with You. After all You are the Specialist." Instead Philip behaved as a statistical pessimist.
2. **Andrew's response teaches us... don't depend on your resources, but on God resources** – We might even say, given the situation, don't depend on your resources, but on what God can do with your resources. He can stretch them... multiply them. In **verses 8-9** we read Andrews response to Jesus' request, *Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'* (The Greek word used here for "fish" described a little picked fish, like sardines. The barley loaves were the size of small pancakes; flat, hard and brittle – the bread of the poor people.) Really the first part of his response was great; he should have stopped with it. But he undermined his position by also focusing on the size of the problem. He appeared to be a hardworking and diligent man; after all, he wasn't ignorant of the resources of the

multitude. Many are like Andrew... hardworking and diligent, but shot down by the prospect of the odds against them.

NOTE: *When faced with seemingly impossible challenges before us we often look at what we can do and the resources we have and give up, but God says, “When faced with impossible challenges focus on what I can do and My inexhaustible resources and go on!”*

IV. THE MIRACLE (John 6:10-13)

In simple, unobtrusive fashion, Jesus had the disciples search the crowd on the mountain slope. He involved them in the impossible event. Whereas Philip had figured on minimums, Christ gave the audience multiplied bread and fish until they were full... “as much as they wanted.” According to verse 12 they ate until they had had enough... in other words they were full. And when the disciples gathered up all the leftovers, twelve baskets full remained, one per disciple. Three things should be noted about this miracle.

3 Important Things to Remember:

1. **Jesus used faithless disciples to meet this impossible challenge** – God’s ability to meet the impossibilities we face does not depend on us, our faith or abilities. He can do the impossible even when our faith is small and shaky.
2. **Jesus not only met the impossible need He provided more than was needed** – I love Ephesians 3:20-21, ²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,* ²¹ *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* When we come to Him, ask Him, trust Him, wait on Him, He does *“immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power...”* Wow!
3. **Jesus knows we will face what are impossible challenges to us, but remember with Him nothing is impossible** - Jeremiah 32:17, ¹⁷ *“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”*, Jeremiah 32:27, ²⁷ *“I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”*, Luke 1:37, ³⁷ *“For nothing is impossible with God.”*, Luke 18:27, ²⁷ *“Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’”*.

V. THE APPLICATION

What the disciple should have learned at miracle’s end, we too should learn. The following are some applicable helps in the problem of facing impossibilities in this life.

4 Practical Helps for Handling Impossibilities:

1. **Let the right one handle it** – Leave it in the hands of the Specialist. Focus on Him rather than the problem... the impossibility.
2. **Refuse to give in to worry** - Just don’t! If it’s impossible, admit it’s impossible to yourself, confess it’s impossible to God, and then confess your dependence on God to face the impossible... and leave it there. Let the “Specialist” go to work.

3. **Don't try to work it out by yourself** – Refuse to calculate. Know your own limits, weakness. You don't have to fix everyone and every situation. You just have to rely, depend and trust the one who can fix it!
4. **Refuse to engage others in worry** – Worry can be contagious and can spread to affect not only our faith, but the faith of those around us. Hold out hope to those around you. We serve a God of the impossible.

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brilliantly disguised as impossible situations”
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