

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Philippians 4:4

The Apostle Paul's basis for his encouragement to "Rejoice in the Lord always" is that "The Lord is near." *The Feeding of the 5000* provides excellent guidance as to how we can use our knowledge of the Lord's nearness to minister with confidence and bring joy and nourishment to those we serve.

Read John 6:5-13

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?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Explain the **challenge** the disciples faced that day after Jesus asked, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

According to the disciples, what were **the available resources** on hand to address this problem?

As a group, identify the unique **challenges** this current school year has presented for your ministry staff, for those whom you serve in ministry, and for your own families and/or personal life.

Ministry staff:

Those we serve in ministry:

Our families and/or personal life:

On your own, finish the following sentence in a way that is true for you. Share your answer with others, as you feel comfortable.

One thing that would make this year more manageable would be . . .

The task of providing food for this large crowd seemed impossible to the disciples. They looked at their available resources, and they did not see a solution. Yet, there was one available resource they apparently had not considered—the man standing in front of them. Jesus was there, but they did not ask him for help.

By this point in Jesus’ ministry, his disciples had seen enough to know there was something quite remarkable about Jesus. Using the words in the box, fill in the blanks to identify what the disciples had already seen Jesus do in his public ministry:

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------|-------------|------|-----------------|-----------|
| wine | seeing | evil spirit | calm | 12 | raise |
| leprosy | invalid | Peter’s | 38 | demon-possessed | paralytic |

By this time in Jesus’ ministry, his disciples had already seen him:

- Heal _____ (Matthew 8:3)
- Heal the centurion’s servant without ever _____ him (Matthew 8:13)
- Heal _____ mother-in-law of her fever (Matthew 8:15)
- _____ a violent sea (Matthew 8:26)
- Heal a _____ (Matthew 9:6-7)
- Heal a woman who had been sick for _____ years (Matthew 9:22)
- _____ a girl from the dead (Matthew 9:25)
- Drive out an _____ (Mark 1:25)
- Heal a _____ man (Mark 5:15)
- Change water into _____ (John 2:9)
- Heal a man who had been an _____ for _____ years (John 5:9)

Can you add to this list? Can you think of an example from your own life or ministry when the Lord provided something that at one time didn’t seem possible? Share your answer with the group, as you feel comfortable.

If you were there with Jesus as one of his disciples, and if you had remembered all these miracles Jesus had performed, what might you have asked him to do?

In Philippians 4, after reminding his readers that “the Lord is near,” Paul gives this guidance as to how we can put that knowledge into practice:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6).

Considering Jesus’ gracious promise to be with you always, recalling his great power, and also remembering Paul’s guidance to “in every situation . . . present your requests to God,” brainstorm with the group to 1) Identify as many specific situations regarding this school year about which it would be good to pray, and 2) Write down at least one specific request you would want to present to God about that situation.

SITUATION

SPECIFIC REQUEST(S) FOR THAT SITUATION

Optional activity: Have someone use your collective answers to set up a prayer schedule for the year. The schedule would establish a day on which the faculty/staff (together or individually) would be encouraged to present each of these specific situations/requests to God in prayer.

Though Jesus graciously and miraculously provided food for this large crowd, many from the crowd, including some who had previously identified themselves as Jesus' disciples, ended up turning away from Jesus and no longer following him. What application does this have for our ministry when we consider the following:

- 1) Most left Jesus the very next day after they themselves had witnessed the miracle.

- 2) They left him after Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Read the concluding verses of John chapter 6, which records an important dialogue between Jesus and his disciples:

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Explain, in your own words, why Simon Peter didn't leave when many of the other disciples did.

Think of a time in your own life when Jesus' 'words of eternal life' were especially meaningful to you. Explain the situation and share the words that were meaningful, as you feel comfortable.

In Philippians 4, after urging his readers to “rejoice in the Lord always” (verse 5) and “in every situation . . . present your requests to God” (verse 6) Paul writes this: ⁷*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

What reason(s) might the following groups/individuals in John 6 have to feel peace:

The disciples that stayed

The disciples that left

Simon Peter

Judas

We teach students who resemble the characteristics of these groups/individuals in some or many ways. What are some specific attitudes and/or actions we can practice that might help keep the peace of God in front our students’ eyes during this unusual year?

WLSTC thanks Pastor Jeremy Mattek for sharing God’s Word with us through the video message and this Bible study!

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