
DO YOU STILL NOT SEE OR UNDERSTAND?

SERIES: ANSWERING JESUS' QUESTION

Dr. Lyle Pointer

Professor Emeritus, Nazarene Theological Seminary

Scripture: Mark 8:11-21

Introduction:

1. Religious leaders had been trying to test Jesus.
 - a. They were plying him with questions.
 - b. Then they asked for a sign, a miracle.
2. Jesus told them no sign will be given.
3. He and his disciples got into a boat and crossed to the other side of the lake.
4. During the ride the disciples realized they had forgotten to stock up with bread.
5. Jesus seized the occasion and talked about yeast.
 - a. Jesus seems to be still dealing with what had just happened with the Pharisees.
 - b. The disciples, however, think they are getting a scolding.
6. Let's evaluate what is happening in this moment of miscommunication.

I. Jesus is concerned about how visual impairment affects our understanding.

- A. Jesus warned His disciples about the “yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod” (15).
 1. Jesus used the idea of yeast as the expansion of evil; the enlarging influence of sin.
 2. The evil of the Pharisees was their hypocrisy—a religious threat.

3. The evil of Herod was his adultery, lust and sexual license--the secular threat.
4. Jesus' message was flee hypocrisy and the world's immorality.
5. What are the temptations in your life that can harm your relationship with God?

B. Meanwhile the disciples are preoccupied with their food shortage.

1. They felt responsible to make sure there was enough food for their travel.
2. Jesus was teaching them about discernment and the possibility of being misled.
3. They were feeling guilty for lack of preparation and the absence of forethought.
4. Can our sense of responsibility overwhelm our understanding?
 - a. The disciples knew they had not prepared adequately for the trip.
 - b. When Jesus talked about the ingredients of bread, such as yeast, the disciples became concerned about their lack of supply and their failure to plan in advance.
 - c. Focusing on our needs is a human tendency that may stymie learning.
 - d. This inner sense of inadequacy and anxiety actually keeps us from grasping deeper spiritual lessons.

C. "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand?" (17).

II. Jesus believes experiential learning cured visual impairment.

We have a saying, "Seeing is believing." The saying is an overstatement. There are some things we cannot see until we believe.

A. Jesus asked, “Do you still not see?”

1. He concluded they did not understand.
2. He must have felt they wanted to know.
3. What applied to the Pharisees seemed not to be accurate about the disciples—namely their hearts were not hardened.
4. Jesus left the hard-hearted religious leaders, but continued to teach the disciples.

B. “Do you not remember?”

1. Jesus reviews recent episodes they shared together—the feeding of the 4000 and 5000.
2. His teaching is a simple memory test mixed with a math class.
3. How many loaves were available in each instance and how many baskets of leftovers remained?
4. The teaching moment consisted of comparing past experience with present reality, e.g. if 5 loaves fed 5000, one loaf can nourish 1000 men.
5. But Jesus concluded with the haunting question, “Do you still not understand?”

C. Learning from experience

1. Experience can fill us with pessimism and teach us what we cannot do.
2. Experience can weigh us down with hopelessness.
3. Experience can, however, teach us . . .
 - a. We lived through sorrow;
 - b. We triumphed over temptation;
 - c. Illness came uninvited, but we recovered from the unwanted guest;
 - d. Problems appeared permanent, but were somehow solved;
 - e. We reached the breaking point, but somehow we did not break.

4. We may only learn half the lessons from experience or we may half learn them.
5. We are blind unless we learn to read aright the lessons of experience.

III. Answering Jesus' questions

A. How did Jesus ask the questions?

1. Was He smiling?
2. Was He shaking His head with a touch of irritation?
3. The fact He asked so many questions in a row indicates His annoyance.
4. His use of the word "still" implies the disciples are behind in their learning.

B. Jesus' volley of questions:

1. "Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?" (17-18)
2. The severest question appears to be, "Are your hearts hardened?"
 - a. This question investigates the unwillingness to learn.
 - b. Hard-heartedness is a willful choice to resist.
An example of this stubbornness in our time is that people will say, "I don't understand," when, in fact, they disagree.
3. Jesus expected His disciples would learn and apply the knowledge gained.
 - a. We dare not find comfort in the faltering and feeble ways of the disciples.
 - b. We should stare squarely into the face of the questioning Jesus.
 - c. We are to answer those penetrating questions and sense His heightened expectations.

Conclusion:

1. What did Jesus expect them to understand?
2. God is able to supply our need.
3. God takes what we have and multiplies it.
4. Jesus is worthy of our trust, for He is God.
5. The spiritual issues are of greater importance than the physical.
6. Our hope is grounded in God's involvement in our lives.

Jesus moves from this teaching moment into the next town to give sight to a blind man.