

Gospel of Mark Chapter 8 Study Guide

Chapter Eight begins with Jesus' question: "Do you not yet understand?" Alas, the religious leaders and the disciples do not. And, probably, neither do we.

The story begins with a second **feeding of a multitude** by miraculous means. Scholars believe these two feedings are provided by Mark for a number of possible reasons:

1. Based on geography, the first feeding is geared toward the Jewish community while the second includes the Gentile community.
2. Jesus is revealed as the good shepherd: providing for the needs of the sheep
3. The stories also highlight the parallels between Moses in the wilderness (manna and quail paralleled by bread and fish)
4. The stories foreshadow the Eucharistic feast and the ultimate supper of the lamb in eternity.

The disciples miss the most important message of the first feeding: Jesus is capable of providing for their needs, healing their illnesses, forgiving their sin. Yet, they are still living with a minimum of understanding about his nature and person. This will continue to be the problem even after Peter makes his declaration of Jesus' identity in Mark 8:27. The whole chapter resonates with the disciple's incapacity to understand or to see. Look for the number of times words like *see*, *perceive*, *understand* are used in the Chapter.

Who is Jesus to you? What quality about him guides or comforts you most?

When the Pharisees come **looking for a sign**, testing him, prepared to argue, they do not get any of the above. Instead of a sign, they get a sigh.

Have you ever gone to God asking for a sign? Why might you get a sigh instead?

The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod

The use of the metaphor 'yeast' when describing the religious and political leaders of their time, is ambiguous. In Matthew 16:12 and Luke 12:1, two interpretations are offered. Mark involves readers in a soul-search to explain what this leaven, yeast means, but in the usual Jewish sense it suggests something evil (Lev 2:11, 1 Cor 5:6-8, Gal 5:9).

What do you think is the dominant evil of religion?

Jesus does a pop quiz on the disciples asking them about the two feeding events.

Why do you think he does that? When is it helpful to remember past events? Do a word search of how many times the word "remember" is used in the Bible.

The Blind Man of Bethsaida

For once, in Mark, Jesus' attempt to heal someone seems to not be immediately successful. The need for a second touch may explain why Matthew and Luke leave this story out. It makes Jesus look not-so-perfect. Yet this two-stage movement is the very point of the story in Mark, tying it closely to its context and pointing most clearly to its significance for disciples today.

Have you ever felt hazy about God?

How did the haziness get resolved?