

Session 7: Mark 6:30–8:30

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because of his unique power as creator, Jesus renews and restores what sin and darkness broke.

Head Change: To understand Jesus's character and mission.

Heart Change: To feel excited at Jesus's ability to equip us to follow him.

Life Change: To live in light of our knowledge of who Jesus is and what he's about.

OPEN

There's something attractive about power. We like the freedom it gives us, the ability to do whatever we wish. Or so we think. **What sort of position do you hold that gives you power over someone else? And where is the limit to that power?**

Jesus, in this passage, is going to demonstrate real power, the kind that defies natural law and remakes religious law. Pay attention to those who benefit from his power.

READ

Read Mark 6:30–8:30.

[illegible]

WATCH

[illegible]

you feel comfortable doing so, have a few people share with the group.

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Background: Bread Made from Nothing

By including both scenes of Jesus feeding the multitudes, Mark assumes that his readers are familiar with their Old Testament. Let's look back at an important Old Testament passage that should help understand the nuances of Mark 7–8.

Turn to Exodus 16:9–21. This section picks up after God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt. The people started complaining pretty quickly, though, because they were out in the middle of the wilderness.

As you read the passage in Exodus, what sounds familiar to what you've read in Mark?

(Think specifically about the location where Jesus takes the disciples prior to feeding the five thousand.)

What do you think the people eating the bread Jesus had just multiplied would have thought?

[illegible]

If Jesus is re-creating the something-out-of-nothing provision that Israel saw in the wilderness, what does that say about Jesus?

Jesus's provision through miraculous bread should immediately clue us in to two things: First, Jesus is God-in-the-flesh and he will provide for his followers. But second, he's not about simply satisfying our cravings. As the passage in Exodus goes on, God's frustration with Israel grows because, rather than trust him to provide, they ignore his instructions and try to take advantage of his provisions.

In the same way, Mark presents the Pharisees in chapter 7 as also taking advantage of God's generosity, using their own legal traditions to ignore caring for elderly parents.

So, as you sit down to eat your next meal, stop and pray for a moment. In your prayer celebrate the provision that Jesus offers you—not just in the food you’re about to eat, but also in the resources you need to be about his mission.

In what ways have you been tempted to take God's generosity for granted? Discuss or write down actionable ideas about how to practice gratitude.

2. Background: Ceremonial Cleanness

The Pharisees attacked Jesus and his followers for eating without first washing their hands. Mothers everywhere may applaud them, but Jesus rebuked them. Why? The Pharisees were focused on the wrong thing. They were not so much concerned about cleanliness—as in, not carrying dirt or

germs—but rather cleanness, a term describing ritual suitability.

The concept of cleanness goes back to the Law of Moses, in which God instituted conditions on how he could be approached. To be in God's presence, a person needs to be in a state of holiness. A person who is clean is in a state of holiness; therefore, becoming clean is essential for entering into the presence of God. Likewise, anything that makes a person unclean separates that person from God.

Generally, anything associated with health or life would be designated as clean. For example, a perfect one-year-old lamb was an acceptable sacrifice, but a lamb that was lame—or nearer to death, less than perfect—was unacceptable. If something or someone was unhealthy or associated with death, they were unclean. Skin diseases, illnesses, touching a corpse, or participating in sinful activities all could make a person temporarily unclean.

An unclean person could go through a process to become clean—make a suitable sacrifice (Leviticus 1:3–17), allow the right amount of time to pass (Lev. 15:19), participate in a symbolic ceremony, such as a ritual washing (Exodus 30:17–21). This was likely what the apostles did not do before eating, prompting the Pharisees' complaint.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus change the rules: he touched the unclean personally to cleanse and purify them, illustrating that he holds the power to transform the lives of individuals. Jesus's touch healed or restored dead people (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43), those with skin diseases (Mark 1:40–45), even those suffering an unnatural blood flow (Mark 5:25–34) to a state of cleanness.

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