

One of the more fascinating things my mother had in her kitchen was a pressure cooker. A pressure cooker allows you to do things that otherwise you might not be able to do. Because it is air tight, as the air inside gets hot, the pressure builds up and since the stem inside can't escape, that stem rises to a higher temperature than it could otherwise. What that means from a practical sense is that food cooks at a much higher temperature and at a much faster speed. I mention this because there are times when life is like a pressure cooker. Have you ever felt that things in life are just bearing down/weighing heavy and that you are just living under constant pressure? There are times when we have all felt that way; like we were living in a pressure cooker. This can even be seen in the life of Jesus' disciples. In fact, we can see it in our selected text.

In John 6 we are standing with Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and they were facing a crowd of 5000 hungry men, not counting the women and children. They were on an isolated place with no place to purchase food and not enough money to do it. *{5} When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* Jesus was putting Phillip to the test and I imagine he felt some pressure. Now this doesn't mean that Jesus was in a quandary for He knew exactly what he was going to do. Jesus did this to "prove Phillip" (v 6) but Phillip had no clue as to what to do. Now all of us at one time or another has faced situations when we had to make decisions/choices when we really didn't know what to do. In such times, we too were under pressure.

But pressure is not always a bad thing. Pressure can help us to grow and to be stronger. So for the next few minutes, let us look at this episode from the life of Jesus and as we do, we will focus our attention to what Jesus teaches about pressure.

First, notice that pressure test our faith in Christ. Every miracle that Jesus performed was mighty and special but this miracle is in some respects unique.

- It is the only miracle that is recorded in all four of the gospels.
- It's the only miracle where Jesus asked someone's advice before he performed it.
- It was performed in front of such a large crowd
- He enlisted the assistance of his disciples.

Now to set the stage; Jesus had just learned that John the Baptist had been beheaded. With this grueling schedule of events, Jesus needed some time to rest so he a spot on the other side of the Sea-Galilee. Now the problem was that the multitudes figured out where he was going and they followed him. When Jesus saw them, he had compassion on them and spent a good part of the day healing the sick. Well, the day was getting late and evening was coming. The disciples were rather insistent as they said to the Lord ***(Luke 9:12) ...Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.***

Now there were two things missing in this situation. **First, they lacked food.** John tells us that there were 5000 men there that day and Matthew tells us that there were also woman and children (Matt 14:21). Some have estimated that the crowd numbered somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 people. So when the disciples say, they need food and Jesus looks at Phillip and asked where are we going to get the food to feed these people, it was quite a task.

Now there are several things interesting about this lack of food. **First, Jesus knew what** the people needed before they knew it. There is no evidence that anybody was complaining of hunger nor had anybody sent word to Jesus regarding where they were going to eat. But Jesus was aware of their need and the potential problem that they were facing before they were aware of it. Now when we face pressure situations of life, we need to recognize that Jesus is aware of what we are going through. Back there in Matt 6 where Jesus is teaching his disciples to pray, he says in ***(Mat 6:8) Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*** Our problems don't take God by surprise. Before you are aware of a problem that you are going to face, the Lord knows about it. More amazing is that **Jesus knew how** he was going to resolve the problem even before the people knew of the problem. He knew how to handle the lack of food issue.

But there was a bigger problem than that. The **twelve lacked faith.** ***{5} When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? {6} And this he said to prove***

him: for he himself knew what he would do. This gives us a little bit of insight as to why Jesus performed the miracle; it was to test of the disciple's faith. Phillip was the first person to take the test. So Jesus asked Phillip the question and Phillip didn't seem to have a clue. He didn't do very well in the test.

Notice what Phillip said. **{7} ... Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.** What's interested here is that Phillip answered a question that Jesus did not ask. Sounds like some guest on political talk shows today. Jesus did not ask how much it was going to take or what it would cost; Jesus asked "*where are we going to get it?*" But seems Phillip did some quick math and concluded that it couldn't be done. That "pennyworth" of "denarii" was a coin used during Jesus day and represented an average day's wage for a workingman. So Phillip is making reference to 200 days worth of wages. It's been calculated that today that would be equivalent to about \$20K.

Now Phillip had a pessimistic view of this problem with reasons why it couldn't be done. There is no place to buy that much food and if there were, we don't have enough money to buy it and furthermore, if we could get the food here, then it would not be sufficient as everybody would get just a little bit. Phillip looked at things from the negative point of view.

There are some people like that today that have a negative response to everything. They can give you all kinds of reasons why it can't be done and why things are so bad and why something won't work

The next person to take the test was Andrew. He heard the Lord's question and it seems he immediately went off looking for food. Just a little while, he came back and said unto the Lord **{9} *There is a lad here,*** He found a little food but he wasn't encouraged by what he found. All he found was a small boy with five barley loaves and two small fish so he concluded that this was not enough to do any good. Now the mistake that both Phillip and Andrew made was the same mistake. They both did their calculating w/o figuring Jesus into the formula. The multitude lacked food while the

disciples lacked faith. Now the lack of faith was a much greater problem because the lack of food never stops God but a lack of faith can stop Him dead in His tracks.

On another occasion in his home town of Nazareth, the scripture says (*Mark 6:5-6*) ***And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. {6} And he marvelled because of their unbelief.*** The people there knew him from his youth as a carpenter son; they knew his family and who was he to make such claims. So because of their doubts and lack of faith, he could not do any mighty works there. Back in John 6, these disciples had sufficient evidence from other miracles that you would have thought they would have suggested Jesus take care of the problem. But many are just like that today. We can look back on our lives and see how we were able to get through some difficult times that at the time we thought there was no way of surviving this problem. But the Lord helps us through one problem after another but then the pressure is turned up a little bit by a new problem and we begin to wring our hands and start to worry and fret and wondering what are we going to do. The next time a problem comes into your life try to remember (*Luke 18:27*) ***The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*** So when pressure comes, it will test your faith.

No. 2 When pressure comes. It turns our focus to Jesus. While all four gospels record this account, John is the only one that mentions that little boy and in some respect, he is the real hero of the story. Here was a lad with a relatively small lunch. Now the loaves of bread were not like we buy today but rather they were more like small flat pancakes or a cookie; so five of those wouldn't go very far. Now the word for fish is not a large fish but rather refers to a small fish. Likely the fish had been *pickled*, or *soused*, since there was not mention of a fire or cooking. So for all practical purposes, this boy had five crackers and two sardines.

The interesting thing is that in spite of the small amount, this boy was more than willing to give it to Jesus and in so doing he learned that what you transfer to Jesus can be transformed by Jesus. What this boy had was valuable because it was available. Sometimes we hear people say something like, *"I can't do very much or I just don't*

have much ability. There is really not much that I can do.” I suggest you will be amazed at how God can use your small talent and your little ability if you would simply make it available to him.

Now as you think about it, this little boy's faith was remarkable. Here was boy who willingly gave up his food seeming without question while the twelve who had traveled and seen one miracle after another had no faith. In some respects, Jesus wants us be like children and one of those areas is in faith. A small child is 100% trusting in their parents. You can put a child up on something and tell him to jump and daddy will catch him and he will jump on faith. A child believes and has confidence in what his parents tell him to do and in that respect; we are to be like children. Now you maintain that kind of faith by having the right focus. The problem with the disciples was that when the pressure was on, they **FOCUSED ON THE CROWD INSTEAD OF THE CHRIST**. They looked at the **PROBLEM RATHER THAN THE PROVISION**. So when problems come our way, if we'll but remember that we have a God greater than any problem, then that will help keep our faith properly focused.

So notice what happens. ***{10} And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. {11} And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. {12} When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. {13} Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.*** Ever wonder why there were 12 baskets full left over. Perhaps it was to teach the disciples a lesson. Each one of them likely collected a basket full. Each one wound up with more than they started with and everybody was full. One lesson was to never doubt God's power to deal with the problems we face.

No.3. Pressure teaches us facts about Jesus. Jesus didn't perform this miracle to demonstrate that he could get into the catering business. No, there was a much deeper lesson than that. Look at *{14} Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* By this the people recognized Jesus for who he really was. Jesus was trying to drive home the point of who he was and what he could do. Jesus wanted the people to understand that just as he could satisfy their physical hunger, he could satisfy the spiritual hunger. This is why a little later in this chapter Jesus says, *I am the bread of life.* Jesus could fill their stomach and also feed their souls. You see, this was more than a picnic. Jesus was teaching some important spiritual truths. There was a deeper need than the physical appetite. Now we have some physical material needs and the Lord understands that as he makes provisions to satisfy those needs. But there is a greater spiritual need in your life and that gnawing hunger will never be quenched with physical provisions.

Twelve basketfuls left over. Why were there any leftovers at all? Was this a miscalculation? No, the Lord was making the point that he was able to provide much more than they needed. He is more than adequate in helping us with the problems that we face. There is no problem, hurt, or question that you have, that Jesus can't solve, heal or answer. He is more than adequate to handle your pressures of life. Remember the marvelous promise in *(Phil 4:19 KJV) But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* It's this promise that can get us through those pressure packed times and that can keep us going when we become discouraged.

Now the greatest problem any person can face in life is a spiritual problem – the problem of sin. The Lord Jesus Christ offers the only solution to that problem. His blood and his blood alone can wash away our sins (Rev 1:5). Have you dealt with the sin problem? If you are here and not a Christian, then let me encourage you to become one.

Invitation