

A Happy Meal in the Hands of Jesus

John 6:1-15

Have you ever faced an overwhelming challenge— a problem so difficult or complex that resolving it seemed impossible?

That's a universal, isn't it? It's a part of the human experience. It doesn't matter how old or young we are — we all face overwhelming and stressful situations.

It could be failing an essential class. It might be the affair that came out of nowhere. Or it might be that stack of bills that grow and grow, or the doctor's office called with the test results that you never expected, or the loss of your job at the worst possible time.

Our lives are full of experiences that seem overwhelming and beyond our capacity to handle. Of course, as we get older our perspective on what counts as an overwhelming challenge changes. When you're 16, a pimple on the end of your nose 3 days before homecoming is an Extinction Level Event. Call the president. Start a special session of the United Nations because rotation of the planet has changed due to the gravitational pull of this huge zit on my nose. However, that same person at 70 gets a diagnosis of a major disease, and she takes it all in stride. She's faced a thousand challenges before, and she'll face this one as well. It's all a matter of perspective.

In the opening verses of John 6 Jesus gives us a lesson in facing overwhelming challenges, and shows us how important it is that we have the proper perspective.

(Show Video)

Aside from the resurrection, this is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four gospels. John was the last of the gospels to be written, so he includes some details about Philip and Andrew that are not included in the other accounts.

From those other Gospels we know that Jesus has spent the whole day teaching the crowds. As the shadows begin to lengthen, Jesus withdraws with his disciples to escape the pressing throngs of humanity. Jesus does this from time to time to both rest and give special training to his 12 special disciples.

As Jesus and his disciples sail across the Sea of Galilee in a boat, the crowds can easily see what direction they are going, so they follow by walking around the lake. In the boat it is just a four mile journey to the north side of the lake. On foot it is a nine mile journey.

Jesus and his disciples find a restful spot on top of a grassy hill. A moment of solitude. Some time for rest. Jesus is also mourning the death of his cousin and friend John the Baptist. He needs this moment of peace. But it doesn't last long. From their high vantage point, Jesus and his disciples can see thousands of people coming. John tells us that the number of men was 5,000. We know from Matthew that there were also women and children there. So this crowd easily numbered 15,000 to 20,000 people.

Although he is exhausted, Jesus doesn't respond rudely or impatiently. Instead he looks on the crowds with compassion. He realizes they are tired too. He also realizes that they have gone all day without a meal.

Talk about overwhelming situations - how do you feed 5,000 people? A plan begins to form in his mind. He wants to not only feed the people physically. He wants to feed his disciples spiritually. He wants to grow their faith. The way Jesus handled it was to perform a miracle. Again, though, remember John calls them miraculous signs. It's about more than the miracle. This miracle points the disciples, and us to something greater.

In John's telling of this miracle, he seems particularly interested in how Jesus involved different people in the miracle.

I. Philip

The first person Jesus turns to is Philip. We know very little about Philip. He was one of the followers of John the Baptist. And we know that Philip is from a nearby village. Maybe that's why Jesus asks him, "*where can we buy bread for all these people to eat?*"

John tells us that Jesus is testing Philip. Jesus is trying to prove and stretch his faith. Every single one of us is tested in our faith. We tend to think of trials as bad things, as spiritual attacks from Satan. However, God tests us with challenges uniquely suited to us and where we are in our spiritual journey and where God is trying to take us.

Philip eyes the crowd and then looks at Jesus and begins running some numbers in his head. In the original Greek he responds by saying it would take more than 200 silver coins. One silver coin was the standard wage for a common day worker in Israel. For most in the crowd, it would take more than 8 month's pay to provide food enough. And even if you had the money, where could you find that much food?

There are some problems money can't solve. We live in a day and age that believes if

we're willing to pay the price, money can solve any problem. But it can't.

Basically, Philip looks the situation over, and then responds by saying, "It's hopeless. Nothing can be done."

Before we jump too hard on Philip, realize that this is not an entirely unreasonable approach to an overwhelming situation.

It's practical. It's realistic.

It's not a state of denial. It's not being gullible.

Philip is right — this does seem to be a hopeless situation.

But while it is good to be realistic about any situation, Philip's approach is incomplete. It is incomplete, first, because he does nothing to positively change the situation.

When the Situation seems hopeless; when it seems nothing can be done; it is easy to do nothing.

The problem with this attitude is that it becomes self-fulfilling. When we BELIEVE that nothing can be done, then the situation does indeed become hopeless.

As we face our problems at work, with our families, or in our church or society, the best way to insure that there will be NO improvement, no resolution to the problem, is for us to sit back with Philip and to complain that it's hopeless, that nothing can be done.

That algebra test is coming on Monday — it's hopeless, so why study?

That stack of bills keeps growing, it's only going to get worse, so why not just keep running up the credit card?

Work will never get better — so why try? Or I'll never find the job I want so why look. The marriage is over. That teenager is hopeless.

The power of negative thinking is real and destructive.

Philip's approach is also incomplete because it doesn't take into account all of the variables in the equation. It's realistic. It's practical. But it's limited in perspective. It only takes the earthly possibilities into account. It only considers what is humanly possible. Philip never considers the spiritual possibilities. He never calculates Jesus into his equations. That's like standing in front of Niagara falls and wondering where you're going to get a drink. When Jesus is there, that's a big mistake. Our calculations are always off when God isn't in them.

Here are the 3 mistakes that Philip made:

1. He looked at what they didn't have — food or money.
2. He looked at what couldn't be done — buy enough food.
3. He looked at only the earthly possibilities. He never considered that Jesus could do something.

It is good to be realistic and practical — but you have to have more than that.

II. Andrew

At this point in the story, another person enters the picture, Andrew. Andrew was born in a fishing village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. His father ran a successful fishing business which employed, among others, Andrew and his brother Simon Peter.

Andrew seems to have always been as interested in matters of the soul as he was fishing, for he left his fishing nets to follow John the Baptist. And when John pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, Andrew along with Philip, began to follow Christ.

While we give him some credit for that, Andrew is not a giant of faith yet. It's not like Andrew is thinking that Jesus is going to perform this great miracle. However, his response to the situation is a stunning contrast to Philip.

So, unlike Philip, Andrew tries to do something. He looks around to see who can help.

And Andrew finds ONE boy with a happy meal. His 1st Century happy meal had five flat round cakes of barley bread and 2 pickled fish. Then in a realistic tone, he adds that although this is a beginning, it is certainly not enough to feed this many people.

Thus, instead of saying, “The situation is hopeless, there is nothing I can do,” Andrew seems to be saying, “I don't have anything, but I'll find someone who can help.”

There is a big difference in the two approaches to this problem. Andrew is not naïve. Like Philip, he takes a realistic approach.

Like Philip, he knows that he is facing a difficult situation. But unlike Philip, he does not despair.

He does not sit back and do nothing. He looks around and finds some help, and he finds one boy with a happy meal.

So often, we are overwhelmed by our job, our family, our finances -- whatever. And we look at the situation like Philip, We see what we don't have. We see what can't be done. We know we can't fix the situation. But, if we're like Andrew we look to others beyond ourselves.

All the while, there are others in our midst who can help us, but are we willing to ask for it? Many people never get help, because they never ask. Are you in an overwhelming situation? Call out for help! That's Andrew's approach, and it was a good approach. Much better than Philip's. Still though, it wasn't enough. There is more we can do when facing an overwhelming situation.

III. The Boy

The third individual that John draws to our attention is the little boy with his happy meal. He doesn't even have a name. We don't know where he's from or why he's here. We don't know where his parents are. All we know is that he has a lunch with 5 loaves and 2 fish. I hope we get to meet him in heaven someday. I wonder how his story went the next day.

You see no matter how overwhelming the situation, there is almost always something that can be done. It might not be much. It might only be a happy meal in front of 15,000 hungry people. It might only be 20 dollars a months in the face of a \$15,000 dollar debt. It might only be one counseling appointment in the face of 15 years of unhappy marriage. But it's something. It's a start. It's a step. Take it.

This is important, because it's not about just the little bit WE can do. It's about Jesus taking our little bit and multiplying it. You see a happy meal in the hands of Jesus is never just a happy meal. Our step might just be a little step. The bit we contribute might be just a little bit, but when we put that little bit in the hands of Jesus, it suddenly is more than enough.

This football in my hand is good for a little bit of fun at a picnic and a sore shoulder the next morning. But in the hands of Tom Brady it is good for a Super Bowl Championship. This golf club in my hands is good for a walk in the woods, but in the hands of Jordan Spieth it's worth a green jacket.

A happy meal in your hands, or \$20 dollars, or a counseling appointment, or whatever little bit you have might not be much and might not accomplish much on its own, but in the hands of Jesus, it could accomplish far more than you could ever ask or imagine.

It's not just about what little you can do, or I can do. It's about giving that little bit to

Jesus and letting him multiply that effort.

1. Philip had looked the situation over and was very realistic about what he was facing — but he stopped there.
2. Andrew had a slightly better approach. As he looked at the situation, he decided to find someone to help share the burden.
3. The boy went even further -- He looked around and said, “Here I am, I'll GIVE what I can to solving the problem, then leave the rest to God.”

Whether it's Monday's Algebra test, or dealing with the news the doctor has given you, or your spouse has left you, or you've found drugs in your child's room, these are real problems.

You need a little bit of Philip. You can't pretend these problems aren't real. You've got to face them and be realistic. You need an honest appraisal of the situation.

But you can't get stuck there — you need a little bit of Andrew. You need to be willing to look for help from others. Why suffer alone when there are those around you who love you and can help?

But you can't stop there — you need a little of this nameless boy. You need to be willing to give what you have to Jesus, even if it's just a little.

You've got to face these problems.

You've got to look to others for help.

You've got to see what you can give to the situation.

But more than anything else — you've got to give it to Jesus.

It's not the what, the why, the when, the where, or the how, that will make the difference. It's the who. And Jesus is who.

This is what set's Jesus apart from all of the religions of the world. A man became lost in his travels and wandered into a bed of quicksand.

Confucius saw the man's predicament and said, “It is evident that men should stay out of places such as this.”

Next, Buddha observed the situation and said, “Let that man's plight be a lesson to the rest of the world.”

Then Mohammed came by and said to the sinking man, “Alas, it is the will of God.”

Finally, Jesus appeared on the scene and said, “Take my hand, brother. I will save you.

If you want to deal with life and all of its overwhelming stresses — you need a little of Philip, a little of Andrew, a little of that boy — but you need all of Jesus!

A Happy Meal in the Hands of Jesus John 6:1-15

What is the most overwhelming challenge you have ever faced?

I. Philip

How did Philip respond to the overwhelming challenge? What 3 mistakes did

Philip make?

1

2

3

II. Andrew

How did Andrew respond to the overwhelming challenge? What 3 things did

Andrew do in contrast to Philip?

1

2

3

III. The Boy

How did the boy respond to the overwhelming challenge?

When facing challenges do you tend to be like Philip, Andrew, or the boy?

What challenge are you facing in life right now?

Have you take that challenge to Jesus?