

John 6 (Part 1) :1-15 • When You're Facing the Impossible

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

We're in John chapter six, starting the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. John chapter six. We're going to read through the first 15 verses. Goes like this.

¹After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. ²And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. ³Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Two hundred denari worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people sit down."

Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost."

¹³So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" ¹⁵Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself." (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray. Father in heaven. Lord, Your Word is so wonderful. We just open our hearts to you today to hear from You, to hear Your voice, to hear You speak to us as we start this new year Lord, our heart is to grow and to learn,

and to know more. We ask your grace to guide us in this study of Your Word, and we ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

You'll notice in chapter six, it begins with the words, “after this,” which is simply a literary way of saying that the events that we're about to talk about came after or some time had passed since the events of the previous chapter. We don't know how much time had passed, but we do know that in chapter five we ended with events that took place in Jerusalem.

And now, John is telling us that Jesus is up north on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Let me put a map up on the screen so you can kind of, first of all, just get a lay of the land.



In chapter five, Jesus was in Jerusalem. We'll circle it for you so you can see it on the map. So that's where He was when chapter five ended. But now as we get into chapter six, we notice that He's traveled all the way up north somewhere to the east side of the Sea of Galilee, or as John tells us, he's also known as the Sea of Tiberius. I don't think that probably went over very well with the Jews. The Romans come and conquer the land of the Jews, then they start naming towns and bodies of water after their own leaders. Tiberius is referring to Julius Caesar Augustus, the second Roman emperor and so forth.

And there was not only they renamed this body of water after him. But also, a city on the west side of the sea as well. Anyway, in verse two, we're told that a large crowd was following Him, and John reveals for us the reason why the people were following Jesus. He says because they saw the signs that He had been doing on the sick. They'd been seeing the miracles, or they'd at least been hearing about the miracles, and they wanted to see more.

So, in verse three, it says, Jesus went up on the mountain and there He sat down with His disciples. You read it in your Bible. Jesus went up on the mountain and you think you're yourself, wow, this guy did a lot of hiking. I mean, He's always, we always hearing about it going up to a mountain. Well, if you were there, in the land, and you saw where He went, you would say, oh, that's a hill, because that's really what it was. It was a hill. And so, He is on a larger area there and incidentally, that area, that raised ground area would be, is known today as the Golan Heights.

And so, He's sitting there with His disciples and they're talking, but from that vantage point, they can see large groups of people that are moving across the land heading toward Jerusalem. And the reason they're traveling and heading toward Jerusalem is given to us in verse four, where John tells us that the Passover of the Feast of the Jews was at hand.

Now, Passover being one of the major feasts of the Jews would command large groups of pilgrims traveling from all over the region to Jerusalem. And so, with this growing popularity, now that Jesus had, these people who are traveling are wondering where Jesus is and since they're out traveling anyway, heading toward Jerusalem, they're finding their way to Jesus.

And so He sees these large packs of people that are moving toward Him, and I want you to notice what happens in verse five and following, ⁵*“lifting up His eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him. Jesus said to Philip, “where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?”*

And then I really want you to pay attention to verse six. Verse six tells you that *“he said this to test Him.”* John is giving us commentary on this particular statement, and it goes on to say for He Himself knew what he would do. Jesus knew all along what he was going to do to feed these people, but He poses this question to Philip, nonetheless. And the reason I want you to pay attention to that question is because I want you to remember that Jesus, according to the writer of Hebrews, is the exact representation of the nature of God.

In other words, what you see Jesus doing, what you hear Him saying, the way He acts, the way He responds. That's how God responds. This is God the Son, right? So, here's the question I want to ask you, because you've read this situation, you know that Jesus already knew what He was going to do to feed these people, He already knew that. And He also knew that going to a guy like Philip to take care of these people, to feed these people. It was beyond Philip's ability. He knew that.

All right, so here's my question to you. Would God ever ask you to do something that is impossible for you to accomplish on your own? Yeah, yeah, He would. You can see it right here. This is God the Son. This is how we learn about the nature of God, the character of God, by watching and listening to Jesus.

And we see that what He does to Philip is He asks him a question for which He already knows the answer, but He asks him a question in order to test Philip okay? This is a test. That's why the question was being posed. It was a test, and the Bible makes it clear that God tests his children from time to time. Let me show you on the screen first from James chapter one, verses two and three.

James 1:2-3 (ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith (and by the way that testing comes from God) produces steadfastness.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith (and by the way that testing comes from God) produces steadfastness (Or sticktoitiveness, like, continuing on, that's what steadfastness means, and we all need that).

1 Thessalonians chapter two,

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV)

...just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

And then 1 Peter chapter one,

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV)

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more

precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Does God test us? Yes, He does. What is He testing? He's testing your faith. He is testing your faith. That's why James said in the passage that we looked at the first one, he spoke of the testing of your faith. So once again, the test might be asking you to do something that He knows is impossible for you to accomplish on your own. Yes, God will sometimes ask you to do things that are impossible for you to do, not impossible for Him.

But yes, impossible for you. So, check out how Philip responds to the test. Remember Philip's the one being tested. Poor Philip. At least when God tests you and me, it doesn't get written down in the Bible for all ages. For our failure to be celebrated throughout the centuries, but Philip answered Him, *"200 denari worth of bread would not be enough for each of them."* Just even get a little or just a bite.

So, see for Philip, it all came down to money. Have you ever, some of you guys can relate to that when God lays something, but you guys figure it out with a calculator, some of you, and that was kind of Philip. By the way, a denari was a day's wages for a working man. So, 200 denari would be, he's basically saying, if a working man saved his wages for 200 days straight and didn't spend a penny, he still wouldn't have accumulated enough money to buy enough bread for these people to even get a bite.

That's essentially what he's saying. To say nothing of the fact, where are you going to get that much food anyway to feed these people. But here's my question to you. Was Phillips' assessment of the situation incorrect? No, it was not, was it? Phillip's assessment was actually pretty right on. Hey, take 200 days of accumulated earnings and if we could even find a place that would sell us that much bread, that this amount of people would hardly get any.

And so, Philip was very accurate. In fact, he was sound in his reasoning. And yet he failed the test. He failed the test. Why? Because his assessment was only correct from a worldly perspective. His error, in case you're wondering, was that he failed to factor in God. That's exactly why he failed. But again, his assessment was correct. He failed to factor in faith in God. Faith in God's ability to deal with the situation.

And isn't that always the way we fail the tests that come our way? Don't we always fail in the area of faith? Believing God, trusting God when the situation looks bleak or hopeless, or just flat out impossible? That's exactly where we

fail. And by the way, the response of Philip that you get here in this passage is exactly what you'll get if you ask an unsaved person for advice on how to resolve a seemingly impossible situation so be very careful who you talk to when you're facing a challenge that you know is very difficult, if not impossible.

If you go talk to an unbeliever, I'm telling you right now, they will give you advice and it will be technically correct. Their advice will be technically correct, but it will lack the most important element of all and that is the power and the might of God who calls things that are not as though they are. So, you have to be very careful, because these tests come our way. And if we go to the world for answers, we're just going to be told, well, no way. There's no way.

Worldly advice is always full of human understanding. And you say, well, what's wrong with human understanding? God gave us understanding, right? So, what's wrong with that? Well, that's all good and fine, but we're not told to live by that from the standpoint when situations are impossible, otherwise impossible. How are we told to live? You guys all know this. Let me put it on the screen. Proverbs 3:5,

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean, not, on your own understanding.

Human understanding is wonderful, but if you're going to lean on it in a situation like this, where it's otherwise impossible, you're going to come up with the same response as Philip. This can't be done. Sorry. It just can't be done. There's no possible way. So just remember that. You know I think that the two most powerful words in the Bible are, "but God," because the Bible will often say something, that's just really challenging or even impossible for you and I as it relates to how we might try to resolve or fix that thing. But God, but God.

And that's what always needs to be in our hearts and minds when we're facing those tests of our faith. Sometimes I'll sit down with a couple, and I've done this many times over the years, and they're going through marriage problems and so we sit down, we say, okay, well let's talk about what's going on. So, we start this conversation all the problems and I want to ask at some point during the conversation, where does God figure into this thing in your marriage or in the midst of all of these problems?

Where does He actually even enter into the equation? Because I haven't heard you mention Him once. I haven't heard you mention His power, His ability, His

strength, His grace, His forgiveness, His goodness, His love. I haven't heard those things. All you're doing is talking about each other, and so you're looking at this mountain in front of you that needs to move, but you can't move it.

So, here's the problem, but God, but God. You're looking at the situation, you're helpless to change it, but God. Oh, how we need to really lay hold of that whole idea. Now, as we keep reading, we find that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, decides he's going to get busy and check out the resources among the crowd that might be available to resolve this issue. Notice what he says in verse nine. He says, well, there's a little boy here who has five barley loaves.

By the way, barley was considered to be the bread of the poor. The people who had some means would eat wheat bread. But, so here's a young boy, this is his lunch, most likely. He says he's got five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they for so many? So, adding to the overwhelming financial shortfall that Philip has already mentioned. He's basically, now Andrew is essentially just adding to the hopelessness of it saying that, well, our resources are woefully inadequate.

We only have these barley loaves, and a couple of fish. Can you guys relate? Have you ever gone into a situation where your resources are woefully inadequate? Have you ever been in this sort of a scenario? I want you to pause here for just a moment and think about how the disciples felt about this, because Jesus poses this question to them. What are we going to, how are we going to feed these people? What, you know?

By the way, this story appears in all four Gospels. Isn't that amazing? God wanted you to hear this one. So, he poses this question to the disciples, and they're all like, I don't know. All they can talk about is the impossibility of the whole situation. Now, keep in mind that these guys have been watching Jesus perform miracles and nobody brings it up. Nobody says, well, I have no idea how we're going to feed these people but look who we've got with us.

The One who's been doing miracles I mean, good grief, healing people, restoring their sight, and their ability to walk and talk, and so what's coming up with some bread, but nobody mentions it. Because when you're faced, when you're faced with this sort of a thing, it's frightening. It's frightening to be faced with an impossible scenario. And we don't naturally think the way we ought, which is with faith. We don't think that way when we're facing these kinds of circumstances.

We naturally think with our human reasoning, just like these guys are doing. May I suggest to you, however, when we are facing a scenario just like this. Humanly impossible, that this is where Jesus shines. When we offer up to Him, the impossible. Lord, this is impossible for me, but it's not impossible for You. So, I offer it up to You. That's when miracles can begin to happen. So, we go on and read in verse 10 that Jesus told them to have the people sit down.

It was a good place to do that because John tells us there was a lot of grass in that area. So, he says the men sat down about 5,000 in number. Notice that he says it was the men that numbered 5,000. So, if you factor in the women and the children, and we don't know how many there were, but it was, the number is going to swell significantly that's all we really know. And then I want you to pay close attention then to verse 11.

¹¹ “Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, (look at this) as much as they wanted.”

Out of five barley loaves and two fish. Everybody in that crowd, probably no fewer than 10,000, got as much as they wanted. John goes on to say in verse 12,

¹² “And when they had (look at this) eaten their fill (So they were full. I’m stuffed. Can’t eat another bite. It says,) he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost. ¹³ So they gathered them up (and look at this) and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.”

I can't remember the last time I ate barley bread. Does anybody? It doesn't sound good. But anyway now we have 12 baskets of it. So, if we're careful to look at this story and apply ourselves to it, thinking as we ought, that what we're seeing here is the character of God playing out in this story. Then we're going to say, okay, what can I learn about the character of God from what we've just read here? What do we find? What do we find about God's character? Well, I just put a couple of things together. Let me put it up on the screen.

- **Goodness/Compassion**
- **Provision**
- **Generosity**
- **Abundance**

First of all, we see God's goodness and compassion. God is not only good to take care of people, but He has compassion on those who are needy, and the

people were needy. We know from one of the other Gospel accounts that one of the disciples actually came to Jesus and said, we need to send these people away so they can go into the villages and find some food, otherwise, they're going to they're going to be so hungry they're going. But you know, it's possible to have compassion and not be able to do anything to meet the need.

But Jesus, we see in this story, met the need, and that tells you something about the character of God. He wants to meet needs. I believe that He is our Provider. We see that in the Scriptures over and over again. He brings provision for those who are trusting in Him, and we see generosity. He didn't basically say, well, we got these, five loaves of bread and these two fish, so just divide it among yourself here, and we'll see how far it goes.

There was this absolute generosity of giving and then the abundance that went along with that. Not only did the people eat, they ate till they were full. People, you're seeing the character of God here played out in this story. And we need to embrace it. And we need to say, yeah and not say things like, well, yeah but. No, no yeah but. This is the character of God that we are seeing in this passage.

And these are all the things that Jesus is showing us about God's heart toward those who trust in Him when they're facing impossible situations. Impossible. Lord, this is impossible for me. We need to get used to saying, but Lord, it's not impossible for you. Did Jesus need the five barley loaves and the two fish? No, He didn't. He didn't, but he used them just the same. And I believe that God wants, to see if we're willing to let go of what we have so that He can fill or use that for His abundance.

We can be like Andrew and just say, well, I don't have what it takes. I mean, here's some barley loaves and two fish. But that's not enough. It's not enough. Are you willing to give it? Are you willing to sacrifice it? Are you willing to hand it over so that God can multiply it and make it into something that will be a reflection of His heart and abundance?

And I want you to think beyond loaves of bread and fish here now. I want you to even think about your own gift or giftings that the Lord has given you or the desires of your heart. Are you willing to lay those down? You might look at a situation and say, I can't do that, that's impossible. Well, are you willing to give God what you do have so that He can make an abundance out of it?

I'm reminded of a story from the Old Testament where there was a famine in the land because Elijah called for that famine and that famine came into the land,

and he met up with a woman, the widow of Zarephath. You remember that story? Let me put it on the screen so we can read it together. Goes like this,

1 Kings 17:8-16

Then the word of the Lord came to him, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” And she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.’” And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

⁸ *Then the word of the Lord came to him, (that’s Elijah)* ⁹ *“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there.(In other words stay there for a while) Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.”* ¹⁰ *So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.”* ¹¹ *And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” (It goes on to say)* ¹² *And she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” (In other words, she’s saying this is the last we have to eat. We’ll probably just starve.)* ¹³ *And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. (Look at this statement though) But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. (He goes on to say)* ¹⁴ *For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.’”* ¹⁵ *And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days.* ¹⁶ *The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.*

Isn't that a great story? I love that story. But what's so cool about it is that God challenged that woman facing an impossible situation, to surrender what she had so that she might be given more. Surrender her little so that she might gain the abundance of the Lord. People, there's this principle there that you need to be very careful to take note of and to understand that there are times when God will do just that.

Notice the Elijah said, first, make me something to eat with what you think you have left. She thought that's all she had. So, this is a, she's asking, he's asking her to step out in faith, to take everything that you have for you and your son, and you make it for me. And of course, he's the representative of the Lord. In other words, give it to the Lord. This is giving it to the Lord's prophet. Same as giving it to the Lord.

You give it to God, you surrender it to God. And then just watch as the abundance of the Lord begins to flow in this situation. And I just love this because the principle is so beautiful. Give what you have to the Lord so that He might turn it into His abundance. Give your lack so that He might turn it into an abundance. This chapter ends in verse 14 and 15 saying that,

¹⁴ "When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" ¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, (It says) Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

Because Jesus was always conscious of the timing of the Lord, and He knew that his time had not yet come for anything related to that. So, He took charge of that. So, some good reminders today? Let's stand together. So, I guess here's the question. What do you have? You say, well, not much. Yeah, I'm with you. I'm with you.

Are you willing to give it to Him? Put it in His hands to see the work of Grace? Some of you guys are going through a test right now. A test of your faith and you're facing a situation and you don't know how you're going to deal with it, but I want you to know that the Lord already knows. He already has a plan. He has a plan. The question is, are you going to respond like Philip and bring it all down to dollars and cents, or are you going to respond like Andrew and make it an issue of we just don't have enough. There's not enough. We can't do this.

Or are you going to respond in faith and say, Lord, I can't do this, but you can. I can't resolve this, but you can. I give my lack to You, and I give my inability to resolve this or to make any change. I give it to You, and I ask You, Lord, to fill

my heart with faith and just to trust you and to wait on you to wait. You know how many times the Bible says, wait?

We need to hear that over and over and over again because we have such a propensity to run out ahead of God because we get nervous. What's going to happen? How's this all going to work out? Listen, God either loves you or He doesn't, and I know that He does. The question is, are you willing to rest in His love in His provision and say, Lord, I trust in you.

So, Father God, I want to pray for those right now who are going through a difficult trial. They're being tested, their faith is being tested. And I pray my father, God, that you would give them the faith, to lay that test in your hands and to confess freely to You, that what is impossible for them is not impossible for You.

That all things are possible with the Lord our God, and to trust You and to wait upon You and to know that you are good, and generous, and loving and kind. Thank you, Father, for the richness of your love. We commit our hearts to You in this new year to seek You with a whole heart to know You better. To hear Your voice. In Jesus' name we pray, and all God's people said together, amen.

If you need prayer, come on up front. God bless.