

Life Devotional: What's that you have in your hand?

Background: When 5,000 people turned up desperate to spend time with Jesus and hear his teachings, Jesus didn't want to turn anyone away. So when his followers came to him and said "It's time to pack up now so that everyone can get home and get some grub" (my paraphrase!) Jesus replied "You give them something to eat". They must have wondered what planet Jesus was on, and responded: "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

Scripture
Mark
6:30-44

It's interesting that Jesus didn't tell his followers off there and then, asking why they didn't have faith that he could feed these thousands of people. Instead Jesus said to them: "How many loaves do you have?... Go and see." He was asking what was available there and then for him to work with.

They came back having found someone's packed lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish (do you ever wonder whether this was their attempt to emphasise their point that there was *not* enough food around for all these hungry people?!) But Jesus could work with that little amount, and he directed people to sit down, gave thanks to God his father for the food and gave it out to the people. Not only did everyone have enough, but there was tons more left over than there had ever been in the first place! (Remind you of Psalm 23? 'You anoint my head with oil; my cup *overflows*').

As well as displaying God's awesome ability to provide and to do miracles, I think this story tells us something about what God can do when we bring to him what we have, however small. Nothing is too insignificant for God to bless and use and multiply.

Reflection: Alvin Slaughter's gospel song *That's when he steps in* has a great line in its chorus: "What's that you have in your hand? I can use it". These words come from Exodus 4 where God reassures Moses that he will be with him when he challenges Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people go. And God proves his power by turning Moses' staff (the thing in his hand) into a snake.

So what is in YOUR hand today? What are the passions, ideas, skills, gifts or character traits that God has given you? However insignificant you may think they are, like Moses' wooden staff or the packed lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fish in Mark 6, God can use them.

In today's world where X-Factor and celebrity dominate, we can think we need a super-special talent or gift to be significant in life or as a Christian. But God is interested in what we do with the small things as well as the big things. And because God made us, it's worth asking him if he wants to use some of our quirky personality traits or passions to bless others and show them God's love.

Take baking for example. I'd have never thought God could use it (other than at church bring-and-share lunches!), but recently God has used it to help me build a relationship with someone who needs a friend, and we bake together then do Bible study while the yummy goods are in the oven.



Questions:

1. What do you think God has placed in your hand at the moment?
2. How might God want to use that to bless people and help others come to know Jesus?
3. Does anything hold you back from using the gifts, talents or personality traits you have?
4. How can you encourage other people to use what's in their hand to serve God and bless others?

Personal Response:

Think about what God has placed in your hand in the past. Thank God for the times you've been able to use those things to serve him and bless others. If, looking back, there are times you've not used those things in a positive way, ask for God's forgiveness and his help to not repeat those same mistakes.

Group Response:

How can we as a group encourage each person to use what God has given them and grow in their gifts and abilities, using them to serve God and bless others?

Missional Devotions

We are looking for individual to prayerfully consider supporting the work we do by considering becoming part of our devotional writing team.

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