



**MULTIPLICATION OF
THE LOAVES AND FISH**
MARK 6:41



2 FISH AND 5 LOAVES
MATTHEW 14:17-18



THE WIDOW'S MITE
MARK 12:41-44



DON'T ASK FOR JUST A FEW

THE JAR OF OIL
2 KINGS 4

Why Focus on Have Nots?

Everyone has something to offer



Giving all

Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, *"How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"* This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, *"Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."* One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, *"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?"* (John 6:5-9).

"God does not begin by asking our ability, but more of our availability. When we prove our dependability, He will increase our capability"

(Neale A. Maxwell).

Moral of the Story: We will never know which little person God will use, and how. That means that we're never just lost in the crowd. We're never without anything to offer. We never know who the Lord will claim and use in ways that we can't predict, or haven't intended

This is a very well-known story. Five thousand people had come to hear Jesus speak, and Jesus asked Philip, “*Where shall we buy bread to feed all these men?*” Philip answered with the impossibility of the task – even if we could buy bread 200 denarii (Approximately US \$286.00 today) would not be enough. A denarii was a day’s wages, and 200 wouldn’t be enough to feed the multitude. Then came Andrew with a boy who had 5 loaves and 2 small fish. We know the end of the story – Jesus told everyone to sit down in rows, then he blessed the food, and broke the bread, and everyone was invited to take as much as they wanted. Not only were the 5,000 people fed, but there were 12 baskets of fragments taken up when they were finished.

Looking at what we don’t have

About this story – when anyone offers the little they have, Jesus can turn that little into more than enough. Ever wondered if anybody else there that day brought any food? After all the people knew they were going to listen to Jesus and would pack a ‘picnic sandwich’. We know that the boy had 5 loaves and 2 fish, but surely someone else had something as well. What about the disciples? Did any of them pack any food with them? If they did, why didn’t they offer it when the need arose? I think it is because they weren’t looking at what they had, they were focused on what they didn’t have. Seeing the large crowd, they saw their lack too, and they were lacking in a major way. The disciples weren’t even well equipped to meet a basic need like feeding the people. They hadn’t made any plans or provisions for such an event. They were caught short and found wanting. All they could see was what they didn’t have.

The Jar of Oil

We read about the widow in 2 Kings 4, whose sons were going to be taken into slavery to pay their debts, so she went to the prophet Elisha to ask his help. This is what he said: 2 Kings 4:2, and Elisha said to her, “*What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?*” And she said, “*Your maidservant has nothing in the house, except a jar of oil.*” Elisha said, “*What do you want me to do? You already have what you need. Think about what you have.*” The widow was told to get as many empty vessels as she could borrow, and go into her house, and shut the door, and pour the oil into the vessels. Enough oil came from that little jar of oil she had to fill every empty vessel she had collected, and then the oil stopped. She sold the oil and paid her debts. Once again, the widow was focusing on what she didn’t have instead of what she already has. She had that jar of oil the whole time, but she was so consumed by her lack and failure that she had never thought of using it before.

Focusing on What We Have

Each of one us is lacking in some way. None of us are yet perfect, and we all have weaknesses, limitations and problems. But we cannot be so focused on what we don’t have that we miss recognising, appreciating, and using what we do have.

**Stepping into
another person’s
shoe is coming out
of our comfort zone**



We Have Talents

Many times, in the scriptures people were told to use what little they had. Look at the parable of the men who were given talents, and had to later give account for how they had used them. They were told to use what they had been given (Matthew 25:14-30).

Weaknesses we CANNOT change

We might be very talented singers and musicians. All of us have different abilities, gifts and strengths. In the same way there are areas that we are not good at.

- We may not be a good singer, but we are good with accounts and administration. Other people are not so good with accounts.
- We might not be able to preach a fiery message. But can influence people to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. We might not be like St Paul in bringing thousands to repentance. But we can use our personalities and strengths that God has given us to reach out to one person at a time.
- Just because God has not chosen us to preach a message to a stadium full of people, we should not make the mistake of focusing on what we don't have. Rather, we should focus on what we do have.
- Some people have the gift of compassion. All Christians should have compassion, but some people have it in abundance. If we were all like that, who would be the one to point out people's shortcomings. If all were the eye, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12, who will be hearing? If all were hearing, who would be smelling?



Why do we get so focused on what we can't do, instead of seeing what we can do? God has given us our strengths and abilities, and if we are willing to place them in His hands we will see God do great things through us.

Weaknesses we CAN change

All of us have areas of weaknesses that we can change, that we can strengthen. Maybe it is a sin we are involved in, or a character flaw we have. Maybe we feel we ought to be doing better in some area of our life. We could make two mistakes in this area:

- Ignoring or overlooking the need for change (sweeping it under the rug)
- Focusing so much on our flaw that we become crippled by it (like being in cold storage)

This is what the Apostle Paul said about himself in 1 Timothy 1:15, *"The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners."*

- Paul the Apostle saw himself as the worst of sinners. He also saw that he had a *"thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated"* (2 Corinthians 12:7). That would knock Paul around, and remind him how worthless and lowly he really was.
- However, Paul didn't allow these things to stop him using the strengths that he did have. He didn't ignore his weaknesses – he was working on them with God's help – but he didn't focus on what he didn't have. Paul remembered that he had some great strength as well.
- In Acts 3, we see Peter and John going to pray when they came across the lame man at the gate called Beautiful. The lame man asked for a handout. Peter and John didn't start thinking about what they didn't have. Oh no, if only we had some money to give him. We are pretty hopeless because we don't even have a social welfare program to feed the needy. What kind of apostles are we if we are so lacking in this area. It just shows how unimportant and out of touch we are.
- No, Peter and John didn't focus on what they didn't have. They were not crippled by their weakness or their lack. Instead they immediately thought of their strength. Peter said, *"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."*

We are not less valuable in God's sight because there are some things that we are not good at. On the contrary, we are needed exactly where we are to complete the Body of Christ that the Church is supposed to be. If we have a weakness we can change, don't ignore it. Work with God as He corrects and transforms us, but do not be so consumed by it that we become crippled.

There are undoubtedly lots of things we are not able to do, but there are lots of things we can do – because we have the God-given abilities and character to do them. Just like the prophet said to the widow, ***“What have you got?” Use that.***



Knowing our gifts

All gifts are given by the same Spirit. Not all have the same gifts, but the Holy Spirit distributes these gifts and empower us to do God's will on earth. We do not have to be envious of another person's skills, talents, and gifts. We are all created uniquely, and our uniqueness gives glory to our Creator and allows us to meet the need of others.

Some ways to discover our God-given talents.

1) Try and test it out

There is always the element of “potential.” Many of us may not reach our full potential because we didn't try. Sportsmen were not born with strong muscles and lungs. They exercise regularly and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The same goes for us. We need to test the water and see where our talents lie. Think about this: How could Peter walk on water without actually stepping on it?

2) Honest self-evaluation

After trying things out, we need to evaluate ourselves honestly. Do we really have a gift in singing, writing, public speaking? Many of us are so good at convincing ourselves that we are gifted with a certain skill when actually, we are not. We've got to be honest. Romans 12:3 tells us that we should not think too highly of ourselves. We've got to recognise our limitations and not feel bad about it. Accepting our limitations free us from the burden of trying to compete with others, and frees us to do what God has designed us for. Simple chores alike. Don't need to be in the limelight all the time. The saints did many hidden and mundane work and became saints.

3) Accept constructive feedback

It would be good to approach honest and trustworthy people and ask for their feedback about us. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?”* Many of us evaluate ourselves poorly. We don't like to think that we're not good at something, or that we're not gifted in some area we want to be gifted in. As such, we might be tempted to lie to ourselves. Others, however, can see us better than we do. They can help us by giving us honest feedback regarding our character, our effectiveness in certain areas, and areas where we need improvements or areas where we're really not good at. Let us not be afraid of asking for feedback from others. It will help us improve and grow.



CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY CENTRE
Encountering God • Healing Hearts • Empowering Lives