



June 13, 2021

**Dear Students,**

How NOT to read the Bible!

(For background on what the Bible is and where it came from, [watch this video](#).)

Read the verses below (Mark 8:1-10) quickly—the important fact is that this is the second time Jesus has done what he’s about to do:

**1** During those days another large crowd gathered. They had nothing to eat. So Jesus called for his disciples to come to him. He said, **2** “I feel deep concern for these people. They have already been with me three days. They don’t have anything to eat. **3** If I send them away hungry, they will become too weak on their way home. Some of them have come from far away.”

**4** His disciples answered him. “There is nothing here,” they said. “Where can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

**5** “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

**6** He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and gave thanks to God. Then he broke them and gave them to his disciples. They passed the pieces of bread around to the people. **7** The disciples also had a few small fish. Jesus gave thanks for them too. He told the disciples to pass them around. **8** The people ate and were satisfied. After that, the disciples picked up seven baskets of leftover pieces. **9** About 4,000 people were there. After Jesus sent them away, **10** he got into a boat with his disciples. He went to the area of Dalmanutha.

- Ok, so now what happens in verses 11-13?

**11** The Pharisees came and began to ask Jesus questions. They wanted to test him. So they asked him for a sign from heaven. **12** He sighed deeply. He said, “Why do you people ask for a sign? What I’m about to tell you is true. No sign will be given to you.” **13** Then he left them. He got back into the boat and crossed to the other side of the lake.

Jesus just did something miraculous! For the second time—and after he had done all kinds of public healings and so on. The translators put that Jesus “sighed” or some

versions have “groaned” but probably what Jesus did here was make that noise you make when someone says something really stupid and you are frustrated—the “horse snorting” noise that Jesus sometimes does. You can’t blame the translators because there’s no good word for it in English—they can hardly say “Jesus blew a raspberry”, if you know what that is. So here’s the first clue on how NOT to read the Bible: The Pharisees don’t want Jesus to be God’s special messenger because that will mess things up for them. It’s not just that they don’t want to be proved wrong or lose power or have to change their lives. They are actually rightly afraid that there will be big political trouble with the Romans and bad things will happen. So if you really want something to be true, or not true, it’s hard to hear what the Bible is really saying. More on this later. Here’s the important part in verses 14-21:

**14** The disciples had forgotten to bring bread. They had only one loaf with them in the boat. **15** “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees. And watch out for the yeast of Herod.”

**16** They talked about this with each other. They said, “He must be saying this because we don’t have any bread.”

**17** Jesus knew what they were saying. So he asked them, “Why are you talking about having no bread? Why can’t you see or understand? Are you stubborn? **18** Do you have eyes and still don’t see? Do you have ears and still don’t hear? And don’t you remember? **19** Earlier I broke five loaves for the 5,000. How many baskets of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

**20** “Later I broke seven loaves for the 4,000. How many baskets of pieces did you pick up?”

“Seven,” they answered.

**21** He said to them, “Can’t you understand yet?”

Here’s the “Bible verse” they are trying to understand: “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” What happens here? The disciples just grab onto the word “yeast” and figure that Jesus must be talking about bread, and they are worried because they didn’t bring enough. Here’s another clue on how NOT to read the Bible. We know we are supposed to “apply” the Bible to our lives, so sometimes we are so caught up in what we are doing and trying to do that we are looking for something in the Bible to tell us what we ought to do RIGHT NOW instead of slowing down and asking ourselves “What is God trying to say to us?” If they just forgot about their own situation for a minute or two and just listened, the disciples would never have thought something so stupid. Mark never misses an opportunity to show how little the disciples understood at the time all this was going on.

But there’s another reason they don’t understand Jesus, and it makes him pretty frustrated—how can they be worried about bread when Jesus just showed them (twice!) that he can get them all the bread they need? If they really trusted Jesus, they wouldn’t

ever worry about how much food they had packed. Like the disciples, because we want to serve God and do the right thing, it's easy to think that it REALLY MATTERS whether we do exactly the right thing and we can get so focused on whether we DID IT WRONG that we can't hear God saying to us that he will take care of us even when we make mistakes.

So here's the RIGHT way to read the Bible: You have to be trusting God and remembering that he loves you and will work out his plans for you no matter what. *Then you can be quietly listening to what God is really saying to you.*

**Your assignment:** What DOES Jesus mean by "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod?" Hint: the Pharisees are their religious leaders and Herod is their political leader.

**Thought questions:** Why can't we just count on religious or political leaders to tell us what the Bible really means for us? How can we learn to hear what God is saying to us?

**Close in Prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, please help me not just read the words in the Bible but to really hear what your Spirit is saying in my heart. Amen."*