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Teaching Letter

Following Jesus' Pattern



Teaching Letter
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The Church's obligation in modern times is to present the Gospel to the entire world—a seemingly impossible task. In this Teaching Legacy Letter, taken from his booklet, Christ's Last Order, Derek Prince compares that task to Jesus miraculously feeding the multitudes. His point? We succeed only when and if we emulate our Lord, "Following Jesus' Pattern."

> And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. — Matthew 15:32–39

What can we glean from looking at the accounts of the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand?

Very simply, I want to take the challenge of feeding a multitude of ten thousand and/or eight thousand people, with virtually no food, as a pattern for us. In essence, it is a parallel to the challenge of presenting the gospel to a world of seven billion people.

An Impossible Task?

Clearly, we have to acknowledge that what Jesus asked the disciples to do was totally impossible. They had no natural ability or means to do what He asked of them. Yet, He required them to do it.

In mathematical terms, if I were to compare the impossibility of feeding ten thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes with the impossibility of presenting the gospel to the whole world today, I would have to say the first is the greater of the two impossibilities.

Whereas, in light of the world situation today, with modern means of communication and travel, along with the resources available to the church, it is not exactly

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impossible to present the gospel to the whole world. But it is certainly an immense assignment.

In this message, I want to make these two comparisons and apply some very simple lessons for our benefit. These lessons will relate to our task of presenting the gospel to the entire world—to every nation, to every creature, to the ends of the earth. From these two accounts of miraculous supply, I want to extract five simple principles.

1. Don't Avoid the Responsibility

First of all, when we read the account of the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew's gospel, it is very clear that the disciples did not want the responsibility of feeding that multitude.

However, let's take note of how Jesus regarded that responsibility. This is what Jesus said to His disciples: "You give them something to eat." I believe this same principle is exactly true for the church today. We may also want to escape the responsibility of presenting the gospel to the whole world. But Jesus says in effect, "It is your job. It is your responsibility. I have ordered you to do it. And I have never retracted the order."

2. Use the Natural and the Supernatural

Second, there are two essential components I want to point out as illustrations from the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand. Those miracles point to a very important relationship between two concepts which tend to be regarded by some Christians as almost opposites. The one is what I would call order or discipline. The other is God's supernatural power.

Some church groups tend to major on one or the other. There is the order/discipline group. Everybody lined up; everybody with their own leader; everybody accountable; everybody doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing; everybody in their proper place.

Now, that is not wrong. In fact, it is very clearly demonstrated in the feeding of the five thousand.

> Jesus said, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." (Luke 9:14b)

If He hadn't done that, some of the people would never have been fed. So, it was imperative that the disciples begin with order—getting everybody into a reasonably sized group that could be dealt with.

Let me point out here, however, that they could have gotten everybody neatly ordered in groups of fifty and left them hungry! What good would that have been? Order, by itself, was not sufficient. For that order to be effective, the supernatural grace and power of God had to be released. Supernatural power in the service of the Lord is not an option. It is a necessity.

Here is what I want to suggest as the second principle for us. To work a miracle, order and discipline must be balanced and complemented by the supernatural power of God.

3. Share the Blessing

The third principle from the miracle of feeding the multitudes is that the multiplication did not depend merely on Jesus. Rather, it depended on the disciples passing on what they received from Jesus. If the disciples had not passed on what they had received, the miracle would never have been consummated.

Once again, I believe the same is true with you and me in regard to the grace of God. It is not dependent only on Jesus. It originates with Jesus—but it has to be completed by our cooperation and activity.

4. Step into Abundance

The fourth principle I see in the miracle of these feedings is that multiplication continued until all the needs were met—and beyond.

Clearly, everybody was fed. But beyond that, after everybody was fed, they had a lot more left over. There was more at the end than at the beginning. That is no accident.

In these miracles, I believe Jesus is demonstrating that God's resources are limitless. He is never limited to just meeting the need, He always has abundance.

God always has more than enough. As I understand Scripture, He is always willing to make available to us more than enough.

5. Experience a Greater Surplus

The final point I want to extract from these miracles is this: the greater the need and the fewer the resources, the greater the surplus you will experience.

Here are the statistics. In the first miracle, the number of people to be fed was larger, yet the resources with which they started were smaller.

In the first miracle, they had twelve baskets of fragments. In the second miracle, they had seven baskets of fragments.

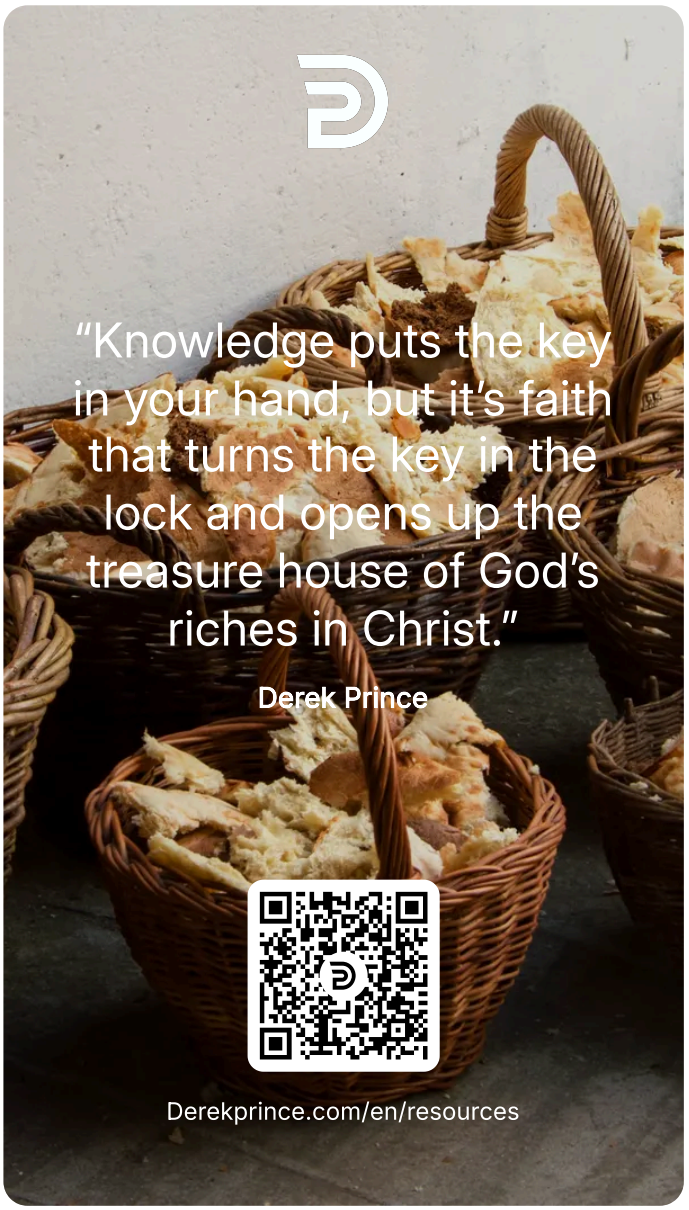
Why was Jesus so insistent [about picking up the fragments]? I am sure He was emphasizing this fifth principle from these miracles. Let's state it once again: The greater the need and the fewer the resources, the greater the surplus. God will always make sure we realize that there is no shortage with Him.

Asking for a Miracle

In view of the miraculous example Jesus has set for us, and His expectation for us to fulfill the enormous responsibility of spreading the Gospel to all the world, our only response is to pray. Let's conclude with the following simple prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, we want to obey Your command to spread the Gospel throughout the world. We know it will take a miracle, and we step by faith into Your miraculous answer for that challenge. Amen.

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