

What You Don't Have

John 6:5-9 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (6) And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. (7) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. (8) One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, (9) There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

This is a very well known story. Five thousand men 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 pennyworth would not be enough. A penny was a day's wages, and 200 of them wouldn't be enough to feed the multitude.

Then came Andrew with a lad 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 brake the bread, and everyone was invited to take as much as they wanted. Not only were the 5,000 men fed, but there were 12 baskets of fragments taken up when they were finished.

I have heard preaching about this story – how when just when person offers the little they have, then Jesus can turn that little into more than enough.

Did you ever wonder if anybody else there that day had any food? We know that the lad had 5 loaves and 2 fish, but surely someone else had something as well. What about the disciples? Did any of them have 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, the were focused on what they didn't have. They saw they were lacking, and they were lacking in a major way. The disciples weren't even well enough 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.

Many times in the scriptures people were told to use what 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.

Another event that comes to mind is the widow in **2 Kings 4**. There was the widow of a prophet 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 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but 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 woman was focusing on what she didn't have instead of what she did. 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.

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

1. WEAKNESS WE CANNOT CHANGE. I am actually a very talented singer and musician. It is just that I am trapped in this body. All of us have different abilities, gifts and strengths. In the same way there are areas that we are not good at.

I may not be a good singer, but I am good with figures and administration. Other people are not so good with figures. I can't preach a fiery message that will cause people to throw themselves on the altar, or run around the Church rejoicing. I can't preach a Conference message, or one that bring thousands to repentance. All I can do is preach the way I do. If I focus on what I can't do, then I would never preach at all, so I have decided that I will use the personality and strengths that God has given me to preach these small messages, and I believe that they have their place in God's kingdom, and that He will use them to accomplish something with eternal value. Just because God has not chosen me to preach a message full of revelation, or to

thousands of people, I will not make the mistake of focusing on what I don't have. I will instead focus on what I 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 sin. If all were the eye, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12, where were the hearing? If all were the hearing, where would be the 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.

2. WEAKNESS WE CAN CHANGE. All of us have areas of weakness 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.

I also think we can make two mistakes in this area –

- a. Ignoring or overlooking the need for change
- b. Focusing so much on our flaw that we become crippled by it

This is what the Apostle Paul said about himself

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

He saw himself as the worst ever sinner. He also said that he a "thorn in the flesh, a message of Satan" that would knock him around, and remind him how worthless and lowly he really was. However, he 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. He remembered that he had some great strengths as well.

In Acts 3, we see Peter and John going to prayer 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. We don't have anything that these other guys coming past here have.

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.

Acts 3:6 Then 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."

If you have a weakness you cannot change, recognize that you are what you are because God made you, and He has chosen the abilities you do have. You are not less valuable in His sight because there are some things that you are not good at. On the contrary, you are needed exactly the way you are to complete the body of Christ that the Church is supposed to be.

If you have a weakness you can change, don't ignore it. Work with God as He corrects and transforms you, but do not be so consumed by it that you become a cripple.

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