



## MOUNTAINS

# THE MOUNTAIN OF PRAYER AND MIGHTY WORKS

## MATTHEW 14:13-36

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### MAIN IDEA

Believers should follow the example of Jesus to refuel and find strength through time with the Father in prayer so that they can experience His mighty power at work.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.*

Have you ever had one of those days that never seemed to end? The kind that you just want to be over so you can go to bed and start over the next morning? We all have those kinds of days from time to time. Think about the longest day you have experienced lately. Now, think about how that day would have been different if when it was hard, crowds of people followed you and expected even more out of you.

- **What was one of your most recent “longest days”? What made it difficult?**
- **On these days are you more likely to seek the company of others or seek isolation? Why?**

**UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

> **Have someone in your group read Matthew 14:13-21.**

Jesus was having a very long, hard day where we pick up in Matthew 14:13. He had just learned of John the Baptist's death by beheading and pulled away to avoid Herod and deal with the loss of a powerful figure in His life. He was grieving and tired and pulled away to a desolate place for some alone time with the Father.

Although the place was desolate, the people still found Jesus. They were drawn to Him because of what they had seen and heard. Instead of withdrawing further or sending them away, Jesus did the opposite. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. He focused on what He could do for others instead of focusing on Himself.

Because Jesus had great compassion on the people that day, we get to read about one of the great miracles in Scripture. The disciples' faith was expanded as they witnessed Jesus do even greater things than He had to that point. The people received healing and hope. Feeding over 5,000 people with a kid's lunch is a mind-blowing miracle that began when our grief ridden, exhausted Savior went to be alone but was overrun with needy people.

- **When you are dealing with grief or exhaustion, what do you tend to do?**
- **How would you feel and react if you were trying to get alone and deal with things only to look up and see a crowd of people following you?**
- **How did Jesus respond to the crowd?**

- **What can we learn from Jesus's example that day?**
- **How does moving your focus from yourself out to others affect you when you are tired, sad, or grieving?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 14:22-26.

This long day wasn't over once the people were fed and satisfied. Jesus sent the disciples on ahead in the boat and went off for a few minutes alone on the mountain. Even though Jesus responded to the crowds initially, He also knew what He needed in order to keep ministering in His purpose.

- **What was Jesus's purpose in going to the mountain alone after feeding more than 5,000 people?**
- **What does this indicate about the importance of spending time with the Father for us?**

Time alone with the Father in prayer was key for Jesus and it is vital for us also. Although we sometimes need to look out from ourselves and help or minister to others, we also need to recognize the value of time with the Father in prayer. Just as Jesus had His alone time with God interrupted at first, we often have to deal with the same.

- **How easy or tough is it for you to get alone with God in prayer?**

- **What are some things you've found that help you set aside that time?**
- **How do you discern between divine interruptions and interruptions that need to be ignored?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 14:27-36.

While Jesus was praying, the disciples were in the boat, and the water became rough out in the middle of the sea. It could seem like Jesus was not concerned with His disciples but the opposite was true. Even though He was not with them physically, Jesus knew what was happening and this situation would play out to the great benefit of the disciples.

- **How do you think the disciples may have been feeling when the storm came up after Jesus specifically sent them off?**

Even though we go through things that are scary and hard, Jesus sees us and knows what we need. Consider how He came walking to the disciples on the water. He could have handled the situation however He wanted but He chose to help them in a way that would grow their faith and help them see Him for who He really was. This was crucial for all that would happen in and through the disciples. Sometimes we don't realize how the lessons we learn in a moment are preparing us for what is to come.

- **When you've been scared or struggling, how have you seen Jesus differently?**

- **How did this encounter with Jesus likely prepare the disciples for what was ahead?**
- **Looking back, what ways do you see that Jesus has prepared you for what you would later face?**

### APPLICATION

- **Make time alone with God your priority this week. Set aside a specific time to spend in prayer and fellowship with Him.**
- **Who do you need to have compassion for this week? Identify how you can minister to someone else in the name of Jesus and do it.**
- **What is causing fear or uncertainty in our lives? How can we see Jesus in this and expand our faith through trusting Him?**

### PRAY

Thank God for always being with you and knowing what you need regardless of circumstances. Commit to spending time with the Father and ask Him to expand your faith.

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**MATTHEW 14:13-36**

**14:15–17.** Loaves of bread and small fish were staple foods in Galilee. The loaves were the size of dinner rolls. John’s description of the fish (Gk “opsarion”) indicates that they were either dried or pickled (Jn 6:9). He also identified the loaves as made of barley, the food of the poor. He implied that the loaves and fish were small since they were sufficient for only one boy’s lunch.

**Notes:**

**14:18–21.** This is the only miracle of Jesus recorded by all four Gospels. A true miracle is clearly expressed by the words everyone ate and was satisfied. Normally, a few small loaves and fish divided among so many people would provide each person with only a very tiny crumb. However, everyone ate to satisfaction and the disciples collected in leftovers more food than was originally available. Collecting these baskets full of leftover pieces served as a powerful reminder of Jesus’s ability to provide abundance for His disciples (6:11, 25–33). John’s Gospel shows that many bystanders compared Jesus’s miracles to God’s provision of manna in the wilderness (Jn 6:22–33). The miracle also closely resembles a miracle of Elisha (2Kg 4:42–44). Although the miracle is referred to as the “Feeding of the Five Thousand,” the five thousand men, besides women and children might equal a total of fifteen thousand people. Thus Jesus’s miracle was far greater than that performed by Elisha.

**14:22–24.** The boat was already some distance from land. The Greek is literally “many stadia”—a stadia equaling about six hundred feet (see Jn 6:19). The Sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide at its widest point.

**14:25.** Very early in the morning is literally “during the fourth watch of the night.” The Romans divided the period from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. into four watches of three hours each. Thus the fourth watch lasted from 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.

**14:26.** The word ghost (Gk phantasma) was used in Greek literature to describe dream visions or spirit apparitions. In the OT a closely related term referred to a dream or vision in which one saw something that was not real (Is 28:7; Jb 20:8 [LXX]). Matthew’s usage may imply that the disciples thought their eyes were deceiving them. The language of the text does not imply that the Bible supports the belief that spirits of the dead roam the earth.

**Notes:**

**14:27.** The words it is I are literally “I am.” The statement is Jesus’s purposeful echo of OT texts like Ex 3:14 and identifies Him as Yahweh.

**14:28–33.** Truly you are the Son of God. Their awe of Jesus reached a new level as He exercised mastery over the created order—something God alone could do (Jb 9:8; Ps 77:19). The disciples’ confession of Jesus as Son of God is not surprising in light of close connections between this miracle and important OT parallels. The title “Son of God” often serves as a messianic title in the NT, but here it also implies Jesus’s deity. The disciples likely interpreted the miracle in light of Jb 9:8 (LXX) which states that the Lord walked on the sea as if it were dry land. Their worship of Jesus also confirmed their growing recognition of His divine nature.

**14:34.** Gennesaret was located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee about five miles south of Capernaum.

**14:35–36.** The people of Gennesaret appeared to be aware of the healing of the woman in Mt 9:20. This miracle occurred in nearby Capernaum and set a precedent for healing by touching the end of His robe.