

Get out of the Box, Believe the Impossible.

Time: 30 minutes

【Introduction】

- Connect the 9 dots using four straight lines without lifting the pencil from the paper. Hint: Get the big picture. Think outside of the box. Stuck? Find the solution below...
- COIN IN THE BOTTLE! If you were to put a coin into an empty bottle and then insert a cork into the neck, how could you remove the coin without taking out the cork or breaking the bottle? The answer is... Simply push the cork into the bottle and shake the coin out.

1. The Challenge (v.1-5)

6:1 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 6:2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. 6:3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 6:4 The Jewish Passover Feast was near. 6:5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

In chapter five we have learned that Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, and in his conversation he reveals his identity as God's equal, which attracts the Jews to accuse him. In defending himself, he mentions not only his personal testimony but also other testimonies. Five testimonies point to Jesus, they are God the Father, the Holy Scripture, the works, John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit and Moses. Jesus finally accused these Jews for not believing in him. In chapter six, we see yet other miraculous signs to point to Jesus being the son of God. In this chapter Jesus reveals even further about who he is and what he is coming to do. Now you would probably expect people will have more faith and able to treat Jesus the way it should be... but chapter six tells us a different story. People are still living inside their boxes.

2. The Boxes (Financial, Physical, Theological) (v.6-15)

^{6:6}He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. ^{6:7}Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" ^{6:8}Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ^{6:9}"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" ^{6:10}Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. ^{6:11}Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. ^{6:12}When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ^{6:13}So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. ^{6:14}After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ^{6:15}Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself." (John 6:1-15)

Financial

In verse 5, Jesus said to Philip, where shall we buy bread for them to eat? The bible says Jesus asked it only to test him, Jesus himself already knew what he was going to do. So why did Jesus ask Philip if he already decided what to do? I think Jesus wants to build up their faith. Just imagine after Jesus performs this miracle, how would he response? It was like how Jesus helps Peter. He told Peter ^{26:34}"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (Matthew 26:34) Later when Peter remembers, he repented. Now Philip, simply being realistic, says that eight month's wages won't be enough for one bite, perhaps they only have eight month's wages. But at least we know Philip is being realistic here. He is saying, even if there is somewhere to buy so much food, we don't have enough money anyway. In church you always have

people like this. They claim they are working for God, but every time they didn't consider God's will first, but consider our financial situation first.

Pastors are not any better. It is difficult not to think about money first. An elder from a small and remote church told me, their church was trying to find a pastor. In his searching process his faith actually was shattered the more he speaks to pastors to join them. You may be wondering, pastors supposed to be committed servants of Christ, when you speak to them more, shouldn't you feel more nearer to God? But the fact is when he invites these pastors to serve at his church, Four out of the first five questions are about money or working environment. Even one pastor said, your church is too far from my place. The elder can't stop wonder, what shall I do, shall I move the church to where you live?

Many times when someone heard that I am working in a church fulltime, you often will get some strange look from them. Often I hear people say, does church pay you? Is it enough? My dad used to be unhappy for be to become a fulltime pastor, he thinks that pastors don't earn much money and his future life will be jeopardized. My dad is not yet a Christian, but mind you those who are Christians often ask similar questions! It is so easy to rely on yourself for financial freedom. Thinking outside of the box financially means you rely on God for your daily providence. God doesn't want us to be lazy people who don't work for their own bread, but he doesn't want us to think our bread is based on our own effort but not his providence. Please remember this, it is God who gives and God who takes away. ^{1:21}and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 1:21) Some of us are quite wealthy, it is even more important not to take God's gift as granted.

Physical

Andrew seems to be a bit better than Philip, at least he hasn't thought about Financial need first. He brings out there is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. Andrew looks at the challenge physically, rather than financially. 6:9 "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" But the problem is, he also has his own box. He is unable to look beyond physical constraints. He said "how far will they go among so many?"

Well, in the hand of Jesus, the answer is, they can go on forever. In the previous chapters, we have learned Jesus came to give the living water and those who believe in him are born again. Jesus can take something small, and make them magnificent. He understands people's need and is able to catch those spiritual moments to transform people. Andrew doesn't seem to know full of Jesus' capabilities, otherwise the question will be, "Lord, please feed us". Andrew seems to come from a different angle than Phillip, but both men didn't seem to be fully relying on Jesus to solve the situation. Andrew mentions about the boy's bread and fish, and seem to be expecting something from Jesus. But we may still say they are still thinking inside the box. Remember the sign of turning water into wine. Mary turned to Jesus to ask for a solution, and the solution is more abundant than anyone can think of. In today's passage Jesus also has the power to transform, to make impossible things possible. When you look at Phillip and Andrew, who see the Financial and Physical constraints, you see one of us. The issue is not only they can't think out of the box, but they don't have the faith to jump outside of the box.

Yes, faith. Relying on Jesus is the only way to jump outside of the box. Trust all things are possible with Jesus is the way to get out of our boxes. The signs are there to point to Jesus. People who are inside the box believe only the miracles. People who are outside the boxes will look beyond miracles and see who Jesus really is. May God help us, to have another break through. I am not sure what is

bothering you. It could be family relationships, friendship, direction, instability, or anything, but God knows. If God can feed 5000 men, he can feed you. The way to get out of your current disastrous situation, is to think outside of the box, to trust Jesus rather than your own personal ability. Faith is God's desire way for us to experience his blessings.

Theological

Those who experienced this miracle, you think they should have got outside of the box. But in fact they jump from one box into another box, both boxes are not what God's intended for them. This time their box is their wrong theology. Because Jesus has the power to perform miracles. They believe Jesus is the one who was prophesized by Moses to come and save them. Moses has said 「^{18:15}The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.」 (Deuteronomy 18:15) That is not wrong, but the form of this salvation is wrong. Moses has take Israelites out of Egypt, and now they are waiting for someone to deliver them from the rule of Roman government. They have a presupposition that because Jesus can perform miracles like Moses, therefore Jesus is the one to deliver them politically. They want to make Jesus the king, but Jesus withdraws from the mountain, because that was not what Jesus comes to do. Jesus was not coming to rescue them from the Roman government, but to rescue them from their sin. Not to temporarily rescue them but to rescue them permanently. He is not coming to build an army to fight the Roman government, but to be crucified as their king on the cross. People at the time couldn't understand why God has to die on the cross, most people understand the theological significance afterwards. Similarly, even now, we have the fuller understanding of the cross, but we still are confined within our own boxes.

3. Get out of the Box, Believe the Impossible

Believe the impossible

Can't believe, but what about the advance of science?

After Jesus fed these five thousand men, actually, it is more than five thousand people if we count women and children. Perhaps it is more than 12 thousand. It was truly a miracle. But to us, it still sounds impossible. Even now I find it hard for myself to imagine how this can happen. Does the bread multiple when you pass it? Or it multiply first before they receive it? I myself find it is so hard to believe because of the boxes we are in. Yes feeding of the five thousand seems impossible in our mind, but it is impossible for people 100 years back to talk to someone overseas with a phone, let alone a mobile phone. It doesn't make sense for them to understand who someone can live inside a TV box. It doesn't make sense how GPS can direct you to where you want to go. All these don't make sense to people 100 years ago, therefore, why couldn't we trust that feeding of the five thousand actually happened? Why do we have to be limited by our own box?

Let the bible decide what it means to be out of box

When you get out of the box, expect incredible things to happen, but be careful that your expectations of God aren't so narrow that you don't see it. A speaker was addressing a large group, when he took a large piece of paper and made a black dot in the center of it with a marking pen. Then he held the paper up before the group and asked them what they saw. One person quickly replied, "I see a black mark." "Right," he replied. "What else do you see?" Complete silence prevailed. "Don't you see anything else?" he asked. A chorus of noes came from the audience. "I'm really surprised," the speaker commented. "You have completely overlooked the most important thing of all—the sheet of paper." But don't concentrate so narrowly on the black dot that you overlook the piece of paper. God can and will surprise you in the way he brings incredible blessings into your life.

Thinking outside of the box does not mean you imagine the wildest thing possible, but you let God's word and God's Holy Spirit determine what is possible and what is not. We live with our experiences, but these experiences can be deceiving, it may blind us, to see what God intends for us to do.

We need to let God decide what is the box we need to get out, not ourselves. When our understanding of God is shaped by merely our experiences,

I had a nice chat with David on Friday night after I drove him home. He said when he went to US someone challenged him to read the bible more. David learned that it is possible to see a fake Jesus and yet you bow down to worship him. He mentioned that there is a guy saw who Jesus but it wasn't really Jesus, because the eyes are not compassionate, and the hands do not have the scars. But I think perhaps the devil may pretend to be like Jesus, perhaps even with compassionate eyes and scarred hands. ^{11:13}For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ^{11:14}And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ^{11:15}It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) But David's conclusion is that he needs to read the bible in order to know whether the experiences are true. Now he has finished the NT. I thank God for it, because it is really through the bible we can get out of our boxes, and believe the impossible.

Lunch time I was teaching Adult's Sunday school. One thing I ask people to do is not letting your own experiences affecting too much the way you read the bible, try to let the flow of text decide what it means.

Bible Study and 1-1

Bible studies and 1-1 sessions are there to help us think outside of the box. Often in these meetings people can challenge each other's thoughts.

Conclusion

Can hippies become Christians? Yes. Can hippies attend bible colleges as hippies? Yes. I met two hippies in the bible college who wants to tell the gospel to hippies.

Can you pray for others, even for those in distant countries and make a difference? Yes you can.

Can someone pray to preach to 100,000? Yes, you can. Whether God granted you that wish is another story, but you can pray.

This season our theme is to Equipping for Ministry. May I encourage you to think outside of the box. Pastor Brian Tung shared with me that his church is trying to start a new ministry, a monthly promotion event at the round pole near the station, near Lemon Grove. He said they have started to use food as an attraction by cooking sausage and have some deeper conversation with people. I thought of Phillip, who can solve Rubik's cube very quickly. Well, if we put them together, you may have Phillip playing Rubik's cube to attract people to understand his faith. Why not? A lot of things you know can really be used by God for his great purpose. I never thought about restarting the guitar class, because I haven't really played guitar for several years. But God can still use what you have learned to benefit his kingdom. Now in our guitar class there are certainly people who have not believed in Jesus, and I am hoping to explain who Jesus is to them. Think my friend, think outside of the box. If Jesus can feed so many people with 5 bread and 2 fish, when you place your life in God's hands, expect incredible things to happen. God can really surprise you and bring incredible blessings into your life. You see, when Jesus was born nobody will expect someone like him can be the savior of the world. But as we read the gospel of John, his power and authority are more fully revealed. He can still perform miracles today, and he can make your life a life of blessing, not only to you and your family but to many more, even beyond you can imagine. The boy who left home that day with his lunch box will not realize how Jesus can use what he have to feed so many people. You will never realize how God can make your little talent to be used for his kingdom. Think, think outside of the box. Let us not be confined by our financial, physical or wrong theological concern, but trust, trust Jesus who have the power to transform.

We have people who can dance, who can do videos, who have music talents, who can cook, who can welcome, who can do child care, who can entertain, who can solve Rubix cubes. the list is unending. God can really make great things happening, but can you think? Think outside the box, believe the impossible, trust God's power, and let him do the work. With God, all things are possible.