

Compassion Fatigue

As you gather together to hear and apply God's Word, start by sharing how you were influenced by the previous study since your group last met. Use the following questions for review.

D Debrief & Interpret

- How did you apply the previous Scripture study?
- What did you learn about God as you applied the Word? What did you learn about yourself?

H Hear the Word

Earlier in Mark 6, we learn that Jesus had sent his disciples in pairs on "missions trips." On those trips, they "preached that people should repent...drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them" (v.12-13). As v.30 says below, they came back at the end of their trips and reported what had happened. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine how they're feeling as you read this story.

[Read Mark 6:30-44:](#)

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. ³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him.

"This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

³⁷ But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

³⁸ "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.



Discuss:

- How do you think the disciples were feeling as they gathered around Jesus in v.30-32? What do you imagine their conversation was like?
- When they landed on the other side of the lake, how do you think the disciples felt when they saw the crowd and Jesus' reactions (v.33-34)? What do you notice about how that impacted them in the rest of the narrative?
- Why do you think Jesus involved these disciples in the miracle of loaves and fish (v.37-41)? In what ways does Jesus meet the disciples' needs even as they struggled with "compassion fatigue" in this story?

R Respond Actively

Summary: When we are struggling with "compassion fatigue," we may feel like we are providing care for others at our own expense. But in this story, we discover that Jesus can meet ALL of our needs. He cared for the disciples as much as he cared for the crowd. He can do the same for us too – Jesus cares for us as much as he cares for our patients. We can receive his gracious compassion for us when we are struggling with compassion for others.

As you end your study, choose one or both of the options below to apply the Scripture to your life this week.

- *Internal:* Where are you experiencing compassion fatigue in your life currently? This could be in clinicals, at work, at home, or with friends. How do you need Jesus to care for your personal needs in this season? Take a moment in silence to pray and ask Jesus to meet both your needs and the needs of those around you. Then ask him to fill you anew with his compassion.
- *External:* Like the disciples, when we attempt to minister and provide care out of our own strength, our human compassion runs out and we grow increasingly fatigued and weary. But Jesus showed the disciples a new approach to ministry – if they relied on him, he is enough to provide for their needs as well. In what ways are you experiencing compassion fatigue in your clinical and work situations? Or perhaps ministry fatigue in your NCF leadership? Develop simple habits this week to help you stay connected to Jesus – starting your day with prayer, listening to Scripture on your commute, etc. – trusting that he is enough not just for everyone around you, but for you as well.