

A summary of John 6:16-31.

- 1. Do we seek the signs (or miracles) or do we seek the Lord Himself?** First the disciples are tested by the Lord. They were the ones who distributed the loaves and the fish, and gathered up the leftovers. Yet they did not “understand the loaves because their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:52). They did not know yet know Jesus as God, the Son of God, the One who was in control of everything. They had witnessed the miracle, but did not see the One who was over all their environment, the author of every provision, and the arranger of every circumstance. They knew the works that Jesus was accomplishing, according to the second kind of testimony of the Son of God (the second of four) in John 5:32-39. Therefore, they needed to be tested. Jesus sent them to the other side. Often, the Lord will speak to us to put us in a situation where there will be a storm or strong waves. At that moment, do we trust the Christ who lives in us, or do we try to depend on ourselves to row ourselves out of our environment (John 6:19)? The negative situations are useful and sovereignly used by the Lord, but we should never pray for them! They (the strong wind) will come if we love the Lord (John 6:18)! The more we love the Lord, the more the storms! The more we love the Lord, the more Satan will be roused to attack us. Satan (represented by the fallen angels) are in the air (Ephesians 6:12), and the demons are in the water (Matthew 12:43). The Lord desires to perfect us in order that we would turn to Him, that we would realize that He loves us, that He will protect us, even when we are afraid. Eventually, when the Lord revealed Himself to them, the disciples acknowledged and worshipped Him as the Son of God (Matthew 14:33).
- 2. We must see God behind the very signs that He created** (John 6:26). The crowd that was fed by Jesus came looking for Jesus. This is very healthy. Yet they were seeking Jesus not because of the signs but because they were filled with food. We should realize that the word “signs” is a very positive word here because the Lord contrast it with being filled with food. It does not just mean “miracles” though of course they were miracles. They refer to the act, but much more to the person behind the act. If we only look for the act and the result (our satisfaction), then we have missed the doer (the Lord Himself) and His purpose. We need to grow from seeking the material blessings of the Lord, to seeking the spiritual blessings of the Lord, to seeking the Lord Himself. Most of us are looking for the material blessings. For example, we may pray to the Lord for a safe flight before our plane takes off, or pray to the Lord before we take a test, asking Him to be with us and help us to get a good grade. This is a very sweet prayer, but we may be limited to such kinds of prayers. On a higher level, we may seek spiritual blessings. For example, we may serve children well, and we may even have a gift for singing or sharing the word with the children. However, this kind of blessing may replace the Lord Himself. We therefore need to pray to the Lord in the following way, “Lord, in my church life, I need to seek You to gain You only. Yes, I will be weak to seek your protection, and even to seek your spiritual blessings, but do grant me Your mercy to gain You a little bit more each day.”
- 3. What is our level of faith?** In Matthew 14:26-31, during the storm, Peter recognized Jesus and responded to Him, asking Him to command him to come to Him if it was indeed Him. According to the level of faith that he had, he ventured out on the water and began to walk. How many of us would do that? Often, we hear the Lord through the brothers and sisters and we recognize the Lord. Yet our faith is very small, and our constitution of Christ is so little. As soon as we look up and see the wind and the waves raging in our lives, we lose sight of the Lord. It is almost as if the Lord was never with us. This is an ongoing process of growth. We need to exercise every day to hear the word of God. The more we exercise, the more we will realize how little faith we actually have, and how much more we need to grow. This realization is very healthy. This will cause us to be more thirsty for the word of God. As soon as we think that we have attained, or that our faith is at an adequate level, we become complacent and lose the desire to grow. Therefore, a good prayer is, “Lord, may You be gracious to me to grant me a pure heart to try to trust You and know You a little bit more. I know that my faith is so small, but let me grow a little bit so You can increase my faith by that much.”

4. **The work of God is to believe the word of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament** (John 6:27-31). The word of God is the food in the Old Testament (according to verse 31 where it is the written word) that endures unto eternal life. The work of God is related to His word, which is just Himself (John 1:1). The work of God is not the services that we perform in the church life (e.g. arranging the chairs, the music, children's service, preparing the love feast) but rather the word. We need to believe into God's word, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament (the entire Bible). On the other hand, we may come to the word, but if we do not know the word, we will not know God. If we understand the word, we will believe into God. We will realize that He controls everything, even all the food that we eat and all the necessities of life. Even if we only believe one or two words of the Bible, we are truly doing the works of God.
5. **Do we take Jesus into our boat?** (John 6:21). This was another miracle! As soon as the disciples took Jesus into the boat, the boat was immediately transported to the land to which they were going. When we are troubled or in distress, we usually focus on the trouble at hand and become consumed by it, not knowing that the Lord is in control. When we take the Lord into our boat, we let go of our ability to solve our problems, and allow Him to rule. Isaiah 43:20 says that He will give water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to His chosen people.
6. **Sometimes the Lord means to pass by us** (Mark 6:48). Mark, amongst the three gospel writers who record this story (the other two being Matthew and John) is the only gospel writer who records this small yet significant detail. Paradoxically, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea, but then meant to pass by them. How can He come to us yet intend to pass us by? Seemingly, Jesus deliberately intended to withdraw His presence from His disciples. This shows that the Lord wants to train us to truly recognize Him. When the disciples saw Him, they thought He was a ghost. When we trust in our own ability, for example, in finding a job or getting a promotion, we may think that the Lord has blessed us because of our intelligence or diligence. Indeed, the Lord has blessed us (a material blessing), but because we do not exalt Him as God, we do not know Him. At the most, He is like a ghost to us. We think we know Him but He is not the Son of God who is the author and the goal of this blessing. Therefore, the Lord will deliberately "distance" Himself from us until we arrive at the point where we are desperate and cry out to Him in fear and distress. At that time, He will reveal Himself to us as the great "I am" (Mark 6:50). It is in these kinds of situations that we are forced to grow (we may call this self-growth) in the sense that we are pushed to find the Lord for ourselves. For example, we may be faced with a challenge to preach the gospel to someone who we feel is not open and we know will reject us. At this point, all our natural ability and even knowledge of the Bible may not work. Nothing works. All our efforts and plans, that we thought were the Lord, are like ghosts, intangible and ephemeral, ready to disappear. The Lord, in a sense, has passed us by. We are then forced to cry out to the Lord and depend on Him. We may even tell the Lord, "Lord, nothing I can say will help this person. You must save Him, and You alone." At that moment, the Lord reveals Himself to us as the "I am," the Son of God who can meet every need.
7. **The seal of God may refer to the Bible** (John 6:27). Some Bible commentators interpret the latter part of this verse as the Father using the Bible (the written word of God) to testify that Jesus is indeed His beloved Son. Therefore, it is not just at Jesus' baptism that the Father testified concerning the Son, but the whole Bible is the Father's testimony of His Son. If the Bible is the seal of God, how much we need to pay attention to it. If the Bible, as the word of God, is the Son of God Himself, then how much we need to pay attention to the Son Himself and listen to Him (Hebrews 1:1-2). All of God's speaking in the Old Testament was through the prophets and centered on the Son, and all His speaking in the New Testament is in His Son. When we read the Bible, we come to the Son. When the Bible speaks to us today, it is actually the Son speaking to us. The Bible and the Son are one.