

July 12, 2015 Mark 8:1-21

O. Intro:

*In 2011 I spoke on an increased focus to the "left of the Bang?"

*A "Bang" is difficult life situation...trauma, etc.

*Helping someone to prepare "Left of the Bang" is better than the help to the "right of the bang."

*This is central idea that drives the modern "resiliency" movement.

*It is the idea that prevention is always better than treatment.

*Of course this true, if it possible.

*There is no one size fits all approach for treatment or for prevention.

*What helps people left and right of the Bang often depends on the person...with one exception.

*The lone exception is... the power of relationships.

*In both prevention and treatment (resiliency and recovery)...a factor that applies to everyone is that **relationships matter most.**

*This is great news for some and bad news for others.

*Great news...you don't have to become self-sufficiently resilient.

*Bad news...you cannot become self-sufficiently resilient.

*We will always need the help of others...on either side of the "bang"

Mark 8:1 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

*What stands out about this group of people is they were with him three days, listening to him teach...and they seemed to be so truly hungry for truth that they were willing to go hungry for food.

*Perhaps they had heard about the way he had fed the other large group and thought he would take care of them.

*Either way...it is impressive that they stayed with him so long, and unlike the other group Jesus fed, these folks were some distance from a food supply.

*Jesus poses the dilemma to his disciples...probing to see if their perception of what is real and true had grown.

4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

*He gets his answer...they had not grown much.

*"Uh, there's no food out here Jesus...we have no idea how to take care of these folks."

*It's unlikely that the fellas forgot about the last big feeding...it's not something you would easily forget.

*More likely they didn't assume Jesus would feed this bunch with a miracle.

*They no doubt were "used" to seeing Jesus do amazing things but they were also used to lots of times of normal life with Jesus.

*They walked everywhere they went (no magic carpets), normally they bought or caught and cooked their own food, probably had plenty aches and pains, caught colds, got blisters.

*I would imagine they often wondered why Jesus didn't make life easier for them...since he could.

*Imagine Peter, laying there one night..."Man my back hurts...I had to catch some fish, cut some wood, cook for the guys...Jesus could easily have "made dinner" without all my work..."

*"Plus, I mentioned my back hurts before bed...he did nothing...raised the dead, casts out demons...how much effort would it be to heal a sore back?...I don't get this guy."

*No they had not merely forgotten...a bad memory is not automatically a lack of faith.

*Jesus will say of them that they were "hard-hearted" or "dull."

*For us a "hard-heart" indicates "mean or uncaring."

*The phrase used in Mark indicates something else..."dullness" is a better word...and some translations use it rather than hard heart.

*It's a hard-heart that does not allow truth to penetrate it...therefore...its unable to "see and hear and respond to the world as it really is."

*It is "dull"

*Have you ever been under general anesthesia? If so, you understand, dullness.

*I have several times...including last February, when I had my wisdom teeth taken out.

-Not fun at any age, but esp 56.

*I remember waking up and staring at something on the wall, actually two something's on the wall...probably looked like a cow staring blankly...mouth drooping open.

*The nurse saw me staring in my dullness and said "Tell me when you see just one of those."

*Eventually, the dullness wore off and what she said made sense..."I see one now" I said.

*She said, "ok" it was time for you to go, I was back in the real world...seeing it as it is.

*This is the idea of dullness...an inability to see and respond to the world as it really is.

5 “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. 6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. 7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. 8 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 9 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, 10 he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

*These baskets were not like "picnic baskets" they were big enough for a guy like Paul to get in (he was lowered over a wall in one in a emergency escape.)

*So there were lots of leftovers...abundant provision...not just enough but plenty.

*Now the story shifts venues...

11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.”

*This next brief narrative has the religious leaders demanding a "sign" from heaven.

*Their motives are seen in the word "test" which also means to "tempt" or "trap"

*They wanted an outward, compelling proof of Jesus' divine authority.

*They were used to miracle workers...plenty were around at that time...just like today.

*Real or fake...they were many making plenty of truth claims.

*This bunch wanted Jesus to "prove himself."

*Jesus "sighed deeply"...word used only here in the NT.

-Demonstrates Jesus' grief and disappointment over their response.

*They had been given unique privilege and opportunity and yet they responded with hard hearts (dull hearts)

*It was clear to anyone with a heart that was open to God...who Jesus was.

*But these guys didn't want the truth...they were committed to living in the fog of their own folly.

*So...Nope, no sign for you guys...partly because there was nothing Jesus could do externally that would change the willful internal hardness of these folks.

*He saw that they were under the general anesthesia of their own pride and folly...they would not have the capacity to make sense of anything he did.

*This dullness...is their own willful choice...this anesthesia is not being forced on them...they are eagerly partaking in it.

13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. 14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." 16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

*Where is all the bread they had collected? This is probably not immediately after the feeding...no telling how long after.

*Plus, it's likely they distributed the leftovers among the people, rather than hoarding them for themselves.

*Here they are crossing the lake, again, and they realize they had one loaf...not enough for all of them.

*I imagine they began to blame one another(who was supposed to bring supplies?), or complain(oh brother, we are going to be hungry again...one loaf...because Andrew didn't bring bread").

*Jesus interjected..."**Be careful of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod.**"

*Both the Pharisees and Herod had hard hearts...they demanded signs but didn't want truth.

*Yeast in the NT represents an unseen but pervasive influence...often used to describe evil but not always.

*In bread dough you don't see it, but it makes the bread rise...an invisible reality with visible results.

*Let's continue our analogy...the yeast is the general anesthesia...the drug these folks take...that makes them see the world as it is not...and fail to respond to a world that really is.

*The thoughts that shape lives are the yeast...unseen(thoughts/beliefs), pervasive, powerful...life shaping.

*They had been drugged by their own foolish thinking...it put them in a fog.

*He is saying...don't allow yourself to be continually captured by these wrong thought patterns...don't take the drug of the prevailing cultural narratives that surround you.

*This ties in well with last week...

***1Tim. 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.**

*Hypocritical liars is not a slander but a descriptor...a technical term for a person who is not merely mistaken but is willfully wrong...because their conscience is scarred.

*They believe that what they think...is something they have come up with themselves...they are enamored by their own brilliance.

*However, these brilliant ideas are actually incepted in their minds by demons.

*They are living in fog of folly...ideas they believe are theirs and quite brilliant...but they are demonic in origin and not at all brilliant.

*The disciples still live in a similar fog...so they began their own brilliant discussion among themselves..."I think he is rebuking us for forgetting the bread."

*"He's trying to teach you to be more responsible Andrew."

*"Well, I think is trying to teach you to not be so demanding...you told me to get the bread, I told you I was too busy."

*This reminds of me of numerous talk shows and coffee conversations where people sit around and in the fog of their own folly they wax eloquent on what is really going in the world.

*"What does this or that mean?"

*But their conclusions are without insight and revelation from God...so they will always get it wrong.

17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened(DULL)?"

*Jesus says, "Uh, guys...I'm right here, I can hear you over there...were in a boat on a lake, your whispers carry quite well."

"Why in the world are you still talking about bread?"

*Reminds me of "Drax" in Guardians of the Galaxy.

*Another character says of him "He is completely literal, metaphors go over his head."

*He responds with "Nothing goes over my head, my reflexes are too fast, I would catch it."

*Jesus had to feel he was dealing with this same kind of literal denseness.

*Their dullness made them unable to understand truth.

18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve,"

they replied. 20 “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” 21 He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

*He responds with yet another play on words...he doesn't give up on helping these guys learn to see more the world as it is...more than a world of fish and boats and bread.

*"You have eyes and ears...but you really don't see or hear."

*"Think about my abundant provision...what do you think that was about? Think about all that you have seen and heard...try to escape the gravitational pull of the thoughts that have kept you dull."

*Some believe there is a hidden meaning here...the 12 basketfuls (among the Jewish crowd) represented his provision for Israel(12 tribes) and the 7 here (among a non-Jewish crowd) represent his provision for the Gentiles (7 was a number of completeness or perfection).

*Could be, I don't know...but if so it doesn't seem clear enough to be the major point.

*I think the major point of Mark devoting large amounts of space (space that is very limited) to two very similar miracles is to demonstrate the ongoing dullness of these guys.

*It took repetition for them to "get it"

*Even then...it would take even more for them to "truly get it."

*It would take "death, resurrection, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit."...the gospel...for them to get it.

*They were easily diverted by their own physical needs so they missed the point the Lord was making.

*His point...

Matt. 6:33 But seek first my kingdom and my righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life.

*The seekers who made up the crowd were willing to neglect their own physical needs to pursue Jesus...and they found that Jesus met **all** their needs abundantly.

*While his own disciples were, were once again, missing the point.

*The point that "Jesus is all they need...he will always provide all they need...not always what they want."

*Until that is, they learned to want him...

*They were not "seeing or hearing" this yet because their hearts were dull.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Relationships are critical to life clarity.

*When we consider the little platoon of 13...Jesus and his 12.

*On the one hand we can think...this relationship stuff doesn't work...the 12 didn't keep each other straight...they often seemed to follow one another into folly.

*On the other hand they were a group of 13 not 12. Jesus was one of them. He was walking with him. He was the one who kept pointing them back to reality.

*You say..."He doesn't count...Jesus was, well Jesus."

*Sure he counts...he was a part of their little community...he was the one who kept calling them to see life as it is...he was literally, physically with them.

*Post resurrection, the guys took this same role in each other's lives...they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able help one another stay in line with reality.

*We now, have this role in each other's lives.

*Not to play the part of "Jr Holy Spirit" telling people what to do.

*But to "be filled with the Holy Spirit" through a surrendered life and then...in committed relationships with one another help each other stay above the fog and see and respond to the world in the clear.

*The Holy Spirit is the "paraclete"...the encourager.

*We are to "paracaleo" each other...encourage one another...in the faith.

2Cor. 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

*This is really good news...we don't have to be, in fact we are unable to be "resilient" all by ourselves.

*The idea that we can or should be individually resilient is an idea that keeps us perpetually...non-resilient.

*It keeps us in the fog of unreality...unable to see and respond to the world as it is.

"Why do I get off track in my mind and choices so easily?"

"Why can't I stay on track without having to rely on others?"

"I must become self-sufficient and able to make it without others in order to be strong...I don't want to need others."

*I admit this line of thinking is a part of my own testimony in past.

- *I launched out on my own at various times as a young man...trying to prove myself strong and that I could rely on Jesus alone.
- *"Jesus alone" didn't mean..."Jesus alone is my savior"
- *It meant, I believed I could, all by myself..."walk faithfully with Jesus"
- *This is not biblical...its not real in any endeavor.
- *I learned a lot and did find him faithful during times when there were no other options for community.
- *But the thinking itself...was foolish.
- *Being alone in battle is not resilient is it dumb...its called "divide and conquer"...and we are willing participants in our own defeat.
- *Recently a friend who had a moral failure told me..."It was a series of wrong choices that by themselves seemed small and harmless, but when stacked together built a bridge to hell. It all starts with exactly what you said...**I did not have a healthy understanding and fear of my capacity for failure.**"
- *A healthy understanding and fear of my capacity for failure.
- *This healthy understanding is most directly related to my choice to be visible and accountable to other people in my life.
- *By ourselves, living in our own minds...we will drift into the fog.
- *God uses others who are walking with him to keep us in the clear...out of the fog of foolish thinking and living.
- *Yes, by all means "have a personal relationship with Jesus."
- *But realize that "personal relationship with Jesus includes rather than excludes others."
- *It's more correctly, have a community-based personal relationship with Jesus.
- *A key part of that relationship with Jesus is going to be fleshed out in relationship with the body of Christ...the church..
- *You will not do well long term all by yourself...I cannot oversell this point...it is beyond dispute.
- *Once again its why our small groups are not primarily "Bible study" but "Living lives together in light of the truth of the Bible."
- ***One is a mere factual approach to God's word...the other is an actual approach.**
- *Actualizing the truth in ways that impact our daily lives.

2. Patience and perspective are a part of those relationships

*Do you get frustrated with the spiritual progress or lack of, in your own life or the lives of those you lead or have influence in?

*Jesus, "The" Jesus...spent three years with his dull boys...and you can see how it went most of the time.

*In addition to 11 staying dull for a long time, one tubed out altogether.

*That fact is both encouraging and discouraging at the same time.

*Encouraging that we are in good company...Jesus...took time to help his guys get it.

*Discouraging in that we can wonder...will we ever really change, will the people we love and lead ever change.

*But the final word is encouragement...that same good company...Jesus, did not give up and did not falter in his life's work.

***Heb. 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

*Part of that "joy set before him" was to see his guys...make it.

*His dull boys became bright lights of the faith...they did eventually get it.

***A word of perspective on what I would call the "Surviving/Thriving" scale**

*Imagine a scale or spectrum of human life...one end is total destruction the other is...perfection.

*We are somewhere on the spectrum...the imaginary middle line represents a point of clear division.

*To the right of that line is survival and the farther right you move the more you are into a life of thriving.

*To the left of that line...we are no longer surviving...things are falling apart...and the farther to the left you move the more things fall apart.

*We tend to look at life as I'm either in this room or that room...rather than as points on a continuum.

*I'm either great or lousy...thriving or not surviving.

*And we measure our progress or that of others or the success of our efforts based on how we see life in those simplistic categories.

*"This relationship, effort, QT, church, small group whatever is not working...I have not moved across the line to thriving, I am not experiencing daily bliss...I still struggle."

*When the reality is...very often the difference between not surviving and surviving is 1 degree of separation.

*And when a person is surviving...they are positioned to move to the right of the line towards a life of thriving at different levels.

*This is were what I call "Resiliency and the "Wall of Relationship"" enters in.

*The line between surviving and not surviving is not really a line.. its a wall.

*And that wall is key relationships...

*Rather than being disappointed with lack of progress...in yourself or others...take heart in having a all (people in your life) and being a wall (the person in other's lives).

*God has given these walls of relationship with others to help us life our lives and stay in the clear.

* **Prov. 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.**

***My paraphrase...a friend loves "left of the bang" and right of the bang and is especially there for us "right of the bang"**

3. I am personally responsible to avoid the "fog," and to see and respond to the world as it is.

*All this talk of a "Wall of friendship" and the failure of Jesus' dull boys does not take me or you off the hook for our own choices.

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

2Pet. 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

*This very same divine power that is self-evident in the world...is resident in believers...we have access to all we need for a life of clarity.

*We have no excuse to live with "dull" hearts other than we are choosing to.

*We have his hope and we have his compassion...but we need hear his challenge as well.

Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts dull?"

*Jesus might ask us..."Why are you still talking about(worrying about)...houses, jobs, health, families, the future, politics...do you still not see or understand...are your hearts "dull"?"

*Its not that these things don't matter...anymore than Jesus was saying bread didn't matter...

*He provided folks with bread...he knows we need to eat...and he knows we have homes, and bodies, and jobs and the like.

*He knows we are concerned for health, our loved ones, our future.

*His point is..."To be truly resilient...these cannot be your prime focus?"

**In asking "Are you still talking about bread?" he was saying...

"Why doesn't your vision of who I am, more fully shape your vision of the world you live in?"

*It's like the nurse saying to me "When you see only one of those, you are ready to go."

*Jesus is saying...when you look around the world you live in and see all the complexity, pain, problems, issues, temptations...and then you see me, very clearly as the center piece of human existence...including your own existence.

*You are ready to go...ready to move through life with increasing clarity and ease of movement.

*We don't need to look for excuses for our dullness...we don't want them.

*The answer to the question "**Are your hearts dull?**"...could be.

*"No, Lord...I'm learning to see clearly...day by day...I'm growing...thank you."

*He will help us with this, if we let him.

*We must help each other with this, it is vital.

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Intro:

1. What are some of the differences between "prevention" and "treatment?" Or "preparation" and "recovery?"
2. In resiliency training they sometimes talk about the "Bang." Prevention or preparation focuses on "Left of the bang." What does that mean? Is it possible?
3. Talk about a "Bang" in your own life, where you prepared? What could have helped you be better prepared?
4. Talk about some of the things that helped you "right of the bang." How did relationships play into your "recovery?"

Read:

Mark 8:1 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, **2** "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. **3** If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." **4** His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" **5** "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. **6** He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. **7** They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. **8** The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. **9** About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, **10** he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha. **11** The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. **12** He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it." **13** Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. **14** The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. **15** "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." **16** They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." **17** Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? **18** Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? **19** When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. **20** And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." **21** He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Discuss:

1. What are some possible explanations for why the disciples did not immediately think Jesus would provide food for this crowd?
2. What do you think the religious leaders were wanting when they asked Jesus for a sign?

3. What did Jesus mean when he said "no sign would be given them?"
4. What is the "yeast of the Pharisees and Herod?"
5. Why were the disciples in danger of having this "yeast?"
6. Why do you think Mark included two separate miraculous feedings, what was his purpose?

Apply:

1. If you are "left of the bang" right now, how are you maximizing the relationships in your life to become more resilient? How could you do more?
2. If you are "right of the bang" right now, are you allowing others into your struggle? If not, how could you make a change that direction?
3. Have you become impatient with your own lack of progress or the lack of progress of others? Think about the "wall of relationship" and how much difference the people God has put in our lives can make. Think about the difference you are making in the lives of others...even though you may not feel like it is true.
4. Is your heart "dull?" Are you still talking about "bread" when Jesus is calling you to put your full confidence in him?
5. Read out loud and pray together about this verse.
2Pet. 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



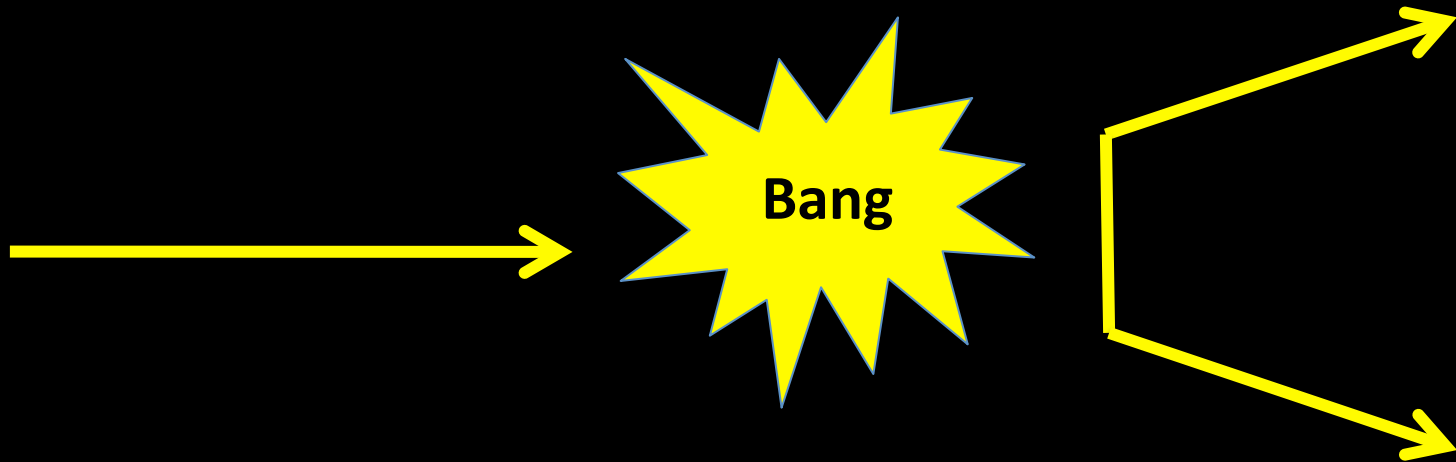
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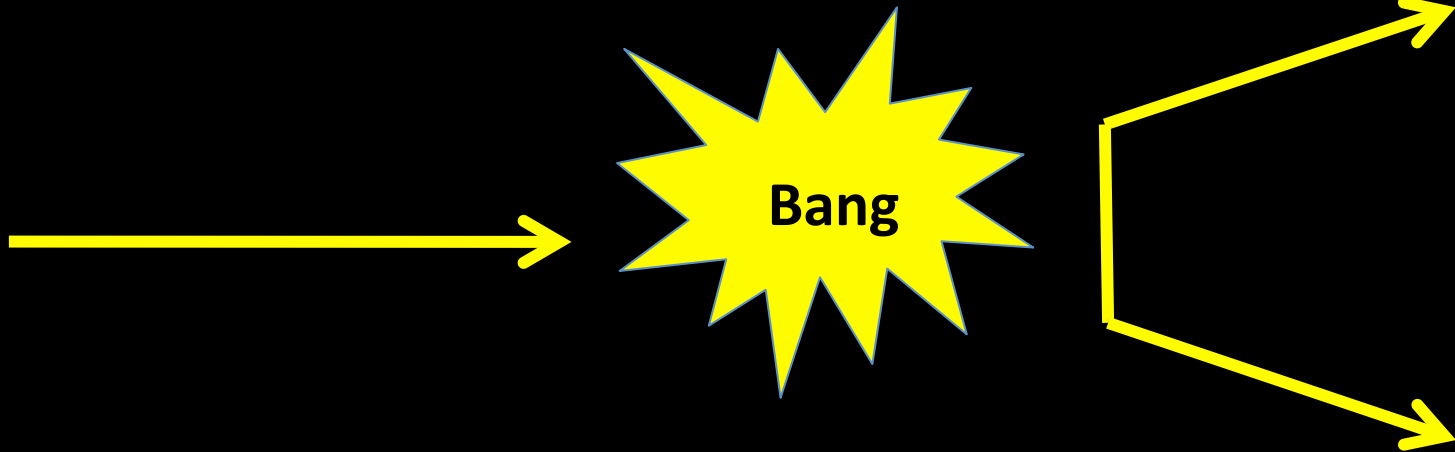
MARK 10:45

J. STILL

An Increased Focus “Left of the Bang”



← Relationships →



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1. Relationships are key to clarity

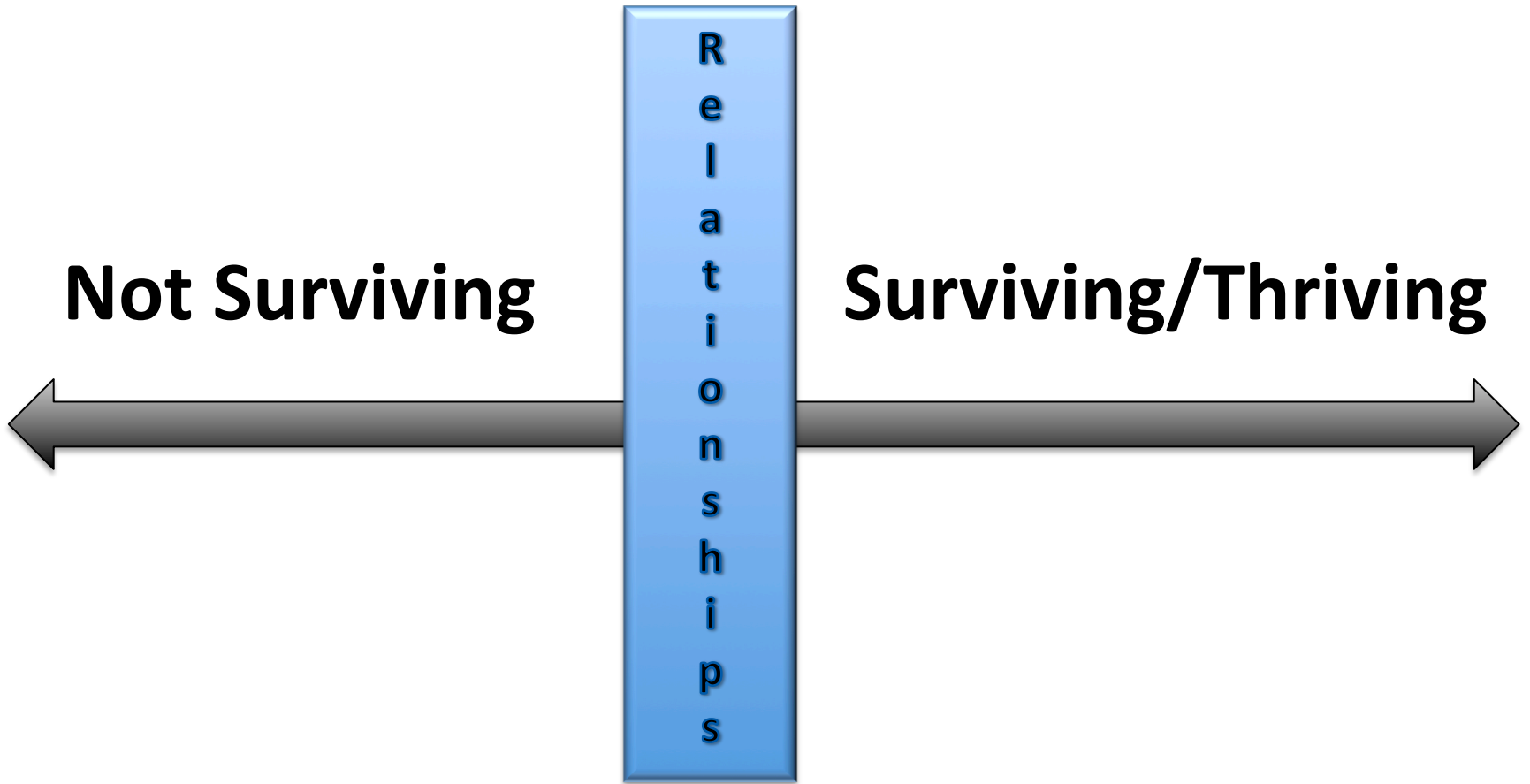
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ourselves have received from God.**

***"I did not have a healthy understanding
and fear of my capacity for failure."***

**"An actual vs. a *mere* factual approach
to God's word."**

2. Patience and Perspective in relationships

**Heb. 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured
the cross, scorning its shame, and sat
down at the right hand of the throne of
God.**



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through our knowledge of him who called us
by his own glory and goodness.**

Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts dull?”

***"No Lord, we are beginning to
see...thank you!"***

