

# Jesus is not a Puppet

## John 6: 1-15

1) Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),

2) and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.

3) Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.

4) The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

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?"

6) He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7) Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

8) Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,

9) "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

10) Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).

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.

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."

13) So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the

pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14) After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

15) Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

### Introduction:

Power Spots that supposedly 'empower' visitors! Places that have special power that enable visitors to achieve goals otherwise unattainable. My wife handed me an article from Asahi.com that talked about this latest fad in Japan.

Apparently, after shrines and other sites are featured in TV programs or magazines, crowds swarm to these 'Power Spots'.

In Kobe, a two to three hour wait is the norm for getting a chance to sit in the Saturnus' chair.

Why wait to sit in this particular chair? It's a 'Power Spot'! The wooden chair became quite famous after a TV show. The show featured a story about a woman who was having hard times. After she sat in the chair, she got a job and found a boyfriend! Now, more than 1 000 people visit the chair on weekends and 400 on

weekdays. A nearby hotel has even offered a room package that includes admission to the house where the chair is.

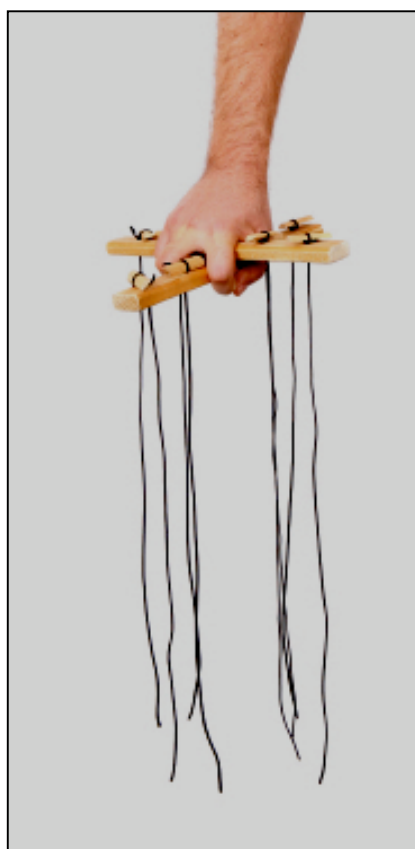
If you were to imagine yourself sitting in that chair, what would come to your mind? – *a marriage that is fulfilling, kids that will listen and not rebel, money to meet your needs, health to enjoy life.*

What would be wrong with that? These are good things. If these things were all we needed for life, then it all seems to make sense.

We all are looking for power in one way or another. We want to be able to make life work.

When power is evident, it attracts. It was very much that way during Jesus' day.

Jesus demonstrated power. He healed the sick. He made the blind to see. Crowds of people flocked to him. Jesus' miracles testified to His identity as the Son of God. His power pointed people to God. But many people treated Jesus like a power spot. Many still do. His power is attractive.



But He is not a puppet that we can control for our own wishes and desires. Jesus doesn't exist just to make us feel good about ourselves.

As our Creator, He knows what we need. His plan is so greater than what could even ask or imagine. Jesus has a deeper and more wonderful agenda for the lives of His followers than just being a guarantee that everything will go the way we want it.

### **The Crowd Sought Jesus for His Power To Heal (vs. 1 - 2)**

At this time in His ministry, Jesus has become very popular. Earlier he had healed the son of a royal official (John 4:43–54). He cured an invalid who had been unable to walk for 38 years! (John 5:8–9). People were taking notice. A great crowd of people had followed Jesus because they saw the miraculous signs He had performed on the sick. These miracles were opportunities for Jesus to teach and instruct people about who He is and why He has come.

Jesus' miracles of healing fulfilled earlier prophecies and demonstrated the nature of mission as the Savior. He focused on the needs of people. With power to do anything, it's interesting to note what Jesus does **not** do. Why not vaporize a few belligerent proud Pharisees

with neon blue lightning streaming from His fingertips? The crowds would love it! With so many people coming to hear him at times, why not levitate about 20 meters above the crowd? Everyone could have a front row seat and no problems paying attention. Jesus wasn't a showman, He was God's servant on a rescue mission.

Jesus always used His power to help people. He never did anything outside the will of His Father in heaven. His mission was to restore what sin had broken.

Healing the sick is a foretaste of the future eternal state with God of all who have been redeemed. Jesus was calling people to have faith and trust in Him as the Savior who would provide for their deepest needs.

***He demonstrates His power not so that we will get excited about how useful He is in getting what we already wanted.***

***Rather, that we might see that He Himself is better than anything we ever wanted.*** But people were missing the point.

### **The Crowd Sought Jesus for His Power To Provide (vs. 3- 13)**

The crowd that followed Jesus was estimated to be about 5000 men. Cultural traditions



of that time counted only the men. The total crowd would then have been up to 4 times as large if you estimated women and children. Jesus used a child's obento of five small loaves of

bread and two small fish to feed an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people. He multiplied the bread and the fish so that there was enough for everyone. The crowd was stuffed and there were twelve baskets of leftovers. Middle eastern custom requires you burp when satisfied. It must have been quite a noise! But they would be hungry again.

Later on in chapter six, Jesus confirms the crowd's motivation for seeking him out. Jesus said to them after they followed him to a new area,

*“I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill” (vs. 26).*

The crowd’s earlier motivation was to follow Jesus because of the miraculous signs they had seen. But a new motivation to follow Jesus quickly emerged when

they could get a full stomach! Jesus used a human need to point to himself as the source of life.

Jesus took care of people’s physical needs to point them to His ability to meet their spiritual needs. But the crowd just wanted food. Jesus was talking of heaven and the crowd was talking about food. Free food, and as much as you want! Witnessing such an amazing display of power, this seemed like the perfect opportunity for the crowd to achieve even greater things with Jesus as their king. Jesus’ true mission was the last thing on their mind. They wanted a Jesus they could manipulate... like a puppet.

### **The Crowd Sought Jesus for His Power To Rule (vs. 14-15)**



The crowds wanted to forcibly make Jesus their king. At this time in history the Jews were being ruled by a foreign

power, the Romans. They wanted to be set free from Roman rule. They wanted a political deliverer. By making Jesus their king, he would have to power to accomplish all that they wanted. The enthusiasm they have is not for who Jesus really is. They want Him because He would make their lives work according to their own definitions of success and happiness. Jesus would be their power spot! It’s not much different than the approach people are having to the Saturnus’ chair. And Jesus would have none of it. *“Aware that the crowd was intending to make him king by force, He departed again to a mountain alone.”* Jesus’ provision of the crowds needs demonstrated that if they would come to Him, He would take care of them. *But they didn’t want to depend upon Him, they wanted to control Him.*

One moment we think we have a pretty good understanding of life and how to make it work. And the next moment everything may seem to be falling apart. God has something even better for us than just the many blessings we seek in life. God calls us to walk with Him in dependence and faith. What is it that you are seeking in life? Within each heart a more radical solution is needed than just

seeking to enjoy life. When Jesus becomes just another means to give us success and happiness in this life, we have tried to make him our puppet. We want to control God rather than depend upon Him. But life is not about us, it’s about Him.

### **Conclusion:**

I’d like to talk about a three year old boy and another type of chair. This chair happens to be a toilet. The boy this story had come to the point in his life where he wanted to show his independence. He wanted to show that he could use the bathroom without anyone’s help! He was living at the time in his grandparent’s big old-fashioned house. The only bathroom was on the second floor. So he climbed the stairs and closed and locked the door behind him. Everything went as planned and he was feeling like a very self-sufficient boy!

The problem was when it was time to leave he couldn't get the door unlocked. He panicked and thought to himself, "I might spend the rest of my life in this bathroom." Thankfully, his father was home at the time and heard his desperate cries for help. The father got a ladder and entered the bathroom from the second floor window. He walked past his son to the door. With adult strength, he turned the lock and opened the door. With a quick Thank you, the boy ran out to play.

The boy in this story is now approaching sixty years of age. He looks back at that experience as an example of how he lived his Christian life for many years. With wisdom seasoned by God's word and life's experiences he writes, "That's how I thought the Christian life was supposed to work. When I get stuck in a tight space, I should do all I can to free myself. When I can't, I should pray. Then God shows up. He hears my cry – and unlocks the door to the blessing I desire.

Sometimes He does. But now, no longer three years old and approaching sixty, I'm realizing the Christian life doesn't work that way. And I wonder, are any of us content with God? Do we even like

him when He doesn't open the door we most want opened?

- *when a marriage doesn't heal*
- *when rebellious kids still rebel*
- *when financial challenges threaten our comfortable way of life*
- *when health worsens despite prayer*

God has climbed through the small window in my dark room. But He doesn't walk by me to turn the lock that I couldn't budge. Instead, He sits down on the bathroom floor and says, come sit with me!" He seems to think that climbing into the room to be with me matters more than letting me out to play. I don't



always see it that way. "Get me out of here," I scream. "If You love me, unlock the door!"

God does love us very much. He has done all that was necessary for us to experience life with Him. Jesus gave His life so that all who believe in Him may have eternal life. The cross is proof of the wonderful invitation made possible by Jesus for a

loving friendship and fellowship with God. God calls us to a relationship of dependence and trust. God has something even better for us than just the many blessings we seek in life. He calls us to Himself, not as a power to be used like a puppet. He calls us to Himself and He enters our lives so that we may enjoy Him and savor Him as our loving King. In Him, not just His blessings, our hearts were truly made to find and experience life.

Just as long as You are with me, that's all I need, may my heart rest in You.

*Lets pray,*

Dear Lord,  
Please have mercy on us.  
We so easily pleased by your blessings.  
But we forget you  
We are so easily discouraged when things don't go our way.  
And we blame you.  
If others were treated the way we sometimes treat you, they would feel used and abused.  
Forgive us for treating you like a puppet that we can control to get what we want.

Forgive us for setting our hearts more on your blessings than on You.  
Thank you for the love and mercy that you have demonstrated at the cross.  
Through faith and trust in Jesus' saving work, we can know you as a Lord and King.  
Please lead our hearts in dependence and faith.  
Enable us to know You better and to represent You well in this difficult world.  
May we enjoy and savor You for who You are, not just what You do.  
I pray these things in the name of Jesus,

Amen