

PUFFED UP or FILLED UP??

Matthew 16:5-12 NIV

5 When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread.

6 “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

7 They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”

9 Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?

10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?

11 How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.

3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think,

5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says.

7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

WHO I LISTEN TO MATTERS

WHAT I LISTEN TO MATTERS

WHAT I LISTEN FOR MATTERS

When we are anxious, our "internal volume" is usually turned up to a deafening level. Shifting the focus from what our anxiety is screaming to what God is whispering changes the entire spiritual frequency of our season. In a season of "Anxious for Nothing," our ears are the primary gates to our peace.

Who you talk to: Are you venting to people who validate your fear, or people who stir your faith?

Who talks to you: If the loudest voice in your life is the news, social media, or a pessimistic friend, your faith will naturally starve. **Anxiety** says: "I have to figure this out." **Prayer** says: "I have to hear how He has already figured it out."

"Have you ever noticed that the biggest-looking loaf in the grocery store is often the lightest one? You can take that giant, 'puffed up' loaf of white bread, squeeze it in your hand, and it shrinks down to the size of a golf ball. It looks substantial from a distance, but it's mostly air. It's a counterfeit.

That is exactly what **anxiety** does to our lives. It puffs us up. It makes our problems look massive, it fills our schedule with 'what-ifs,' and it expands until it takes up all the room in our hearts. But the moment life puts the squeeze on us, we realize there's no substance there. We aren't full; we're just inflated.

"See, that's the deception of the 'Puffed Up' life. It looks like substance, but it's just a shell. And here's the dangerous part: a loaf doesn't puff itself up. It takes an **ingredient**. It takes yeast. In **Matthew 16**, the disciples were in a boat, and they were already starting to 'puff up' with anxiety. They realized, in verse 5, they forgot to bring bread, and suddenly, their whole world shrunk down to their empty stomachs. They were arguing, they were worried, and they were losing their clarity. THEY...

But Jesus sees right through the physical hunger to the spiritual danger. Everything happens for a reason. He doesn't talk to them about their grocery list; He talks to them about their **influences**. He tells them in verse 6: *'Watch out!'*—stay alert, be on guard—*'against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'*

He was telling them: 'It's not just about the bread you forgot; it's about the **voices** you're remembering. If you let their legalism, their doubt, and their fear into the dough of your heart,

you're going to end up exactly like this hollow loaf—big on worry, but empty of power.'

The Pharisees (The Pious/Separated Ones) - everyone claiming to be separated AREN'T sanctified (guided by the Holy Spirit)

Background: Represented the middle class and were well-liked by common people. They focused on applying the law to daily life, often teaching in synagogues.

Beliefs: Accepted both the written Torah and an extensive body of "oral tradition," which they considered equally binding

. They believed in the resurrection of the dead, angels, and the afterlife.

Approach: Known for strict, sometimes hypocritical, legalism (condemned by Jesus).

Legacy: After the destruction of the Temple (70 AD), they evolved into Rabbinic Judaism

The Sadducees (The Aristocracy)

Background: Primarily elite priests and aristocrats who held majority seats on the Sanhedrin (ruling council). They were politically influential, often collaborating with Roman authorities to maintain power.

Beliefs: Accepted only the written Torah (first five books of Moses), rejecting oral tradition. They denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of angels, and an afterlife.

Approach: Focused on maintaining order, temple worship, and sacrifices.

Legacy: Faded from history after the destruction of the Temple, as their power base (the Temple) was gone

Both of these groups could easily be seen as individuals that 'were close to God' - but Jesus gives the disciples a serious lesson through one statement...be aware of the 'yeast' of the Pharisees and Sadducees - they are puffed up, and not filled up.

"Now, Church, here is the reality of the kitchen: Yeast is IN the dough - and there is a difference between the yeast of today and the yeast of ancient times...**modern yeast is a single, scientifically isolated strain** engineered for speed and consistency, while **ancient yeast (used in biblical times) was a wild, unpredictable mixture** of yeast and bacteria, commonly known as sourdough.

Modern: You add a teaspoon of instant yeast to flour and have dough in 1–2 hours.

Ancient: A woman would take a small lump of dough from yesterday's bread (the "leaven") and hide it inside a new batch of flour. This "leaven" had to be kept alive, fed, and protected. This explains the biblical metaphor: "*A little leaven leavens the whole batch*" (Galatians 5:9

Once the yeast is in the dough, you can't just ask it to leave. You can't wish it away. You have to **work it out**. Any baker will tell you that the only way to deal with the air bubbles and the inconsistencies in the dough is a process called **kneading**.

Yeast is a living organism. When it gets into the dough, it starts consuming the sugars and releasing **carbon dioxide gas**.

The Science: These gas emissions create those little pockets or "air bubbles" inside the dough. Those air bubbles must come out.

The Spiritual Parallel: In **Matthew 16**, Jesus warns about the yeast of the Pharisees. It gets into the "dough" of our minds and starts producing "gas"—empty talk, "what-if" scenarios, and prideful thoughts. It makes us feel "big" or "full," but it's just trapped air. It's a hollow expansion.

You have to press it, fold it, turn it, and do it again. It's repetitive. It's tiring. It feels like you're doing the same thing over and over.

And that is exactly where we find the widow in **Luke 18**.

Jesus tells this story right in the middle of our 'Anxious for Nothing' season because He knows that when we get 'puffed up' with the yeast of this world, our first instinct is to **give up**. We say, 'I prayed once and nothing happened,' or 'I've been dealing with this anxiety for weeks and I'm exhausted.'

But look at Luke 18:1. Jesus says we should **always pray and not give up**. That word 'give up' in the Greek is *en-kakéō*. It means to 'cave in' or to 'faint.' It's the baker who stops kneading before the dough is ready. It's the believer who lets the yeast of the Pharisees win because they're tired of the press.

3 "Kneading" Points:

Persistence is Not Pestering: The widow wasn't trying to change the judge's mind; she was demanding her **justice**. When we persist in prayer, we aren't "begging" a stingy God; we are "kneading" the yeast of doubt out of our own hearts until we are **Filled Up** with His promise.

The Press is the Purpose: The pressure you feel in this season isn't God trying to break you; it's the Father 'kneading' the air bubbles of anxiety out of your spirit. If there's no press, there's no substance.

The Sound of the Squeeze: Every time you pray the same prayer again, you're squeezing the yeast out. Every time you say, 'Lord, I trust You' despite the news, you're folding the Bread of Life into your situation.

I. The Problem: The Fermentation of Fear

The Yeast Factor: Explain the Greek *zymē*. It's small, it's hidden, and it's contagious.

Puffed Up Anxiety: Anxiety makes our problems look bigger than they are. Like yeast in dough, fear "puffs up" a situation until it consumes the whole bowl of our mind.

The Pharisee Influence: Who are you letting talk to you? If you listen to "yeast-filled" people, you will end up with a "puffed up" heart. If you listen to 'your twin' and your 'twin' is yeast-filled, you will end up with a 'puffed up' heart.

II. The Process: The Kneading of Prayer

Don't Cave In: Connect the word *en-kakéō* (Luke 18:1) to the work of a baker. Kneading is hard work. It's repetitive. It's persistent.

Sifting the Air: Prayer is the "kneading" process that works the air bubbles of anxiety out of our lives.

The Widow's Strategy: She didn't have the "Bread" yet, but she refused to stop the "Kneading." Her persistence was her protection against giving up.

III. The Provision: Living as the "Filled Up"

Remember the Miracles: In Matthew 16, Jesus asks, "*Don't you remember the five loaves?*" Let your memory of what God did minister to you. Memory is the weight that keeps us "Filled Up."

The Bread of Life: When we are filled with Christ, there is no room for the yeast of the world to rise.

Clarity in the Season: A "Filled Up" believer isn't moved by the wind of the season because they have the substance of the Word.

The "Bottom Line" (The Big Idea to Leave Them With)

"Anxiety puffs you up with 'What ifs,' but Prayer fills you up with 'Even ifs.'"

If you don't knead (persist in prayer), the yeast of this world will make you **Puffed Up** and unstable. But if you let the Master Baker knead you through persistent prayer, you become **Filled Up**—strong, consistent, and ready for the fire.

1. The Financial "Even If"

The What If: "What if the contract doesn't go through? What if the business slows down this quarter?"

The Even If: "**Even if** the bank account hits zero, my God is still Jireh, my Provider. He fed the 5,000 with a lunchable, and He can sustain my household."

2. The Health "Even If"

The What If: "What if the report from the doctor isn't good? What if this stiffness in my knee is something permanent?"

The Even If: "**Even if** the healing doesn't come in the timing I want, God is still my Healer and my Strength. My identity isn't in my diagnosis; it's in His deliverance."

3. The Relationship "Even If"

The What If: "What if they never change? What if this person walks away from the relationship?"

The Even If: "**Even if** I am left standing alone, I am never lonely. God promised to never leave me nor forsake me. My worth isn't tied to their opinion; it's tied to His love."

4. The Legacy "Even If" (The Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Moment)

This is the ultimate biblical "Even If" from Daniel 3:18.

The What If: "What if the furnace is too hot? What if the king follows through on his threat?"

The Even If: "Our God is able to deliver us... but **even if** He does not, we will not serve your gods."

The "What If" (The Yeast)

What if I fail?

What if they judge me?

What if the storm hits?

What if I lose it all?

The "Even If" (The Bread)

Even if I fall, He lifts me up.

Even if they do, God justifies me.

Even if it does, He is my Anchor.

Even if I do, I still have Christ.

The Biblical Root

Psalms 37:24

Romans 8:33

Hebrews 6:19

Philippians 4:12

"Every time you pray, you are taking a **What If** and kneading it into an **Even If**. You are pushing the air out and putting the substance in. You're saying, 'Lord, I'm worried about X, but **EVEN IF** X happens, You are still Lord.'"