

THE SIGN OF HIS PROVISION

Leader pages on pp. 114-117

THE POINT:
JESUS MEETS THE NEEDS
IN OUR LIVES.

JOHN 6:1-15

¹ After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).
² A huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick.
³ Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples.
⁴ Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near.
⁵ So when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?"
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⁶ He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.
⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little."
⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,
⁹ "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?"
¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place; so they sat down. The men numbered about five thousand.
¹¹ **Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks he distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.**
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¹² When they were full, he told his disciples, "Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted."
¹³ So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten.
¹⁴ When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world."
¹⁵ Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

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MEMORY VERSE



11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks he distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

KEYWORDS

Passover (v. 4)—The Passover commemorates the deliverance of the Hebrew slaves from the terrors of the tenth plague—the death of the firstborn in Egypt.

Test him (v. 6)—This is not to be understood in the sense of temptation, as Satan would do, but a testing intended to lead Philip to further and deeper

commitment as a follower of Jesus.

Two hundred denarii (v. 7)—A denarius, or a "penny," was a typical day's wage (Matt. 20:2).

The Prophet (v. 14)—Some Bible scholars believe this reference to the Prophet points back to the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15.

HOW DOES JESUS MEET THE NEEDS IN OUR LIVES?

Craig Randall was just doing his thing, driving a garbage truck in Peabody, Massachusetts. While on his route, he spotted a Wendy's drink cup with a contest sticker in the trash. Earlier, he'd won a free chicken sandwich, so he thought he'd try his luck again, hoping for maybe some fries or a drink. But this time, he hit the jackpot—the sticker was worth \$200,000 for a new home. Craig wasn't expecting to get much, but he ended up with way more than he could've imagined. The same is true for us when it comes to bringing our needs to Jesus. He may not give us what we think we want, but we can be sure He will provide us with exactly what we need when we seek Him in our lives.

In this session, we'll see yet another miracle recorded in the gospel accounts. The significance of this miracle became a formative moment for those who followed Jesus, especially those closest to Him. It's a significant lesson for understanding how Jesus meets our needs. Let's sit down on the hillside with Jesus to see what we can learn.

Jesus Sees Our Needs // John 6:1-5

Aside from the resurrection, the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is the only miracle

recorded in all four gospels. Obviously, the gospel writers considered this a significant sign, and God thought it was so important that He had each of them recount the event from their own perspective.

In John's account, we see that even though Jesus had crossed over the Sea of Galilee (v. 1), the crowd followed Him. Why? Because of the physical healing that Jesus had provided to the people in the Galilean area (v. 2). Of course, who wouldn't want to seek out the healing possibly offered, or at least come to see it done? Word had clearly spread, and it was worth the journey to many.

The crowd that had followed Jesus was described as "huge" (v. 2). John notes that the time of the Passover was near, so the crowd size was understandable (v. 4). But this situation presented a problem: There were many tired, hungry people in an isolated location. Jesus knew that sending the people away could do more harm than good. As was often the case, Jesus then looked upon the crowd with compassion before providing a solution.

The setting for this sign demonstrates a few notable things about Jesus's actions.



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- **Jesus sat down (v. 3).** By this simple action, Jesus demonstrated His authority as a teacher. In the synagogues, a seat was reserved for a rabbi to sit down and discuss the teachings with the people.
- **Jesus sat on a mountainside to teach (v. 3).** Mountains were significant in the history of Israel. It was on a mountain that Abraham was led to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22). It was on a mountain that God had revealed Himself to Moses (Ex. 3). It was on a mountain that God had demonstrated His power in the confrontation of Elijah with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).
- **Jesus chose the Passover festival time for this sign (v. 4).** Soon a lamb would be slain to commemorate the saving of God's people from the angel of death in Egypt. John would later show how Jesus had come to save God's people from eternal death.
- **Jesus planned to feed the people who came to listen to Him (v. 5).** Jesus also wanted to involve His disciples in what He was about to do. So, He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?" (v. 5).

Jesus has often asked such questions to grow His people's faith. George Müller was an evangelist who operated several orphanages in England in the 19th century. Early one morning, Müller led a young lady named Abigail into the dining room set for breakfast but there was no food. He prayed, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock at the door, and it was the baker, unable to sleep because he was sure God wanted him to bake bread for Müller. Müller said to the children, "Children, we not only have bread, but fresh bread." Almost immediately they heard a second knock. This time it was the milkman. As it turned out, the milk cart had broken down outside the orphanage, and he offered the milk to the children, completing their meal. This wasn't the first nor the last time Müller knew that God saw his need and was able to meet it.⁵ The God who would feed the five thousand, and who took care of Müller's children, will provide for us as well!

Not only does Jesus desire to meet physical needs, whether through food or healing, but Jesus would use the physical need to show His nature as the only Son of God. He is the One who can meet all our needs. Our greatest need, of course, is salvation. Jesus came first and foremost to save us from our sins, reconciling us to God.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT JESUS NOTICED AND CARED FOR THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE CROWD?



DIGGING DEEPER POVERTY

In the 1st Century, poverty played a crucial role in shaping communities and societal dynamics. Back then, being poor was a common reality for many people. Without a strong middle class, there was a wide gap between the wealthy elite and the poor. This economic disparity led to a strong sense of community and support among those struggling to make ends meet, as they had to rely on one another to get by. Issues like food scarcity, lack of proper housing, and absence of healthcare were significant concerns that directly impacted life expectancy and overall quality of life. Moreover, poverty also shaped religious and philosophical ideologies of the time. Many teachings and moral codes, like those found in early Christianity, emphasized helping the poor and showcased compassion and charity as vital virtues. In essence, the widespread poverty of the 1st Century didn't just define the daily lives of individuals but also had a profound influence on the cultural and moral fabric of society as a whole.

Read Matthew 25:35-40. How can you address poverty in marginalized communities?

Jesus Has a Plan // John 6:6-11

Why might Jesus have turned to Philip with His question of where they could buy bread to feed those in attendance? First, Philip was from Bethsaida, which would not have been that far from where they were, which meant he would have been familiar with the resources available to them. Naturally, Philip reverted to the financial concern he had when confronted with the problem. Like the other disciples, Philip's faith was obviously still maturing. He probably quickly calculated the total to dissuade Jesus from going down this road: "Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little" (v. 7).

Philip had seen Jesus perform miracles; he had seen Jesus heal people, cast out demons, and thus seen prophecies fulfilled. Yet when the spotlight was turned on his experience, Philip responded with a lack of faith rather than complete trust in the Lord's willingness and ability to provide. It's at this time that we see a shift in the circumstances; Andrew (Simon Peter's brother) said, "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish" (v. 9).

From Philip's perspective, the ability to feed the masses didn't make sense in time or money. From Andrew's perspective, the ability to feed was due to a lack of resources too, but at least he could now make sure his Master would be able to eat. Yet, once Jesus saw the boy give his food to the disciples, He was going to demonstrate how little is much when God is in it.

Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down (v. 10a). In other gospel accounts, Jesus ordered them to sit by groups of a certain number. Overall, the number of men was around five thousand (v. 10b). This meant there would have been more than two or three times that overall number, as women and children would most likely have been present too.

Then Jesus did an amazing miracle, as He took the bread and fish, gave thanks, and the food was distributed among the people. Not just a tiny morsel or crumb; they could eat what they wanted until they were full. What started as something small—pieces of bread and a couple of fish—was trusted to the Lord, and He quickly turned a fast into a feast! The focus of this part of the narrative



shows how the greatest hope wasn't found in the disciples who had been with Jesus for so long, nor the unlikely circumstances affecting them; instead, the answer to a great need came through a young boy who simply opened his hands in surrender to Jesus.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU SEEN JESUS MOVE THROUGH HIS PEOPLE TO MEET SPECIFIC NEEDS?

Jesus Provides in Abundance // John 6:12-15

When we read the rest of this narrative, we are awed once again at the extraordinary miracle that Jesus performed as a way to care for the people and to represent the Father before them.

After Jesus performed this incredible miracle, people began to see Him as fulfilling a sign designated for the promised Messiah (v. 14). The tone of their comments was one of confidence that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Yet, something about the way they responded led Jesus to withdraw. We might think at this point, "Jesus, isn't this what You want to happen? Don't You want people to see You as King? Don't You want people to see You as the One Moses prophesied about?"

Even though Jesus is indeed the Messiah promised to come and save the people, the crowd's perspective didn't seem to be driven by a gospel-centered focus; rather, it seemed to be for political motivations. Jesus knew His role as king differed from those who merely wanted to conquer

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Rome. Jesus didn't need an earthly kingdom to prove His position and authority, and He certainly didn't come to lead a revolt.

So, instead of giving in to their desires, "he withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (v. 15). Why do we see Jesus retreat rather than advance? Perhaps Jesus saw that the people's hearts were more focused on what He could do for them than who He was. Their hearts were in the wrong place, focused on what they wanted, not what He knew they needed. So, Jesus wants to show us that meeting our needs isn't about satisfying our desires and wants. Instead, He is pointing us to our greater need, which is a relationship with God.

The same extraordinary power that transformed the offering of bread and fish into a meal for over five thousand people is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. And it's the power that comes from God's endless source of grace and mercy; it's the power to set you free. Praise God that He knows what we really need!

HOW CAN WE KNOW IF WE'RE FOCUSED MORE ON WHAT JESUS CAN DO FOR US THAN ON WHO HE IS?

DID YOU KNOW?

Second Harvest Food Bank plays a pivotal role in addressing food insecurity in communities. Second Harvest is a dedicated organization that collects, stores, and distributes millions of pounds of food to those in need. With a network of partner agencies and food pantries, they ensure that nourishing meals reach the tables of families, seniors, and individuals who might otherwise go hungry.

Volunteer involvement is a cornerstone of their operations, mobilizing community members to contribute time and resources. By addressing the immediate needs and fostering self-sufficiency, Second Harvest Food Bank is more than just a lifeline; it's a beacon of hope and a catalyst for lasting change in its communities.

Biblical Truth: Believers are to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth.

How can we be beacons of hope, like Jesus, for those facing food disparities?

LIVE IT

How can we make prayer the main thing in our lives?

We're always going to deal with some kind of need. It could be things we need such as support, money, or even something deeper like spiritual guidance. But we must be careful about who we let fill those gaps. Not everyone has our best interests at heart. Jesus isn't just about meeting our needs; He shows us a whole new, a better way to live. Choose one of the following applications:

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- **Reflect.** Write out a prayer of confession to the Lord, admitting times that you have focused only on your desires instead of seeing how our greatest need has been provided in Christ and His provision.
- **Share.** Find a way this week to live like the young boy from this passage and share with someone what God has blessed you with, big or small. Remember, God can take our little and make much of it!
- **Seek.** Spend time in prayer regarding ways to show compassion as Jesus did, not as a burden but as a blessing. Prayerfully seek out someone you can share the gospel with this week.

DAILY READINGS

1. MORE THAN ENOUGH // JOHN 6:11-12

Two fish. Five loaves of bread. A familiar yet profound story. A great multitude follows Jesus to the sea of Galilee. In a mountain, he sits with his disciples. When he lifts his eyes, he sees a multitude drawing near. Philip voices concern for bread to eat, but Jesus has a plan. Andrew informs Jesus there is a young boy with two fish and five barley loaves of bread, and Jesus tells him to make the people sit down. This verse informs us of what God can do with a little. He takes the loaves, gives thanks, and has the disciples distribute as much bread and fish as the people want with fragments remaining.

Give what you have to the Lord and expect Him to provide more than enough.

2. NO SMALL THING // 2 KINGS 3:18

What kind of requests do you take to the Lord? Are you bold enough to ask God for big things? Unimaginable and impossible things. Child of God, we should be doing just that. The king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edon seek Elisha to see if the Lord wants them to fight against Moab in battle. The hand of the Lord comes to Elisha while the harpist plays. In this verse, he tells them this is an easy thing in the Lord's eyes. They will not see wind or rain, but the valley will be filled with water so their animals can drink. The Lord will also deliver Moab into their hands.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, that whatever I need is considered a light thing in your eyes.

3. OVERFLOW IS POSSIBLE // GENESIS 36:7

Obedying his mother's request, Jacob pretends to be Esau by making his skin hairy like Esau's to deceive their father, obtaining Jacob's blessing before the father dies. This causes an ongoing feud between the two brothers. By the time we reach this chapter, they have reconciled. Esau takes wives from Canaan and has children with them. He then carries them along with his

possessions, cattle, and beasts into the country away from his brother Jacob. This verse tells us why. They have far too much to remain together; the land can not support each of them and their cattle. God's Word promises that He will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing without measure.

Master, help me to operate in faith and expectation.

4. NEVER ALONE // PSALM 23:4

I have never taken a flight alone. During a recent trip it appeared that I would be separated from my group on our return trip due to flight cancellations. I began to feel a little anxious until I spoke with my spouse. He reminded me that I am never alone; the Lord is always with me. David provides the same reminder. He opens this psalm by stating that the Lord is his shepherd; therefore, he lacks nothing. He acknowledges the Lord as the one who leads him and provides him a peaceful, flourishing life. In the face of danger, he fears no evil because the Lord is with him.

Like David, we are never alone and should remember we are always under the Lord's protection and care.

5. THE PEACE OF GOD // PHILIPPIANS 4:7

Do you know God's promises to you? This is one of my favorite verses because it's a promise from God to his children. When we feel anxious, we are to recall what we know to be true. Paul starts this chapter by telling the people to stand firm in the Lord. He urges Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind. He commands them to rejoice in the Lord always, letting their graciousness be known to everyone. They are not to worry about anything but pray with thanksgiving, making their requests known to the Lord. Then, comes the promise. The peace of God, which surpasses human understanding, will guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Choose to rest in and be thankful for God's promise of peace.