

# JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JOHN 6:1-15

*The life and ministry of Christ is sufficient to feed all men*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Crowds gathered to watch the miracles.** Jesus and the disciples ministered to the people by healing their sicknesses. As they did, word spread among the people, and a very large crowd gathered. Luke 9:10 tells us in his account that the disciples had just returned from Jesus sending them out to preach and heal. Matthew 14:14 adds that Jesus healed sick people there as well. As a result of these miracles, people came to see for themselves. These people were more attracted by Jesus' miracles, although Jesus had compassion on them for He saw them as sheep without a shepherd (see Mark 6:34).

**Jesus showed the crowd an even greater miracle** – After healing their sicknesses, Jesus had the people sit down. He then, amazingly, demonstrated His power as Creator. Jesus offered thanks and then multiplied the fish and loaves. The details of how this was done or what it looked like are not given to us. We can be sure this was not a miracle of satisfied appetites having only eaten a small portion of the original fish. Twelve basketfuls were collected! This miraculous account is found in all four Gospels.

**Jesus was more than a prophet** – After multiplying the fishes and loaves, the people wanted to make Jesus their king. They didn't want to worship Him. They wanted to selfishly make him their king so he could use His powers to deliver them from Rome. God had promised a king- a deliverer. Many of the Jews assumed he would be an earthly king who would reign on David's earthly throne and throw off the foreign domination of Rome. These people were actually prepared to force Jesus to be their king. But Jesus would not be forced to do anything. He was already King of Kings, ruling over heaven and earth. His mission was far more important than overthrowing Rome. Jesus came to overthrow the dominion of sin and death for all who would believe.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

In John 6:35 Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Jesus' providing food for the 5,000 is a picture of a greater salvation He would bring. He is not just the multiplier of the fish and the loaves. He Himself is the bread of life.

John 6:40 continues, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

**Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 2:9,10**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

These verses are the very end of Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving for Samuel, the child God gave her. She prophesied a day when God would raise up His king and exalt the horn of His anointed. Her son Samuel would grow up to be a prophet. He anointed David as God's king. But David would only be a partial fulfillment of this prophetic word. One day God would raise up Jesus the eternal King. Jesus revealed that the Father had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (see Luke 4:18).

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- Did Israel have a king when Hannah prayed her prayer? (No. Saul, Israel's first king, was probably not even born yet.)
- Why would Hannah talk about God giving strength to His king if there was no king in Israel? (Hannah's prayer was a prophetic prayer that looked forward to the day when God would give strength to His king.)

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### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

*Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.*

### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

#### SILENCING THE CRITICS

##### Supplies:

five small loaves

Explain to the class that some critics, who do not believe in miracles have suggested that the bread was really not multiplied but simply broken up in very small pieces and passed out. Start breaking up the loaves to show just how small a portion that would mean a person would receive. By breaking one of the loaves in half, then breaking one of the pieces in half and doing this 10 times to one of the remaining halves, you would end up with a piece that is the equivalent of 1/5000 of the total. Show this small piece to the class and ask them if they think this is what filled each of the 5000 men. Then ask them what part of the story proves that Jesus really did multiply the fishes and loaves. The answer of course is that the leftovers filled twelve baskets.

This miracle is recorded in all four gospels which all agree that Jesus performed the miracle. Overall, that is very convincing evidence.

You might want to explain to the class that those who do not believe in God and His miracles are actively sinning in their unbelief. In Romans, Paul tells us that men who do not believe are actively suppressing the truth. (See Romans 1:18-25.)



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### ACT IT OUT

**Supplies:**

- a sheet or other covering to act as a costume
- a small loaf of bread
- any other props you would like

Act out the story as though you were one of the five thousand who were fed. When you describe the multiplication of the fishes and loaves, avoid explaining just how they were multiplied. Tell the children you saw the boy with five loaves and fishes but you could not see what exactly happened because as soon as the Lord broke the bread and gave thanks, those in front of you stood up and would not sit down.

Tell the class that the bread and fish kept coming and that everyone ate as much as they wanted. Then everyone passed the leftover pieces to the disciples who collected them so as not to waste any of the fish.

Talk about how the crowd was ready to make Jesus their king but could not find Him.

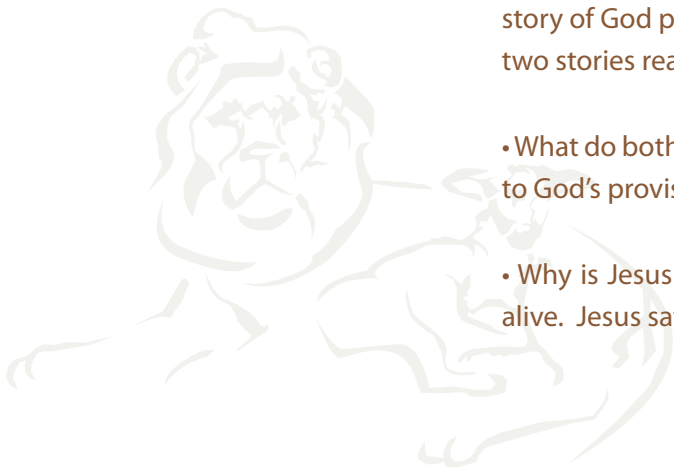
Then go on to say how you looked for the Lord all the next day and finally found him. Open up your Bible to John 6:26-40 and read it to the class while staying in character and personalizing the comments from the crowd. (If you use a red letter edition you will more easily recognize Jesus' words from the comments of the crowd.)

- What was Jesus' message to the crowd the next day when he tried to teach them? (Jesus was trying to teach them to follow Him for more than miracles. Jesus could give them eternal life!)

### REVIEW THE STORY OF THE MANNA

Read the story of the multiplying the fishes and the loaves then read to them the story of God providing manna from Exodus 16. After you have reviewed these two stories read John 6:32-33 and ask the students the following questions:

- What do both the manna and the multiplication of bread point to? (Both point to God's provision of salvation through Jesus.)
- Why is Jesus like bread? (Bread satisfies your natural hunger and keeps you alive. Jesus satisfies our spiritual hunger and gives us eternal life.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

#### AN ACTIVITY

**Supplies:**  
pencil and paper

Draw a picture of the fishes and loaves and draw the words "He who comes to me will never go hungry" creatively in your picture.

### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

**Supplies:**  
• white board and markers

John 6:35-44 is a wonderful blend of two important truths, God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Draw two columns on the board, one entitled "What God Does" and another "What Man Does." Review the passage and write out the verses or portions of verses in the appropriate column. Soon the class will see the mystery in our coming to Christ.

The point here is not to settle an age long dispute between the two. Let us be comfortable knowing that only those the Lord calls can come to Him while also believing all that all those who come, freely come of their own desire.

### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Dried fish and barley loaves** – Dried fish was a common food staple in the region. Fish were dried to preserve them. The little boy in the story had barley loaves which were less expensive bread than wheat loaves.

