

FIVE THOUSAND MEN FED

Matthew 14:13-22; Mark 6:30-45; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:1-66

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the disciples, and the multitudes

Key-locations: Locations around Lake Galilee: Capernaum and the desert

Key-repetitions:

- Crowds (many): a great crowd followed Jesus (Jn 6:2); Jesus saw a crowd coming towards him (Jn 6:5); Jesus asked Philip where they could buy food for so many people (Jn 6:5); the people wanted to make Jesus king by force (Jn 6:14-15).
- Bread: the disciples didn't have enough money to buy bread for the crowd (Mk 6:37); the disciples had only five small pieces of bread (Mat 14:16-17); Jesus multiplied the bread, the people ate and there were twelve baskets of leftover bread (Mat 14:19-20; Jn 6:11-13).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' desire to be alone after the death of John the Baptist.
- Jesus' compassion for the crowd.
- Crowd's animation and great hope.
- Disciples' concern for that the people needed to eat.
- Philip's concern for finances needed to feed the crowd.
- Boy's willingness to share his lunch.
- Crowd's self-centeredness.
- Crowd's determination to make Jesus king.

Initial-situation:

During the second year of Jesus' ministry, his popularity with the people grew. John the Baptist was in prison and the multitudes who had formerly followed John now sought out Jesus.

Herodias took the opportunity to have John the Baptist killed when King Herod celebrated his birthday.

Initial-problem:

Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist and withdrew by boat with his disciples to a remote place (Mat 14:13).

Final-situation:

After the feeding of the five thousand, the crowd of people intended to grab Jesus by force and make him king. So Jesus withdrew to the mountain to be alone and pray.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist. Jesus and his disciples withdrew by boat to a remote place where they could be alone (Mat 14:13).

Many people saw Jesus and his disciples leave in the boat, and realized where they were going. People from surrounding towns took off running and got there first.

When Jesus landed, he saw a large crowd. He felt compassion for them and healed their sick (Mat 14:14). Jesus felt compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus taught them many things. It was late in the day and Jesus' disciples interrupted him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages to buy themselves something to eat" (Mk 6:33-36).

Jesus asked Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" Jesus asked Philip this question to test him. Jesus already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered, "Eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for each person to have a bite!"

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here's a boy with five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish. That won't go far with so many people!"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down."

There was about five thousand men in the crowd (*plus women and children*). Jesus took the loaves of bread, gave thanks, and had his disciples distribute the bread to the people who were sitting. He did the same with the fish. The people ate as much as they wanted.

All the people had enough to eat. Then Jesus told his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." The disciples filled twelve baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves (Jn 6:5-13).

The people saw the miracle that Jesus performed and said, "Jesus is certainly the prophet who is to come into the world!" The people intended to grab Jesus by force and make him king (Jn 6:14-15).

Jesus ordered his disciples to get into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake. But, Jesus stayed, dismissed the crowd, and went up on a mountainside by himself to pray (Mat 14:22-23).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus want to be alone with his twelve disciples?
2. How did Jesus react to the crowd that interrupted his plans to be alone with his disciples?
3. How do you react when your plans are interrupted?
4. What was the test that Jesus gave Philip?
5. How do you react when you see a need and the solution appears to be impossible?
6. How did Jesus feed the crowd that had about 5,000 men plus women and children?
7. If Jesus could multiply food, why did Jesus want to save the scraps?
8. Has there been a time when you experienced God stretching your resources (financial, physical, emotionally) far beyond what you thought possible?
9. After the feeding of the 5,000, what did the crowd want to do?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus feels compassion for needy people.** Jesus felt compassion for the crowd and healed their sick (Mat 14:14). He felt compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34). He felt compassion for the hungry people (Mk 6:37).
2. **Limited financial resources do not limit what God can do.** Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread. Philip assessed the cost. Jesus performed a miracle that proved that limited resources do not limit God from doing his work (Jn 6:5-7).
3. **The person who is aware of his limitations, but gives his all to Jesus, will experience God increasing his little gift.** The story contrasts the disciples' actions with the boy's action. The disciples didn't have enough to feed the people and they didn't give Jesus anything. The boy gave what little he had, his five small loaves of bread and two small fish, to Jesus. Jesus multiplied the boy's lunch to feed five thousand men plus women and children (Jn 6:8-11).
4. **Age is no barrier to serve Jesus.** Jesus took the lunch that a child offered and used it to feed 5,000 men (Jn 6:8-9).
5. **God gives in abundance.** Jesus took the boy's lunch and multiplied it. Everybody ate all they wanted and there were twelve baskets left over (Jn 6:12-13).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Journalistic Interview of Characters in the Story:

Tell the story one time.

Ask for volunteers who will represent characters in the story:

- The disciple Philip who was present when Jesus fed the 5,000 men.
- The boy who shared his lunch with Jesus.
- A man in the crowd who is campaigning to make Jesus king.

Ask each volunteer to listen for their character's part in the story as the story is repeated a second time.

Retell the story.

The leader, as a reporter, interviews each volunteer by asking questions related to their character. Example: Philip, what happened when those listening to Jesus became hungry?