

Feeding of the Five Thousand



Scripture Reference: [John 6:1-14](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Jesus is powerful and can take care of us.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



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Story Overview:

So many people wanted to hear Jesus preach that a crowd followed him to a remote location. As mealtime approached, the only food that was found was a boy's lunch containing five small loaves of bread and two small fish. Jesus instructed the apostles to divide the food among the crowd of 5000 men (in addition to women and children). Everyone ate as much as they want and there was food left over at the end of the meal.

Background Study:

Jesus had been teaching for about two years when he sent his disciples out in pairs to teach. They went from town to town teaching people about God and the need for repentance. They were able to drive out demons and heal the sick (Mark 6:12). Right before the event in today's lesson, John the Baptist was beheaded. The disciples all came together again to be with Jesus. They wanted some time alone with him but a crowd of people showed up. It seems everyone had heard about Jesus and wanted to spend time with him.

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle (besides the resurrection) found in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17). It took place in a remote area on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus and his disciples took the boat over to the shore but the crowd seems to have hurried around the lake to join them there.

Philip, Andrew and Peter were originally from nearby Bethesda (John 1:44). They might have known some of the people in the crowd. They would have known what food was available in the area and how much the food would cost. For this reason they asked Jesus to dismiss the crowd so that everyone could go and buy their own food.

Jesus surprised the apostles by telling them to feed the crowd (Mark 6:37). They looked among the crowd to see what the situation was. The only food that they came up with was two small fish and five small barley loaves. It would be impossible to feed the crowd.

Barley loaves were inexpensive and would have been about the size of hamburger buns. The bread might have been something like pita bread. If packed in a lunch, the fish were probably dried and salted and the size of sardines.

Jesus organised the crowd by having the disciples divided them into groups of fifty. It was springtime, and the hill was covered with grass on which the people could sit. There were women and children - we don't know how many - besides the five thousand men

(Matthew 14:21).

None of the gospel accounts detail exactly how the food multiplied. However it happened, the result was that the food was prayed for and then divided. Five loaves and two small fish became enough food for the whole crowd. The leftovers were more than the original amount of food.

Jews always gathered the scraps because they regarded bread as a gift from God. Small wicker baskets were part of the clothing of the day. They would have been useful for carrying all sorts of things.



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Pack small snack parcels for the children today and bring them to class. This could be small pita breads and some type of fish (sardines are especially smelly and will help make the story stay in the children's minds for years to come!). You could have individual packs or one to share. Help everyone unpack and eat their snack before you tell the story.

How about a real teacher challenge, today! If you were a mother living in New Testament times, how would you pack the lunch? No paper and no plastic!

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The Story:

Many people heard about Jesus. They heard that he was a good teacher and helped people to learn more about God. They heard that he could make sick people well. Sometimes big crowds of people would gather to hear Jesus speak.

One time Jesus and his apostles wanted to spend time together away from the big crowds of people. Where could they go to be alone? They decided to get into a boat and sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They could rest and talk together in the quiet of the grassy green hills away from cities and people. So they sailed across.

The Sea of Galilee is not very big. It is not actually a sea but it is a lake. The people could see Jesus and his apostles landing the boat on the distant shore. The people wanted to be with Jesus so much that they decided to follow him. They walked around the lake to the other shore. Soon there was a huge crowd of people gathered again to hear Jesus preach. There were five thousand men plus women and children. Jesus knew that the people must really be serious if they walked all the way around the lake. He did not rest but spent all day teaching the people about God.

When evening came the apostles began to wonder how all of these people were going to eat. They were far away from any towns. Maybe Jesus should stop preaching so the people could walk to a town and buy some food. Jesus knew the apostles were worried. He asked one of the apostles, "Philip, where are we going to buy bread for all of these people?"

Philip was from a town near there and he knew that it would cost a lot to buy food for over five thousand people. Philip answered Jesus, "I would have to work for eight months to earn enough money to feed this crowd!"

Andrew was another apostle. He had been asking people in the crowd if they had any food. He found one boy who had brought his lunch. The boy did not have much food. He

only had two small fish and five small loaves of bread. Andrew did not know how this small amount would feed over five thousand people but he took the food to Jesus anyway. He knew that Jesus could do anything!

Jesus said, "Divide all of the people into groups of fifty and tell them to sit down on the grass." Soon the whole crowd was divided into small groups.

Then Jesus did a wonderful thing! He prayed to God to thank Him for the food and then he began handing bread and fish to people. Jesus began with only two fish and five loaves of bread but every time he handed it to someone, more bread and fish would appear. Jesus gave bread and fish to everyone in the whole crowd. Everyone ate bread and fish until they were full!

Finally, when everyone was finished they cleaned up all of the small pieces of bread left over. The leftover bread was enough to fill twelve baskets full!

Jesus fed over five thousand people from two little fish and five small loaves of bread. No human being could do a miracle like that. Only Jesus could. Jesus was powerful enough to take care of a whole crowd of people. Jesus is powerful enough to take care of you and me.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and the slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story

in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. What did the people do when Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee? They followed him.
2. What food did the boy have in his lunch? Two small fish and five small loaves of bread.
3. How many men were in the crowd that Jesus fed? Five thousand
4. What did the apostles fill twelve baskets with after the meal? Leftover bread

Song Suggestions:

- [Jesus' Love is a-Bubblin' Over Song](#)
- [One, Two, Three Jesus Loves Me Song](#)
- [Yes! Jesus Loves Me](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

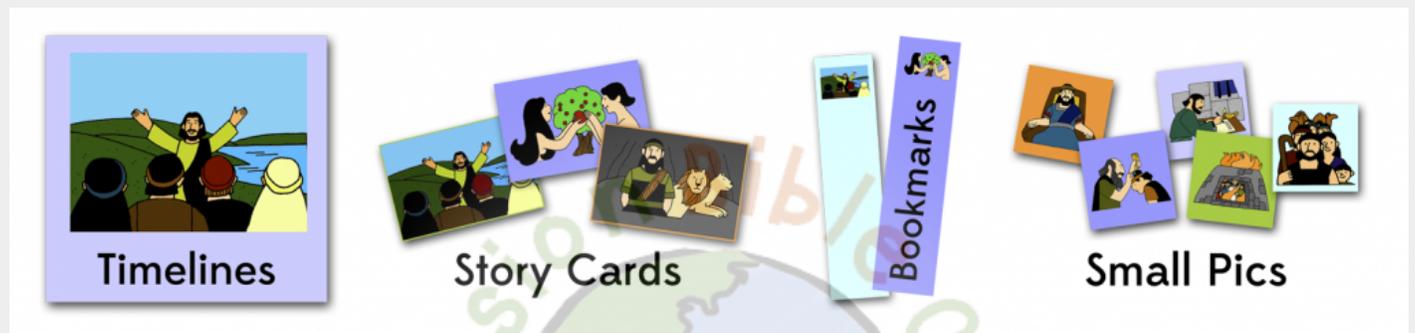
[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Have a picnic snack of bread and fish today. If the weather is nice consider eating outside sitting on the grass while you tell today's story. Be sure and clean up all of the scraps!
- Older children can use a bible concordance to find out what types of fish were found in the Sea of Galilee. Also learn more about the types of bread that were eaten. Sample different types of fish.

- Calculate how much it would cost to feed 5000 men (guess how many women and children). Maybe you could plan on each person eating a hamburger, fries and drink. How many groups of 50 would that have been?
- Older children can do a “gospel harmony” – Read each gospel account of the story and jot down the facts you learn from each.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Feeding of the Five Thousand” in A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for “Feeding of the Five Thousand” in letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page about Jesus and a boy’s lunch \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page at http://www.freecoloring.info](http://www.freecoloring.info)
- [Craft: Cute fish mobile made from toilet paper or paper towel tubes. Instructions at http://www.catholicicing.com](#)
- [Craft: Video instructions \(3 minutes\) on how to make a paper fish on a popsicle stick at http://www.simplekidscrafts.com](#)
- [Craft: Loaves and fishes necklace using macaroni at http://www.busybeekidscrafts.com](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-miracles/>

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