



Jesus Feeds the Multitude

Matthew 14:13–21



LESSON GOAL

The child will not only marvel at Jesus' miracles, but also submit to His authority.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- A boy gave his five loaves and two fish to Jesus.
- Jesus did a miracle by feeding thousands of people
- Jesus' miracle proved that He is God

KEY VERSE

"Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes." —Matthew 14:19

APPLICATION

- Believe that Jesus is God because He fed the multitude.
- Trust that only through Jesus' power can man be saved from sin.
- Have compassion on those who need a Savior.
- Give thanks for God's provision.

NEXT WEEK

Jesus Walks on Water
Matthew 14:22–34

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

After presenting the Kingdom parables in Matthew 13, Matthew continues to describe the mounting opposition to Jesus’ ministry. He first describes the opposition in his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus is rejected in His hometown at the end of Matthew 13 not because of His “wisdom and mighty works” (13:54) but because the inhabitants were “offended at Him” (13:57). While the people recognized Jesus’ authority, they rejected Him because of His message.

Jesus was opposed not only by His neighbors, but also by Herod the tetrarch. Herod the tetrarch was the son of Herod the Great, who had tried to kill Jesus as a child. Although not as powerful as his father had been, Herod the tetrarch continued his father’s opposition to God’s authority. Matthew 14:3–12 tells how Herod imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist. When Herod heard from his servants “the report about Jesus,” (14:1) the paranoid Herod said, “This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him” (14:2). The superstitious and apparently guilt-ridden Herod recognized that John had authority, and now feared that John had come back in judgment. Because of his fears, Herod desired to see Jesus, perhaps to arrest Him also (Luke 9:9).

In the midst of opposition from petty neighbors and powerful rulers, Jesus continued to perform miracles which strengthened His disciples’ faith and challenged the crowds to accept His message. Jesus’ miracles were proof He had the authority to call men to repentance and to place their faith in Him. One of the most dramatic of these miracles is recorded in all four Gospels: the feeding of the 5,000.

Jesus’ Compassion for the Crowd (Matt. 14:13–14)

When the disciples returned to Jesus after being sent out to perform miracles and to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 6:7–12,30; Luke 9:1–6,10), the disciples told Jesus not only about Herod’s looking for Him (Matt. 14:13), but also about everything the disciples had done and said (Mark 6:30; Luke 9:10). The Lord demonstrated His love for the disciples when He told them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Jesus recognized their need to rest because “there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat” (Mark 6:31). So many people surrounded Jesus that it was difficult for the disciples to eat, talk, and recover from their trips. Jesus and the disciples went by boat to a deserted area near the city of Bethsaida, located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:32; Luke 9:10).

When the multitude saw Jesus and the disciples leave by boat, they followed Him on foot (Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:33; Luke 9:11). Some actually arrived before Jesus because they ran ahead of Him (Mark 6:33). When a multitude had gathered, Jesus “was moved with compassion for them” (Matt. 14:14). The crowds had come

“because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased” (John 6:2). The crowds wanted Jesus for what He did and not for who He was, but Jesus still loved them. In Matthew 9:36, Jesus had compassion on the multitude because “they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Because of His compassion for this crowd in the isolated area, Jesus “received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing” (Luke 9:11). Jesus has such compassion for the crowds that He planned on feeding them (John 6:5). He wanted to care for not only their spiritual needs but also their physical needs.

Jesus’ Challenge to the Disciples (Matt. 14:15–17)

Although Jesus knew what he was going to do for the crowds (John 6:6), He did not tell His disciples. When day turned into evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food” (Matt. 14:15). The people had decided so quickly to pursue Jesus that most had not brought food with them (Mark 6:36). Not only did the people need to eat, but the disciples may also have been eager to spend more time with Jesus and to tell Him about their recent preaching trips.

Instead of sending the crowds away, Jesus tested the disciples by giving them the responsibility of feeding the crowd. Jesus told the disciples, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat” (Matt. 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13). Jesus specifically asked Philip where they could buy enough food for the multitude (John 6:5). (Philip, like Peter and Andrew, had grown up in the area.) Philip failed the test when he answered, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them” (John 6:7). The denarius was the common wage for a day’s labor. Philip’s response was mathematically sound. If one man worked for two hundred days (or approximately eight months), he would still not have enough to feed the crowd. But Philip’s problem was that he was too busy punching his mental calculator to contemplate the majesty and goodness of the Messiah before him.

Jesus then told them to go and see how much food they did have (Mark 6:38). Like Philip, Andrew also revealed his lack of faith in Jesus’ ability to feed the crowds. Although he found a boy with a lunch of “five barley loaves and two small fish” (John 6:9), Andrew expressed doubt over the usefulness of so little in feeding a crowd so large. Andrew rhetorically asked Jesus, “What are they among so many?” (John 6:9). Neither Philip, Andrew, nor any of the other disciples responded in faith. They should have recognized Jesus’ power and said, “Jesus, although we cannot feed them, You can.” Instead of looking to the one who had made the people, they vainly scratched their heads and looked at the people. Jesus’ test was designed to bring their attention to His sufficiency, but instead they focused on their insufficiency.

Jesus’ Command over the Universe (Matt. 14:18–21)

After taking the food (Matt. 14:18), Jesus told His disciples to organize the people into groups of fifty and have them sit on the grass (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:39–40; Luke 9:14–15; John 6:10). The Apostle John mentions that there was much grass there and Mark tells that the grass was green (John 6:10; Mark 6:39). It was spring since the Passover was near (John 6:4). Perhaps the disciples had begun to guess what Jesus was planning, but the people must have anxiously wondered what amazing thing He was going to do next. When all had been seated, Jesus took the food, looked to heaven, blessed God, thanked Him for the food, broke the bread, divided the fish, and then gave the food to the disciples (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11). The disciples in turn passed out the food to the multitudes.

Just as it is impossible to know what it looked like for a withered hand to grow back, a storm to be calmed, or an ear to be reattached, it is impossible to know exactly how the food multiplied. Instead of explaining exactly how it looked, the Gospel authors chose to focus on the dramatic outcome of the miracle. The first dramatic result was that the people “all ate and were filled” (Matt. 14:20). John adds that the people ate “as much as they wanted” (John 6:11). From five loaves and two fish, God multiplied enough food to satiate a multitude. Not only was there enough food, but there were even leftovers! The second dramatic result was that there were twelve baskets of leftover bread (Matt. 14:20). When the people had finished eating, Jesus commanded the disciples to “gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost” (John 6:12). When the disciples had finished, each had his own basket of leftovers. God had perfectly planned how much food He would create from the bread and fishes—He even planned out what the people wouldn’t eat! Matthew saves the last dramatic result for the end: “Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children” (Matthew 14:21). Perhaps as many as 25,000 people were present for the miraculous meal! Never before had Jesus done a miracle which directly affected so many people. All of those who sat in the cool of the early evening, their bellies satisfied and their minds racing with what Jesus had done, had to ask themselves how they were going to respond to the miracle they had just seen.

Conclusion

Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not reveal how the crowd responded to Jesus’ miracle, John does. After the multitude saw Jesus’ sign, they rightly concluded, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14). But instead of responding to His authority by repenting and believing in Him, the people tried to bring the Messiah under their authority. “Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king” (John 6:15). The people wanted a king who would be able to satisfy their stomachs, not one who commanded obedience and demanded faith. They were willing for Jesus to be authoritative as long as they remained autonomous.

On the next day, Jesus exposed their false motives and challenged them to believe in Him as the Bread of Life (John 6:22–66). Not only did the multitude reject Him as the way of salvation, but even those who had previously called themselves His disciples turned away (John 6:66). Many are willing to come to Jesus as a compassionate shepherd or a gracious provider. They are willing to call Him king if their desires are satisfied. But only those whom the Father has given (John 6:35) will place their faith in the Son and submit their lives to Him.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What was Jesus doing in today's lesson?
Jesus was teaching the people a parable.

What story did Jesus teach about?
Jesus taught the people the parable of the sower.

What did the disciples ask Jesus?
They asked Him why He taught in parables.

What does it mean to have "ears to hear"?
The people with "ears to hear" are those who God allows to understand His message.



A Big Lunch

Ask the children if they have attended "big church," the place where their parents go to worship God after they are dropped off in class. Ask them if all the people after the worship service wanted to eat lunch, how much food would be needed to provide food for all of them? Jesus miraculously fed more than 5,000 people after He taught God's Word.



Compassion

When Jesus saw the crowds all around Him, He had compassion on them. Compassion is seeing people in need and then wanting to help them. They had brought their sick and they were like sheep without a shepherd. He knew that they had an even greater need than hunger or sickness. It was to be saved from the eternal punishment of their sins. When have you felt compassion for someone? How did you try to help them or comfort them in their tough time of life?



A Sea of Faces

Illustrate to the students just how many people were sitting on the grass before Jesus. The chances are that there were far more than 5,000 men there that day. The estimated number is closer to 25,000 people counting women and children. Lay a large piece of butcher paper across the floor. Give the children markers and ask them to draw 25,000 circles for faces. They will lose count quickly but have them fill as much of the page as possible. Use this illustration to show them the incredible miracle that Jesus did this day.



One Piece Into Thousands

Pass out a piece of bread (or a paper shaped like bread) to each student. Ask the students to break the bread into 5,000 pieces. As they begin to tear, ask them to

keep track of how many pieces they have in front of them. They will realize quickly that 5,000 is a big number and the pieces of bread get smaller and smaller. Ask the students if one of these little pieces would fill them up? Explain that what happened in today's lesson is truly a miracle. Jesus fed 5,000 men with only five loaves and two fish and they were all full. Even after the people were finished, they filled 12 baskets with the leftovers.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Jesus was rejected by many people. Even the people of His own hometown did not like Him. But Jesus did not allow such rejection stop Him from teaching His message to the people.

Jesus sent His disciples out to spread the gospel message as well. When they returned, they were eager to tell Jesus about their experiences and to get some rest. Jesus saw that His disciples were tired and hungry and told them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). They had to go to a deserted place because there was always a large crowd gathered around them to hear their message or see their miracles. They got into a boat and sailed to the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, a place that was far away from any towns or villages.

Many people saw them get into the boat and they watched and followed the boat from the shore. When they saw where the boat was going to stop, the crowd ran ahead so they could meet Jesus and the disciples when they got off. Though they were looking for peace and quiet, when Jesus saw the crowd, He was filled with compassion for them and wanted to help them. Many of them had come with sick friends or family members hoping that Jesus would heal them. Jesus worked His way through the crowd and healed them of their physical diseases and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

The day wore on and it started to get late. The disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food" (14:15). They knew that the crowd was certainly hungry, and there was no town or village close by where they could get something to eat. The disciples wanted Jesus to send them away so that they would have time to get to a village before it got too late.

Jesus had already planned to provide food for the crowds, but He didn't tell the disciples what His plan was because He wanted to test them. Jesus said to the disciples, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matt. 14:16) Philip said to Jesus that it would cost them a lot of money to feed this many people. There were about five thousand men there, and many had their wives and children with them. Philip did not see how they could possibly feed that many

people. It would be too expensive! Apparently, Philip did not remember that He was speaking to Jesus, the Son of God, who had performed miracle after miracle in front of him! Nothing was impossible for Jesus.

Jesus tested them again. He told the twelve disciples to go out among the crowd and see how much food they had. All they found was a boy who had brought a lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish. Andrew failed Jesus' test as well. He said that it was impossible to feed a huge crowd with such a little bit of food. None of the disciples had responded in faith. They did not realize that they were standing with the One who had created all the people there, and who could certainly feed them all!

Jesus took the five loaves of bread and two fish and told the disciples to gather the crowd, separate them into groups of fifty people, and have them sit down on the grass. When everyone was seated and anxiously waiting to see what Jesus would do, He looked to heaven, blessed God and thanked Him for the food, and began handing out the food to the disciples. He continued to hand out food until everyone there had been fed enough food so that they were no longer hungry. When they were all done, Jesus told the disciples to gather the leftovers. They filled twelve baskets with all the extra food.

Jesus had miraculously created enough food to feed five thousand men, and their wives and children! Imagine how amazed all of the people were. They each had to make a decision as to how they would respond to such an obvious display of power that could only be of God.

The response started off right. The crowd concluded that Jesus must be the Messiah, the King that God had promised to send them. But instead of repenting and believing in Him when they saw that He was Messiah, they were planning a way to take Him away by force and make Him become their earthly king. They wanted a king who would always make sure they had enough food, not one who required obedience and faith.

The next day, Jesus told them that He knew what they were planning in their hearts, and once again challenged them to put their faith in Him. The crowd did not repent, however, but rather rejected Jesus as their Savior. Even some who had already claimed to have put their faith in Him turned away from Jesus when they saw that He would not be their earthly king. Many were seeking a king who would give them what they wanted, but only those whom God has chosen will place their faith in Him and submit their lives to Him.



Lesson Questions

What were Jesus and the disciples doing in the beginning of this story?
Jesus and the disciples were looking for a quiet place to take a break.

What did they find when they came to the shore?
They found a multitude of people who had followed them.

What did Jesus do for the people?
Jesus healed the sick.

What did the disciples say when it was getting late?
They said that Jesus should send away the people to find food.

How much food did they have?
All they could find were five loaves of bread and two fish.

What did Jesus do with the loaves and fish?

Jesus thanked God for the food and gave it to the people. When they were done they were all full and there were 12 baskets of leftovers.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Bread and Fish

Bring five dinner rolls (real) and two fish (props) to class in a bag. Have the children count each item as you pull them out. Ask them if these bread and fish are enough to feed everyone in church. (Answer: No.)



Five Loaves and Two Fish

To illustrate what the loaves and fish might have been like, show the students two small dried fish and five dinner rolls when the section of the story arrives where they gave Jesus all the food that they could find. Also bring in a small basket about the size of a lunch basket. This was likely the size of the baskets that the disciples had collected the extra food in. They brought to Him a young boy's lunch, which consisted of two fish and five small loaves of bread and collected 12 baskets of leftovers.



That's Impossible!

For children who spend little time preparing food and trying to make it stretch, Jesus' feeding of the multitude can sometimes seem insignificant. To help them realize how impossible it is to do what Jesus did, select a volunteer from the class and give him a single, small, cookie. Ask him to share the cookie with the whole class. (Is this section necessary?) Midway through his attempt you could ask those who have already received a piece if they have had enough or whether they want more. Instruct the child to go back and give them some more. It will soon become apparent that one cookie cannot feed even a small class. In today's lesson Jesus did much more than feed a few children.

Praise and Worship

All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name

He Is Able

Change My Heart, Oh God

Fairest Lord Jesus



Jesus Feeds the Multitude

Jesus sought a quiet place,
(hold hand over eyes as if searching, then place finger to lips)

But the multitudes gave chase.
(pump arms)

At dinnertime, the disciples said,
(tap wrist)

“Send them away to buy some bread.”
(point away)

But Jesus did a miracle,
(point up)

Made each and every belly full,
(pat stomach)

With just a little bit of food,
(hold thumb and forefinger to indicate small)

Jesus fed the multitude!
(hold arms wide open)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Collect the Extras

Materials: created loaves of bread, fish and baskets. These objects could be made out of various materials such as paper bags, cardstock, etc. Create baskets for the students out of paper bags with the top rolled down.

Directions: The object of this game is for the students to collect the baskets of left-over food like the disciples did after Jesus fed the multitude. Create enough bread and fish for 12 baskets to be filled. Divide up the students into teams divisible by 12 (2, 3, 4, 6, or 12) and distribute the bags evenly among teams. The first team to fill their basket(s) and return to their station wins the round. For a longer game play multiple rounds.

Loaves and Fish Snack

Give the students gummy fish, quarters of graham crackers, and small Dixie cups. Let them create a simple basket from a Dixie cup by hooking (half) a pipe cleaner through two holes near the top of the cup. Place the treats inside the little cups. Glue the key verse or memory verse to the side of the cup.



Feeding the Multitude

Materials: brown paper loaves of bread, gray paper fish, and sky blue cardstock base sheet, green grass sheet, verse, scissors, glue, black markers or crayons

Directions: Distribute the materials to the students and instruct them to cut out the various items: bread, fish, grass, and verse. On this day there were many people reclining on the green grass. It must have been an enormous crowd of people that

were there that day. It probably looked like a sea of faces. Ask the students to cut the green paper the short way so that it looks like a rolling hill. The students should begin the craft by gluing on to the verse to the top of the page. Next, they can glue or tape on the rolling green fields. Ask students to draw circles all over the green grass for all the people that were there that day. Finally, they can tape on the loaves of bread and the fish at the bottom of the page.



Pass the Bread

For this game instruct the students to make to single file lines. Each line is given a loaf of bread. This can be an actual uncut loaf or a something like a nylon filled with newspaper. On the signal have the students pass the bread down their line. To make this interesting, instruct them to pass it in some pattern (eg. over the head, under the legs). When the loaf gets to the end of the line the last person should run to the front of the line and start passing it again. The team to have all their teammates start the bread down the line wins.



“Loaves and Fish”

Materials: copies of “Loaves and Fish” craft page ribbon, paper fish, paper bread, hand held hole punch, preprinted verse card

Pray with the children, thanking God for all the provisions He gives us. Cut out the pieces of bread and fish with the students. Students may decorate fish and bread. A hole can then be punched in the corner of the bread and at the end of the fish. Using ribbon (or twist-ties) thread the piece of ribbon through the holes. Attach a card with the following verse written on it: “And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples...” Matthew 14:19. (For younger children, twist-ties may be easier to work with.)

Coloring Pages

Give each child a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



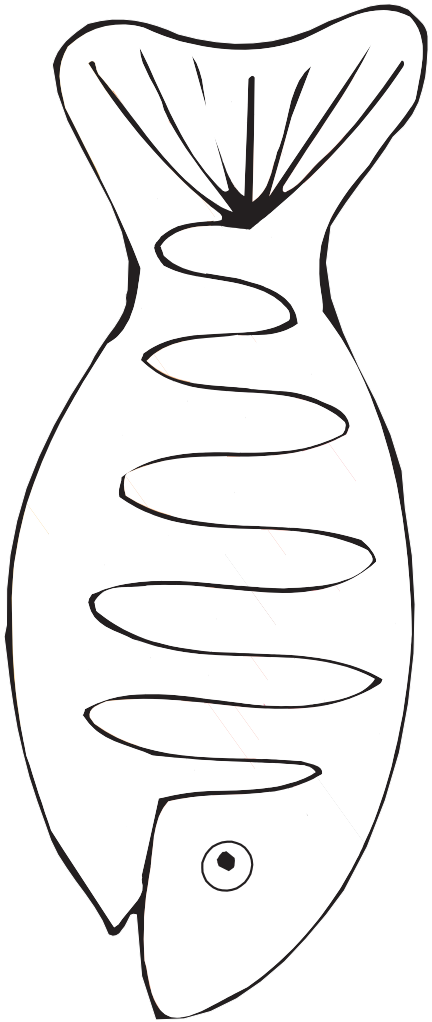
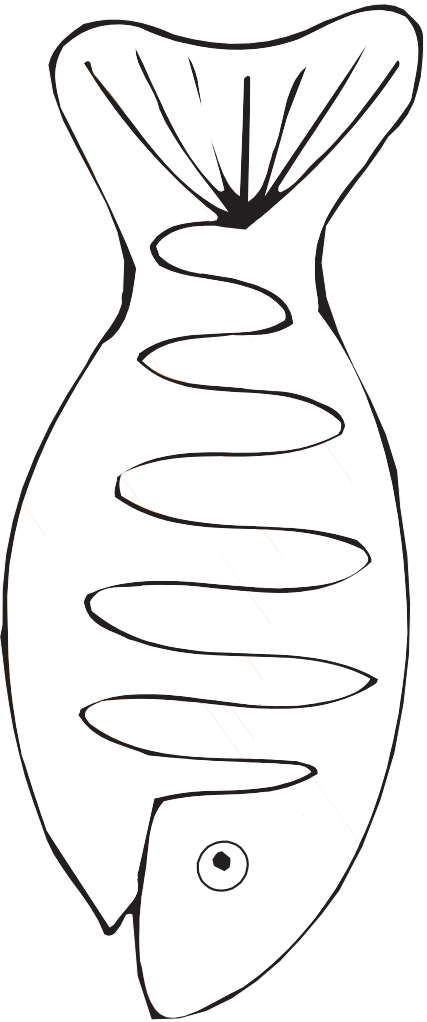
MEMORY VERSE

“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.” —*Matthew 14:14*

Loaves and Fish



Loaves and Fish



"And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples..."
—Matthew 14:19



"...And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes." —Matthew 14:19



"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained." —Matthew 14:20

