

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

Discussion starter

- What is the most interesting, unusual or beautiful picnic you have ever had?

questions

Read **John 6:1-15**.

1. Why did the crowds follow Jesus instead of going to Jerusalem for Passover (6:2)?

A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.

Note: Those thought to be wonderworkers usually drew large followings in the ancient world, but most wonderworkers did not emphasize teaching over miracles as Jesus did (6:26-27).

- ♥ Would you have been in this crowd? Why or why not?
- ♥ For what reasons do people follow Jesus today? What makes *you* want to follow Jesus?

2. What are some things we learn about Jesus as a person in 6:5-6?

He was compassionate and caring – he was concerned about the crowd eating

He used everyday situations to teach and build the faith of the people and disciples

He was a person of purpose; he had a plan and knew exactly what he was going to do

He had the power to carry out his plan

He was a great teacher – teaching by example and demonstration, not just words

- ♥ Is he the same today? What does this mean for you?

Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Everything we read about and see Jesus doing in the Bible is still true of him today. He is still caring and compassionate, he still has a plan and purpose in our lives, he still teaches, etc.

Whatever we see Jesus do and say in the Bible can also be expected of him today.

3. In what way was Jesus' question to Philip a test (6:5-6)?

Teachers (rabbis) often quizzed their disciples with questions and tested their disciples resolve or understanding of a matter by posing a difficult situation. The disciples had seen a number of miracles by now. Jesus was "testing" to see if they were beginning to think spiritually and supernaturally or did they still see situations with only their physical eyes and reasoning.

What "grade" would you give Philip on his test (6:7)? Why?

Answers will vary but the point is that Philip didn't really pass the test. He had only a physical, rational answer to Jesus' question instead of seeing the possibilities of what Jesus could do.

Philip didn't yet "get it." He doesn't see Jesus' miraculous ability. Jesus is not bound by "impossibilities."

- ♥ How do you usually respond to an "impossible" situation in your life that doesn't seem to have a solution? Stoically? Fear/Anxiety? Nonchalance? Avoidance? Realistically? Doubt? Trust/Faith?

4. Did Andrew show any greater faith and understanding than Philip (6:8-9)? Why or why not?

Andrew was a little more hopeful and showed more faith by finding and bringing the boy with the loaves and fishes, but he really doesn't see beyond that.

- ♥ Jesus was using this experience to teach his disciples. If any of the disciples had been strong and mature in their faith at this time, how would they have answered Jesus' question, "Were shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

Jesus was looking for faith, not doubt. The disciples could have answered in a number of ways; "I have no idea what you will do, Lord, but I know that you have a plan and that nothing is too difficult for you." Or "We have seen you do other miracles and we know you can take care of this too" or "We don't need to buy bread! If you changed water to wine, I'm sure you can change the stones to bread!"

- ♥ When did God last test your faith? (The opposite of *faith* is *doubt*.) Do you feel like you "passed" the test? What did you learn from the experience? **Have several share.** (Testing is often difficult, but we learn things that we could not learn any other way.)
5. Jesus' actions in 6:11 serve as a model of what to do in impossible situations where we feel inadequate to meet the needs and demands that are put upon us. Following Jesus' example, what can *we do* and what can we expect *God to do* in these situations?

Jesus **took what was available** (the 5 loaves and 2 fish) and he **thanked God for what he had** and then **he did what he could do** – began to distribute the food. As he distributed the food, the food began to multiply or not run out.

We can follow Jesus' example when we are in an impossible situation or when we don't know what to do by **taking what is available to us at the time** and then **thanking God for what he has provided**. We then **do what we can with it, trusting God to come and do his part**. Too often we want to wait and do nothing until we see the solution, but that is not faith. By taking, thanking and acting we demonstrate our faith that God will come and do his part.

- ♥ How much food did each person get (5:11-12)? What does this say about Jesus' provision for our needs?

Each had as much as he/she wanted and there was plenty left over. God is never skimpy in his provision for us. He give abundantly. We never have to worry that there will never be enough of whatever he is providing for us (strength, wisdom, encouragement, courage, healing, or supplying our physical needs)

- ♥ When has God stretched your limited resources (physically or emotionally) far beyond what you could have imagined? In what way do you need to trust him to do so now?

6. A *sign* points to something or reveals some truth. What do you think are some reasons why Jesus performed this miraculous sign of *feeding the five thousand*?

Answers will vary, but here are some suggestions:

- Demonstrated that God is compassionate – taking care of the people. Miracles are always benevolent acts
- It revealed Jesus' identity as the Son of God
- He used the miracle to test his disciples faith but also to teach them and the people about God and how to live life
- Showed that Jesus' satisfies completely as the Bread of Life
- Showed that Jesus was Master over nature and matter
- Showed that God supplies our physical and spiritual needs
- Showed that nothing is too hard for God

- ♥ What can we learn from Jesus withdrawing from the place of success to be by himself (6:15)?

Jesus would not be distracted from his mission and what God wanted him to do, no matter how strong public opinion was for wanting him to be something else. He simply walked away even though the people were ready to revolt and declare him as King.

Both heart questions below are good ones for you group to discuss:

- ♥ When might be a good time for you to withdraw from people?
- ♥ What are some spiritual benefits of being alone?

Read **John 6:16-24**.

7. What are some specific truths Jesus wants us to know and understand about him from the miracle of the storm on the lake and Jesus walking on the water?

Jesus shows his absolute power over nature by walking on the water, calming the storm and making the boat immediately arrive at its destination. He demonstrates that he is the Creator and sustainer of nature. Jesus is more powerful than any physical force. He is Master of all. His very Presence brings peace. Jesus is with us in all circumstances and his presence stills the storms of life.

- ♥ What do you sometimes forget about Jesus that could help you in a tough situation if only you remembered?

In the middle of the storm, it seems the disciples had completely forgotten the miracle of the feeding to the five thousand and the power Jesus demonstrated over nature and matter. We often forget, too, what Jesus has done for us in the past. If we remembered, we would ask him and trust him to bring us through the current situation.

Both the miraculous signs of *feeding the five thousand* and *Jesus walking on the water*, happened close to the festival of Passover. Passover was the celebration of the Hebrew people being freed from Egyptian slavery by their prophet and savior, Moses. Among Moses' many miracles, two were especially remembered and commemorated: 1) The parting of and taking people through the Red Sea, and 2) the miraculous feeding of the people with manna for forty years in the desert. Both these miracles had become powerful symbols of God caring for his people by rescuing and sustaining them.

- ♥ With that background, what was Jesus communicating about himself to his disciples and the Jewish people when he performed these two miracles around the time of Passover? **It is as if Jesus was acting out a story or parable. By his actions he was showing that his was greater than any prophet before him, especially Moses, whom the Jewish people considered to be their greatest leader because he gave them the Law. Jesus is showing that he supercedes Moses. He not only provides bread, but he is the bread from heaven and the bread of life. Jesus shows even a greater command over nature than Moses did when he parted the Red Sea. Jesus walks on the sea and calms the storm. Jesus is ushering in and revealing a new order. Jesus is proving to the people who he is in ways that they would understand and relate to.**

Read **John 6:25-40**.

8. Food is necessary for life. What are some differences between *physical* food and *spiritual* food (6:26-27)? Although physical food is necessary for physical life, it is temporary and it spoils and does not last forever. Physical food sustains our physical life. Spiritual food sustains our spiritual life that will last forever. Spiritual food comes from God and although we need physical food to live, spiritual food is much more important because it has eternal consequences. Physical food will not keep us alive forever. We all will die physically. Spiritual food feeds the deepest center of human existence, the spiritual self, and continues to satisfy. We can work for and produce our physical food, but spiritual food only comes from Jesus.

Jesus is urging the people to be more concerned with eternal life than physical life. He was telling them to lift their minds above the physical necessities of life. He wasn't commanding them to stop working for a living, but he was saying that their main quest should be for spiritual food that never spoils.

- ♥ Where does one get spiritual food (6:27)? **The Son of man (Jesus) gives it to us**
Is there any other way to get it? No – **God is the only source of spiritual food.**
 - ♥ Do you look for Jesus because of who he is or because of what he does?
 - ♥ Which receives the most attention and effort in your life – spiritual success or material success? Which one will last forever?
9. What is the "work" of God – the thing God is most interested in you doing (6:29)?
To believe in Jesus whom God has sent

How do you do this work?

As we have discussed before, belief is not just head knowledge. It is an action of the heart. It means to cleave to, trust, rely on, and have faith in His God and Jesus his Son. The work involves learning about God, responding to him and developing a relationship with him. Certainly, Bible study, is part of this work, as is prayer.

- ♥ Does belief seem like work to you (6:29)? Why or why not? How hard do you work at believing?
 - ♥ Considering that Jesus had just fed five thousand people from five small loaves and two small fish, the question the crowd asked in 6:30 almost makes us laugh! Yet, what are some ways we often do the very same thing in our relationship with God?
10. The Jews considered *manna* to be bread from heaven. How did Jesus define *bread from heaven* (6:32-35)?

It is God who give true bread from heaven

The Bread from heaven comes to give the life of God to the world

Jesus himself is the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Jesus will never be spiritually hungry or thirsty again. Jesus completely satisfies our spiritual hunger.

- ♥ Consider Jesus' words in 6:35-40 about the *bread of life*. How do we eat this bread? Is this something we only do once? We eat the Bread of Life by coming to Jesus and
 - ♥ How would you describe your daily spiritual diet? Junk food? Frozen food? Baby food? Microwave dinners? Leftovers? Meat and potatoes? Bread and wine?
11. What promises does Jesus make to the one who comes to him and believes on him?

Verse

Promise

6:37 - **Jesus will never drive away anyone who comes to him**

6:39 - **Jesus will not "lose" anyone who comes to him (It is not our ability to hold on to him that is important, but his ability to hold on to us!)**

6:39 - **Jesus will raise up (from physical death) all those who come to him**

6:40 - **everyone that believes in the Son will have eternal life (the life that never ends)**

- ♥ What are some words that describe how these promises make you feel? **Loved, secure, significant, etc.**
- ♥ According to 6:35-40, how sure can a person be of what will happen to them after physical death?
We don't have to guess what will happen to us after we physically die. We can be very sure, that if we believe in Jesus and what he has done for us (died for our sins and restores our relationship with God) that we will have eternal life and he will raise us up on the last day.
- ♥ What kind of changes would you see in your life if you lived wholeheartedly the way Jesus did (6:38)?

response

This would be a good way to end the lesson by having some in your group share from their own stories of how God drew them to Himself.

We sometimes think that we, at some point in our life and for some reason, decide to "check Jesus out" and then we decide to come to him and believe in him. According to **John 6:44**, however, this is not the case. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him . . ." We come to Jesus because God the Father has drawn us with loving-kindness (**Jeremiah 31:3**). We never come to Jesus by our own initiative. As God draws us, our part is only to say yes or no.

Spend some time reflecting on the events and circumstances of your life. How do you see that God the Father has drawn you to himself? What people did he use? What circumstances? What situations? How did he work in your heart? *Spend some time thanking your heavenly Father for the way he has drawn you to him with great loving-kindness. How can you best express your gratitude?*

Encounter with Jesus

What physical, emotional or spiritual need do you have in your life right now? From what you see in **John 6:1-21**, does Jesus want to fulfill your need? Is he able to fulfill it? Does he need anything from you in order to give you what you need? What is your faith level for Jesus meeting this need? (Faith is *choosing* to believe God's promises to us regardless of our feelings or circumstances).

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. Hear Jesus call you by name and ask you, "**What do you need?**" *On the back of this page, tell him what is on your heart as you answer his question.*

Do you hear Jesus saying anything back? What thoughts came to mind? Do you see him doing anything? Are you reminded of any Scripture? Write down any words or impressions that come to you. Spend some time with Jesus, listening and then thanking him for what he has shown you.