



## John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 5/12) Feeding the 5000

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect:** *In what parts of your life do you need to continue to change in response to the grace you have received? How could you ask God to help you in his strength?*

#### Warm-Up

1. What are the most common things that people 'live' for? Are those things bad? Do they satisfy?

#### Read John 6:1-14

2. Where has Jesus been prior to this? How big was the crowd? *Why had they followed Jesus?*
3. As Jesus and the disciples withdrew up a mountainside, what were they probably hoping for?
4. What is the significance of John's reference to the time of the "Jewish Passover Festival" being near?
5. How do you feel when your quiet time is interrupted? How do you think Jesus felt?
6. How did Jesus have *compassion* for the crowd even though they had mixed motives? (The parallel accounts of this incident may also shed further light on the shape of Jesus' compassion.)
7. Where else do we witness the compassion of Jesus? How does it make you feel to know that Jesus is also compassionate towards us? How does knowing that help you to approach Jesus more freely?
8. What happens when Jesus takes the bread and fish? How is it evident that this was a miracle?
9. How abundant is the provision of Jesus? How does this point to his ultimate provision for us?

#### Read John 6:25-36

10. What has happened just prior to this? Why (according to Jesus) were the crowds looking for him?
11. What does Jesus tell the people *not to do*? What do you think is the 'food that spoils'?
12. What are you tempted to 'live for' apart from Jesus? What is the danger of making a good thing our ultimate thing in life?
13. What is the only 'work' that is required for salvation? Does this mean we earn our salvation?
14. What role did bread have in the ancient world? *What does Jesus mean when he says he is the 'bread of life'?*
15. Is the 'life' that Jesus brings just a mere existence or something more? Try to spend some time discussing all of the wonderful dimensions of the life that Jesus brings for us?
16. What was the manna in the Old Testament? How is the 'bread of life' similar? How is it superior?
17. Why did Jesus need to die in order to save us? How does the Lord's Supper (and the broken bread) point to this? Can we have life to the full and life forever without Jesus' death?
18. How did various people respond to Jesus' claim? What does it mean to feed on Jesus? (Try to consider that for someone who is not yet a Christian AND for those who are believers.)

**Apply** *How do you keep 'feeding on Jesus' every day as you seek to live for him?*

**Pray** *Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus is the bread of life who has come down from heaven for us. Help us to look to him, feed on him, and know life in his name. Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 5/12) Feeding the 5000

Small Group Discussion Questions

### On Your Front Line this Week

*What would it look like to reflect the gentleness of Jesus on your frontline?*

### For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

### Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Does your food satisfy you” by Vaughan Roberts: <https://stebbes.org/sermons/does-your-food-satisfy/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “The Feeding” by Tim Keller: [https://gospelinlife.com/sermons/?ep\\_filter\\_book-of-the-bible=john-6](https://gospelinlife.com/sermons/?ep_filter_book-of-the-bible=john-6)
- *Read (article):* “Reflections: The Desire of My True Country” by C S Lewis: <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/reflections-january-2020/>

### Series Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Read:* “Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel” by Andreas Köstenberger
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

## JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

*Week 5/12 “Feeding the 5000”  
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (01/03/2026)*

오천명을 먹이심 | Biānabur Dhiëc | 喂饱五千人 | 5000 பேரை போஷித்தவர்

*Bible Passage: John 6:1-15; 25-35*

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*Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus is the bread of life who has come down from heaven for us.  
Help us to look to him, believe in him, and feed on him. Amen.*

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It doesn't really matter if it's breakfast, lunch, or dinner, I never really feel “full” — I never *truly* feel satisfied — unless I've had pasta or bread. I love it! [There's a numberplate of a car in Toowoomba with “I ♥ BREAD” — I'm pretty sure it's for a baker because it's often parked near a bakery! But every time I see it, I think ‘yes!’]

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- But in the ancient world, bread wasn't just a toasted companion for your smashed avocado. It was THE staple of ordinary, everyday life that played a crucial *physical and social role*.
- **Physically**: bread was the source of life, providing nutrition, fulfilling your hunger.  
*If the grain supply of a nation was constrained or cut off — it meant famine.*
- But bread didn't just fulfil your physiological need for food — it also had a social function.
- **Socially**: breaking bread was a sign of friendship with another.  
Jesus got in a stack of trouble for how generously and widely he broke bread with people. //
- So, as we come to this sign in the Gospel of John, it is extraordinary that Jesus miraculously multiples five *barley loaves* and two *fish*, with such abundance, that 5000 men *plus women and children are fed to the full, with twelve baskets of bread leftover*.
- But Jesus is **NOT showing us** that he is the ultimate catering backup plan, but that he — alone — is the ultimate source of life, forgiveness, and life forever with him.
- *Jesus is the one who truly satisfies. /*
- *He ALONE is the ONLY one who can ultimately satisfy.*
- He is the bread that we need. /
- That's the claim to which this sign points.

It's really neat *that apart from Jesus' resurrection,*  
that this miracle is the only one featured in all four Gospels!

- *In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John...*
- But what makes John unique,  
is that he doesn't just *fill us in* on what happens on the mountainside,  
but he also *shares what happens* the next day by the lake:  
as the crowd track him down,  
and he challenges them to find their ultimate satisfaction in him.
- So we've got a bit to cover: Two sections of chapter 6.  
But let's consider the claim in three parts...
- Satisfaction is found in the one who is:
- **Full of Compassion;**  
**Generous Provider;** and **THE**  
**Bread of Life.**

## FULL OF COMPASSION | VERSES 1-7

공휼이 가득함 | Thiëŋ kē Kác dē Piōu | 充满慈悲 | மனதுருக்கமானவர்

First, *satisfaction is found in the one who is full of compassion.* Chapter 6, verse 1...

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1 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish Passover Festival was near. 5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

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We don't really know how long it had been since Jesus' healing of the paralysed man.  
A miracle that *had left some religious leaders furious, persecuting Jesus, and wanting to kill him.*  
*But what we do know is that as Jesus withdraws up the mountainside, a remote and solitary place,*  
his intention seems to be to have some quiet time alone with the disciples.

- The other Gospel authors tell us that John the Baptist has just been killed.  
John reminds us that the Jewish Passover is near. /
- *Jesus knows that his hour is soon to come.*
- But if they thought they were going to have some *quiet* space to themselves, they're in for a rude shock as a crowd of 5000 men *plus who knows how many women and children,*  
have tracked them down and are following them up the mountain.

- Can you imagine that? As you look down from the mountain, you would see them coming.
- Maybe — at some level — this feels all-too-familiar!  
That you can never manage any time to yourself.  
That it's always interrupted by something urgent or another need.
- But this is not just a hope for some alone-time being dashed!
- Jesus' life is in danger; his cousin has been recently beheaded; *and*  
You're preparing for what you're about to face.
- And this crowd are in hot pursuit,  
because they've seen the miracles Jesus has performed *and now they want more of the same.*

I'd want to run and hide.

- I'd be so grumpy when they all showed up. /
- But not Jesus. /
- *Mark tells us that he taught them as they were like sheep without a shepherd.*  
*Matthew tells us that he healed their sick.*  
*Luke adds that Jesus welcomed and had compassion for them. And of course, he fed them, too. /*
- *I find it astonishing that even in the face of all that has happened, the strain that he was under, the mounting pressure of what he was about to face, and the questionable motives of the crowd, that Jesus' gut-wrenching compassion is so great that he is moved to action without hesitation.*
- A comprehensive care for these people and their needs.

- Emotionally *welcoming them.*  
Spiritually *teaching them.*  
Physically *healing and feeding them.*  
Eternally *he'll soon go to the cross to save them.*
- Don't just be WOWED by what he is ABLE to do, *take to heart what he is WILLING to do.*
- This is a glimpse of Jesus' heart. Not just for a crowd 2000 years ago.  
But this is a glimpse of Jesus' heart for you. For us. /

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Jesus said: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened...

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People can hesitate going to Jesus for all sorts of reasons.

- Perhaps you think you're not important enough or good enough.  
That your issue is too big or too small. / That God is too busy or not bothered.
- I heard an influencer recently saying you should pray to intermediary people — like saints — because God is pretty stretched. But that's utter nonsense. Go to Jesus.
- He's not only capable of handling *whoever, whatever, and whenever,*  
but he's willing and wants to welcome you.
- You do that for the first time. *And then over and over again.*
- *How other people respond — or how you would respond — is not a measure of how Jesus will and does. // No one else compares.*

## GENEROUS PROVIDER | VERSES 8-15

아낌없이 베푸시는 분 | Dumióny de Gëëm | 慷慨的供应者 | தாராளமாக கொடுப்பவர்

Second, *satisfaction is found in the one who is the generous provider.* Verse 8...

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8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

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When Jesus asks the disciples, "*Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?*"

- **He's probably not expecting** them to respond with a list of nearby bakeries.  
**He's probably not even expecting** them to suggest a multiplication miracle. /  
**He's drawing them** into the problem and showing them *again* who he is.
- They don't think this is *their problem*. And they still haven't grasped who is the solution.
- Where shall WE BUY this bread? *Send them away to buy it for themselves?*  
Where shall WE BUY this bread? *It would cost a fortune!*

- It's like they're thinking: It's not our problem. /  
Even if it was, we can't afford the solution. /  
And if we tried, it wouldn't be enough. // So why bother?
- Sometimes, we can be reluctant to recognise need,  
because we resist the responsibility of responding, *and*  
we know — heart-of-hearts that *on our own* we don't have the resources to resolve it.
- But Jesus doesn't expect them to solve the problem,  
he wants them to share in it and point to the solution. To him./
- We can be so overwhelmed by the problems around us that we dismiss them altogether.  
But if Jesus has a heart for those in need — and indeed for all who are lost — so should we.
- We can keep coming to Jesus — seeking out his will and his ways. Relying on him.  
We can't save people — but we do need to point people to the one who does save.

When Andrew speaks up and says, *here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish*, the disciples surely must have swapped some great glances at that point.

- What is he doing? Even Andrew knows it's not enough.
- Five barley loaves and two small fish — what will that possibly do?!!
- Those loaves were probably about 150 grams each.  
Two fish might have been about 150 grams in total!
- It's not actually much food for one person, let alone 10,000!

- Surely, Andrew MUST have felt a bit ridiculous even mentioning it!  
*As disciples, offering small gifts in the face of big challenges often can!*
- But the potential to meet the need,  
isn't dependent on our power to provide. We've just got to be willing to obey. /
- The disciples were powerless.  
The crowd was powerless. / BUT Jesus is not.
- **Jesus asks** for everyone to be seated.  
**Jesus takes** the loaves and gives thanks.  
**Jesus gives** everyone all that they need.
- As much as they wanted.  
Everyone had enough to eat.  
There was an abundance of leftovers. / Jesus provided and they were satisfied!

Let's be clear. This is not a biblical basis for the 'prosperity Gospel'.

- "That if you give a little in faith then God will give you an abundance in return."
- It's not even a spiritualised justification for over-catering. (*Even though I would love it to be!*)
- Remember: it's a sign, it points away from itself to something more.
- Don't just look at the bread and the fish, look at the one behind the bread and fish.
- When the people eat their fill and when they witness the leftovers being collected, they want to make Jesus King *by force*.

- At one level, that's ridiculous!  
They have just recognised Jesus as one with incredible power,  
so now your plan is to deploy your limited power to coerce him to get what you want?  
That's foolish, right? / Jesus is not going to be coerced.  
*But they're also kind of onto something.*
- They want Jesus as their King — *because they've recognised that he is the one who can provide.*  
*But they don't fully understand how far he'll go to provide for us in the ultimate way. //*
- It must have been so tempting for Jesus to take the glory at that very moment.  
Imagine maybe 10,000 people gathered. A movement of people wanting you as king. /  
This is a picnic that we're still talking about 2,000 years later.
- But Jesus won't take the momentary glory to avoid the cross.
- The miracle is a pointer. /  
To the *only one* who can give us what we really need.  
To how *he will* fully provide for us.  
And *that he* — *Jesus* — is willing to do it.
- If you want to see just how far Jesus' compassion and abundant giving will take him,  
then you don't need to look any further than the cross.
- That he doesn't just break bread *with* us,  
but he becomes broken bread for us.

## BREAD OF LIFE | VERSES 25-35

생명의 떡 | Cuin dë Pïir | 生命的粮 | ஜீவ அப்பம்

He is the **bread of life**.

After the people had tried to make Jesus king by force, *he withdrew and vanished from them.*

- In fact, the evening after he fed the multitude, *there was another sign as he walked on water.* (You'll need to wait until next week for that one.)
- But the very next morning, *the crowds from the mountainside come looking for Jesus again!*
- They've been searching.
- *They've tracked him down and they want to know where he's been.* / It's as if they're saying: Jesus, where did you go? We've been looking for you? We're not done with you yet?
- But the same Jesus whose heart is full of compassion, also knows their hearts, and says:

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[verse 26] "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

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- Perhaps at first Jesus' words might seem harsh.

- But this isn't Jesus devoid of compassion. He healed, taught, and fed them!
- This is Jesus' *compassion* and *ability to provide for them* coming rushing together. /
- They haven't come with a spiritual hunger for him, but a material hunger. They want more of the bread! / They want more signs. /
- But Jesus knows that the greatest thing that they need isn't: for their stomachs to be filled, or the minds to be wowed. They need him! *The one who the father has sent. The one whom the father has placed his seal. Saying this is him!*

Look, we can long for all sorts of things in life.

Career, family, love, food, adventure. There's lots of good things in the world.

- They all can be good gifts. But they are not what we ultimately need. On their own, they will never truly satisfy us.
- They can fuel us up but still leave us famished.
- In fact, if we make any of those things our ultimate source of truth, meaning, and purpose. If we make approval, achievement, popularity, wealth, or health our ultimate goal then they will disappoint us, even crush us, because they'll always leave us hungry.
- Hear what Jesus is saying: that if there's anything more important to you than him, it will spoil.

The people “half-get” what Jesus is saying, so they wonder, right, okay Jesus: well, what sort of works do we need to do to earn favour with God?

- Maybe they think that they have to earn their way to God.
- To do all the right things. Accumulate enough points.
- But Jesus makes it clear that all that they need to do, is to believe in the one whom God has sent: to believe in him.

When Jesus said that, *everyone knew the gravity of what he was claiming*. That’s why they say:

- Well, *what evidence will you provide to convince us, to give us confidence to believe in you?*
- When Moses was in the desert, they got manna — bread from heaven each day. That manna sustained them for 40 years! How will you top that Jesus?! But Jesus is not just going to give them a sign — he’s going to give them himself.
- The true bread from heaven.
- Jesus drives the point home in *verse 49*, your ancestors received the amazing provision, yes! They add manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But I am the true bread, the living bread, and if you eat of me, you will never die!
- Do you believe that? Have you received that bread? Are you eating that bread?
- Bread *that is from God — we can’t supply it ourselves*.  
Bread *that brings life — more than existence, life to the full and life forever*.

Bread given at great cost — *this bread cost Jesus his life. / There was no other way.*

- Tim Keller put it like this:

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If you’re a farmer or a hunter-gatherer you’re constantly aware of something. Outside of the odd mineral like salt, everything we eat has died so you can live. You cannot live without eating and everything you eat has had to die so you can eat it, so you can live. Whether plant or animal. Bread is not just grain that has died so you can eat it. But you realise that if the bread stays whole, you’re going to fall to pieces because you’ll starve. But if you are going to be made whole the bread needs to be broken into pieces. When Jesus Christ says I am God that has been made bread, what he means is that I am God made breakable, vulnerable, to come to die on the cross to die for your sins”

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Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

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That’s why, the night before Jesus died:

Jesus took the bread and said *this is my body broken for you*.

*Jesus took the cup and said this is my blood of the new covenant shed for you.*

- Have you received this bread? If you haven’t, you can, simply by believing in him.
- And if you have, then we’ve got to keep on feeding on him everyday. Jesus is our spiritual diet. Like manna fresh every morning.

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There's a billboard when you drive from Toowoomba to Brisbane at the moment that says:

"The key to peace? Be a vegan"

Now being a vegan might do all sorts of things, but it's not going to bring you lasting peace.

You might think that's really obvious. But don't you think we're all tempted to substitute all sorts of things everyday in the place that only Jesus can fulfil. //

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- Just a few weeks ago, our dear brother Dennis went home to the Lord.

And for his funeral he chose this very passage.

- He chose it, because he wanted everyone to respond to Jesus' invitation and live.
- But I have to tell you, that Dennis also LIVED IT.
- Jesus was his daily bread.

**He hungered for Jesus.** In the reading of his Word, in prayer, in praise.

**He depended on Jesus' strength** in the power of his Spirit.

*Sometimes you don't realise how much you need Jesus until Jesus is the only thing you've got.*

**He obeyed Jesus,** living with a reliance on Jesus' will and ways.

**He proclaimed Jesus,** for he wanted nothing more than people to know the bread that brings life.

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- Will you go to Jesus?

Will you keep feeding on him?