

# 3.2

## FEEDING A CITY WITH A SACK LUNCH

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God provides  
for us out of His  
compassion.

### TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will worship God  
for who He is, not  
just for what He  
does.



### FOCUS VERSE: John 6:14

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

### LESSON TEXT: John 6:1-15



## BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Text:** John 6:1-15

An iconic miracle of Jesus is the feeding of the five thousand. A close examination of this story and the surrounding context demonstrates there may have been more going on behind the scenes than was immediately obvious. This story in John sits between two very different circumstances—one where the crowd desired to kill Jesus (John 5:16, 18) and another where the crowd abandoned Jesus because they could not accept His teachings (John 6:60, 66). Such were the highs and lows of Jesus' ministry.

The feeding of the five thousand happened on the side of a mountain, one of few places that could have accommodated such a large crowd. Organizing a crowd of this size and distributing food could not have been a fast process. However, instead of Jesus immediately breaking bread and feeding the hungry crowd, He first asked the disciples to try to solve the problem. Jesus already knew what He was going to do (John 6:6), but He wanted to test the disciples first.

The disciples first mused over their ability to purchase food, and apparently some went into the crowd to ask for donations. Sadly, in a crowd of over five thousand, only one boy volunteered his lunch. This was undoubtedly a test for the crowd as much as it was for the disciples. The crowd had clearly come to receive but was hesitant to give for the benefit of others.

The resulting miracle was undeniable and caused many to want to make Jesus their king. However, despite the amazing miracle, Jesus saw their hearts and discerned they had failed the test. Jesus left the crowd to be alone. His choice for solitude and rejection of their kingship makes sense when His identity as God incarnate is considered. Jesus didn't need the crowd's approval or admonition to be King. He was already King all by Himself.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND  
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# DAY 1

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## John 6:1-3

<sup>1</sup> After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

<sup>2</sup> And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

<sup>3</sup> And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

## Biblical Insight

The events of John 6 provide interesting commentary on the previous chapter as well. After Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the Jewish mob wanted to kill Him. However, many must have been persuaded by Jesus' defense because a "great multitude" followed Him, upwards of five thousand people (John 6:2, 10). Part of the reason they followed Jesus so closely was because of the miracles He performed for the sick.

## Daily Devotion

In nineteenth-century America, a "bandwagon" was a horse-drawn wagon with a platform on which a group of musicians performed. The bandwagon would often precede a circus parade, announcing the circus was in town. During Zachary Taylor's presidential campaign in 1848, a famous circus clown invited Taylor to join his circus bandwagon. Taylor gained more popularity and approval in the towns where he rode on the bandwagon. The phrase "jump on the bandwagon" first appeared during this campaign. It implied that people are influenced by the pressure to conform to what looks successful.

An example of this bandwagon mentality is seen throughout the Gospels. When Jesus was popular, crowds followed. When His popularity waned, crowds willingly chose to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus.

Upon reflection, why do you follow Jesus? Is it because you feel social pressure to follow Him? Or do you follow Him because you love Him?

## Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### John 6:4-7

<sup>4</sup> And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

<sup>6</sup> And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

### Biblical Insight

The Passover was typically associated with celebration and feasting (Leviticus 23:5-6). The fact that so many chose to follow Jesus instead of traveling to Jerusalem or another major city to celebrate Passover was another testament to Jesus' popularity. However, being on a remote mountain was not conducive to preparing a large meal. Even if there had been a place to purchase food, the disciples recognized that "two hundred denarii"—over half a year's salary for an average laborer—was not sufficient to buy enough food for everyone.

### Daily Devotion

A young woman recently moved to a large city hoping for a fresh start. God led her to an Apostolic Pentecostal church. There she received the gift of the Holy Ghost and began to experience God healing the scars of her past.

When her car broke down and she had no funds to repair it, she relied on public transportation to commute to work. Unfortunately, she could not take public transportation to church and could not afford an Uber. She was heartbroken, and she cried out to Jesus to provide a way because she desired to be in church.

The following Sunday she received a notification that money was added to her Apple Pay from an anonymous account. It was the exact amount she needed to pay for an Uber. Miraculous money appeared each Sunday until her car was repaired.

If you need provision in your life, remember that Jesus still provides.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

### John 6:8-10

<sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

<sup>9</sup> There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

<sup>10</sup> And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

### Biblical Insight

The scarcity of bread and fish stood in sharp contrast to the throng of people sitting on the hillside. Interestingly, although five thousand people followed Jesus to receive something (primarily healing), only one came forward when something was asked of them. It is nonsensical to think a boy in the crowd was the only one who packed food that day. This fact demonstrates the selfish attitude of those who followed Jesus. They wanted to receive but not to give. This may be one reason when Jesus later asked for a commitment from the followers, many left (John 6:66).

### Daily Devotion

George ordered a twenty-eight-ounce steak at a restaurant. After eating half, he placed the steak in a to-go box. He was already looking forward to the next day when he would be able to finish his steak.

As George left the restaurant, a homeless man approached him asking for money. George handed the homeless man five dollars and blessed him in Jesus' name. Feeling proud for doing his Christian duty, George began walking away. The homeless man called out to him, "What about the box?" In that moment George realized it was easier for him to part with a five-dollar bill than the leftovers in the box.

As followers of Jesus, we must be willing to give what is easy and what is difficult. There is no place for selfishness. Upon reflection, is there something Jesus could ask you to give that you would refuse?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 4

### John 6:11-13

<sup>11</sup> And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

<sup>12</sup> When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

### Biblical Insight

The Passover celebration ultimately ended up being a feast; the leftover bread filled twelve baskets. Notably, although Jesus performed the miracle, He intentionally included the disciples in searching the crowd for food, organizing the crowd to sit down in an orderly fashion, distributing the food, and gathering the leftovers. This intentional inclusion caused the twelve disciples to have a different perspective than the rest of the crowd, who ultimately would abandon Jesus while the twelve remained (John 6:67-69).

### Daily Devotion

Maestro Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, is known for being a passionate teacher and approachable leader. According to his TED talk, Zander was not always an effective leader. After conducting for twenty years with mediocre success, Zander had a realization—the conductor of an orchestra never makes a sound. A conductor's success depends upon his or her ability to awaken the possibility in other people.

Jesus intentionally included the disciples when He healed the sick, cast out demons, and taught. He wanted to inspire them to become the men who would establish the future church. To do so, they needed to be used in the present.

New believers, teenagers, and children will be Sunday school teachers, worship singers, evangelists, and pillars in the church one day. How can you intentionally include them in the ministries where you are involved?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### John 6:14-15

<sup>14</sup> Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

<sup>15</sup> When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

### Biblical Insight

The onlookers' response stands juxtaposed to the response Jesus received in the previous chapter. In chapter 5 the onlookers wanted to kill Jesus (John 5:16, 18); in chapter 6 they wanted to crown Him king. Previously the onlookers had not recognized Jesus as the Prophet written about by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15; John 5:46); here they verbally proclaimed Jesus was that Prophet. However, Jesus fled from this crowd just like He had the first time when He recognized they were more interested in free bread and miracles than in life change and discipleship (John 6:26) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for John 6:15).

### Daily Devotion

At the age of thirty, Josh Brown was diagnosed with a brain tumor with no option for chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. Death was inevitable. Desperate, Josh did something he had not done since he was a little boy; he prayed. He began attending church and seeking God.

Months later, an MRI revealed his tumor had turned into scar tissue. He was healed! In the years since, Josh Brown's relationship with God has only deepened. In his career as a neuroscientist, Dr. Josh Brown boldly declares that God is real and performs miracles.

When miracles occur in our lives, they are meant to draw us closer to Jesus and to become a testimony to lead others to Christ. Reflect upon the miracles Jesus has done in your life. Did you allow them to draw you closer to Jesus? Let's not take them for granted like the onlookers in John 6.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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