NEW LIFE ONE STUDIES

Series: Growing Together.
Study Guide
Message: “Big Needs. BIGGER GOD.”

SCRIPTURE

Main Text:	Cross References:
John 6:1–15	*Exodus 16:1–18* *2 Kings 4:42–44* *Deuteronomy 18:15–18* *Matthew 14:16–20* *John 6:26–35* *1 Corinthians 12:4–7* *Ephesians 2:8–10*

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

(This section focuses on understanding what the text means — before jumping to what it means for us.)

Read John 6:1-7

Main Idea: Jesus intentionally confronts His disciples with a need far beyond their own ability so they can learn where true provision comes from.

Commentary:

John tells us that a massive crowd is following Jesus because they have seen the *"signs"* He performed by healing the sick. That word matters in John's Gospel. Jesus' miracles are not simply displays of supernatural power; they are signs that reveal something about who He is.

John also tells us that Passover was near. Passover reminded Israel of God rescuing them from Egypt, and the story surrounding that rescue included God miraculously feeding His people with manna in the wilderness. That background becomes important as Jesus feeds a crowd in a remote place and later identifies Himself as the Bread of Life. *(See: John 6:35)*

Jesus asks Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" John immediately tells us that Jesus already knew what He intended to do. The question therefore is not Jesus looking for Philip's solution. It is a test designed to reveal how Philip sees the situation.

Philip does the math. His estimate of *more than two hundred denarii* represents roughly many months of ordinary wages—and even that would only give everyone a small amount. Philip is not wrong about the size of the problem. Humanly speaking, the need truly exceeds their resources.

But Philip's calculation leaves one enormous factor out: ***Jesus is standing there***. The test exposes the difference between accurately recognizing <u>our</u> limitations and assuming those limitations determine what **God** can do.

Think About It:

1. Why does John make sure we know that Jesus already knew what He was going to do before He questioned Philip? What might Jesus be trying to reveal or develop in His disciple?

2. How does the Passover setting—and Israel's history of God providing food in the wilderness—add another layer to what Jesus is about to do?

3. Philip's calculation is factually reasonable. Where does his perspective become incomplete, and what does that teach us about the difference between honestly recognizing limitations and being controlled by them?

   Takeaway:
   The need may be bigger than us, but it is never bigger than Jesus.

Read John 6:8–9

Main Idea: What appears completely inadequate becomes part of Jesus' work when it is placed before Him.

Commentary:
Andrew now enters the story with an almost comically small solution: *five barley loaves and two fish.*

John is the only Gospel writer who tells us that the food belongs to a boy and that the bread is specifically barley bread. Barley was an inexpensive grain commonly eaten by poorer people. Nothing about this meal looks impressive—not the amount, the food, or the person carrying it.

There may also be an intentional Old Testament echo here. In *2 Kings 4:42–44*, someone brings the prophet Elisha twenty barley loaves. Elisha commands that the food be given to one hundred men,

and despite the servant's objection that there could never be enough, everyone eats and food remains afterward.

John's story is dramatically larger. Elisha feeds one hundred with twenty loaves. Jesus feeds thousands with five.

The comparison points us toward something greater than the usefulness of a small lunch. Jesus is doing something that identifies Him with—and surpasses—the great works of God Israel already knew.

Andrew sees the food but immediately recognizes the mismatch: *"How far will they go among so many?"*

That is one of the tensions at the heart of the passage. The food really is insufficient. Scripture does not ask us to pretend that five loaves are secretly enough for thousands. The point is that adequacy does not come from the size of what is available. It comes from Jesus.

Think About It:

1. Why might John preserve details as ordinary as an unnamed boy and five barley loaves? What contrast do those details create with the enormous need in front of Jesus?

2. Compare this scene with 2 Kings 4:42–44. What similarities do you notice, and what does the much greater scale of Jesus' miracle suggest about Him?

3. Andrew sees something available but immediately asks, "How far will they go among so many?" Why are we often tempted to evaluate what God can do primarily by measuring what we have?

Takeaway:

Jesus does not need what we bring to be impressive before He can use it.

Read John 6:10–13

Main Idea: Jesus provides with an abundance that makes clear He—not the disciples or their resources—is the source.

Commentary:
Jesus tells the crowd to sit down, takes the bread, gives thanks, and distributes it.

John repeatedly emphasizes the abundance of the provision. The people receive *"as much as they wanted."* Verse 12 says they had *"all had enough to eat."* And when the meal ends, there are twelve baskets left over.

This is not barely enough. *Jesus supplies abundantly.*

The twelve baskets reinforce the magnitude of the miracle and ensure that none of the provision is wasted. Many interpreters also see possible symbolism in the number twelve, echoing the twelve tribes of Israel and Jesus' twelve disciples, although John does not explicitly explain the number for us. What is unmistakable is that the leftovers are greater than the resources they started with.

There is also an interesting difference between John and the other Gospel accounts. John emphasizes that Jesus distributes the food. Matthew adds that Jesus gives the multiplied bread to the disciples, and the disciples give it to the people.

Both emphases matter. Jesus is the source. The disciples are participants. They cannot produce the miracle, but Jesus chooses to

place what He provides into their hands so that others receive it through them.

That gives us a helpful picture of Christian ministry. We are not the source of salvation, transformation, healing, grace, or spiritual life — Jesus is. But He repeatedly chooses to involve ordinary people in carrying what He provides to others.

Think About It:

1. What words and details in verses 10–13 emphasize the abundance of Jesus' provision rather than merely the fact that everyone received something?

2. Compare John 6:11 with Matthew 14:19. What do the two accounts together teach us about the difference between Jesus being the source and His followers being participants?

3. Why is that distinction important? What happens when Christians begin acting as though everything depends on us—or, on the other hand, as though our participation does not matter at all?

Takeaway:
Jesus provides what only He can provide—and still invites ordinary people to carry it to others.

Read John 6:14–15 and John 6:26–35

Main Idea: The multiplied bread is a sign pointing beyond the miracle to Jesus Himself.

Commentary:

If we stop reading at the leftovers, we can easily misunderstand the

miracle. The crowd sees what Jesus has done and concludes that He must be “the Prophet who is to come into the world.” This likely echoes Moses’ promise in Deuteronomy 18 that God would raise up another prophet like him.

Given the Passover setting, the connections are hard to miss:

Moses.
Wilderness.
Miraculous bread.
A prophet sent by God.

The crowd recognizes that something enormous is happening—but they still misunderstand Jesus. They want to make Him king by force, apparently imagining the kind of ruler who can heal sickness and provide unlimited food.

Jesus withdraws.

Later, when the crowd finds Him again, Jesus exposes their motivation: they are looking for Him because they ate the bread and were filled, not because they understood what the sign revealed.

Then Jesus takes the miracle deeper.

Israel’s ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they eventually died. The Father is now offering something greater than manna.

Jesus says: “I am the bread of life.”

The deepest hunger in John 6 is not physical hunger — humanity needs Jesus Himself. The miracle therefore is not ultimately a lesson about turning small resources into large results. It is a revelation of the One who has come to give life to the world.

That keeps Christian service in its proper place. Meeting physical needs matters. Serving matters. Generosity matters. But the greatest thing Christians have to offer anyone is not ourselves — ***it is Jesus.***

Think About It:

1. What does the crowd understand correctly about Jesus in verses 14–15, and where do they still misunderstand what kind of Savior and King He is?

2. Why does Jesus challenge the crowd for pursuing the bread while missing the sign? What is the difference between wanting something Jesus can give us and wanting Jesus Himself?

3. How does Jesus' declaration "I am the bread of life" change the way we understand the feeding miracle—and the deepest need of the crowd?

Takeaway:
Don't stop at the bread. The sign points us to Jesus.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

John 6 gives us a picture of what happens when an overwhelming need, inadequate resources, ordinary people, and the power of Jesus all meet in the same place. The story challenges both our tendency to think too much depends on us and our tendency to assume what we have could never matter.

1. **THE NEED IS BIGGER THAN US.**
   Philip looks at thousands of hungry people and realizes immediately that the disciples cannot meet the need.

Neither can we.

There are broken relationships we cannot repair, addictions we cannot defeat for someone else, hearts we cannot transform, and people we cannot save. But John 6:6 reminds us: Jesus already knew what He was going to do.

Recognizing our limits is not unbelief. The danger comes when we begin treating our limits as Jesus' limits.

Make It Personal:

a. Where are you currently overwhelmed by the size of a need?
b. Have you been measuring what is possible only by what you can see, control, afford, or accomplish?

2. **BRING WHAT YOU HAVE.**
   Five barley loaves and two fish were nowhere close to enough. But they were available to Jesus.

   Scripture says the Spirit gives different gifts to different people "for the common good" *(1 Corinthians 12:7)*. You do not need someone else's gifts, personality, resources, or opportunities in order to faithfully offer what God has given you.

   Make It Personal:
   What has God already placed in your hands—your gifts, relationships, experience, time, resources, compassion, story, or opportunities—that you may be underestimating because it seems small?

3. **TRUST JESUS TO DO WHAT ONLY JESUS CAN DO.**
   The disciples could organize people and distribute bread. They could not multiply it. In the same way, we can love, serve, pray, teach, encourage, share the Gospel, and walk beside people — but we cannot change someone's heart. *Jesus can.* That means we do not

have to carry the crushing pressure of trying to become someone else's savior.

Make It Personal:
a. Where are you carrying responsibility for an outcome that ultimately belongs to Jesus?
b. What would it look like to remain faithful while entrusting the result to Him?

4. PASS ON WHAT JESUS PROVIDES.
Matthew 14:19 says Jesus gave the bread to the disciples, "and the disciples gave them to the people." Jesus could have fed the crowd without them. Instead, He allowed them to participate. That is still an incredible picture of following Jesus: we get to help bring people what only He can ultimately provide.

Make It Personal:
a. Who has Jesus placed within your reach right now?
b. How could you help bring His truth, grace, encouragement, compassion, or Gospel into that person's life?

LIVING IT OUT

1. NAME THE NEED.
Identify one real need God has put in front of you. Don't minimize it—but don't let its size convince you Jesus cannot work.

Pray: "Jesus, this is bigger than me. What would faithfulness look like here?"

2. BRING WHAT YOU HAVE.

Stop waiting until you feel more gifted, knowledgeable, experienced, or prepared.

Ask: “What has God already given me that I can faithfully offer?”
Then offer it.

3. RELEASE THE OUTCOME.
Do what God has actually asked you to do.

Love.
Serve.
Pray.
Speak truth.
Encourage.
Share Jesus.

Then trust Him with what you cannot control.

You are responsible for faithfulness. Jesus is responsible for being Jesus.

4. PASS IT ON.

Look for one practical opportunity this week to help someone experience what Jesus provides.

Share the Gospel.
Invite someone into community.
Pray with someone.
Encourage someone.
Serve someone.
Walk beside someone.

Jesus is the source. We get the privilege of passing it on.

For LifeGroups

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Share —

- Which part of John 6 challenged the way you normally think about need, resources, or responsibility?

- Where are you facing something that feels significantly bigger than what you can handle?

- What has God placed in your hands that you may have dismissed as too small?

- Where are you tempted to carry responsibility for something only Jesus can do?

- Who has God placed within your reach that you could intentionally love, serve, encourage, or point toward Jesus?

Pray Together —

Pray that God would:

- Help you see overwhelming needs without becoming overwhelmed by them.
- Keep your limitations from becoming the limits you place on Jesus.
- Reveal the gifts and opportunities He has already placed in your hands.
- Give you courage to offer what you have even when it feels small.
- Free you from the pressure of trying to change people yourself.

- Teach you to depend on Jesus as the true source of life and transformation.
- Show you where He is inviting you to participate in His work.
- Give you opportunities to bring the hope, healing, and joy of Jesus to people around you.
- Make your lives faithful witnesses to the One who is the Bread of Life.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

The need was huge. The resources were small. But Jesus was more than enough.

So:
SEE THE NEED.
BRING WHAT YOU HAVE.
TRUST JESUS WITH WHAT ONLY HE CAN DO.
PASS ON WHAT HE PROVIDES.

You don't have to be enough — Jesus is.