

SESSION TITLE: “Proof of Life: The Sign of Bread”

FOCAL PASSAGE: (John 6:1-14)

REVIEW/REACT: Last week we discussed how Jesus established His position of equality with God by breaking the religious traditions.

Would anyone like to share how he or she allowed the Holy Spirit to work in and through you this past week? Did anyone have a “special agent follower” experience?

Review the Scripture verse from last week:

But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”
John 5:17

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner accept that Jesus will provide for all of his/her needs which is different from providing for his/her wants.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Share – The following information:
(Display a picture of a storage facility)

Ask – Why are storage facilities so prevalent in our society? Allow time for responses?

State – They are so prevalent because Americans have way too much stuff. Could you imagine explaining to someone in a third world country that you have so much stuff that your 4-bedroom home will not hold it so you have to keep stuff stored somewhere else?

Tell – The following humorous story:

A Quaker man watched a new neighbor moving into the neighborhood. The neighbor had not just one but two 18-wheel moving trucks and six movers working all day to unload his stuff. The Quaker gentleman went over to greet his new neighbor. After exchanging pleasantries he said “Neighbor if thou dost need anything you just let me know and I will tell you how to get along without it.

We definitely live in a society of “wants” instead of “needs”.

Coke has a new product “C2” it is coke with half of the carbs and half of the calories. In their commercial campaign they use a Rolling Stones song.

“You can’t always get what you want
You can’t always get what you want
But if you try, try, try you get what you need.”

The song should be changed to say, “If you trust, trust, trust, you get what you need.”

State – In today’s passage Jesus teaches the masses and the Disciples that He can provide for their needs. He still provides for our needs if we trust in Him.

B. Optional Method – Movie Clip “Along Came Polly”

Start: 48:45

Stop: 50:15

DVD: Chapter 13

Synopsis:

Polly questions the point of decorative pillows. Reuben can’t really answer, so Polly leaves the room and comes back with a knife and proceeds to stab the pillow. She asks Reuben to do the same. Reuben resists but eventually gets into it and he realizes how much control a silly pillow has over his life.

Ask – What material thing(s) is/are your “decorative pillows”? What is controlling you? Are your wants larger than your needs?

State – In today’s passage Jesus teaches the masses and the Disciples that He can provide for their needs. He still provides for our needs if we trust in Him.

II. Book

A. Utilize the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.

III. Look

A. Distribute the handout “Living Abundantly in God’s Provision” and guide members to complete it.

IV. Took

A. Display two columns on the marker board. (Needs and wants)

Ask people to name things under each category. List them on the board.

Ask – Is it sometimes difficult to distinguish between our needs and wants? How much of your prayer life is focused on needs vs. wants? What is the largest amount of waste of resources in your life? Do you waste finances? Do you waste talents and gifts? Do you waste time? Do you waste material possessions?

This week let’s look at our resources and evaluate if we are being good stewards. Are we focusing on needs vs. wants?

Close in prayer.

Review this week’s memory verse.

<p style="text-align: center;">Memory Verse When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.” John 6:14</p>
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B. Optional Method – Share the following example of God multiplying provisions through his faithful followers.

When Temple Baptist Church in Fargo, North Dakota heard that the Baptist International Mission Board was sending boxes of food to feed families in Iraq, they decided to help. The 100-member congregation set a goal of assembling 25 food boxes, but did not realize God had bigger thing in mind.

The South Valley Baptist Association contacted local producers and growers asking for help. The community responded generously.

James Sabot, development director for the Baptist Association said it is often hard to convince producers to help with a giving program because so many people and organizations ask them for gifts each month. Sabot said a flour-grinding mill donated 2,500 pounds of flour, which kicked the project into high gear.

Producers and growers donated about 80 percent of the total food count. Monetary gifts were used to purchase additional food, which brought the total to 12,000 pounds of product.

Temple Baptist Church’s goal of 25 food boxes ballooned into 181 boxes. It took thirty people to pack and load the food boxes that Temple Baptist and two other Baptist churches in the area donated.

Sabot commented, “People just want to help.” He summed up the whole event as an “amazing continuation of God at work.”

www.bpnews.net, God multiplies Iraq food project beyond church’s wildest imagination, By Ashley Haygood, May 20, 2003.

Ask – How can God multiply your resource to provide for the needs of others? What do you think could be accomplished if one SGM was totally and completely sold out to God? What if you were focused only on the needs of others not your wants?

Challenge members to evaluate how they are using their resources this week.

Review the memory verse.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. The feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle (besides the Resurrection) recorded in all 4 Gospels. Complete the chart below to gain an historical perspective of this sign.

What events led up to the feeding of the 5000?		
(Matt. 14:1-14)	(Mark 6:7-31)	(Luke 9:1-11)
John the Baptist is killed	The Disciples are sent out to preach	The Disciples are sent out "taking nothing for the journey"
His Disciples bury Him and report to Jesus	The death of John the Baptist is reported	Herod wants to see Jesus
Jesus withdraws and the people follow Him to be healed	The Disciples report their mission experience	Jesus withdraws
	Jesus withdraws to rest	

2. Compare/contrast the feeding of the 5000 in the gospels.

(Matt. 14:15-21)	(Mark 6:32-44)	(Luke 9:12-17)	(John 6:1-14)

3. Why were the crowds following Jesus? (John 6:2)
(They wanted to see more signs. They were still motivated by sight not faith.)
4. What personal application do you gain by the fact that Jesus had to remove Himself from the crowds?
5. How did Jesus test the Disciples in (vs. 5-9)?
(He was seeing if they had faith in Him to provide or if they would try and solve the situation by human means.)
6. How do you react when needs arise, do you attempt to solve them in your own power or do you seek the provision God? Is there a happy medium?
7. What is the significance of Jesus' demand in (v. 12)?
8. Do you waste resources that God has provided you or are you a good steward? How could you improve?

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Living Abundantly in God’s Provision

Jesus will provide for your needs and wants you to live abundantly, how well are you doing?

1. Jesus wants you to do more than is humanly possible and He enables us to do what He commands.
 - a. When is the last time you accomplished something that could only be explained by God’s work?
 - b. Where can you plug into God’s enterprise?
2. Jesus wants to multiply your efforts to accomplish His will.
 - a. What processes can you take to tap into His power?

3. The Disciples were inclined to limit Jesus to what they could see or do.

a. Is your vision for your accomplishments limited to what you can do or do you have a God-sized vision?

b. What is your vision for...

1. Your life

2. Your SGM

3. Your church

Daily Devotions for Next Week
PROOF OF LIFE: THE SIGN OF DELIVERANCE
John 6:16-21

MONDAY -- *Read John 6:15*

- Review the previous four signs recorded by John: John 2:1-11 (wine), John 4:46-54 (healing), John 5:1-18 (strength), John 6:1-4 (Bread).
- Remember the purpose of the signs. John 20: 30,31
- How did the people respond to Jesus? Was this response right or wrong? Why?

TUESDAY -- *Read John 6:16-17*

- Why did the disciples leave for the other side of the lake without Jesus? (Read Mark 6:45 and Matthew 14:22)
- Where was Jesus going when he sent the disciples away?
- Why was prayer so important to Jesus?
- How important is prayer to you in your life? Today, spend a few moments in prayer. Try keeping an attitude of prayer throughout the day.

WEDNESDAY – *Read John 6:18 also read Psalms 139:7-10*

- Do you think Jesus knew that a strong wind would come up and stir the sea before the disciples could reach the other side?
- Have the experiences through which you have gone taught you that Jesus is watching you and knows your circumstances?
- What circumstances are you facing today that needs to be taken to Jesus for His direction and help?
- Read Psalms 139:7-10. Jesus loves us and He does care about our lives.

THURSDAY – *Read John 6:19-20 – Mark 6:48-50*

- What time of the day did this sign of deliverance take place? Were the disciples looking for Jesus in the midst of their circumstance? Many times in the dark hours of our lives we are doing as the disciples and we are rowing furiously rather than looking to the one who has the power and care to deliver us.
- Right now, search your heart for areas of your life that need to be turned over to Jesus for deliverance. Then turn them over to Him.

FRIDAY – *Read John 6:21*

- The scripture speaks of the disciples' willingness to receive Jesus into the boat, and immediately they were delivered from their circumstance.
- Are you willing today to receive Jesus into your life and make Him Lord and Master?
- JESUS IS OUR DELIVERER.

**PROOF OF LIFE:
“The Sign of Bread”
John 6:1-15**

**(Exegetical . . . What it meant to the World back THEN)
JESUS’ “SIGN” OF THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000
SIGNALLED HIS IDENTITY
AS GOD’S UNIQUE AND SUFFICIENT PROVISION
FOR HIS PEOPLE’S NEED**

This story comes at a crucial point in John’s Gospel. Despite some opposition from his enemies and disaffection by his disciples, in this chapter Jesus’ growing popularity climaxed with the people’s attempt to make him their king (6:15), the disciples’ confusion over his teaching (6:60), and the confession of their allegiance to “the Holy One of God” (6:68-69).

Chapter five ended with Jesus’ claim that Moses had written concerning him (5:46). In this sign Jesus fed a large crowd miraculously with bread, offering a symbolic restatement of God’s miraculous provision of manna for his people under Moses’ leadership. (This is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels.)

- I. The CONTEXT of the Sign of the Feeding of the 5,000 involved a special time (approach of Passover) and a place (on a mountain) where the crowds followed him (1-4).
 - A. Jesus and his disciples had traveled across the Sea of Galilee (1).

NOTE: John notes that Jesus and the disciples had “gone away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.” Since chapter five occurred in Jerusalem, John has omitted events in Jesus’ Galilean ministry before this miracle (cf. Mt. 4:12—15:20; Mk. 1:14—7:23; Lk. 4:14—9:17).

ASIDE: The Romans later referred to the Jewish “Sea of Galilee” by its Roman name, “Sea of Tiberias” (a town founded on its shores by Herod the tetrarch in 20 A.D.). Clearly John wrote his gospel at a time when the Roman name was perhaps better known to readers outside Palestine.
 - B. Large crowds continued to follow Jesus because they saw the attesting miracles (“signs”) that Jesus was performing (2).

NOTE: The crowd appears as a single character in the story, placing the key emphasis on the other characters (Jesus, disciples). The tense of the three verbs suggest persistence: the crowd “kept on following” because they “were continually watching” the miracles that Jesus “was in the habit of doing.” These miracles are called “signs” to indicate their proofs of Jesus’ identity and of the appearance of the kingdom in Him.

ASIDE: As Passover approached (cf. 6:4) crowds would gather, anticipating the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Passover reminded them of deliverance from their oppressors under Moses and renewed expectations for the coming Messianic deliverer. John uses this theme to link implicitly chapters 5 (cf. 5:46-47) with the season, associations, and significance of chapter 6.
 - C. The PLACE of the miracle was the mountain slope upon which Jesus had taken his disciples to rest and to teach them (3).

NOTE: In this culture teachers sat. The word here suggests Jesus was teaching his disciples (and perhaps others who gathered around him). The mountain setting reminds one of Sinai where Moses revealed God’s law to His people, more clues to the significance of the coming miracle.
 - D. The TIME of Jesus’ Sign of the Feeding was just before the Jewish celebration of Passover in the spring (4).

NOTE: Passover as a celebration of Israel’s deliverance and God’s divine provision would be at the forefront of everyone’s thoughts. This provides the theological context for the miracle, God’s provision of manna in the wilderness which lies behind Jesus’ subsequent discussion and self-identification (6:26-40) and this supernatural provision as the sign of the coming kingdom (Hosea 2:19-23; Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Mark 14:25; Luke 14:15-24; Revelation 19:7) at which “the meek would eat and be satisfied” (Ps. 22:26), like the first sign (provision of wine at the wedding feast). Unlike the first sign given in private because of the immature faith of the disciples (cf. 2:11), this sign was given publicly before a large crowd who then misunderstood its implications.

ASIDE: As noted above, a time gap exists between 5:47 and 6:1, now revealed between six and twelve months. John identifies Passover as “the feast of the Jews” (3b) as their most important festival. Chapter five occurred in Jerusalem during “a feast of the Jews” (5:1), suggesting a lesser feast, either Tabernacles or Firstfruits. Passover occurs in the early spring, Firstfruits in early summer, and Tabernacles in the fall, providing a clue as to interval.

- II. The COMPLICATION occurs as Jesus' tested the disciples' understanding of his ability to provide for the needs of those who had been seeking him (5-9).
- A. Jesus noted the size of the crowd that was gathering to him on the mountain (5a).
NOTE: John keeps the focus on Jesus and the disciples by giving no details of the preceding circumstances or time of day (unlike the same event recorded by the other gospels).
- B. Jesus, although he already determined his course of action, posed a rhetorical question to Philip concerning where to find enough resources to feed the crowd as a test of Philip's understanding of Jesus' identity (5b-6).
1. Jesus asked Philip where to find sufficient resources to feed the crowd (5b)
NOTE: The question presumed three things: (a) Jesus' willingness to make some provision for the crowd's basic needs, (b) an opportunity for the disciples to participate in his provision, and (c) the impossibility of providing for the crowd through their meager financial resources. Jesus use of the word "purchase" invited an answer that would deny the human possibility of provision – but that might provoke Philip to offer another solution, one corresponding to his understanding of Jesus' identity.
ASIDE: Why did Jesus directed the question to Philip? Suggestions include: (a) Philip's later response to Jesus (14:8,9) showed he didn't easily understand what was happening and, therefore, his understanding needed more testing than the others; (b) Philip came from the local area (1:44,45) and would better appreciate available resources for their need; (c) Philip happened to be the closest disciple.
2. Jesus predetermined strategy reveals Jesus' question was rhetorical to test Philip's understanding of Jesus' identity and ability to meet the need of the crowd (6).
NOTE: Since Jesus already had a plan, the question was rhetorical, one that assumed an answer and invited Philip to participate in it by proposing a course of action, as Jesus' means to "test" (*perazo* ; determine the quality of) Philip's understanding.
- C. Philip presented the futility of any attempt to provide food for the crowd (7).
NOTE: Philip did not understand Jesus' ability to meet the need apart from human resources. Philip estimated that "200 denarii" (six month's wages) would not be enough money to buy what was required. It's possible that the amount was a proverb to describe any large financial transaction (Robinson, *The Evangelists and the Mishna*, 292-293).
"...it seems not to have occurred to Philip that the Lord who at Cana had manifested his ability to supply wine when it failed would be just as able at Bethsaida to furnish bread" (Hendickson, *The Gospel According to John*, 220).
- D. Andrew, Peter's brother, presented the availability of a small portion of food while noting its inadequacy to meet the need (8-9).
NOTE: Andrew and Philip appear together three times in John (1:44; 6:7; 12:22). His suggestion may have attempted to salvage Philip's failure. It had a small degree of optimism, but recognized that it also offered little hope.
ASIDE: There is no indication that the boy generously offered his lunch; merely that Andrew was aware of its existence and brought it to Jesus' attention.
NOTE: Four details emphasize the insignificance of Andrew's suggestion: (1) Andrew is identified as the brother of Simon Peter, placing him as a less important figure among the disciples; (2) the boy is described using the diminutive of the term for "child," indicating that he is a *very young* boy; (3) the boy's meal is meager. He has only brought five small cakes made from the cheapest grain (barley) and two fish, also stated in the diminutive ("*very small* fish") to indicate they are little more than sardines included as a condiment to flavor the barley cakes. This last detail in particular sets the stage for the miraculous multiplication of such meager rations to feed the huge gathering.
- III. Jesus MIRACULOUSLY provided more than sufficient food for all by supernaturally multiplying the small resources of bread and fish (10-13).
- A. Jesus commanded the disciples to have the people sit on the ground in anticipation of his provision for their need (10).
NOTE: Jesus offered no rebuke for faithlessness, simply commanded his disciples to take control of the crowd and have them recline, the position of eating, thereby suggesting that he was about to provide for their need. The brief observation that "there was much grass" offers an image of bounty in an agrarian culture (as well as a confirmation of the season in which the miracle has occurred). For the reader this image becomes a foreshadowing of the sufficiency to follow.

For the first time John provides a number for the gathered crowd: 5,000 men, which could assume that a large number of women and children accompanying them (10b). This stands in sharp contrast to the meager portion made available through Andrew.

- B. Jesus supernaturally multiplied the bread and fish, which the disciples distributed to the seated crowd until all the people's hunger was satisfied (11).

NOTE: The scope of the miracle becomes clear. A single child's meager muffins and sardines were multiplied to satisfy the hunger of many men (with others).

ASIDE: Some suggest John's presentation makes an implicit connection with the Last Supper room (cf. Mt. 26:20,26; Mk. 14:18,22; Lk. 22:14,19): they reclined (as if to eat), after which Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, and distributed it. The order of teaching followed by eating reflects subsequent church practice (Acts 20:7-12). Perhaps John makes a subtle point concerning Christ's spiritual provision exemplified in the Lord's Supper.

- C. Jesus commanded the disciples to gather all the remaining food, producing twelve large baskets of fragments after the crowd had been satisfied (12,13).

NOTE: Jesus supplied more than was needed by the crowd: the food satisfied their hunger and there were twelve large baskets left over. Gathering the fragments suggested the treatment of manna, a parallel emphasized later in the chapter (Ex. 16:4; cf. Jn. 6:32-33): there was sufficient for the day's need so that none of the manna was to be left over to the next day (Ex. 16:4-5,16-19). Theologically this is similar to the request in the Lord's Prayer for "daily bread," the provision

ASIDE: The term here denotes the larger, more durable of two types of baskets in common use, another indication of the miracle's scope. The number may suggest the disciples' participation in this sign.

- IV. The RESULT of Jesus' fourth "sign" was that the people, having identified Jesus as the expected prophet, sought to make him their king so that Jesus retreated to avoid them (14-15).

NOTE: Seeing Jesus supernaturally provision according to the example of Old Testament events, particularly Moses and manna (cf. Jn. 6:31-32), the crowd concluded that Jesus was the expected prophet (cf. Dt. 18:15-18) and wanted to acclaim him as their king. Knowing that such a role would only be the result of their own selfishness (cf. 6:26), Jesus retreated from them.

ASIDE: Later in this chapter Jesus will correct their misunderstanding, noting that God, not Moses, provided the manna, and teach that he is the true bread from God that satisfies the need of his people. In this way the miracle will assume a larger role in Jesus claim to be God.

**(Theological . . . What it means to believers ALWAYS)
THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF JESUS
(THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD)
PROVIDES "SPIRITUAL FOOD" GENEROUSLY
TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM.**

NOTE: The theological message of this text comes through the details that draw a connection between God's provision of manna for his people in the wilderness and Jesus' provision of food for the crowd following him.

**(Pedagogical . . . What it means for us NOW)
TRUST JESUS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS, NOT YOUR WANTS.**

- I. The Story: Jesus provided food supernaturally and abundantly for the people.
- A. The people needed provision of food in the wilderness (1-4).
 - B. Jesus provided more than sufficient food for their needs (5-13).
 - C. Jesus refused to accommodate himself to their selfish ambitions created by misunderstanding (14-15).
- II. The Message: Jesus meets the needs of those who follow him.
- A. Those who follow Jesus experience needs for his provision (1-4).
 - B. Jesus provides generously for the needs of those who follow him (5-13).
 - C. Jesus' followers must not misunderstand his provision as the satisfaction of their own ambitions (14-15).
- III. The Application: Trust Jesus to meet your needs, not your wants.