

## PREPARING FOR A MIRACLE

### "WE ARE HUNGRY" MATTHEW 14:13-21

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Personal God** – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1-2

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
where does my help com from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

So often when we affirm that God is a personal God, our sentiments reflect upon God the Father; and that is appropriate for good reason. Virtually every page of the Old Testament demonstrates God's involvement in the daily lives of human beings; from Adam and Eve in the garden to the events surrounding Noah and the world-wide flood to God's of call upon Abraham to leave his homeland for God's express purpose of creating a chosen people unto himself. And even after Israel's repeated seasons of rebellion against him, Yahweh continued to demonstrate that he was involved in and cared about their daily life.

Yet, an equally valid, and perhaps even more vivid, demonstration of this core belief is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ: *the Son of God*. In the truest biblical sense, compassion (another one of our core beliefs) means to enter into the plight or burden of another. You can not find a more explicit example in all of Scripture than the moment in time when "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). The Son of God entered into the hopeless plight of fallen humanity who, apart from divine intervention, were destined to forever be separated from the loving fellowship of God. From the moment of his conception (albeit

supernaturally brought about by the Holy Spirit) to his physically torturous death, Jesus demonstrated in the fullest way possible what it means for us to have a personal God.

Today's passage serves as yet another example in the life of our Lord and his personal interaction with humanity. After much personal ministry, receiving heart-breaking news and needing to reconnect with his twelve closest disciples in lieu of their recent ministerial endeavors, Jesus knew they needed to get away. Yet, upon their arrival a crowd was already gathering to meet and be healed by him. Despite every prior development that would indicate a need to say "enough is enough", Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." (Mark 6:34) Over the course of one evening, Jesus healed many, made sure that everyone present received more than enough to eat and spoke words of truth regarding our heavenly Fathers eschatological kingdom. How humbling it is to fathom the depths of God's personal love and faithfulness to sinners like us.

#### **Situation for Discussion**

Lisa, a good friend of yours, has been sick for quiet some time. She's seen countless doctors but none seem to be able to nail down what's wrong. Desperate for relief, she's turned to her church, and more specifically God, for healing. Throughout all her personal prayers and the prayer and ministerial efforts amongst church lay and staff leaders, she has still found little to no

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relief. She reads of the great miraculous healings by Jesus in the Bible...but is having a hard time appreciating their value given the breadth of her physical struggle with no apparent "miracle" in sight.

## day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 14:13-21

13When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

14When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

16Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

18"Bring them here to me," he said. 19And he

*directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

**Note any questions that come to mind as you read the passage:**

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Above "what had happened" write "(vv. 1-12)".
- \* Circle "privately" and "solitary" in v. 15.
- \* Highlight "the crowds followed him" in v. 13.
- \* Highlight "Jesus" and "had compassion on them" in v. 14.
- \* Underline "as evening approached" indicating *time* in v. 15.
- \* Place brackets around the disciples' suggestion in v. 15.
- \* Double underline Jesus' request of the disciples in v. 16.
- \* Circle each occurrence of "five loaves" and "two fish".
- \* Underline the first phrase in v. 20. Double underline the word "satisfied"
- \* Place brackets around v. 21.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The text begins with the phrase, "When Jesus heard..." Heard what?
2. What was Jesus' response to the news he received? What does this reflect about his humanity?
3. Read Luke's account of this story (9:10-17). Identify two or more details from his account that are distinct from Matthews rendering.
4. In light of your answer to questions 1 and 2, reread vv. 13-14. What does Jesus' response to the crowd communicate to you about him (his character, mission, focus, etc)?
5. Reread v. 15. From a practical standpoint, do you find anything illogical about the disciples' suggestion?
6. What do you make of Jesus' response back to the disciples' suggestion?
7. Take a moment to imagine yourself in the middle of the crowd amidst the events that unfold in this story. Describe what images or impressions come to mind?
8. What does v. 17 communicate to you about God's provision?
9. **Discussion:** How would you respond to the situation for discussion?

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

This week, we begin a three week study of Jesus' feeding of the 5000. This miracle is unique in that it is the *only* miracle of Christ recorded in all four Gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14). As expected, each account compliments the other(s). Yet each writer, keen to the message they were to convey to their respective audience, includes lone aspects to the "whole" story. For instance, only the Matthean account is preceded by the news Jesus receives regarding John the Baptist. Only in Mark's account do we read of the reason behind Jesus' compassion upon the crowd: "because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). The Markan and Lukan accounts are unique in their mention of the return of the twelve from miraculous public ministry (v. 30; v. 10 respectively). Additionally, Mark and Luke are the only two authors to affirm that Jesus took time to "teach them many things" (v. 34) about "the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:11). Luke and John both provide geographic parts to the whole; allowing the reader to know their precise location(s) of this story. And unique to the Johannine account is the source (a boy) of the five loaves and two fish as well as the crowd's concluding remarks about Jesus true identity as the long-awaited prophet (v. 14). Interestingly, Mark, whose account of the life of Jesus is replete with his supernatural works, is the only account that makes *no* mention Jesus' miraculous healing of the sick.

With the aforementioned in mind, it is important to note the two significant events that transpire just prior to this story. The first is Jesus' sending out the Twelve to preach and minister to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6; NASB). Jesus gave power/authority to this select group of disciples over "unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease." (Mt 10:1). Mark even attests to their effectiveness. "They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." (Mk 6:13) Secondly, Jesus receives news from John the Baptist's disciples regarding his execution (beheading) by King Herod Antipas. This news comes at precisely the same time as the return of the twelve (Lk 9:10). Knowing that his disciples were in need of rest (Mk

6:31) and that he himself needed to get alone a) to pray and absorb the loss of his cousin and God's servant and b) to possibly get out of Herod's province (See below), Jesus initiates a brief journey to a remote and, under *normal* circumstances, vacuously populated area on the outskirts of Bethsaida.

Expectations were short-lived. As Jesus and the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee the crowds caught wind of their likely destination and followed after them on foot. Note the desperation amidst the crowd. They are willing to venture far from their home(s) to a remote region in search of interaction with Jesus; a virtual wilderness intrinsically incapable of providing the multitudes with physical sustenance for a crowd even a small fraction of their size. While Jesus knows their pursuit of him is largely for physical, in-the-moment miracles, Jesus' compassion upon them springs from his comprehension of their hopelessness apart from the spiritual sustenance that only he could provide. Jesus addresses their physical needs through the miraculous presentation of food and many supernatural healings. Then, he spoke of his Father's kingdom.

From a spiritual perspective, the impact of this event upon the crowd would produce a two-fold "domino" effect. First, the crowd having food miraculously provided for them in a wilderness-like setting "almost certainly was meant to call to people's minds God's supernatural feeding of the Israelites with manna in their wilderness wanderings in Moses' day" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 233). This recollection would then have drawn them to the words in Deuteronomy 18 in which, through Moses, Yahweh spoke "[I] the Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like [Moses] from your midst, from your brethren...and [I] will put My words in His mouth" (vv. 15, 17). As darkness fell upon this momentous evening, the crowd left with no other logical conclusion: "Surely this is *the* Prophet who is come into the world" (John 6:14; italics added).

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## The Message of the Passage

*Jesus' miracle before the five thousand demonstrates to us the abundance of God's compassion and provision to a spiritually lost world in need of a Savior.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Give Yourself Some Good Advice Based on the Message of this Passage**
  - Pick a verse or verses from the passage to memorize or think about this week.
  - Relate the message of this passage to any of the following:
    - o Belonging
    - o Becoming
    - o going Beyond
  - Journal your thoughts on this passage
- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)
  - \* Home Group Discussion (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group).  
Take some time this week to share with those in your group a few of the ways God has personally revealed himself to you through his detailed involvement/orchestration of certain events in your life.

### “We are Hungry”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

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## notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 13 **solitary place** When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. he divided his kingdom amongst his three sons: Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip. Archelaus ruled over Judea and Samaria. Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea - the location Jesus was in prior to the return of the Twelve and his hearing of John the Baptist's death. And lastly, Philip was given rule over Iturea and Trachonitis - which included the east and northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Philip was a relatively good ruler, especially in light of Antipas and Archelaus. Perhaps this is why Jesus retreated to the area(s) under Philip's rule on more than one occasion (cf. 15:29; 16:13, etc).

Luke tells us that the name of the city is Bethsaida (9:10). A smaller, yet more frequently mentioned *Bethsaida* (cf. 11:21; Mark 6:45, 53; John 6:17, 24) existed on the opposite (northwest) side of the Sea of Galilee. "Bethsaida on the eastern side of the Jordan, a mile or more above its mouth, was rebuilt and adorned by Philip the Tetrarch, under the new name of Julias, in honor of Julia, daughter of Augustus; and there Philip was afterwards buried. From the mouth of the Jordan a plain extends along the eastern shore of the lake for some three and a half miles, gradually narrowing as the lake curves toward the mountain. This plain, while not equal to that of Gennesaret on the other side, is mainly fertile, and was under careful cultivation; but at its southern end the mountain comes so near the lake as to make a very retired locality; and on the lower part of the mountain sides are beautiful grassy slopes, which answer to all the conditions of the narrative before us. (John A. Broadus, *Matthew*, ACNT, 323).

v. 14 **compassion** "The [active] verb "to have compassion" (*splanchnizomai*) is used in the New Testament only by the Synoptic Gospel writers: five times in Matthew (9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34), four times in Mark (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22) and three in Luke (7:13; 10:33; 15:20)." This word suggests "strong emotion, it means "to feel deep sympathy." " (Louis A. Barbieri, "Matthew", in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 41).

v. 14 **sick** "The adjectival noun *arrostos* means without natural strength, having some form of chronic illness. The sick here suffered from various chronic sicknesses that disabled them one way or another. The Lord was moved by both the sicknesses and the handicaps they produced" (Spiro Zodhiates, *Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, 192).

v. 15 **evening** "The Jews were accustomed to distinguish between the first evening and the second evening. It is commonly supposed that the first was from about 3 P.M. to sunset, the second from sunset on into the night. In v. 23 the second evening is meant; but here in v. 15 it is the first evening" (Broadus, 323). Compare with Luke's description in 9:12 - "Late in the afternoon..."

v. 15 **send . . . away** Despite the recent, and miraculous successes the disciples had just experienced in their mini-mission trip, they quickly regressed to approaching the problem of the hungry crowd from a natural, "common-sense" stand point. Their suggestion that Jesus send the crowd away falls short on at least two fronts. First, the small villages around the area would simply not be able to accommodate all the persons that comprise a multitude of this size (likely six to eight thousand or more). Second, the disciples seem to have already forgotten the miracle-laden ministry successes they had just returned from. Not only that, they failed to turn to Jesus with an expectant belief that he could and would intervene to solve the growing hunger amidst the crowd.

v. 16 **you** "You" is in the emphatic sense. (i.e. - forcible, insistent). The impression one is left with is that Jesus was seeking for them to be more involved in his earthly ministry; especially in light of the extent to which he had recently empowered them.

v. 19 **loaves** "The standard Jewish loaf of bread provided a meal for three" (Blomberg, 232). At this ratio, Jesus' miracle would have included turning five loaves of bread into roughly 2500 to 3000 loaves of bread.

v. 19 **blessed** (Lit., "gave thanks" to God) "Jesus' actions reflect the standard practice of a Jewish head of household at the beginning of an ordinary meal. Jesus may well have pronounced the common Jewish benediction, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth (m. Ber. 6:1)" (Blomberg, 232).

v. 20 **basket(fuls)** "A small wicker basket used by women for shopping" (Zodhiates, 194). Significant to this aspect of the story is that no food, none of God's gracious provision, was to go to waste.

v. 21 **five thousand** "Extravagant numbers in ancient miracle accounts underlined the greatness of the miracle. In this narrative the disciples saw the size of the need and the littleness of the human resources available; Jesus recognizes the size of the need and the greatness of God's available resources" (Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 405).

v. 21 **women and** "The number of these was probably small in proportion to the men, for otherwise Mark, Luke and John would hardly have omitted to mention them" (Broadus, 325).

# Connect the **FAMILY**.

## Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Jesus wanted to teach his disciples an important lesson about trusting him. To do so, he needed them to be a part of a miracle that only He could do. Read Matthew 14:13-21. If Jesus could feed over 5000 people with only 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread, then he could definitely take care of the disciples. You can also trust God to take care of your life.



## Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, I pray \_\_\_\_\_ will realize his help comes from You, the maker of heaven and earth. Ps 121:2

## Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

**Personal God** – I believe God cares about everything in my life.

**Memory verse** – "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Lk 6:38

## Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- \*Why did the disciples want to send the people away?
- \*How did Jesus expect the people to be fed?
- \*How much food was used to feed over 5000 people?
- \*What did Jesus want to teach the disciples?

## Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Since he cares about everything in your lives, God wants to teach your family to trust him. Over 5000 people were fed because one boy gave away his lunch. Decide as a family on something you can give to another family (money, a gift, a cake, etc.). Put it in a paper sack and deliver it to them anonymously.



## Challenge

*Kids preschool through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.*

Family completes **Experience It** \_\_\_\_\_ Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** \_\_\_\_\_

Family participates in **Live It** \_\_\_\_\_ Child memorizes **Memory Verse** \_\_\_\_\_

**Kids can earn extra tokens on Sunday morning by:**

Bringing a friend to **The Kid Connection** \_\_\_\_\_ Completing **KIDZ Bulletin** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).