

## PREPARING FOR A MIRACLE

### "I SURRENDER ALL"

#### JOHN 6:1-15

### 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.*

Last week on this page we discussed the depths of God's personal involvement in the affairs of fallen humanity through the person and work of Christ. But we would be remiss to not address the personal, intimate work of the Holy Spirit who has deposited himself upon every believer.

Actually John has much to say about the person of the Holy Spirit. In John 3, he is the Regenerator from whom we are born again (vv. 5-8). John reaffirms the role of the Holy Spirit as life-giver in chapter 6 when he states that "the Spirit gives life" (v. 63). Unique to the Gospel of John in all the New Testament is John's attestation, through the words of Christ, that the Holy Spirit is "*the Spirit of truth*" (14:17, 15:26, 16:13; italics added). As such he bears witness to the truths of God rooted in Scripture. In fact, Paul testifies that without the Spirit, no one can know of the thoughts of God (1Co 2:11). It is through the Spirit of God that we may understand what God has freely given us (v. 12).

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*I am the bread of life.*

*-Jesus*

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On an even more interpersonal front, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the *Paraclete* to come following his ascension (14:17). This Greek term, for which there is no definitive English equivalent, means "called to the side of" for the purpose of 'helping.' A fuller understanding of this role of the Holy Spirit (and Jesus as well - cf. 1 John 2:1) is to see him as our Advocate (NET Bible) much like a lawyer would speak to or on behalf of a client in a legal setting. Other titles in different translations have been used (*Comforter* - KJV; *Helper* - NKJV, NASB, ESV; *Counselor* - NIV, NLT) to aid the believer in this special role of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Regardless of the title, it is an inescapable reality that the care of the Father and Son included the giving of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us (1Co 3:16) throughout our spiritual journey.

### Situation for Discussion

Bob is a skeptic who works with you at the office. He knows you're a Christian and every once in a while likes to play "stump the Christian" with you by throwing out challenging questions regarding events in the Bible and what not. On Friday, your paths crossed in the break room. Seeing this as another opportunity to prod you, Bob asks, "Tell me this. You guys say that Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever right? Then why don't we see the same kinds of public miracles today that supposedly happened in the Gospels."

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# day 1

## ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

### John 6:1-15

1Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberius), 2and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.

3Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

5When 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?" 6He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bit!"

8Another 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?"

10Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. 11Jesus 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.

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

14After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

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 "(ch. 5).
- \* Circle "because" indicating *cause* in v. 2.
- \* Box each occurrence of the phrase "great crowd".
- \* Place brackets around v. 4.
- \* Underline Jesus' question in v. 5.
- \* Highlight each verb that refers to Jesus' actions.
- \* Circle "filled twelve baskets" indicating *result* in v. 13
- \* Double underline the crowd's response to Jesus in v. 14.
- \* Draw an arrow from the word "Jesus" to "withdrew" in v. 15.

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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, "Some time after this..." Read chapter 5 to identify a) to whom Jesus is speaking and b) to identify the tone or mood of the setting. Record your conclusions here.
2. Why is the crowd following Jesus? Do you think their pursuit of Jesus is sincere? Explain your answer.
3. Read Luke's account of this story (9:10-17). Identify two or more details from his account that are distinct from John's rendering.
4. Out of nowhere, John inserts v. 4 into his telling of this miracle story. Why do you think he does this?
5. Why do you think Jesus chose to ask his disciple(s) a question to which he already knew the answer?
6. Verse 11 states that Jesus "distributed" the loaves and fish to the crowd yet the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke state that Jesus "gave them to the disciples to set before the people." How might one explain/reconcile John's account in light of the others?
7. Do you perceive any particular significance in the fact that there were precisely twelve baskets of leftovers? Explain your answer.
8. What was the crowd's response to Jesus' actions? Why do you think they responded in this way?
9. What was Jesus' response to the crowd? Why do you think he responded in this way?
10. **Discussion:** What characteristics would you expect to see in a person whose faith in Jesus is genuine?

In this our second week in surveying Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five-thousand, we view this event through the lenses of John's Gospel. John's Gospel is unlike the Synoptic (lit. - seeing together) Gospels in a variety of ways. Whereas the Synoptics present the life of Christ in a similar fashion, even using common sources in their development, a whopping 92% of the material in John is not found in Matthew, Mark or Luke. Yet, while 92% of John's material is unique to his Gospel, this miracle makes up part of the marginal 8% of material found in the others. That in and of itself ought to highlight the great significance this miracle story has in revealing divine truths about our Savior; and this especially in light of John's purpose statement for writing his Gospel - "But these [miraculous signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (20:31)

Not surprisingly, John includes details of this event found in none of the Synoptics: the name of the boy of water Jesus and the disciples crossed by boat, the source (a boy) of the five loaves and two fish, as well as Jesus' command to the disciples to "gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." (v. 12)

Perhaps most significantly is the strategic manner in which John has arranged his material in support of his purpose statement stated above. Leon Morris (Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John, 20-42) among others note there are seven major "signs" (miraculous events revealed to communicate spiritual truth) in the Gospel's main body: Jesus turning water into wine (2:1-11), the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54), the healing of the lame man (5:1-18), the feeding of the five thousand (6:1-15), Jesus walking on the water (6:16-21), his giving sight to the blind man (9:1-41) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-57). Associative to these signs (either prior to or shortly after) exist seven discourses that espouse spiritual truths regarding the identity of Jesus, the Christ.

While the Jewish crowd rightly connected Jesus' miraculous provision of 'manna' with "the Prophet who is to come into the world (v. 14) as foretold in Deut 18:15 - "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers." This prophet was to be greater than even the great prophet Moses under whose leadership Israel received manna from heaven during their desert wandering (Exodus 16). However, their historic/prophetic perception fell short of the far more significant truth Jesus sought to point them toward. Shortly after this miraculous sign, Jesus is approached by the crowd again. He uses this moment to challenge the veracity of their devotion to him (v. 26) followed by a lengthy discourse (vv. 25-59) asserting the fact that he, Jesus, is the "true bread [who has come down] from heaven" by the hand of God (v. 32) to bring "life into the world" (v. 33). "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (v. 35). Unfortunately, the crowd had already dismissed the passage that quickly followed the promise of a new and greater prophet. Deut 18:18 - I will put my words in his [Jesus] mouth and he will tell them [the Jews] everything I command him [to do and say]." In their pursuit to satisfy their temporal needs/desires (via food, physical healing(s) or national/political advancement (v. 15), Jesus' words fell upon spiritually deaf ears.

Perhaps theologian Craig S. Keener's words speak most poignantly the relationship this "sign" and the latter discourse: "More than with some of the previous narratives, the discourse that follows the feeding of the five thousand interprets and applies it, bringing out the Christological meaning of the event. Thus the feeding miracle in John points to a deeper Christological interpretation: Jesus is not merely a new Moses providing a sample of new manna, but he is heaven's supply for the greatest need of humanity" (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 1:663).

### *The Message of the Passage*

*Jesus' miracle before the five thousand points us to the revelation that the body of Jesus is the true bread from heaven; sent by God to provide eternal life for all who believe.*

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# 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:**
  - **Belonging**
  - **Becoming**
  - **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).

One might define a *miracle* as a divine intervention that transcends time, space and the laws of nature. Salvation of souls aside, if you believe you have seen/experienced a miracle (either personally or in the life/circumstances of another) share the details with your group. And from your perspective, what specifically sets that moment or event apart as a true miracle given the definition above?"

## **“I Surrender All”**

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

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

v. 1 **Galilee/Tiberias** Reading v. 1 might lead one to wonder why the inclusion of two names for the sea Jesus crossed. During Jesus' public ministry, this "sea" (a generic term in the Bible for any sizable body of water; and given its size - approx. 8 x 12 miles wide - we would refer to today as a "lake") was known as the Sea of Galilee. However, as the city of Tiberias (named in honor of Emperor Tiberius) grew in prominence during the latter half of the first century (when John was writing his Gospel), the water mass came to be referred as the Sea of Tiberias. So John is writing of a significant historic event in the life of Christ to his then contemporary audience. The double inclusion reminds John's readers of the historic context of this miracle.

v. 4 **Passover Feast** "This will be significant as the story unfolds, for Passover was a time when Jewish people recalled their deliverance from Egypt through Moses and were looking for the Prophet like him who was to come. They expected the Prophet to bring deliverance and provide 'manna' from heaven as Moses had done (cf. 2 Baruch 29:3-30:1). Resultantly, "it was a time when nationalistic fever was high" (Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC, 161).

v. 6 **test** (Gk. - *peirazo*) This same word is used throughout the New Testament in passages relating to being "tested" and to being "tempted"; same word, significantly different motivational nuances. In the negative sense, *peirazo* (to tempt) is designed to lure one away from the things of God to engage in sin (See Satan's temptation of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels: Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13). In the positive sense (to test), God is the subject with the object being the one whom he is testing. In these instances (See God's testing of Abraham - Ge 22:1-19) the "test" is not for God to find out what we are going to do; rather it is an opportunity designed to reveal to us where our heart/affection/trust is in relationship to *him*. Here, Jesus' testing reveals to Philip that he is still approaching ministry (i.e. - his role as a disciple) from a natural, pragmatic standpoint rooted in human limitations rather than a supernatural, miraculous standpoint rooted in the limitless resources of the Son of God.

v. 9 **a boy** "In John, the boy is also undoubtedly a helper or servant (of the disciples); Andrew would of course not make an inventory of what food the whole crowd had but of what they themselves had on hand (cf. Mk 6:38; [in which Jesus asks the disciples, "Go and see how many loaves you have" (Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, 211 italics added).

v. 9 **barley loaves** "Barley bread was food for the poor" (B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 97). For historical Old Testament context, see 2 Kings 4:42-44).

v. 11 **distributed** Given John's emphasis on the Christology of Jesus, one should not be surprised to see Jesus credited with the distribution of the loaves and the fish. This is not an unprecedented manner of description in John's Gospel. Prior to this, John the Baptist's disciples approach him out of concern that "He (Jesus) is baptizing and all are coming to Him" (3:26; NKJV, italics added; see also 4:1). However in 4:2 John provides the parenthetical caveat "although in fact it was *not Jesus* who baptized, but his disciples" (italics added). Therefore, while the disciples carried out said task in actuality, it was, just as in the case of Jesus' baptisms, under the authority/command of the miracle giver himself.

v. 13 **twelve baskets** "The twelve baskets may symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, or perhaps twelve baskets were filled simply because there were twelve disciples doing the gathering" (Kruse, 163; italics added). Says another, "that the disciples filled twelve baskets simply underlines afresh the abundance of the miracle; there is no need to allegorize the baskets" (Keener, 669).

v. 14 **king by force** "It is important to note that John does not argue that the people are wrong in this judgment [that Jesus is "the Prophet who has come into the world"], but only in their estimate of its significance. Their attention was focused on food (v. 26) and victory (v. 15) - not on the divine self-disclosure mediated through the incarnate Son, not the Son as the bread of life, not on a realistic assessment of their own need" (D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, 271). "Jesus does not give the multitude a chance to put their conceptions concerning him into effect. He rejects a priori any notion of kingship as they conceived it...something he would later describe as a "kingship of this world" (18:36). What the multitude envisioned was that *they* would *make* him king and that he would exercise a worldly kingship over them" (Ridderbos, 216).

v. 15 **Jesus withdrew** [Jesus] knew that this was not the way in which he was to fulfill the Father's will and win deliverance for his people. So he avoided the crowd's unwelcome attention by withdrawing to the Golan Heights - not this time with the disciples (whom he sent back across the lake) but in solitude" (F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 147).

# Connect the **FAMILY**.

## Experience it!

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

Read John 6:1-13. What was the one thing that Jesus needed in order to perform the miracle of feeding 5000 people? He needed someone to be willing to give away their lunch. Imagine how hungry the little boy was when he sacrificially gave away his lunch to Jesus. But look what great thing Jesus did with his gift! God wants to do great things in your life, but you must be willing to put him before the things you want.



## 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 you will rise up and help \_\_\_\_\_; redeem her because of your unfailing love. Ps 44:26

## 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?
- \*What was the Philips' excuse for not feeding the people?
- \*Why do you think the disciples did not think about asking God for help?
- \*Describe the miracle Jesus performed.

## Live it!

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

Just like God used the sack lunch of a little boy to take care of hungry people, God can use the generosity of your family to take care of the needs of people today. This week, help your kids fill a paper lunch sack with individually wrapped, non-perishable snack foods. Have them bring it to their Kid Connection class on Sunday. As a family pray that God would use their sack of food for a miracle.



## 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*

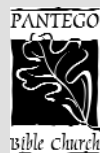
I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## 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).