

Bread for Thousands

JOHN 6:1-15 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus already knows what he will do, and it is more than enough.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 7): John 5:1-18, Equal With God. Its big idea: Jesus does God's work, and he asks you, "Do you want to get well?"
- After this passage (day 9): John 6:35-51, The Bread of Life. Its big idea: Jesus is the bread from heaven, and he keeps everyone who comes.

Open

Recall last time (John 5:1-18): Jesus healed a man at a pool on the Sabbath and called God his own Father, and his critics heard him claiming to be equal with God. Today John shows us that same Jesus on a hillside with a hungry crowd. Ask: 'When have you faced a need so big you did the math and knew it would not work?' Let two or three answer. Read John 6:5-6 aloud: 'Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?' ... 'for He knew what He was about to do.' Big idea: Jesus already knows what he will do, and it is more than enough. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. The Test: A Question Jesus Already Knew the Answer To (John 6:1-9, about 13 min)

The one thing: Jesus is never caught off guard. He asks because he wants the disciples to see how short their resources fall.

Ask: Philip and Andrew both did the math honestly. Why do you think Jesus let them run the numbers first?

2. The Meal: Thanks, Then More Than Enough (John 6:10-13, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus does not give barely enough. He gives more than the crowd can eat.

Ask: John says they ate 'as much as they wanted,' and there were leftovers. What does that tell you about the kind of giver Jesus is?

3. The Crowd: Right About the Sign, Wrong About the King (John 6:14-15, about 10 min)

The one thing: The crowd read the sign partly right but wanted a king on their own terms. Jesus will not be crowned that way.

Ask: The crowd wanted to make Jesus king. Why would he walk away from that?

Close (never cut it)

Go back to Jesus' question: 'Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?' The answer is that we can't, and he knew that all along. He took a poor boy's lunch, gave thanks, fed thousands until they were full, and then refused to be crowned on anyone's terms but his own. Let that picture of him sit in the room: Jesus already knows what he will do, and it is more than enough.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, cut its discussion question and go straight from verse 15 to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 5, 3, 2, 1, 4 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Philip worried, Andrew worried, The boy with the lunch happy, The full crowd happy · Code: TWELVE BASKETS

Act it out: Children sit on the 'grass.' One child holds a paper bag lunch. The teacher plays Jesus, gives thanks, and passes out crackers until everyone has plenty, then the children gather the extras into baskets.

1. The Test: A Question Jesus Already Knew the Answer To

JOHN 6:1-9 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- A large crowd follows Jesus, and Passover is near.
- Jesus asks Philip a question he already knows the answer to.
- Philip counts money and Andrew counts loaves. Neither adds up.

Jesus asked this to TEST Philip, for He knew what He was about to do.

Andrew found a boy with five BARLEY LOAVES and two small fish.

Discuss: Philip and Andrew both did the math honestly. Why do you think Jesus let them run the numbers first?

Jesus is never caught off guard. He asks because he wants the disciples to see how short their resources fall.

MUST COVER

- v.6: the question was a test. 'He knew what He was about to do.' Jesus has a plan before anyone panics.
- vv.7-9: Philip's money math (a denarius was about a day's wage, so 200 is most of a year's pay) and Andrew's lunch math: 'what difference will these make among so many?'

IF THERE'S TIME

- v.4: Passover was the feast remembering how God freed Israel from Egypt. In the wilderness God fed them with bread from heaven (Exodus 16). Every mind there knew that story.
- Barley was the cheap bread of the poor. This was a humble lunch.

Illustration idea: Staring at a banking app after a surprise car repair, adding it up three times, hoping the total changes.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He wanted them to admit they couldn't do it.
- Listen for: He was teaching them to trust him instead of their own plans.

If it drifts: If talk turns to budgeting tips or money stress in general, return to v.6: the point is not Philip's math but that Jesus already knew what he would do.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Philip ran the numbers, but Jesus already knew what he would do.

Short on time? Drop the Passover background and keep verse 6.

Bridge → So what does Jesus do with a boy's lunch that makes no difference?

2. The Meal: Thanks, Then More Than Enough

JOHN 6:10-13 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus tells the people to sit down on the grass.
- He gives thanks over five loaves before anything multiplies.
- Everyone eats their fill, and twelve baskets are left over.

Before anything multiplied, Jesus GAVE THANKS.

The pieces left over filled TWELVE BASKETS.

Discuss: John says they ate 'as much as they wanted,' and there were leftovers. What does that tell you about the kind of giver Jesus is?

Jesus does not give barely enough. He gives more than the crowd can eat.

MUST COVER

- v.11: Jesus takes the small lunch, gives thanks, and feeds everyone 'as much as they wanted.'
- vv.12-13: twelve baskets gathered 'so that nothing will be wasted.' The leftovers prove the abundance.

IF THERE'S TIME

- An older story: the prophet Elisha fed 100 men with 20 barley loaves and had some left (2 Kings 4:42-44). Here Jesus feeds about 5,000 men with 5 loaves. This is far beyond Elisha.
- 'Have the people sit down': the people could not help at all. They could only sit and receive.

Illustration idea: A grandmother cooking for a family gathering who always makes too much, so everyone goes home with leftovers.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He's generous. He gives more than we need.
- Listen for: He cares about small things, even crumbs.

If it drifts: If people debate whether it 'really' happened, acknowledge the question, promise time at the end, and return to what John claims happened in v.11.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Five loaves in his hands became more than enough. He knew what he would do.

Short on time? Skip the Elisha comparison and keep 'as much as they wanted' and the twelve baskets.

Bridge → A meal like that makes a crowd want to do something about Jesus. What they want is surprising.

3. The Crowd: Right About the Sign, Wrong About the King

JOHN 6:14-15 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The people call Jesus 'the Prophet who is to come.'
- They try to make him king by force.
- Jesus withdraws to the mountain alone.

The people said, 'Truly this is the PROPHET who is to come into the world.'

Jesus WITHDREW again to a mountain by Himself.

Discuss: The crowd wanted to make Jesus king. Why would he walk away from that?

The crowd read the sign partly right but wanted a king on their own terms. Jesus will not be crowned that way.

MUST COVER

- v.14: 'the Prophet' recalls Moses' promise that God would raise up a prophet like him (Deuteronomy 18:15). Moses had fed Israel in the desert, so the crowd connects the dots.
- v.15: 'make Him king by force.' They wanted to grab him and use him. Jesus withdraws. He decides what kind of king he is.

IF THERE'S TIME

- John calls this a 'sign' (v.14): a miracle that points past itself to who Jesus is. The crowd saw the bread but stopped short of what it pointed to.

Illustration idea: Wanting a friend mainly because they're useful, like someone who calls only when they need a ride.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: They only wanted him for free food.
- Listen for: His kingdom wasn't the kind they had in mind.

If it drifts: If this becomes a debate about politics or kings today, bring it back to v.15: the question is who sets the terms, the crowd or Jesus.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The crowd wanted to manage him. Jesus knew what he would do, and it was more than they asked.

Short on time? Keep v.15 and the withdrawal. Skip the Deuteronomy explanation.

Bridge → So what has this hillside shown us about who Jesus is?

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with the math. Ask about a time a need felt bigger than what they had. Then read John 6:5-9 together.
2. Notice verse 6. Point out that Jesus asked a question he already knew the answer to. Ask what they make of that.
3. Read the meal. Read vv.10-13. Notice 'as much as they wanted' and the twelve baskets. John calls this a sign, something that points to who Jesus is.
4. Watch the crowd. Read vv.14-15. The crowd calls him the Prophet and wants to make him king by force, and he walks away. Ask why they think he did that.
5. Leave the question. The crowd had its answer about who he was, and Jesus would not fit it. Leave them with the question this whole story raises: who is this man? No pressure. The next part of John picks this up.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Wasn't this just people sharing their lunches?"

People do suggest that. But John names only one lunch, the disciples clearly had nothing, and a potluck would not make a crowd try to crown someone king. John means a miracle. You can doubt it, but that is what he is claiming.

"Why would Jesus 'test' Philip? Isn't that a bit of a trick?"

John says Jesus knew what he would do. The question let Philip see his limits before he saw what Jesus could do. It was teaching, not a trap.

"What's 'the Prophet'?"

Moses promised that God would raise up another prophet like him. Moses fed Israel in the desert, so a crowd fed near Passover drew the connection.

"If he's so generous, why doesn't he fix my money problems?"

That's an honest question, and this story doesn't promise every bill paid. It shows who Jesus is: not caught off guard and not stingy. The next days in John go deeper into what he came to give.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Let the Bible do the talking

John's details (the test, barley, twelve baskets) carry the lesson on their own.

If you're new: Read each section aloud before teaching and point to the exact verse for every claim.

If you've taught for years: Let the class find the numbers (200, 5, 2, 5,000, 12) and ask what each one shows.

2. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

Newcomers will doubt the miracle, and people who have drifted may carry hurt over unmet needs.

If you're new: Have the 'sharing lunches' answer ready and admit honestly that the story does not promise every need met.

If you've taught for years: Invite the doubt out loud and let the crowd's reaction in v.15 do the arguing.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

This is a sign that shows who Jesus is. The bread-of-life teaching comes in the next two days.

If you're new: End on what the story shows about Jesus, not on homework or the John 6:35 discourse.

If you've taught for years: Resist tying it to communion or 'I am the bread of life.' Tell the class it is coming, and let the sign stand alone today.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: When did you last face a need you knew you couldn't cover?
- use an object: Hold up a small bread roll and ask how many people it could feed.
- start in the text: Read v.6 cold: 'for He knew what He was about to do.' Ask what it would be like to know that in the middle of a crisis.

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: Jesus already knew what he would do, and it was more than enough.
- call back to the opening: Hold up the roll again: in his hands it would have been more than enough.
- allow quiet reflection: Reread v.11 slowly and give thirty seconds of silence to picture everyone full.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone says they prayed for provision and it never came.: Don't explain it away. Say plainly that this story shows who Jesus is but does not promise every need met on our timetable. Thank them for their honesty and offer to talk afterward.
- A skeptic insists it was just people sharing lunches.: Welcome the question. Note that John names only one lunch and describes a crowd so stunned they tried to crown Jesus. Say that John is clearly claiming a miracle, and let them weigh it without winning an argument.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- 2 Kings 4:42-44
- Exodus 16:13-18
- Mark 6:30-44

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/6-1-15/lesson

Bread for Thousands

JOHN 6:1-15 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “for He knew what He was about to do.” John 6:6

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus already knows what he will do, and it is more than enough.

1. THE TEST: A QUESTION JESUS ALREADY KNEW THE ANSWER TO · JOHN 6:1-9

- A large crowd follows Jesus, and Passover is near.
- Jesus asks Philip a question he already knows the answer to.
- Philip counts money and Andrew counts loaves. Neither adds up.

Jesus asked this to _____ Philip, for He knew what He was about to do.

Andrew found a boy with five _____ and two small fish.

Discuss: Philip and Andrew both did the math honestly. Why do you think Jesus let them run the numbers first?

2. THE MEAL: THANKS, THEN MORE THAN ENOUGH · JOHN 6:10-13

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Before anything multiplied, Jesus _____.

The pieces left over filled _____.

Discuss: John says they ate 'as much as they wanted,' and there were leftovers. What does that tell you about the kind of giver Jesus is?

3. THE CROWD: RIGHT ABOUT THE SIGN, WRONG ABOUT THE KING · JOHN 6:14-15

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The people said, 'Truly this is the _____ who is to come into the world.'

Jesus _____ again to a mountain by Himself.

Discuss: The crowd wanted to make Jesus king. Why would he walk away from that?

Read this week: 2 Kings 4:42-44 · Exodus 16:13-18 · Mark 6:30-44

For Kids: Bread for Thousands

JOHN 6:1-15 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus always has more than enough.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Twelve baskets of leftovers are gathered.
- ☐ Andrew finds a boy's small lunch.
- ☐ Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread.
- ☐ A big crowd follows Jesus.
- ☐ Jesus gives thanks and feeds everyone.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Philip: happy · sad · worried

Andrew: happy · sad · worried

The boy with the lunch: happy · sad · worried

The full crowd: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

N G B A N D R E W
B B R E A D U R U
B C O N G R A S S
K D L O A V E S G
V B P H I L I P K
N D S B A R L E Y
B A S K E T S C Y
N V D G F I S H U
N D F S G Y U D B

BREAD · FISH · LOAVES · BARLEY · BASKETS · GRASS · PHILIP · ANDREW

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=B 3=E 4=K 5=L 6=S 7=T 8=V 9=W

7 9 3 5 8 3 2 1 6 4 3 7 6

5. DRAW IT!

Draw the boy's lunch in one box and the twelve full baskets in another.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"He knew what He was about to do." John 6:6 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus took a small lunch and ... _____