A Table in the Wilderness

MARK 6:35-44 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

The Shepherd makes his flock lie down, then feeds them full.

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 4): Psalm 23:2-3, Green Pastures, Quiet Waters. Its big idea: The Shepherd gives rest, restores my soul, and leads me rightly.
- After this passage (day 6): Psalm 23:4, Through the Valley. Its big idea: In the darkest valley, the Shepherd is with me.

Open

Recall last time (Psalm 23:2-3): every verb belongs to the Shepherd. Today: “He makes me lie down in green pastures” (Psalm 23:2), seen on the grass beside the lake. Ask: Who in your life makes you stop and rest? Read Mark 6:39: “Jesus directed them to have the people sit in groups on the green grass.” Big idea: The Shepherd makes his flock lie down, then feeds them full. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. He Makes Me Lie Down (Psalm 23:2, about 8 min)

The one thing: Rest in Psalm 23 is given by the Shepherd, and it comes with being fed and kept safe.

Ask: Why might Psalm 23 say the shepherd “makes” me lie down, rather than “lets” me?

2. Not Enough (Mark 6:35-38, about 10 min)

The one thing: The disciples' plan was to send the hungry away; there was no way to feed them.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to feed the crowd when he knew they could not?

3. All Were Satisfied (Mark 6:39-44, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus made the crowd recline on green grass and fed them until all were satisfied: Psalm 23:2 as a scene.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus had the people sit down before there was any food to see?

Close (never cut it)

Read Mark 6:39 and 42, then Psalm 23:2. The crowd lay down on green grass and was fed full by the Shepherd. Say the line together: “He makes me lie down in green pastures.”

PROTECT THE ENDING

If the last section starts late, read v41-42 and go to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 2, 4, 3, 5, 1 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The hungry crowd worried, The disciples with only five loaves worried, The crowd after eating happy, The disciples picking up leftovers happy · Code: GREEN PASTURES

Act it out: The children sit in small groups on the floor. One child is Jesus, who looks up, thanks God, and breaks a few pieces of bread, giving them to “disciples” to hand round to each group. At the end the disciples collect the leftovers in baskets.

1. He Makes Me Lie Down

PSALM 23:2 · ABOUT 8 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The shepherd brings the sheep to rest; they do not get there alone.
- In the prophets, a flock lies down when it is fed and safe.
- Green pasture had to be found in dry hill country.

“He makes me lie down in GREEN pastures.” (Psalm 23:2)

“They all ate and were SATISFIED.” (Mark 6:42) A flock lies down when it has been fed.

Discuss: Why might Psalm 23 say the shepherd “makes” me lie down, rather than “lets” me?

Rest in Psalm 23 is given by the Shepherd, and it comes with being fed and kept safe.

MUST COVER

- Psalm 23:2: “makes me lie down” is something done to the sheep.
- Ezekiel 34:14 and Zephaniah 3:13: feeding and lying down go together, under God's care.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Sheep, like all ruminants, lie down to chew the cud after grazing: a flock lying down is a flock that has been fed.

Illustration idea: A parent who makes a feverish child lie down and brings soup to the bed.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: We wouldn't stop on our own.
- Listen for: He knows what we need.

If it drifts: If the talk turns to time management, bring it back to who does the making: the Shepherd.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The Shepherd brings his flock to rest and feeds it.

Short on time? Drop the ruminant note. Keep “makes me lie down.”

Bridge → Mark shows a crowd made to lie down on green grass.

2. Not Enough

MARK 6:35-38 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- It is late, the place is desolate, and the crowd is hungry.
- The disciples want to send everyone away.
- Jesus says, “You give them something to eat.”

“You give them something to EAT.”

“FIVE—and two fish.”

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to feed the crowd when he knew they could not?

The disciples' plan was to send the hungry away; there was no way to feed them.

MUST COVER

- v35-36: “a desolate place” and a late hour; the disciples' plan is to send the crowd away.
- v37-38: two hundred denarii (about two hundred days' wages) and five loaves and two fish.

IF THERE'S TIME

- “You” is emphatic in Greek: Jesus hands the problem back to them.
- Israel once asked, “Can God really prepare a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19).

Illustration idea: A parent opening the cupboard to feed unexpected guests and finding one tin of soup.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: To show them they needed him.
- Listen for: To get them involved instead of sending people away.

If it drifts: If it turns into a debate about whether the miracle happened, return to what the passage shows about the Shepherd.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

There was not nearly enough, and the Shepherd was about to make them lie down.

Short on time? Drop the denarii detail. Keep v37.

Bridge → Then Jesus has the crowd sit down as guests.

3. All Were Satisfied

MARK 6:39-44 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The crowd sits in groups on the green grass.
- Jesus looks up, gives thanks, breaks the bread and gives it out.
- Everyone eats and is satisfied, with twelve baskets left over.

“Jesus directed them to have the people sit in groups on the GREEN grass.”

“They all ate and were SATISFIED.”

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus had the people sit down before there was any food to see?

Jesus made the crowd recline on green grass and fed them until all were satisfied: Psalm 23:2 as a scene.

MUST COVER

- v39-41: groups on the green grass (many hear Psalm 23:2); Jesus took, blessed, broke and gave.
- v42-43: all were satisfied, and twelve basketfuls were left over.

IF THERE'S TIME

- The same four verbs (took, blessed, broke, gave) come back at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22).
- Elisha fed a hundred men with twenty loaves, and they had some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Illustration idea: A grandmother's kitchen where there is always more food than the family can eat.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He gives more than we need.
- Listen for: Nothing was wasted.

If it drifts: If people start listing their own lack, acknowledge it and bring them back to v42: “They all ate and were satisfied.”

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He made them lie down in green pastures, and all were satisfied.

Short on time? Drop the Elisha note. Keep v41-42.

Bridge → So hear the psalm line again next to v42.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

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

1. Start with the line. Say Psalm 23:2 together, then ask: Who makes you stop and rest?

2. Read it. Read Mark 6:35-44 together.

3. The disciples' plan. They wanted to send the crowd away. Jesus said, “You give them something to eat.”

4. The meal. Five loaves, two fish, a blessing, and everyone satisfied with twelve baskets over.

5. Leave the question. Ask: What do you make of a man who can feed thousands from a lunch? Leave it with them.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Did this really happen?”

It is the only miracle before the resurrection that all four Gospels record. Mark tells it plainly, with numbers.

“Why the green grass?”

Only Mark mentions it. Many readers hear Psalm 23:2 in it, though Mark does not say so.

“What were the twelve baskets for?”

They show there was more than enough. Jesus later reminded the disciples of the number (Mark 8:19).

“What does this mean for me?”

The Shepherd who satisfied that crowd still provides for those who come to him.

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. Make it concrete

Mark gives numbers: two hundred denarii, five loaves, twelve baskets.
If you're new: Put the numbers on a board.
If you've taught for years: Set the numbers beside Numbers 11:21-22 and 2 Kings 4:42-44.

2. Let the Bible do the talking

The scene speaks for itself.
If you're new: Read v39-42 slowly without comment first.
If you've taught for years: Let the class notice the green grass themselves.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It shows the Shepherd providing.
If you're new: End on v42, not on a task.
If you've taught for years: Pair it with Psalm 23:2 and stop.

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 have you had to stretch something far too small to cover a need?

- use an object: Hold up five small bread rolls and two sardine tins and ask how many people they could feed.
- raise a problem: Thousands of hungry people, a desert place, and late in the day: what would you do?

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: The Shepherd sets a table in the wilderness, and all are satisfied.
- call back to the opening: Return to the 'too little' stories from the start and read v42 over them.
- pray the text: Thank God for the bread he gives each day, as Jesus did before breaking the loaves.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone is genuinely short of food or money.: Do not spiritualize it away. Acknowledge it, and if your church can help in practical ways, quietly make that possible.
- Someone asks why God feeds some and not others.: Admit it is a hard question. Keep to what this passage shows: the Shepherd's compassion and provision.
- 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

- Ezekiel 34:11-16
- Zephaniah 3:13-17
- John 6:1-14

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/mark/6-35-44/lesson

A Table in the Wilderness

MARK 6:35-44 (BSB) · THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.” Psalm 23:2

THE BIG IDEA

The Shepherd makes his flock lie down, then feeds them full.

1. HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN · PSALM 23:2

- The shepherd brings the sheep to rest; they do not get there alone.
- In the prophets, a flock lies down when it is fed and safe.
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“He makes me lie down in _____ pastures.” (Psalm 23:2)

“They all ate and were _____.” (Mark 6:42) A flock lies down when it has been fed.

Discuss: Why might Psalm 23 say the shepherd “makes” me lie down, rather than “lets” me?

2. NOT ENOUGH · MARK 6:35-38

- It is late, the place is desolate, and the crowd is hungry.
- The disciples want to send everyone away.
- Jesus says, “You give them something to eat.”

“You give them something to _____.”

“_____—and two fish.”

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to feed the crowd when he knew they could not?

3. ALL WERE SATISFIED · MARK 6:39-44

- The crowd sits in groups on the green grass.
- Jesus looks up, gives thanks, breaks the bread and gives it out.
- Everyone eats and is satisfied, with twelve baskets left over.

“Jesus directed them to have the people sit in groups on the _____ grass.”

“They all ate and were _____.”

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus had the people sit down before there was any food to see?

Read this week: Ezekiel 34:11-16 · Zephaniah 3:13-17 · John 6:1-14

For Kids: A Table in the Wilderness

MARK 6:35-44 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus gives me rest and food, like a good shepherd.

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

☐ They find five loaves and two fish.

☐ Jesus thanks God and breaks the bread.

☐ Everyone sits on the green grass.

☐ Everyone eats, with twelve baskets left.

☐ A big crowd is hungry.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The hungry crowd: happy · sad · worried

The disciples with only five loaves: happy · sad · worried

The crowd after eating: happy · sad · worried

The disciples picking up leftovers: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

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

JESUS · BREAD · FISH · LOAVES · GRASS · BASKETS · TWELVE · CROWD

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=G 4=N 5=P 6=R 7=S 8=T 9=U

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

5. DRAW IT!

Draw the crowd sitting in groups on the green grass, with twelve baskets of leftovers.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“He makes me lie down in green pastures” Psalm 23:2 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus gives me _____. _____