

# Jesus Feeds the Multitude

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat” (Matthew 14:16).

“Often we hesitate, unwilling to give all that we have, fearing to spend and to be spent for others. But Jesus has bidden us, ‘Give ye them to eat.’ His command is a promise; and behind it is the same power that fed the multitude beside the sea.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 369. [Author’s emphasis.]

**Suggested Reading:** *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 341–348. (At the bottom of this page)

## 1. HUNGERING SOULS

Sunday, Mar 23

**a. Besides the disciples, who else accompanied Jesus when He went over the sea of Galilee before the Passover? John 6:1, 2.**

### John 6:1, 2

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. **2** And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

“Christ had retired to a secluded place with His disciples, but this rare season of peaceful quietude was soon broken. The disciples thought they had retired where they would not be disturbed; but as soon as the multitude missed the divine Teacher, they inquired, ‘Where is He?’ Some among them had noticed the direction in which Christ and His disciples had gone. Many went by land to meet them, while others followed in their boats across the water. The Passover was at hand, and, from far and near, bands of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem gathered to see Jesus. Additions were made to their number, until there were assembled five thousand men besides women and children. Before Christ reached the shore, a multitude were waiting for Him. But He landed unobserved by them, and spent a little time apart with the disciples.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 364.

**b. Describe the spiritual condition of the people assembling. Mark 6:34.**

### Mark 6:34

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

## 2. CARING FOR OUR NEEDS

Monday, Mar 24

**a. What did Jesus tenderly recognize that the people needed—and how did He use this opportunity to test the faith of His disciple, Philip? John 6:3–6.**

### **John 6:3–6**

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. **4** And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. **5** When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? **6** And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

“From the hillside [Jesus] looked upon the moving multitude, and His heart was stirred with sympathy. Interrupted as He was, and robbed of His rest, He was not impatient. He saw a greater necessity demanding His attention as He watched the people coming and still coming. He ‘was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.’ Leaving His retreat, He found a convenient place where He could minister to them. They received no help from the priests and rulers; but the healing waters of life flowed from Christ as He taught the multitude the way of salvation. . . .

“The day seemed to them like heaven upon earth, and they were utterly unconscious of how long it had been since they had eaten anything.

“At length the day was far spent. The sun was sinking in the west, and yet the people lingered. Jesus had labored all day without food or rest. He was pale from weariness and hunger, and the disciples besought Him to cease from His toil. But He could not withdraw Himself from the multitude that pressed upon Him. . . .

“He who taught the people the way to secure peace and happiness was just as thoughtful of their temporal necessities as of their spiritual need. The people were weary and faint. There were mothers with babes in their arms, and little children clinging to their skirts. Many had been standing for hours. . . .

“Many had come from far, and had eaten nothing since morning. In the surrounding towns and villages they might be able to buy food. . . . But Jesus said, ‘Give ye them to eat,’ and then, turning to Philip, questioned, ‘Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ This He said to test the faith of the disciple.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 364, 365.

**b. What was the reaction of Philip? John 6:7.**

### **John 6:7**

Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

“Philip looked over the sea of heads, and thought how impossible it would be to provide food to satisfy the wants of such a crowd. He answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be nearly enough to divide among them, so that each might have a little.”—*Ibid.*

## **3. WHATEVER WAS AVAILABLE**

*Tuesday, Mar 25*

**a. What information did Andrew give to Jesus—and what did the Lord then direct the disciples to do? John 6:8–10.**

### **John 6:8–10**

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, **9** There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

**10** And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

“Jesus inquired how much food could be found among the company. ‘There is a lad here,’ said Andrew, ‘which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?’ Jesus directed that these be brought to Him. Then He bade the disciples seat the people on the grass in parties of fifty or a hundred, to preserve order, and that all might witness what He was about to do.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

**b. Explain the steps Christ took in multiplying the food—and what lessons we can learn from this. Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:37–41; John 6:11.**

### **Matthew 14:19**

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

### **Mark 6:37–41**

He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? **38** He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. **39** And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. **40** And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. **41** And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

### **John 6:1**

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

“Jesus did not seek to attract the people to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. To that great throng, weary and hungry after the long, exciting day, the simple fare was an assurance both of His power and of His tender care for them in the common needs of life. The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is better than earthly good—the abiding comfort of His own presence.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 47, 48.

“In this miracle, Christ received from the Father; He imparted to the disciples, the disciples to the people, and the people to one another. So all who are united to Christ will receive from Him the bread of life, and impart it to others. His disciples are the appointed means of communication between Christ and the people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 49.

**c. Of what lesson on true ministry are we here reminded? Isaiah 61:6.**

### **Isaiah 61:6**

But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

“The disciples brought to Jesus all they had; but He did not invite them to eat. He bade them serve the people. The food multiplied in His hands, and the hands of the disciples, reaching out to Christ, were never unfilled. The little store was sufficient for

all. When the multitude had been fed, the disciples ate with Jesus of the precious, heaven-supplied food.”—*Ibid.*

## 4. THE BEAUTY OF SHARING

Wednesday, Mar 26

**a. What should we learn from the significant instruction Jesus gave after feeding the multitude? John 6:12, 13.**

### John 6:12, 13

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. **13** Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

“When the baskets of fragments were collected, the people thought of their friends at home. They wanted them to share in the bread that Christ had blessed. The contents of the baskets were distributed among the eager throng, and were carried away into all the region round about.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 368.

“Jesus bade His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.’ John 6:12. These words meant more than putting the food into baskets. The lesson was twofold. Nothing is to be wasted. We are to let slip no temporal advantage. We should neglect nothing that would serve to benefit a human being. Let everything be gathered up that will relieve the necessities of earth’s hungry ones. With the same carefulness are we to treasure the bread from heaven to satisfy the needs of the soul. By every word of God we are to live. Nothing that God has spoken is to be lost. Not one word that concerns our eternal salvation are we to neglect. Not one word is to fall useless to the ground.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 48.

**b. Even when it may appear inconvenient or impossible, what Christian quality are we bidden to cultivate? Isaiah 58:6–8; 1 Peter 4:9.**

### Isaiah 58:6–8

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? **7** Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? **8** ¶ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

### 1 Peter 4:9

Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

“In every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command. . . .

“As we see the necessities of the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted, how often our hearts sink. We question, ‘What avail our feeble strength and slender resources to supply this terrible necessity? Shall we not wait for someone of greater ability to direct the work, or for some organization to undertake it?’ Christ says, ‘Give *ye* them to eat.’ Use the means, the time, the ability, you have. Bring your barley loaves to Jesus.

“Though your resources may not be sufficient to feed thousands, they may suffice to feed one. In the hand of Christ they may feed many. Like the disciples, give what you have. Christ will multiply the gift. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. That

which seemed but a meager supply will prove to be a rich feast.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 49, 50. [Author’s emphasis.]

## 5. OUR CREATOR AND PROVIDER

Thursday, Mar 27

**a. What wonderful characteristic of God must we never forget? Psalm 37:25, 26; Philippians 4:19.**

### Psalm 37:25, 26

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. **26**He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

Philippians 4:19 **19** But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

“It is the grace of God on the small portion that makes it all-sufficient. God’s hand can multiply it a hundredfold. From His resources He can spread a table in the wilderness. By the touch of His hand He can increase the scanty provision and make it sufficient for all. It was His power that increased the loaves and corn in the hands of the sons of the prophets. . . .

“When Jesus bade His disciples give the multitude to eat, they answered, ‘We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.’ Luke 9:13. What is that among so many?

“The lesson is for God’s children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey. The supply in their hands may seem to fall short of the need to be filled; but in the hands of the Lord it will prove more than sufficient. . . .

“A fuller sense of God’s relationship to those whom He has purchased with the gift of His Son, a greater faith in the onward progress of His cause in the earth—this is the great need of the church today. Let none waste time in deploring the scantiness of their visible resources. The outward appearance may be unpromising, but energy and trust in God will develop resources. The gift brought to Him with thanksgiving and with prayer for His blessing, He will multiply as He multiplied the food given to the sons of the prophets and to the weary multitude.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 241–243.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Friday, Mar 28

1. Describe the attitude of the people in listening to Christ’s words.
2. How did the Lord supply their physical necessities?
3. What do we learn from the way Christ kept the multitude in order?
4. What should I remember whenever prompted, “Give ye them to eat”?
5. Name times when God’s providence for you was especially remarkable.

**Suggested Reading:** *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 341–348.

The Bible lays much stress upon the practice of hospitality. Not only does it enjoin hospitality as a duty, but it presents many beautiful pictures of the exercise of this grace and the blessings which it brings. Foremost among these is the experience of Abraham. (6T 341.1)

In the records of Genesis we see the patriarch at the hot summer noontide resting in his tent door under the shadow of the oaks of Mamre. Three travelers are passing near. They make no appeal for hospitality, solicit no favor; but Abraham does not permit them to go on their way unrefreshed. He is a man full of years, a man of dignity and wealth, one highly honored, and accustomed to command; yet on seeing these strangers he “ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.” Addressing the leader he said: “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant.” Genesis 18:2, 3. With his own hands he brought water that they might wash the dust of travel from their feet. He himself selected their food; while they were at rest under the cooling shade, Sarah his wife made ready for their entertainment, and Abraham stood respectfully beside them while they partook of his hospitality. This kindness he showed them simply as wayfarers, passing strangers, who might never come his way again. But, the entertainment over, his guests stood revealed. He had ministered not only to heavenly angels, but to their glorious Commander, his Creator, Redeemer, and King. And to Abraham the counsels of heaven were opened, and he was called “the friend of God.” **(6T 341.2)**

Lot, Abraham’s nephew, though he had made his home in Sodom, was imbued with the patriarch’s spirit of kindness and hospitality. Seeing at nightfall two strangers at the city gate, and knowing the dangers sure to beset them in that wicked city, Lot insisted on bringing them to his home. To the peril that might result to himself and his household he gave no thought. It was a part of his lifework to protect the imperiled and to care for the homeless, and the deed performed in kindness to two unknown travelers brought angels to his home. Those whom he sought to protect, protected him. At nightfall he had led them for safety to his door; at the dawn they led him and his household forth in safety from the gate of the doomed city. **(6T 342.1)**

These acts of courtesy God thought of sufficient importance to record in His word; and more than a thousand years later they were referred to by an inspired apostle: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Hebrews 13:2. **(6T 342.2)**

The privilege granted Abraham and Lot is not denied to us. By showing hospitality to God’s children we, too, may receive His angels into our dwellings. Even in our day, angels in human form enter the homes of men and are entertained by them. And Christians who live in the light of God’s countenance are always accompanied by unseen angels, and these holy beings leave behind them a blessing in our homes. **(6T 342.3)**

“A lover of hospitality” is among the specifications given by the Holy Spirit as marking one who is to bear responsibility in the church. And to the whole church is given the injunction: “Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:9, 10. **(6T 342.4)**

These admonitions have been strangely neglected. Even among those who profess to be Christians, true hospitality is little exercised. Among our own people the opportunity of showing hospitality is not regarded as it should be, as a privilege and blessing. There is altogether too little sociability, too little of a disposition to make room for two or three more at the family board, without embarrassment or parade. Some plead that “it is too

much trouble.” It would not be if you would say: “We have made no special preparation, but you are welcome to what we have.” By the unexpected guest a welcome is appreciated far more than is the most elaborate preparation. **(6T 343.1)**

It is a denial of Christ to make preparation for visitors which requires time that rightly belongs to the Lord. In this we commit robbery of God. And we wrong others as well. In preparing an elaborate entertainment, many deprive their own families of needed attention, and their example leads others to follow the same course. **(6T 343.2)**

Needless worries and burdens are created by the desire to make a display in entertaining visitors. In order to prepare a great variety for the table, the housewife overworks; because of the many dishes prepared, the guests overeat; and disease and suffering, from overwork on the one hand and overeating on the other, are the result. These elaborate feasts are a burden and an injury. **(6T 343.3)**

But the Lord designs that we shall care for the interests of our brethren and sisters. The apostle Paul has given an illustration of this. To the church at Rome he says: “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” Romans 16:1, 2. Phebe entertained the apostle, and she was in a marked manner an entertainer of strangers who needed care. Her example should be followed by the churches of today. **(6T 343.4)**

God is displeased with the selfish interest so often manifested for “me and my family.” Every family that cherishes this spirit needs to be converted by the pure principles exemplified in the life of Christ. Those who shut themselves up within themselves, who are unwilling to be drawn upon to entertain visitors, lose many blessings. **(6T 344.1)**

Some of our workers occupy positions where it is necessary for them often to entertain visitors, either their own brethren or strangers. It is urged by some that the conference should make an account of this, and that in addition to their regular wages they should be allowed a sufficient amount to cover this extra expense. But the Lord has given the work of entertaining to all His people. It is not in God’s order for one or two to do the entertaining for a conference or a church, or for workers to be paid for entertaining their brethren. This is an invention born of selfishness, and angels of God make account of these things. **(6T 344.2)**

Those who travel from place to place as evangelists or missionaries in any line should receive hospitality from the members of the churches among whom they may labor. Brethren and sisters, make a home for these workers, even if it be at considerable personal sacrifice. **(6T 344.3)**

Christ keeps an account of every expense incurred in entertaining for His sake. He supplies all that is necessary for this work. Those who for Christ’s sake entertain their brethren, doing their best to make the visit profitable both to their guests and to themselves, are recorded in heaven as worthy of special blessings. **(6T 344.4)**

Christ has given in His own life a lesson of hospitality. When surrounded by the hungry multitude beside the sea, He did not send them unrefreshed to their homes. He said to His disciples: "Give ye them to eat." Matthew 14:16. And by an act of creative power He supplied food sufficient to satisfy their need. Yet how simple was the food provided! There were no luxuries. He who had all the resources of heaven at His command could have spread for the people a rich repast. But He supplied only that which would suffice for their need, that which was the daily food of the fisherfolk about the sea. **(6T 345.1)**

If men were today simple in their habits, living in harmony with nature's laws, there would be an abundant supply for all the needs of the human family. There would be fewer imaginary wants and more opportunity to work in God's ways. **(6T 345.2)**

Christ did not seek to attract men to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. The simple fare He provided was an assurance not only of His power but of His love, of His tender care for them in the common needs of life. And while He fed them with the barley loaves, He gave them also to eat of the bread of life. Here is our example. Our fare may be plain and even scanty. Our lot may be shut in with poverty. Our resources may be no greater than were those of the disciples with the five loaves and the two fishes. Yet as we come in contact with those in need, Christ bids us: "Give ye them to eat." Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13. We are to impart of that which we have; and as we give, Christ will see that our lack is supplied. **(6T 345.3)**

In this connection read the story of the widow of Sarepta. To this woman in a heathen land God sent His servant in time of famine to ask for food. "And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah." 1 Kings 17:12-15. **(6T 345.4)**

Wonderful was the hospitality shown to God's prophet by this Phoenician woman, and wonderfully were her faith and generosity rewarded. "She, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah. And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.... And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord.... And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." 1 Kings 17:15-24. **(6T 346.1)**



God has not changed. His power is no less now than in the days of Elijah. And no less sure now than when spoken by our Saviour is the promise that Christ has given: “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward.” Matthew 10:41. **(6T 346.2)**

To His faithful servants today as well as to His first disciples Christ’s words apply: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.” Matthew 10:40. No act of kindness shown in His name will fail to be recognized and rewarded. And in the same tender recognition Christ includes even the feeblest and lowliest of the family of God. “Whosoever shall give to drink,” He says, “unto one of these little ones—those who are as children in their faith and their knowledge of Christ—a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward.” Matthew 10:42. **(6T 347.1)**

Poverty need not shut us out from showing hospitality. We are to impart what we have. There are those who struggle for a livelihood and who have great difficulty in making their income meet their necessities; but they love Jesus in the person of His saints and are ready to show hospitality to believers and unbelievers, trying to make their visits profitable. At the family board and the family altar the guests are made welcome. The season of prayer makes its impression on those who receive entertainment, and even one visit may mean the saving of a soul from death. For this work the Lord makes a reckoning, saying: “I will repay.” **(6T 347.2)**

Brethren and sisters, invite to your homes those who are in need of entertainment and kindly attention. Make no parade; but, as you see their necessity, take them in and show them genuine Christian hospitality. There are precious privileges in social intercourse. **(6T 347.3)**

“Man doth not live by bread only,”(Deuteronomy 8:3) and as we impart to others our temporal food, so we are to impart hope and courage and Christlike love. We are “to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Corinthians 1:4. And the assurance is ours: “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” **(6T 347.4)**

We are in a world of sin and temptation; all around us are souls perishing out of Christ, and God wants us to labor for them in every way possible. If you have a pleasant home, invite to it the youth who have no home, those who are in need of help, who long for sympathy and kind words, for respect and courtesy. If you desire to bring them to Christ, you must show your love and respect for them as the purchase of His blood. **(6T 348.1)**

In the providence of God we are associated with those who are inexperienced, with many who need pity and compassion. They need succor, for they are weak. Young men need help. In the strength of Him whose loving-kindness is exercised toward the helpless, the ignorant, and those counted as the least of His little ones, we must labor for their future welfare, for the shaping of Christian character. The very ones who need help the most will at times try our patience sorely. “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,” Christ says, “for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 18:10. And to those who minister to

these souls, the Saviour declares: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:40. **(6T 348.2)**

The brows of those who do this work will wear the crown of sacrifice. But they will receive their reward. In heaven we shall see the youth whom we helped, those whom we invited to our homes, whom we led from temptation. We shall see their faces reflecting the radiance of the glory of God. They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.” Revelation 22:4. **(6T 348.3)**