



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### John 6:1-14: The Feeding of the Five Thousand

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*"After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.*

*4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. 5 Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*

*7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*

*8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"*

*10 Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples<sup>[a]</sup> to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." 13 Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. 14 Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

#### Background Notes

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle of our Lord that is recorded in all four gospels, other than the resurrection of Christ. Verse 10 tells us that the number of **men** that were fed was about five thousand. We know from the Gospel of Matthew that omen and children were also there, so maybe as many as twelve thousand, or fifteen thousand, or maybe even more, were feed.

Where did this miracle take place? In verse 3 we read that Jesus went up on a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. We believe that this miracle took place somewhere at the northeast end of the Sea of Galilee, on the slopes of what is known today as the Golan Heights.

Why does John tell us, "Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near"(v4)? Probably to explain the crowds. We know from the other Gospels that people were coming from the cities around the Sea of Galilee to hear Jesus, and probably their ranks were swelled by folks from all over the Galilee area who were heading towards Jerusalem for the Passover.

Why did the Lord ask Philip, *"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"* Most likely He selected Philip because he was from the nearby town of Bethsaida, and he would have known where supplies could be purchased. Philip responded, *"Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little"*(v7). A denarius was a workingman's daily wage; so two hundred denarii would be two thirds of a year's salary!

At this point Andrew announced that a boy in the crowd was willing to give his lunch to the Lord. Notice how Andrew presents that fact: *"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"*(v9). In other words, "Hey -- the kid means well, but let's not be ridiculous! How are we going to feed five thousand people with five pita breads and two small fish?"

Verse 13 emphasizes that what took place here was definitely a miracle. Critics of the Bible always want to come up with alternative explanations for this miracle. They want to say that it wasn't really a miracle, everybody just shared a little bit of bread -- like a sacramental portion, like in the communion service, or something like that. Oh no! The Scriptures make it quite clear that this is a very dramatic miracle -- they even have twelve baskets full of left-overs!

One more background note: In verse 14 we read *"Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.'" They were probably referring to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18; where it was predicted that God would raise up a prophet like Moses. The fact that Moses fed the people with the miraculous manna, and now the Lord is feeding them with miraculous bread may have promoted the connection in their minds between the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18, and what the Lord was doing here. In fact, the Lord was indeed the fulfillment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18.*

## **Doctrinal / Teaching Points**

### **1. The miracles of Christ were pre-designed.**

The Lord Jesus was testing Philip when He asked, *"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do."* When do you think the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came up with the idea that He would take a small boy's lunch and multiply it to the blessing of so many? Do you think that was a spur of the moment decision?

Of course it wasn't! None of the Lord's miracles were spur of the moment decisions. The miracles of Christ were **pre-designed from eternity past**. The Lord was never caught off guard, or in a situation where He had to wonder, "What do I do now?" As God, He knew exactly what He was going to do. The Lord never did any of His miracles merely by an arbitrary burst of power. No, the miracles of Christ were pre-designed. That is why the miracles recorded in the Gospel of John are called "sign miracles." They were designed; they were pre-designed.

The Lord's miracles were designed not only to prove the deity of Christ, but they were also designed to teach. The Lord certainly could have snapped His fingers and produced caviar or filet mignon -- but the Lord didn't do that. He chose to take a little boy's lunch and multiply it, because there is teaching associated with this miracle. Always look for the teaching associated with every miracle of Christ.

## **2. Christians have a responsibility to meet social needs.**

Where do we see that truth taught in this miracle? Look at verses 5-6: "*Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*" *But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*" Philip's responsibility and attitude about the meeting of the needs of the people was being tested. Suppose Philip had said at this point, "Lord, feeding these people is not our responsibility. If these people were dumb enough to come way out here without any food, let them starve." (We would never say anything like that, would we? Well, I think all of us can identify.) If Philip had taken that attitude, he would have failed the test.

Do you see the lesson? As Philip and the other disciples had a responsibility to meet the social need of feeding these people, so Christians have a responsibility to meet people's needs. Our primary responsibility, of course, is to preach the gospel, but we also have a responsibility to meet the social needs of people with whom we come in contact – our neighbors, people in the community. Christians have a responsibility to meet social needs.

## **3. There should be a balance between generosity and economy.**

Look at verses 11-12: "*And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.'*" We see here our Lord's generosity – they had as much as they wanted! But we also see our Lord's economy – He made sure that nothing was lost.

We need to follow our Lord's example. There should be a balance between generosity and economy, and sometimes that balance is not easy to maintain. As flawed human beings, we tend to go to one extreme or the other. We become so economy-minded that we hoard things and become stingy – uncaring of others needs and refusing to give. On the other hand, we can become so lavishly generous that we become wasteful, and don't use our resources properly.

There should be a balance between generosity and economy. That balance should characterize our personal lives, it should characterize the life of the church, and it should characterize any ministry you are involved in. There should be a balance between generosity and economy.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Give what you have to the Lord.**

The little boy gave what he had! It didn't seem like much in view of the need of thousands of people, but he gave what he had. He didn't give what he didn't have, but he gave what he had. The Lord expects us to do the same. We may not have much to give, and the needs are great, but the application here is -- give what you have to the Lord. **He** can take what little we have to give and multiply it to the blessing of many.

Notice that the boy gave all he had – it wasn't much, but he gave it **all!** You know, if I had been that boy I think I probably would have thought to myself, "I'll be

really generous -- I'll give three loaves and one fish." That's a pretty good gift, right? But no -- he gave it **all** to the Lord!

We should be like this boy, and give all to the Lord. That doesn't mean that we have to empty our bank accounts into the collection plate -- after all, we do have responsibilities before the Lord that we need to meet. But we should place everything we have under the Lordship of Christ.

We should dedicate all we have to the Lordship of Christ. Have you dedicated your talents to the Lord? What about your time? Give what you have to the Lord.

## **2. Do what you can for the Lord.**

That application is taught in the role the disciples played. The disciples could not multiply the bread, but did what they could -- they could help! In verse 10 the Lord had His disciples organize the people so that there was easy distribution of the food. There was no stampede when the bread was multiplied. The food was distributed in an organized and orderly way, and the disciples were used here.

The disciples distributed the food -- they couldn't multiply it, but they could get involved in working with the Lord to serve the people. Then they gathered up the fragments, and they were blessed as a result.

Twelve baskets! Every disciple had a basket, and each disciple had more in that one basket than what the Lord started with -- the little boy's lunch! Do you see the multiplication, and do you see the blessing as a result?

We too are to do what we can for the Lord. Are you doing what you can for the Lord, or do you just attend church services? Do you do what you can for the Lord or do you say, "Well, yeah, but what can I do?" or "I just don't have time!"

We can do all kinds of little things. Can you drive? Well, for any church, for any ministry, there are always drivers needed. Can you pick up someone who needs a ride to church? Can you lick envelopes and stick on stamps? In any church, in any ministry, there are always mailings that have to go out. (Come see me later if you can do that!)

There is always something that you can do, and like the disciples, you will be blessed as a result. Do what you can for the Lord!