

BRMC Small Group Study: John 6:1-15

Leaders' Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

You would notice that the study format is different. We will be changing the question categories to include Observation, Interpretation, and Application questions. We hope that this would help to provide more organisation to the study.

Context:

The Gospel of John.

John's gospel testifies to the fact that God has given the true light to every person in this world through Jesus Christ: the Word who was with God and was God, through whom all things were made. Jesus came, full of grace and truth, and gave to all who received him the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1)

In Chapter 1-5

John the Disciple will at many points make clear who Jesus is (His divinity). To find this, look out for keywords like "testimony". John the Disciple also makes clear the identity of John the Baptist (who testifies that Jesus is the Son of God). Thirdly, John the Disciple will touch on what Jesus came to earth to do: to rescue the earth, and to bring the Kingdom of God through His actions and miracles on earth.

Think about these aspects as you go back to John 1-5 to refresh your memory, and as we move on to John 6.

Introduction:

John 6 begins with one of the most well known miracles performed by Jesus: the feeding of the five thousand. This is the only miracle, other than Jesus' resurrection, that appears in all four Gospels. Note that only the men were counted in the five thousand and it was likely that would be at least double the number if women and children were counted.

In later studies, we will discuss John 6 which talks about the 'Bread of Life'. Just as John 4 talked about the Samaritan woman and Jesus providing 'living water', John 6 shares a similar theme on 'consuming' Jesus who would bring eternal life.

Lesson Objectives:

1. To understand the miracle and why it happened.
 - a. Note: Study this passage in relation to the story of Moses and the providence of manna.

Observation

1. Who are the characters in this passage and how did they interact with one another?

- *A great crowd follows Jesus.*
- *Jesus asks Philip where to buy food for the great crowd. Philip expresses incredulity.*
- *Andrew brought the boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish (why wasn't he named?)*
- *Jesus gets the crowd to sit down in groups and gives thanks for the food. Then everyone has enough food to eat.*
- *The disciples gather 12 baskets of leftover food from the crowd.*
- *The crowd saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did and wanted to make him king by force, causing Jesus to withdraw to a mountain by himself.*

2. What are some key features of this passage? Note the time where this occurred, the place, and the sequence of events.

- *You may wish to provide a short summary of the passage. Some examples can be seen below.*
- *It was the time of the passover.*
- *This took place at the sea of Galilee/Tiberias.*
- *There was a need to feed a large number of people.*
- *Jesus multiplied the little that they had to feed all of them.*
- *Additional information: This is not the first time in the Bible where food was multiplied abundantly by God. 2 Kings 4:42-44 - 42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give to the men, that they may eat." 43 But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred men?" So he repeated, "Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" 44 So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.*

Interpretation

3. Read Exodus 16. What are some similarities and differences between John 6:1-15 and Exodus 16?

- *In both stories, the people came to the leader for food.*
- *Just as manna and quail was provided for the Israelites, Jesus also provided bread and fish for the people.*
- *However, in Exodus 16, the people were forbidden from keeping extras and it went rotten if they did (Exodus 16:16-20). Whereas in John 6, Jesus told them to gather up the remainder that it may not be wasted (John 6:12)*

4. What does the parallel between these two passages tell us about Jesus?

- *At this point, Jesus was at height of his popularity. His feeding of 5k parallels Moses calling down manna. However, both are short lived. And both point at how the people only focused on their physical needs such as food. The people ultimately did not see God nor did they worship him.*

- The parallel between the two passages tell us that Jesus is actually God. The same God who provided manna and quail in the wilderness also provided bread and fish. This is an important emphasis in John's Gospel, John goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Jesus is God.

5. Is there a significance to the twelve baskets of leftovers (John 6:13)?

- Some people have suggested that these twelve baskets represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the abundance that God has shown them.

- However, it could also be there were twelve baskets because there were twelve disciples going around to collect the leftovers.

- Jesus provided for the five thousand and is still providing for all peoples on earth, not just the Jews.

6. Why did Jesus not want to be made king (John 6:15)?

- The people were looking for an earthly king. They believed that the Messiah would come to save them from their oppressors the Romans. Having seen Jesus provide food just like Moses provided Manna, they saw Jesus as the "Prophet who is to come into the world!" v14 (this was prophesied by Moses). They wanted Jesus to be king because they believed he would take them out of Roman occupation just like Moses did with the Israelites in Egypt. They were looking at the miracles not the saving grace. On one level there is the idea of Jesus providing. But on a deeper level, this leads to Jesus' concept of being the bread of life (which will be explained later in the chapter).

Application

7. As the boy offered his 5 loaves and 2 fish to Jesus and allowed them to be multiplied to become a blessing for many, what can you offer to God to be a blessings to his people?

- Read Romans 12:6-9 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

8. Do we question how far our offering will go? What is Jesus' response?

- Both Andrew and Philip questioned Jesus. Philip thought of this in terms of the money (200 denarii or 8 month's wages) that was required to feed the crowd. He knew the prices of food in the land. Andrew, the helper, tried to find the only resource available- a small boy's lunch. However, he questioned: "How far will they go among so many?" What did Jesus do?

9. How can we live in a way that displays our trust that God provides for us spiritually and physically?