

Jesus and the Humongous Picnic

Lesson 9

LESSON AIM

To help kids trust that ★ *Jesus provides everything we need.*

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ be grouped into “families” and walk together,
- ✓ participate in an interactive story of the feeding of the five thousand,
- ✓ make a stretchy fish to use in retelling the story to their families, and
- ✓ practice telling today’s Bible story with a partner.

BIBLE BASIS



Mark 6:14-44; John 6:1-14

The feeding of the five thousand is certainly one of Jesus’ most remarkable miracles; in fact, the feeding and the Resurrection are the only miracles reported in all four Gospels.

This was an emotional time for Jesus. He’d just gotten the news that John the Baptist had been beheaded at the whim of Herod’s stepdaughter after she performed a dance that pleased Herod at his birthday party. Herod immediately regretted his offer to give her anything she desired, but to save face he ordered the beheading of the imprisoned John.

When John’s disciples brought the tragic news to Jesus, he

You’ll need...

- ☐ three to four 4-foot diameter circles made from twine or cotton cording (1 for every 3 or 4 kids)
- ☐ five 20-inch lengths of elastic or twine
- ☐ large package of fish-shaped crackers* poured into a paper grocery bag that is then stapled shut
- ☐ paper plates and napkins
- ☐ 2 large green party tablecloths
- ☐ masking tape
- ☐ envelope with this message inside: “John the Baptist is dead!”
- ☐ copies of the “Stretchy Fish” handout (p. 106)
- ☐ scissors

* Always check for allergies before serving snacks.

wanted time alone. Leaving from Capernaum, he and his disciples sailed across the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee toward a rural area near Bethsaida. However, the masses of people wanting to see Jesus anticipated his direction, so that when the boat pulled toward shore Jesus found not solitude but a huge crowd awaiting him. Scripture notes that there were 5,000 men. Adding women and children, the total number of people in the crowd had to have been at least 10,000! Rather than retreating from this daunting gathering, Jesus had compassion on the people; he healed their sick and taught them.

As evening drew near, Jesus asked his disciple Philip how the people could be fed. Philip pointed out that even if the disciples worked for months, they wouldn't be able to buy food for everyone. Only in John's Gospel does it tell that Andrew brought forward a young boy who wanted to offer his food of five small loaves and two fish. Bless Andrew not only for seeing the child, but also for seeing with eyes of faith what Jesus might do with such modest beginnings.

Jesus had the people sit in groups of fifty and a hundred, much as an army would be organized. Jesus took the bread and blessed it and then gave it to the disciples to distribute to the hungry people. Then he did the same with the fish. Afterward, the disciples picked up 12 baskets of leftovers. With this miracle, Jesus showed himself to be greater than Moses! The next day, Jesus explained that the bread he gave represented eternal life, but the people in the crowd of about 10,000 could only think about their full bellies. Right after the miraculous feeding, the people wanted to make Jesus king. To foil their plans, he slipped away and went off into the mountains by himself. The disciples took off in their boat again and the huge crowd dispersed.



Deuteronomy 8:1-3

For Jewish people who were raised on stories of their ancestors, what did it mean that Jesus produced bread for the hungry? A great deal! For one thing, here was a prophet greater than Moses—the one they esteemed more than anyone. Moses only *told* of the manna that God would drop on the camp of the wandering Israelites. Jesus himself *produced* the bread to feed the masses and later went on to proclaim himself to be the bread of life.

This symbolism wouldn't have been missed by any of Jesus' followers. A prophet greater than Moses? This must be the Messiah. Let's make him king!

Jesus taught over and over that his was not the role of conquering king, but the role of suffering servant who would give his life for the ransom of many. It was a lesson even his own disciples couldn't accept or understand at this point. It brought such disappointment that in the end, it was easy to influence crowds—who were only seeing the short view—against him. They wanted full bellies, not full hearts. They wanted their hero to shove Herod and Rome aside, not to succumb to a criminal's death.

From this point on, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and teachers of the law would see Jesus as a much greater threat than they had before.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Would kids rather have a full belly or a contented heart? Kids live much more in the “now” than adults do, so a full belly will win almost every time.

However, we never know when the Holy Spirit will speak to the hearts of the children we teach. You'll find that kids who've been through grief and very difficult circumstances will often identify hunger for God's reassuring presence in their hearts at quite a young age.

Because you're teaching kids of mixed ages, some of them will receive this lesson at a deeper level than others. That's fine. As your more God-hungry kids interact with the lesson, they'll begin to open others' eyes.

Even if you're only planting the first seeds of the complex idea of the heart that's hungry for God, who knows when the Holy Spirit will bring it to mind? The next time the child eats fish crackers? goes fishing? goes on a picnic? feels heartache over a friend's betrayal?

How precious are those first seeds you plant! You're partnering with the Holy Spirit to help children understand Jesus in a new way and to change their hearts forever. As you have fun with the rowdy parts of this lesson, bear in mind that everything you do is leading toward making an eternal difference.

ATTENTION GRABBER

Hoop Family Dash

Greet kids warmly and ask about what's been going on in their lives this past week.

Say: **Today we're going to revisit one of Jesus' greatest miracles. It's such a great miracle that it's told four times in the Bible. You'll see in this amazing miracle how ★ Jesus provides everything we need.**

Learning about such a miracle requires a little preparation. A lot of preparation, actually. I hope you're up for a workout! But don't worry—this isn't a go-it alone activity. Watch out, because I'm about to grab you into Hoop Families!

Use twine hoops to encircle three to four children each, depending on the size of your group. Aim for a mix of younger and older children in each family.

Say: **OK, families, here comes the big connection.**

Attach an elastic cord to each hoop circle, and then attach the loose ends of the elastic cords to the end of another cord. This last cord acts as your "lead rope."

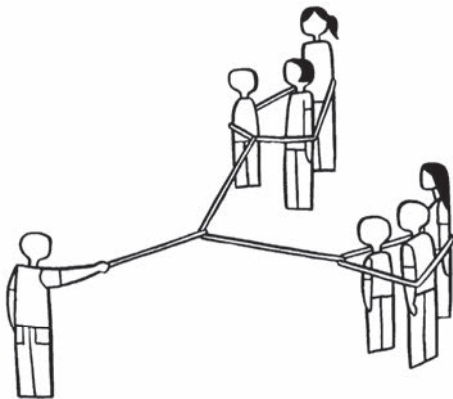
Pull on your lead rope gently to lead the Hoop Families around the room. This will lead to lots of giggling as the children learn how to move together inside their hoop rings. As you move along, say: **Wherever Jesus traveled in Galilee, he taught about the kingdom of God, not about things a regular teacher might teach about. He taught about a loving God who wanted to forgive people and give them new life. And Jesus also healed the sick. So when word came that Jesus was in the neighborhood, everyone hurried to bring their sick friends and relatives to him.**

"Hurry" your Hoop Families into a brisk walk. Take them around the room, into the hallway, or even outside if it's a nice day. Make sure your Families end up panting a bit. Then release the elastic cords.

Say: **Jesus didn't usually stay in one place for long, so the crowds felt that if they hurried to be the first to see Jesus, they'd win the big prize of getting close to him and having their relatives healed.**

Hold up the bag with the fish crackers.

Say: **Here's the big prize. Taking care that no one in your family falls down or gets hurt, let's see which family can get to the prize first!**



Toss the bag of treats as far from the Families as possible. Cheer on the Families as they try to get to the prize first.

Say to the winning Family as you take the bag of treats: **Good job! I'll hold on to that for you until we get to our story area.**

Say: **Of course, when the families all got to Jesus, they made a great circle around him so they could get close to hear him and maybe even touch him. Families, make a big circle around me and then walk quickly around me, making sure to keep pace with everyone else in your family.**

Let the families keep walking quickly until you have a hilarious group of tired, out-of-sync Families.

Say: **Families, it looks like you're ready for a rest! When I say three, drop to the floor together. Ready? One, two, three! Now take some nice deep breaths.**

Because you did such a good job working together, you can put your hoops around me and lead me to the story area. Gently, please. Remember, I'm holding the treats!

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Jesus and the Humongous Picnic (Mark 6:14-44; John 6:1-14)

Say: **Take off your shoes and place them against that wall. Indicate a wall. Good. Now help me spread out and tape down these green tablecloths. I'll tell you what they represent a little bit later.** Spread out the tablecloths for maximum area coverage and tape them at the corners and between the two cloths. **Excellent. Now we're ready to go.**

You may be surprised to learn that this great miracle began with Jesus getting some really bad news. I have an envelope with the bad news in it right here. Who would like to open it?

You may want to let a younger child open the envelope and ask an older child to help read the note inside.

The note reads, *John the Baptist is dead!*

Say: **That was terrible news for Jesus! John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. John the Baptist was the one who baptized Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. And John the Baptist had been in prison for a long time. King Herod had John the Baptist killed.** Ask kids to show you what they look like when they get really bad news.

When John's disciples came to Jesus with the sad news, Jesus decided to take his disciples in a fishing boat and sail to a place where they could be alone for a while. Jesus wanted to spend time praying to God. Ask kids to show you what they look like when they pray.

But the crowds of people who wanted to see Jesus watched to see which way his boat sailed and they took their families and started running along the shoreline as fast as they could. Ask kids to show you what they look like when they run.

When Jesus and his disciples pulled into shore, they didn't find the nice, quiet place they were hoping for. Instead, they found a huge crowd of thousands of people waiting for them.

Ask:

- **What could Jesus have done when he saw the crowds waiting on the shore?**

Say: **He could've had the disciples sail away to a different place, or he could've pulled into shore and faced the thousands of people who'd come to see him. The Bible says that Jesus had compassion for the crowds, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.**

Ask:

- **What do you think "sheep without a shepherd" means?**

Say: **Jesus and his disciples pulled their boat up to the shore to meet the crowds. Jesus took time to teach the people and to heal the sick who were there. It wasn't the day of rest and prayer he imagined, but he loved people too much to brush them aside.**

As the sun began to sink in the sky, the disciples grew nervous. There was no way to feed the huge crowd. The disciples asked Jesus what to do. Ask kids to show you what they look like when they don't know what to do.

Then the disciple Andrew brought forward a little boy who was willing to share his food of five small loaves of bread and two fishes. Jesus had the disciples tell the people to sit down on the green grass, kind of like you're sitting on these green tablecloths. Then he took the little boy's loaves, gave thanks to God for them, and broke the bread and had the disciples distribute it to the groups sitting on the grass. Then he did the same with the fish. From that one little meal, that whole crowd of about 10,000 people ate all they wanted. Ask kids to show you what they look like when they're full.

Open the stapled grocery bag of fish crackers and toss a fish cracker in the air for each child to catch. Then serve a paper plate

of fish to each child. Give kids napkins to wipe their hands when finished.

Say: **That was one humongous picnic! After everyone finished eating, the disciples went around and picked up 12 baskets of leftovers. All from one little boy's meal!**

Seeing Jesus' great miracle, some of the people began to make plans to take Jesus and make him king by force. But instead of staying with the crowd, Jesus went off to a mountaintop to be by himself.

Ask:

- Why did people follow Jesus even when he wanted to be alone?

- What do you think of what Jesus did?

Say: **Let's make something to remind us that ★ Jesus provides everything we need.**

Have kids put on their shoes.

LIFE APPLICATION

Stretchy Fish

Lead the kids to the craft table where you've set out the supplies.

Say: **Today we're going to make a really cool fish you can use to help you retell our Bible story to your families. It's simple but tricky at the same time. Look what happens when you follow the cutting directions exactly.**

Display the stretchy fish you folded and cut before class. Be prepared for oohs and ahs!

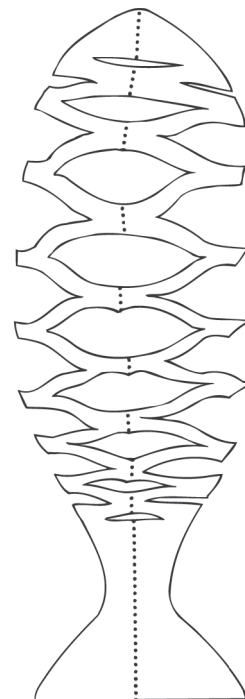
Say: **Listen carefully as I guide you through the process of making the fish.**

- ✓ Fold your handout in half on the dotted line. Crease your fold nicely.
- ✓ Cut the outline of the fish from A to B.
- ✓ Cut carefully on the black lines, some from the center and some from the outside.
- ✓ When you've finished cutting, gently pull your fish at both ends and watch it stretch!

If kids make a wrong cut, give them another copy of the handout and a bit of assistance getting started.

Prep Box

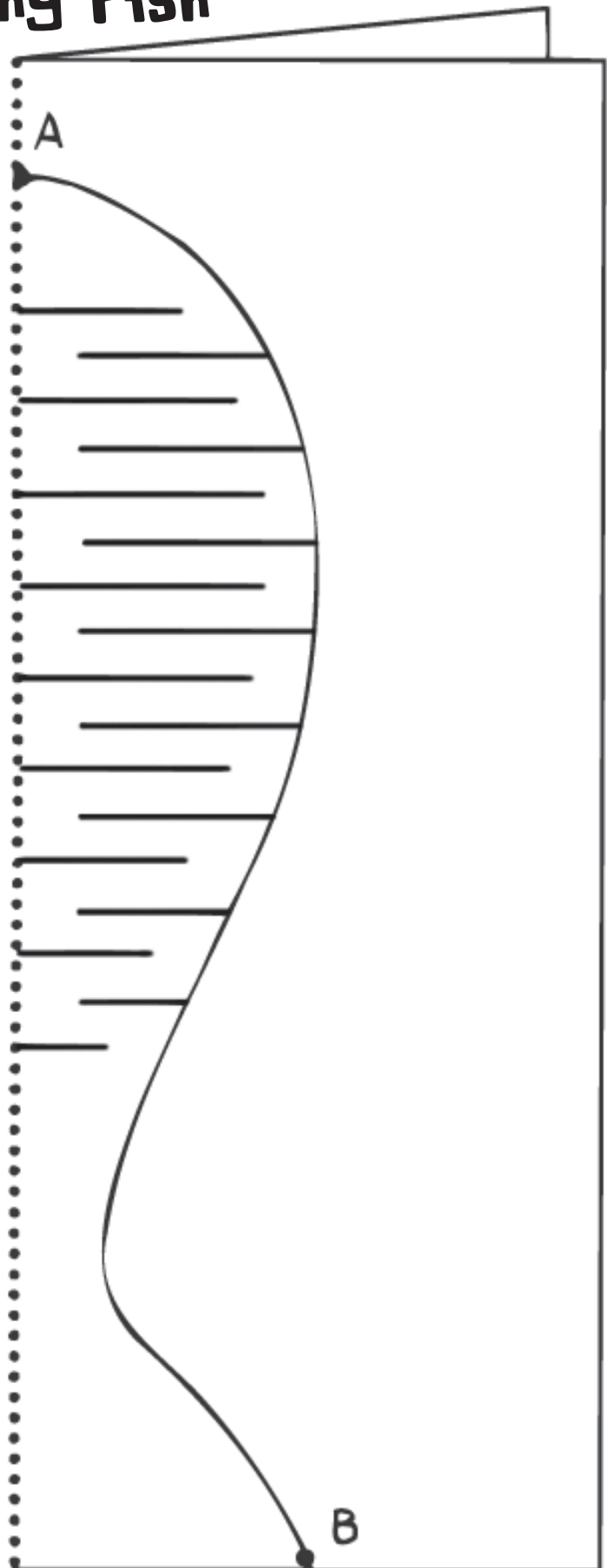
Set out scissors and copies of the "Stretchy Fish" handout. Have a stretchy fish prepared so kids can see a sample of what they'll be making.



Teacher Tip

Have older kids seated next to younger kids to keep an eye on the younger ones' cutting. It's very simple but requires a bit of concentration.

Stretchy Fish



When kids are done, say: **Check this out! We have a whole bunch of fish right here before our very eyes. Look at how the fish stretches, like the way Jesus' miracle stretched two fish to be enough for thousands of people.**

COMMITMENT

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Pair Story Telling

Have kids form pairs and take turns telling each other about the feeding of the five thousand using their stretchy fish. If a partner gets stuck, the other partner can offer prompts.

After giving the kids a few minutes to practice their stories, ask:

- **What are the most important parts you'll remember to include in your story?**
- **What kinds of questions will you ask your families after you tell the story?**

Say: **When you share God's Word each week, you're doing an important job for Jesus. The very last command Jesus gave his disciples before he rose into heaven was, "Go into all the earth and preach the gospel." When you share God's Word at home, you're helping tell the good news about Jesus. Great job!**

CLOSING

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Say: **Let's gather for prayer.**

Dear Jesus, thank you for teaching us that you ★ provide everything we need and take away the hunger inside our hearts. We thank and praise you for being such an amazing Savior. Amen.



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