

Jesus Feeds 5,000

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference

John 6:1-14

Lesson Focus

Through Jesus' power we have plenty to share.

Bible Memory Verse

"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." John 6:14

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids follow Jesus until they're hot, tired, and hungry!	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Colored pencils
Circle Time Kids see how a little popcorn becomes a lot.	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source, ¼ cup popcorn kernels, 8 cups popped popcorn
Opening Prayer Kids do a "popcorn prayer" and ask God to multiply their gifts for others.	None	None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Jesus Feeds 5,000 Story Kids see how the gifts of a kid like them helped Jesus care for others.	Spark Story Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible	None
It's Barley Enough Kids find five loaves and two fish in a hidden picture puzzle.	Leaflets	Pencils or crayons

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Powering Up! Kids put their gifts through Jesus' love and power and watch them grow!	Leaflets, Spark Bible Stickers	Pencils or crayons
Twelve Basket Upset Kids play a variation of "Fruit Basket Upset" to reinforce the lesson.	None	Chairs

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids review the Bible Memory Verse and look at Faith on the Go!	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids do another "popcorn prayer" and thank God for their gifts.	Spark Family Pages	None

Bible Background

The story of the feeding of the crowd is in all four Gospels, each with its own emphasis. In John's Gospel, this story takes place at Passover, a Jewish feast celebrating God saving the people from slavery in Egypt. After leading them through the Red Sea, God provided manna for the people to eat in the wilderness (Numbers 11). In Jesus, God comes to free people captive to sin and unbelief. Through Jesus, God multiplies a few fish and loaves of bread to feed thousands of people. In Jesus, God's promise to free the people and provide for them is fulfilled. Another important theme is that In Jesus, God provides more than enough; there are twelve baskets of leftovers for the disciples to gather! Furthermore, barley bread was the food of the poor; in Jesus, God takes what is humble and ordinary and provides generously for the world.

Why This Story Matters

Kids are confronted daily with information about difficulties in the world, and they may often feel anxious and powerless to change things. Help them recognize that they are uniquely gifted by God to make a difference by bringing God's love to the world—just like that little boy who shared his humble gift of food.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

We're going to gather into a crowd of people to follow Jesus! Lead the kids around the room, adding kids as they arrive. Stop in various places and announce parts of Jesus' story. For example, **Look over there! Jesus just cured a blind man! Now the man can see!** Demonstrate and invite the kids to react to the miracle. Other ideas include Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus healing a man unable to walk, Jesus teaching in the temple, Jesus healing the ten lepers, Jesus calming the storm, and Jesus walking on water. When most of the kids are present, say, **Wow! Following Jesus around is amazing! But I'm hot and tired, and I'm starting to get really, really hungry, aren't you?** Mime your hunger for the kids, and encourage them to do the same. **We don't have any money for food, and there's no place around here to get food anyway! Let's just sit down by this hillside and see what Jesus will do next.** Sit down in the area for Circle Time.

Spark Resources

Spark Activity Pages
Spark Coloring Pages

Supplies

Colored pencils

Circle Time

When Jesus saw that there was a big crowd watching and waiting for him, he felt bad for them. He knew they must be hungry! Before we talk about what happened next, take a look at this. Show the kids the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of popcorn kernels. **Do you think I could feed this whole group with these kernels as they are?** Then show them the 8 cups of popped popcorn. **This little $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of kernels turns into this big bowl of popcorn! How do you think that happens?** Have a conversation with the kids about how there is moisture inside the kernels and when they are heated, the moisture builds up pressure until it explodes and transforms the kernels into popcorn you can eat. **By themselves, these kernels aren't enough to feed many people—and you can't really eat them anyway. But when you add power in the form of heat, they are transformed to be more than enough! Jesus' love and power work the same way to help us share the gifts we have with others. What are some things you like to do that you could use to show love to others?** Encourage each kid to come up with at least one thing, such as reading, drawing, playing sports, singing, etc. Exactly *how* those gifts might be used isn't as important at the moment as helping kids identify a gift they have. **Keep those gifts in mind and we'll talk about how Jesus' power can take small gifts and make them huge. But first, we're going to read a Bible story about how Jesus' power turns just a tiny bit of food into enough to feed five *thousand* people!** Give each kid some of the popcorn to munch on while you read the Bible story.

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (tracks 11 and 28 on Spark Song CD, page 62 in Spark Songbook)

Song 2: "The Lord Is Good to Me" Sing this popular table grace, sometimes called "Johnny Appleseed." The words of this song talk about how God provides the things we need, just as in today's story.

Opening Prayer

We're going to do a "popcorn prayer." That means I'll start and then anyone can jump in afterward and the prayer will bounce around the group. We'll pray to ask God to multiply our gifts to help others. Lead a prayer in which you simply begin, "Dear God, please multiply my ability to _____ so I can use it to help others." Encourage every kid to "pop" into the prayer, but also be mindful of kids who aren't comfortable doing so. When the last kernel of prayer "pops," say, **Amen.**

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies

Music source
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup popcorn kernels
8 cups popped popcorn

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Jesus Feeds 5,000 Story

Invite kids with Spark NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible.

Today we're going to act out the story as I read it so you can get an idea of what the people must have thought when they saw Jesus' miracle. Everyone will play all the parts. As you read the story, have the kids stand up and do the actions in the story, such as sitting in the grass, Phillip scratching his head, the boy shyly offering his food, Jesus giving thanks and passing it out, the disciples gathering it up, etc. Encourage them to show on their faces how people were feeling. Be generous with time. **Who do you think was most surprised at Jesus' miracle?** Accept answers, but wonder aloud if it might have been the little boy who had given the original gift. **What would you have thought if it had been you who gave that gift?**

Invite the older kids to look up the story in their Spark NRSV Bibles on page 1178, and the younger kids to find Jesus Feeds 5,000 on pages 426–431 of the Spark Story Bible. Older kids can help younger kids when they have found their own pages.

Ask the older kids to look through the pictures with their buddies, choose their favorite picture, and say why they like it. Then find Squiggles on each page. Next, have the older kids read verse 11 to their buddy, and have the pairs discuss what they think Jesus might have said when he gave thanks. Younger kids can help their buddy place an "I wonder" sticker next to that verse. Below the sticker, older buddies can write, "what Jesus said when he gave thanks."

Bible Memory Verse

"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." John 6:14

Reread the Bible Memory Verse one short phrase at a time, with the kids repeating. Then combine the phrases into longer phrases until the group can say the entire verse. Challenge kids to see if they can recite it to their buddy.

It's Barley Enough

Direct kids to the front of their leaflets. **In today's story, Jesus' disciples wondered where they were going to find food to feed the crowd. Then a little boy stepped forward with five loaves of bread and two fish. We're going to find those loaves and fish so Jesus can multiply them to feed the crowd.** Kids can work together with their buddies to find all the loaves and fish hidden in the picture and circle them. Then have the buddies share with each other their favorite ways to eat bread (like cinnamon rolls) and fish (like fish sticks) and write them in the space under the picture.

When kids have finished, invite them to read and discuss the Bible Bits together.

Spark Resources

Spark NRSV Bibles
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies

None

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils or crayons

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

Powering Up!

We may not feel like we can make a difference in the world, but with Jesus' love and power, our gifts can be multiplied! Direct kids to turn their leaflets over to the back page. **In the middle of the page is a cross. That cross shows the love and power of Jesus. On one side of the cross, you see the humble gift of the boy's loaves and fish. On the other side, you see the twelve baskets of food that were left over after the five thousand people had eaten. Jesus' love and power multiplies simple gifts into enough to take care of us. Now, on the left side, draw a picture of yourself doing something you love, like we talked about in Circle Time. Then draw an arrow through the cross to the space on the right side, and draw how your gift can help others, through Jesus' love and power.**

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Pencils or crayons

Give kids time to do their drawings. Encourage kids of all ages to share what they've drawn.

Ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special mark next to the item they found the most interesting.

Twelve Basket Upset

This is a variation of the game "Fruit Basket Upset." Set up chairs in a circle, with one fewer chair than kids in the class. Divide the class into two groups, being sure to mix up older and younger kids. One group will be "Bread" and the other will be "Fish." Have the kids sit anywhere in the circle of chairs, with one kid standing in the center to be Jesus. Jesus then will call out "Bread" or "Fish." If he calls out "Bread," all the kids who are Bread must stand up and change seats with someone else in the group, but they cannot take the chair immediately next to them. Jesus also will try to sit down in the nearest open chair. Whoever is left without a chair becomes Jesus and repeats the process. At any point, instead of saying "Bread" or "Fish," Jesus can call out "Twelve Basket Upset," at which point everyone must stand up and change seats. Play until everyone has had a chance to be Jesus or until time runs out.

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Chairs

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Look at the Faith on the Go! ideas on your leaflet. Who wants to share one idea they think they can do this week? Encourage kids of different ages to share.
Remember that even if we think we don't have much to offer, Jesus' love and power can turn our gifts into plenty to share with others!

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Closing Prayer

Distribute Spark Family Pages to kids and point out #4 under Family Conversations. Encourage the kids to continue the conversation you've had in class today with their families.

Spark Resources
Spark Family Pages

We're going to do another popcorn prayer, this time thanking God for the ability to share God's love through our gifts. Begin by saying, "Thank you, God, for giving me the gift of _____ that I can share with others." Again, encourage every kid to "pop" into the prayer until every "kernel" has "popped." Then say, **Amen.**

Supplies
None

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home the leaflet and Family Page.