



WEEKLY STUDY

Week 1

What story are you telling about your life? What story are others telling about your life? As good as those may be, is it possible that God has a better story for you? (The answer is yes.) This series is all about the way Jesus changes lives and changes the stories of those who follow him.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional question at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

*Jesus, my strength and provider,
I can easily miss your promise of provision.
When I am hungry, you fill me up.
When I am tired, you give me rest.
When I feel alone, you are with me.
Free me up to get lost in wonder—I wonder what you will do next.
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JOHN 6.1-4

Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

- People weren't following Jesus just to be entertained. When they saw or heard of Jesus' ability to heal the sick, they wondered what he could do for them. *Can I be healed of my condition?* As the crowds grew, it would seem less and less likely that anyone would get to witness a miracle in their life. The location on the mountainside indicates a desire for more people to witness the words and work of Jesus. Have you ever felt lost in the crowd of people hoping to be made well? Know that Jesus sees you and creates space for you to see his work.

- *Jesus, thank you for making way for the crowds. I want to see you. I want to be made well.*

TUESDAY: JOHN 6.5-9

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

- Crowds can be both exhilarating and exhausting. Jesus took this opportunity head-on as he cared for the hunger of the crowd. Philip couldn’t imagine where the resources to feed such a crowd would come from. He certainly didn’t expect the answer to come through a boy with five small loaves of bread and two fish. How quickly we can turn Jesus’ request into our problem. When we make it our problem to solve we enlist our normal, limited ways of problem-solving.
- *God, help me to see the abundance of your provision even in seasons of scarcity.*

WEDNESDAY: JOHN 6.10-11

Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

- For followers of Jesus, this action of taking food, giving thanks for it, and giving it away might sound familiar. Jesus follows this same pattern in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup at the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room on the night before his betrayal. The sign that is about to feed the crowd is another miracle performed “so that they may believe”. Jesus is giving himself away to the crowd. Would a full belly be enough for you to believe in Jesus?
- *Jesus, I believe in you. I receive what I need from you and give thanks.*

THURSDAY: JOHN 6.12-15

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

- The miracle of leftovers was noticed by the crowd. Sometimes our hunger can cause us to miss the miracle. Our appetite and sense of survival can lead us to take what we need and miss the moment. The people in the crowd around Jesus noticed—it happened right before their eyes—and it caused them to say that Jesus really could be from God. As in other examples, Jesus knew his larger purpose and avoided the natural desire of the people to make him their earthly king.
- *Jesus, surely you are the Son of God. Rule over my heart and my life.*

FRIDAY: DEUTERONOMY 8.7-10

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and

honey; ⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

- God is bringing us into a good land. What we see in the miracle of the loaves and fishes is a sign pointing backward (and forward) to this Old Testament promise. There is a land where we will lack nothing. The land itself will offer us what we need. Bread will not be scarce. The basic needs of survival will be met in an extravagant way. Have you ever wondered why there were left over baskets of food after everyone had eaten in John 6? God's care for us is extravagant and overflowing.
- *Lord, thank you for your generous love for us. May I see the good land with deep springs you have prepared for me.*

SATURDAY: GENESIS 45.10-11

You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

- These words from Joseph to his brothers and father are filled with grace. He invited them into the place of provision during a famine. They didn't deserve it, but they were offered a place where generations could thrive instead of perish. Where are the places God has used to offer you comfort and a new outlook?
- *God thank you for the mercy shown to the wayward brothers of Joseph. Show that same mercy to me and lead me into the land of provision.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In the miracle described in John 6.1-15, we hear about Jesus overcoming a scarcity mindset with a real tangible miracle that feeds people physically and amazes them with the abundance of leftovers.

- When are you likely to believe that there is not enough?
- When has Jesus shown you that there is more than enough?
- What are the overflowing baskets in your life?