

MY GENEROUS LIFE
FOR CONNECT GROUPS
WEEK 2



THOMPSON STATION CHURCH

JOHN 6:1-13

WEEK 2

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 6:1-13. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for our pastor, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS: God often uses causes to encourage us to give generously and stir up the habit of giving.

TEACHING AIM: I will become a person who is faithful to respond to a need when God prompts me.

MEMORY VERSE: You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11, NIV).

MEMORY VERSE: Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it you”—when you already have it with you (Proverbs 3:28, NIV).

GENEROUS ATTRIBUTES

Cause Giver. A person who is faithful to respond to a need when God calls.

Consistent Giver. A person who is faithful by giving monthly.

Committed Giver. A person who is faithful in their generosity by tithing to their home church.

Courageous Giver. A person who is faithful by giving beyond the tithe.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 What is your first memory of giving to someone else?

- 2 If you grew up in church, when do you first remember giving an offering or tithe of some kind?

- 3 Does generosity come naturally to you, or does it take more effort and reminders? Explain.

Giving is not something that comes naturally to most of us. We work hard for our money, so we want to keep it for ourselves and our families. Giving is a habit—and like any other habit, it has to be learned. Those who have less stress about giving are likely those who were taught to give as children. Whether you gave part of your allowance or some money you got from your parents to put in the offering plate, or it was a gift given to a friend, these moments make an impact and communicate the importance of giving. Every journey of giving begins somewhere; it usually begins with giving what we have, like the little boy we will read about in John's Gospel.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

- > Have a volunteer read John 6:1-5.
- Why were the crowds following Jesus at this point?

 - How did the crowds following Jesus set the stage for the miracle that was about to take place?

The feeding of the 5,000 is the one miracle that is found in all four Gospels. It was almost Passover, the second in Jesus' ministry and the only one in Galilee. At this point, seeing all the miraculous works Jesus was doing, the crowds followed Jesus every place He went. This massive following would provide Jesus the opportunity to work one of His more well-known miracles. The people came wanting to be healed, but Jesus made sure they also left filled.

- What was Jesus trying to teach Philip with his question in verse 5?
- How would you teach a child why he or she should look for chances to give? For example, could you have three jars for holding change in their room: one labeled "spend," one "save," and one "give"? What other ideas come to mind?

Jesus looked up and saw the crowd pressing in on His disciples on the mountain and decided to do something about it. Philip was from this region, so that's likely why Jesus directed the question toward him. He also had a greater purpose and lesson in His question. Jesus knew what He planned to do before Philip did, but He asked Philip the question to teach him and the others present. We have the same opportunity with our friends and family who are just beginning their giving journey. Jesus noticed a need, responded to it, and taught as He responded.

- If you give to particular causes, how could you make giving a more consistent part of your life?
- What things might you do to become more aware of when God is asking you to respond to a need?

> Have a volunteer read John 6:6-13.

Notes:

- Why is it significant that Jesus knew what he would do in verse 6? How did Philip respond to Jesus' request (v. 7)? When do we respond this way to Jesus?
- How did Andrew respond to the small amount the young boy had to give (v. 9)?
- This story reminds us that Jesus has unlimited resources and knows the outcome of every situation. How should these truths impact our giving?

Jesus knew they had all the resources He needed to do what He planned. Philip did not see the situation from Jesus' point of view. He missed what Jesus was able to see clearly, and so often do we. Many people stop short of giving because they are afraid what they are giving is not enough or that it won't make a difference. Such a response echoes Andrew's. Yet behind the scenes, Jesus understood all that was going on. When we give, the amount does not matter as much as the practice of willingly giving to the work of the Lord.

- What did Jesus do with the small amount that was given? How did the disciples and other witnesses respond?
- Why is the simple act of giving more important than the amount given? What does giving teach us about Jesus and our relationship with Him?

The Gospel writers do not tell us much more about this boy other than he had five loaves and two fish that he willingly gave to Jesus.

This child gave what he had, and though it did not seem like enough to the disciples, it was more than enough for Jesus. He was giving specifically for a cause that resonated with him in conjunction with faith in who Jesus was and what He might could do. Stewardship is a lifelong practice that begins somewhere. For most us, that beginning is giving for a specific cause. As we learn more about giving, we are able to see how Jesus takes a gift of any amount and puts it to work in His kingdom. We may never know exactly where our gift goes, but we can rest confidently knowing that the kingdom of God is being built.

Notes:

- How much was left over when Jesus was done?
What should this teach us about Jesus? What did the disciples learn from this?
- How does the act of giving help us learn to depend on Jesus and trust in His work?

When we give to Jesus, He takes our gift and multiplies it beyond what we can see. There were 12 baskets left over that day, one for each disciple. With Jesus, what we are able to give is enough. The boy started by giving what he could to meet a need. At times, our gifts will be small; other times, our gifts are large. Our journey as givers has to begin somewhere.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 1 Read John 12:9 Toward what cause did Mary give?
How can giving toward causes really be giving to Jesus?
- 2 What causes could we support, or what apparent needs could we meet together as a group?

- 3 How does giving to a specific cause present a unique opportunity to show someone else the love and goodness of God?

Notes:

90-DAY ACTION STEPS

Use these steps to help your groups process the truth from this lesson in an ongoing way.

- 1 Learn: I will read *The Plastic Donut*—Jeff Anderson. “When the heart engages through a gift that matters, it becomes more than writing a check.”
- 2 Pray: I will pray daily for God to help me notice the needs around me. “Thank You, Lord, for blessing me in all ways at all times with more than I need. Lead me to live faithfully, give generously, share joyfully, and look expectantly toward my future.”
- 3 Respond:

I will start where I am by setting up digital giving and by preparing for special offerings.

I will read another book of my choosing as a devotional with my family to learn to live generously. Visit [TSCLife.org/give](https://www.tsclife.org/give) to respond.

PRAY

Thank God for the ability to give to the work of ministry. Pray that He would multiply our gifts and do more with them than anything we could ask, think, or imagine.

JOHN 6:1-13

6:1-4. The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus had crossed to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee at a time when the Jewish Passover feast was near. If we accept John 5:1 as a Passover, the reference in 6:4 would be the third Passover observance recorded in this Gospel.

Notes:

This is one of those several examples in John where we see the miracle-message method of Jesus' ministry. Paul told the Corinthians that Jews required a sign, and John reminded us that a great crowd of people followed Jesus because they saw the miraculous signs He had performed on the sick (6:2). Some scholars estimate there may have been as many as seven thousand to ten thousand people, since verse 10 talks about five thousand men. As we shall see, this chapter is about faith, but these people wanted food. Jesus talked about spiritual relationship, but the crowds were interested in physical showmanship. They focused on the lunch, not the love—on their bellies, not their beliefs.

Our passage first centers on people in need. As we have already seen, starvation is a stark and unpleasant reality in our modern world. Ten percent of the world's babies die before their first birthday, and one of every four children suffers from malnutrition. Yet the problem of spiritual hunger is even more severe. Like the people gathering on the mountainside in Galilee, millions today need the living bread that only Jesus can provide.

The introduction of the Passover is always significant in the chronological pattern of John's Gospel. He contrasted the rejection in Jerusalem at the end of chapter 5 with the magnificent scene of thousands coming to hear Jesus speak on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. This body of water actually has four names in Scripture: The Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Tiberias both identified here in our text; the Lake of Gennesaret in Luke 5:1; and the Sea of Kinnereth (Num. 34:11). Today it is generally called Lake Kinneret, but students of the Bible have difficulty calling it anything other than the Sea of Galilee.

The bread-and-water connection has ancient Israeli roots in the manna of the desert and water from the rock. The entire Exodus experience sets the historic basis for the Jewish Passover Feast.

Notes:

6:5-9. Remember that Jesus had been doing more miracles than the three John has recorded for us so far. Many people followed Him because of their interest in His power and His teaching. This crowd would have been greatly enlarged because of the number of visitors to Palestine for the Passover. Jesus had led His disciples out to this solitary place to have some private teaching time with them, but the crowds followed. Mark tells us in his account that Jesus had compassion on them and taught them late into the day—and He also saw their need for food.

From a picture of people in need we move to a picture of the disciples in confusion. Philip's reply is so typical of what we might say. He looked strictly at the human dilemma, considering only his own resources, and pronounced that the situation was hopeless. This whole inquiry was instigated by Jesus' question: Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat? It is typical of John to remind his readers that Jesus already knew what would happen next (v. 6). At first we wonder why Philip was singled out, but then we remember he was a native of Bethsaida, possibly the closest town. If a local convenience store had been open at that hour, Philip would have known about it. Nevertheless, Philip did a quick assessment of what it would cost for each one to have a bite!

But Andrew had a plan; this fellow-citizen of Bethsaida found a boy carrying a lunch consisting of barley loaves and fish. Like Philip, Andrew had no idea what use that pittance would be. John's record offers so many interesting observations, not the least of which is that the two fish Andrew found were definitely small. The word *opsarion* is used only by John, and it emphasizes the insignificance of these tiny sardines.

Two things surface in this portion of our text. First, we see that Jesus Christ was all-sufficient for any need even when His disciples were in confusion. Second, the purpose of the miracle seems clear: to instruct the disciples, to lay a foundation for the sermon on the Bread of life, and to feed hungry people.

6:10-13. Like Moses' ancient rod, Samson's donkey jawbone, and David's sling, this simple lunch shows again that seemingly useless things can become important in Jesus' hands. He alone is all-sufficient. Everyone was satisfied, and each disciple had his own personal basket of leftovers as a reminder of the Master's power. The identification of the number of men appears in all four Gospels. We can only guess what the total number of people might have been. Some estimates reach as high as twenty thousand people. What a wonderful picture John paints of Jesus holding those five small barley loaves in His hands as He gave thanks. The verb is the word from which we get our word *eucharist*, though this was a simple mealtime blessing, not a religious ceremony.

Notes:

But why the command to gather the pieces that are left over? Let nothing be wasted? Obviously the ample provision is important (Jer. 31:14), and surely a special focus on the role of the disciples. All of them probably doubted that anything could be done to feed this vast number of people. Philip and Andrew just happened to be on the spot to respond publicly.