

Intro

This session is about bread. There are 2 different types of bread - no, not white and brown bread.. Instead we're on about physical bread that we eat - and Jesus who describes himself as the bread of life.

In John 6.35, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Again in John 6.51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

So, apart from bread being something that we eat to satisfy our physical hunger, the truth is that Jesus can satisfy our hunger spiritually and through his life, we can live forever.

In Matthew 4.4, we learn that God's Word brings life: Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

So let's get into our bread-fest and see what God says to us!!

Bread Feast

Get some home-made bread, or different types of bread and pass them round the group to eat. Make a feast out of it, making it look good, plates and even do blindfold taste tests. Really make a big thing out of it! Make sure everyone tries different types of bread (be careful of nut allergies etc). Ask around what everyone's favourite bread is. You can do the 'science thing' and get the students to put a piece of bread in their mouth and keep on chewing without swallowing. After a little while, the bread should get a bit sweet as the amylase in your saliva breaks down the starch in the bread into glucose (sugar)! Interesting little boffin fact there for you..

Bible reading - Mark 6.34-44 and John 6.5-13

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do

you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

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?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. 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. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Game - Follow-on

This game needs careful thought before playing. Basically, it is about telling a story as a group. If there are members of the group who are likely to inject dodgy things into the story, you may want to be clear from the outset that this won't be tolerated.

The game is that you tell a story as a group, with each person adding a phrase to the statement the person makes before them. You encourage people to make something creative up, so you create an interesting and unique story! So, for example, you start by saying, "One day there was a farmer who went out into his field". The next person says, "In the field he found a small crop circle and wondered if he'd been visited by aliens." The next person makes something up, "He'd often wondered if aliens visited as his mother-in-law looked like an alien.." And so on.

If people are uncomfortable about taking part, get them to say something easy or a couple words. The more creative ones may want to expound their linguistic and imaginary vocabulary..!

The point of the game is that the story didn't end up as you wanted it to. You had one idea, but everyone else took the story in a different direction. Without any lead, the story became confused. In the same

way, Jesus had a plan for him and the disciples. But often the disciples got confused and went in different directions. We need Jesus, the shepherd to guide us. After all, we are sheep and sheep aren't that bright!

Movie Clip - Evan Almighty, part 1

DVD Chapter 13. Time 53.56 (when Evan comes home from Congress at night) - 57.20 (as scene cuts from Evan waking up to the TV in the bar). Pause the DVD here and blank the screen.

The point is that God had called Evan to build an ark. Like Noah before him, people didn't understand. In Evan's case, even his family didn't understand and left him. We don't always understand what Jesus is doing, but like Evan (and Noah), we need to obey and get wise to the Jesus way of doing things - usually upside down to the way the world around us does stuff!

Talk Part 1

What do you do when you have a whole crowd of people who are hungry? You phone up KFC right? Well, unfortunately, Jesus and the disciples weren't near a Kentucky food outlet up there on the hill in 1st Century Israel, so there had to be another solution.

It's amazing, but the disciples had already been through a lot with Jesus. They seen him heal people, knew of his miracles, deliver people from evil spirits and so much more. Jesus had taught them, lived alongside them and cared for them. But still, they didn't quite understand. In Matthew, we read that Jesus (already knowing what he was going to do) asked Philip what they should do when faced with 1000s of people and very little food. He did a quick maths assessment and realised they didn't even have enough money to feed that many people! How many times do we feel like that? We kind of know Jesus is with us, will never forget or leave us - but we just lose sight of it when big and small things happen out of our control. Our first reaction is often like the disciples - we try to find human solutions and try to take control of the situation with our human thinking. But Jesus does things differently.

Andrew put forward a boy who had volunteered his food. Like us, the boy gave what he had. And Jesus went and multiplied his small offering, his small gift - and did something amazing with it. Hey, often it's you guys as young people who need to lead some of the adults! Andrew had the savvy to get hold of the food and give it to Jesus. Sometimes, you just have to do what you can do, although it may not seem much!

Jesus got the disciples to organise the crowd then took what had been given to him (the bread and the fish), he offered it up to God, gave thanks and then gave it out. Take what little or however much you

have, offer it ALL up to God (the boy gave his entire lunch, not some of it..) and then take action - just as Jesus did. When the people had finished eating, the disciples went around and collected 12 baskets of remaining bread and fish - one each! Of course, we know that although there were 5000 men there, actual numbers would have been much higher with women and children (let's round it up to 12000) so the amount of people fed from 5 loaves and 2 fish was extraordinary. To be honest, most restaurants would make a killing if they could do this - mind you, the menu of just bread and fish may get a little boring.. But seriously, Jesus simply asks us to give what we have, to trust him, thank him, expect big things and then to step out in faith in our everyday life. He says, 'pray for your friends' then go love them. He says, 'take your £50 guitar, have a heart for worship and then start worship times with your mates'.

But there's more to learn, so let's keep on the bread journey..

Movie Clip - Evan Almighty, part 2

DVD Chapter 13. Time 57.21 (as scene cuts from Evan waking up to the TV in the bar) - 1.01.20 (when Evan and his wife kiss on board the ark).

Point here is that Evan's family came back to help him, stand alongside him. As his wife says to him, to be there 'side by side'. We should do the same with Jesus, as he is always standing alongside us.

Bible Reading - Matthew 15.29-38

Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish." He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children

Talk 2

Jesus had already fed a crowd of 12000 (we've made that figure up) when one day he was again with his disciples, teaching loads of people. Again, he had compassion for the people who were so hungry for the bread of heaven (Jesus) that they hadn't eaten any physical bread (food). Today, we just turn up to church or put on GOD TV / Christian radio. But in parts of the world, people will travel for days to hear the Word of God taught. It's challenging and asks the question - what are we each doing to help other Christians in the rest of the world..?

Unfortunately, the disciples hadn't learned from the 'feeding of the 5000' when Jesus had fed 1000s with very little food. When Jesus told the disciples he wanted to feed the people as they had nothing to eat, he was probably anticipating a faith-filled response from them. Instead, the disciples forgot what had happened before and asked Jesus where they could get enough bread to feed all the people. Jesus gently asked them how many loaves and fish they had. He took the food, gave thanks and again got the disciples to hand round the food to the people. At the end, there were 7 baskets left.

Now, you may be sitting there thinking, "hang on a minute, the disciples were a bit slow.. Surely one of them should have said, 'Jesus why don't you do your thing again like with the 5000 the other week'.." The disciples had seen Jesus do a miracle again with bread and fish. This time, the disciples even had their own bread and fish, rather than mugging a child's packed lunch (joke!) Yet they were unable to think in spiritual terms, but again only in human wisdom saying, *"Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"* But don't be so quick to judge..

Has God ever let you down? No. But how many times are we quick to forget how God has come through for us, delivered us, helped us, provided for us..? We are just like the disciples so often, not operating in great faith (we even have the Holy Spirit in us, unlike the disciples as this was before God had sent his Holy Spirit). In Philippians 4.19, Paul told the church that, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* So the Word of God (the bread of life) tells us the truth that God will always meet all of our needs. Note that this says needs, not everything we want or think we need!

Ephesians 3.20 tells us that God *"..is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.."* The Amplified Bible gives a much fuller explanation (using all the Greek words that this verse could mean). *"Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]."*

Just as there were buckets of food left over after the feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000, God wants to use you and work in you to do more than anything you can imagine possible. He'll do stuff that is more than we ask or even dare to ask. God will do more than we could pray, desire, think, hope or dream! Now that is something incredible - and yet very possible as with God nothing is impossible (Matthew 19.26) and *"everything is possible for him who believes"* (Mark 9.23). Jesus wants to do the same for you. But we have to surrender all we have to Jesus and put him first in every area of our lives.

Response - use as appropriate

1. For some of us, we need to make Jesus number one in our life. We haven't let God be the boss of our lives and take away all the wrong, all the rubbish and make us into a new creation.

We need to pray this prayer: Father God, I am sorry that I have done wrong and sinned against you. I realise I have messed up and need you to change me to be like you. Jesus I ask you to come into my life and change me, renew me and transform me to be like Jesus. I turn away from all the wrong, I turn 180 degrees and instead choose to follow Jesus completely from today. I give you all of my life, surrender everything I have to you. I want to follow you wherever you lead and whatever the cost. Jesus I know you will do more than I ask or imagine with my life. Amen.

2. For others, you are a Christian but you haven't let Jesus be number one in every area of your life. There are still areas of darkness that you haven't opened up to Jesus to change. There are sins, weights, burdens, unforgiveness, secret wrongs and hurts. Jesus wants you to give all these over to him today.

A prayer for you: Jesus, I want you to be Lord (in charge) of every single area of my life. I recognise there are areas of darkness and parts of my life I haven't handed over to you. These are (list these things to God in prayer). Jesus I ask you to come into these areas and I surrender completely to you. I want to be everything, go everywhere, do and have everything you have for me. I can only do this as I obey you completely. I make this choice today and every day from now on.

3. For all of us: what can we give to Jesus that is like the boy's bread and fish - give to Jesus so that he can use and do incredible things through us, even for us - for his glory. Second, what are we doing to help others around the globe who don't know Jesus and those who do know Jesus but need more resources? Let's make a determined effort to do something - check out Tearfund, Compassion, Christian Aid etc.'