

An English teacher and her class were studying well known Proverbs. One day she gave them a test to see if they were understanding what she taught. She stated the first half of a proverb and then asked the students to come up with the rest of what it said. These were some of the answers that the teacher got from her students on that quiz:

It's always darkest before... Daylight Savings Time.

Never underestimate the power of... termites.

Don't bite the hand that ... looks dirty.

If you lie down with dogs, you'll... stink in the morning.

An idle mind is... the best way to relax.

A penny saved is... not much.

Two's company, three's... the Musketeers.

Children should be seen and not... spanked or grounded.

If at first you don't succeed... get new batteries.

When the blind leadeth the blind... get out of the way.

Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and... you have to blow your nose.

Even though the students in that class had studied those sayings for several days they still had trouble with the right answers.

The disciples seem to have had a similar problem they had been with Jesus for several months they still had trouble getting their answer right.

During the time they'd been with Jesus, His disciples had watched Him as He had...

- healed a Leper – Mat 8:1
- healed the servant of a Roman centurion– Mat 8:5
- healed Peter's mother in law – Mat 8:14

- He'd also driven out evil spirits various diseases – Mt 8:16

and they had even seen him

- raise a girl from the dead – Mat 9:25 .

### **They'd seen His power up close and personal.**

But now it's late in the day – they're on a hill out in the middle of no-where - and they've got a bunch of hungry people on their hands. Being practical, the disciples suggest to Jesus that He send the people home so they can get something to eat.

It's then that Jesus says the most unusual thing to them:

He says: **"They do not need to go away. YOU give them something to eat."**

Matthew 14:16

Just imagine being told to feed them.

1. There are 5000 MEN plus an equivalent number and women and children in this crowd
2. And they don't have a local takeaway.

The same story in the Gospel of Mark tells us another part of the conversation. When Jesus says that they should feed the crowd, "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?" Mark 6:37

In the Gospel of John. Verse 6 says that Jesus asked this only to TEST them, for he already had in mind what he was going to do." This was a test!!!

Up until this point in time... Jesus had been doing all the work.

He taught, healed, raised people from the dead

And the disciples pretty much were learning by watching.

But now... it's test time.

It was like that teacher who set the stage, by citing the first part of the sayings to her class, and then expected them to fill in the blanks.

In the same way, Jesus has set the stage for His disciples.

He's given them an impossible situation

He has confronted them with way more than 5000 and He tells His disciples to feed them.

JESUS TEST QUESTION: How are YOU going to feed them?

And... how do they answer?

We don't have enough money - "ding" wrong answer"

We ONLY have 2 fish & 5 loaves - "ding"! wrong answer"

So what's the right answer?

The right answer: give Jesus what you have and let Him deal with the solution

Hebrews 11:6 says – "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.

One Sunday afternoon a man was taking a short walk when he was overtaken by a storm. He took shelter in a neighbouring church where we found a special service for Sunday school scholars in progress. The vicar was teaching the basics of the Christian faith. He asked: "What is a miracle?" A little girl put up her hand and replied, "Something we can't do, but Jesus can." The minister seemed surprised at this original answer. It left him amazed thinking of the little child's definition,

**"Something we can't do, but Jesus can."**

If we earnestly seek God's involvement in our plans, personally and as a church, if we are honest, we have nothing much to bring to the table, Jesus fills in the gaps. His strength makes up for our weaknesses. That is the essence of faith.

3 things stand out in this passage, but there are probably a lot more

### **1st – God desires to stretch our faith.**

God wants us to mature in our faith, if we want to grow, we will be put in situations that we cannot do on our own.

That's what Jesus is doing with the Disciples in this feeding of the 5000. They learnt by doing and putting their faith in what Jesus could do not what they could do.

**AW Tozer says** "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

One person said: '**Many a person is praying for rain with their tub the wrong side up.**

Faith is all about - trusting God to do something we can't do on our own.

Faith for our church means we are believing and praying for God to bring people to know Jesus.

### **The 2nd lesson Jesus' objective was *not just* to feed the 5000**

If that was all He had in mind, He could have sent them home.

When Churches don't understand this, they can fall into the trap of forgetting why they exist.

From the early 1900's through the 1960's there was a powerful church in Manhattan. It was called Broadway Presbyterian Church and they were committed to reaching out to people for Christ, and they used every tool they could to get that done... including food kitchens.

But from the 60's to the 1990's a subtle change began to take place. In the soup kitchens, prayers were not offered over meals because they were afraid that they'd offend the poor. They no longer tried to convince the homeless to turn to God and to repent of their past sins.

Over time they found that the same people were coming year after year and there was no change taking place in their lives. The church gradually slipped from a

membership of 1000 people down to 120 and a once mighty congregation sat with a nearly empty building.

**The church does not exist to feed the poor, or to take care of the needy**

**The church exists to serve Jesus Christ and bring people to salvation**

Churches that obey the great commission ensure that sharing Jesus is at the top of the list with everything that they do, otherwise we are no different to any other community group.

There are many organisations that started out as Christian outreaches and have evolved into social groups. They lost their focus and therefore they lost their original reason to exist.

If our centre of attention ever gets off of Jesus and becomes focused on good works without Him being at the centre, we'll have lost our very reason to exist. We exist as a church to glorify serve Jesus Christ and share the gospel.

The miracle of the feeding of the 5000 was to show that Jesus was God, that he had all authority in heaven and earth, and that they needed to follow Him.

**3rd Lesson Jesus asked His disciples to be His PARTNERS in this miracle.**

Jesus told his disciples YOU do it – YOU give them something to eat.

And how much food do the disciples come up with?

5 loaves and 2 fish!

Matthew 14:19 says that "Jesus directed the people to sit down on the grass. 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 the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people."

When everybody had had their fill, they collected the leftovers and they ended up with 12 baskets full of food.

Jesus took what the disciples gave Him and He multiplied it.

Why did He do that? Why did He ask the disciples to come up with the food?

He actually didn't need the 5 loaves or the 2 fish. He was Jesus!

Why then did He do it the way He did? He did it that way because He wanted His disciples to be His partners in ministry.

Conclusion: In a recent issue of *Christianity Today* (January 2013), a Muslim man describes his commitment to follow Isa al Masih, Jesus the Messiah. Here's how he described the miracle:

One night the only food my wife and I had was a small portion of macaroni. My wife prepared it very nicely. Then one of her friends knocked on the door. I told myself, *The macaroni is not sufficient for even the two of us, so how will it be enough for three of us?* But because we have no other custom, we opened the door, and she came in to eat with us.

While we were eating, the macaroni started to multiply; it became full in the bowl. I suspected that something was wrong with my eyes, so I started rubbing them. I thought maybe my wife hid some macaroni under the small table, so I checked, but there was nothing. My wife and I looked at each other, but because the guest was there we said nothing.

Afterward I lay down on the bed, and as I slept, Isa came to me and asked me, "Do you know who multiplied the macaroni?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I am Isa al Masih **[Jesus, the Messiah]**. If you follow me, not only the macaroni but your life will be multiplied."