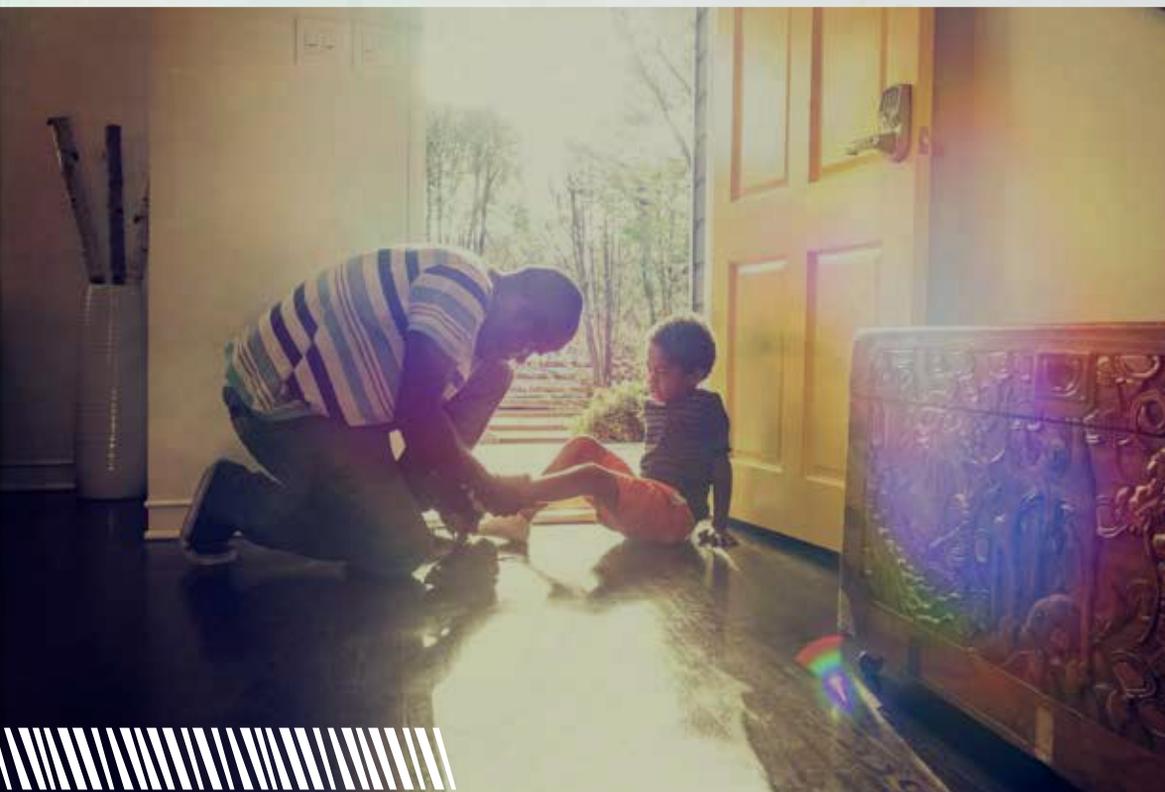


# 6

## *Jesus Provides*



*What was something provided for you as a child that you didn't appreciate at the time?*

**QUESTION 1**

#BSFLjesus

*Jesus cares and meets the needs in our lives.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

If you're familiar with Operation Christmas Child®, you know it's a ministry in which individuals pack shoeboxes with toys and gifts for children. Last year, more than eleven million boxes went to kids all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

I have a friend who delivers these boxes to children. On one occasion, he was delivering boxes to a crowd of children in Bosnia. My friend noticed a young boy off in a corner, and he asked one of the other workers about him. "He's blind," the worker replied. My friend was apprehensive as he approached the boy with a box, because he didn't want this blind child to receive a coloring book and crayons!

When the boy opened his box and felt the contents inside, everyone watching was stunned into silence. The boy pulled out a Walkman®, the perfect gift for a child who can't see!

Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus showed us that God knows exactly what we need—and He provides.

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# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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**Mark 6:34-37** (CSB)

**<sup>34</sup> When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup> When it grew late, his disciples approached him and said, “This place is deserted, and it is already late. <sup>36</sup> Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat.” <sup>37</sup> “You give them something to eat,” he responded. They said to him, “Should we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?”**

Ministering to others' needs can be unbelievably exhausting. R. Kent Hughes highlighted the demanding life of ministry this way:

Mary had a little lamb,

'Twas given her to keep,

But then it joined the local Church

And died for lack of sleep!<sup>2</sup>

The disciples surely were feeling like that lamb at this point in the Gospel of Mark. They had been out among the people where “they drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (Mark 6:13). They were mourning the death of their friend and forerunner to the Messiah, John the Baptist (vv. 17-29). Jesus' popularity was at an all-time high so that the encroaching crowds were constantly swarming them.

Realizing they were becoming exhausted, Jesus proposed a break: “Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while” (v. 31). It must have felt like the most welcome command to their weary bodies. The goal was to cross the lake and rest. This was just a few miles by water, but much further by land—yet the people ran that distance and were there to meet Jesus when He landed!

*Where do you see evidence of God's compassion in the world today?*

QUESTION 2

Jesus is in the business of helping desperate people. He knows what our souls need. He understands how to give us the replenishment that will truly satisfy us. He was about to prove this to both the hungry crowd and the stunned disciples. Rather than being frustrated because He and the apostles weren't greeted with solitude, Jesus "saw a large crowd and had compassion on them" (v. 34).

In the first century, sheep were a metaphor people understood. When Jesus charged Peter to feed His sheep, He wasn't insulting or belittling the animals; He was referring to one of the most ever-present and useful creatures around in that time and place. They provided an income for shepherds, wool for making clothes, and appropriate sacrifices in the temple. But sheep were also prone to wander. Shepherds had to be vigilant to corral their flocks and ensure they were in places where they had plenty to eat and drink. A shepherd was only as good as his ability to provide for his flock.

People are just like sheep in this regard. We have hearts that tend to stray. We turn to cracked, dirty cisterns when not guided to the Living Water. When we get tired of where we are or what we have, we seek satisfaction in the closest patch of grass that looks like something we might like.

When Jesus looked on the people as sheep without a shepherd, He saw more than their need for physical food; He saw their inward spiritual condition. They were following Jesus around because they wanted something He had, even if they couldn't explain it. They were even willing to run all the way around a lake to follow Him and hear what He had to say.

### **Mark 6:38-44** (CSB)

<sup>38</sup> He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they found out they said, "Five, and two fish." <sup>39</sup> Then he instructed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup> He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves. He kept giving them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> Everyone ate and was satisfied. <sup>43</sup> They picked up twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup> Now those who had eaten the loaves were five thousand men.

*What distractions may hinder us from recognizing ministry opportunities?*

### QUESTION 3

***How has God proven to be sufficient for the challenges in your life?***

#### QUESTION 4

As a father to two children, my job is to provide for them in two ways: I provide for them physically and spiritually. When they grow up and eventually move out of my house, if I have only taken care of them physically, I have not done my job as a believer.

On the shore, Jesus modeled the right way to provide: He provided for the people both spiritually and physically. The people were hungry to learn from Jesus, so He fed them spiritually. “He began to teach them many things” (v. 34).

Jesus had fed them spiritually; now He would feed them physically. The disciples were not unconcerned about the physical needs of the people; in fact, they had mentioned it to Jesus themselves. But their solution was far different than what Jesus would do. Their solution was practical: just send them away so they can buy dinner. Thousands of people were in the crowd—five thousand men alone—so their solution seemed far more reasonable than what Jesus said: “You give them something to eat” (v. 37).

“You” in the original language expressed an emphatic command. Jesus was calling His disciples to do the impossible; after all, it would take two hundred days’ worth of wages (Mark 6:37; see Matthew 20:2) to purchase enough food to feed such a large number—yet these twelve disciples had abandoned their jobs to follow Jesus and had no wages!

The best the disciples could come up with were two dried, salted fish and five loaves of barley bread—but what they called “loaves”





were more the size of our dinner rolls today. That was it. Not nearly enough to get the job done. And that was true until Jesus stepped in. Jesus is always enough to get it done.

Jesus “blessed and broke the loaves” (v. 41). Then He distributed the food among the people—and it never ran out. The people did not each have just a bite or two. “Everyone ate and was satisfied” (v. 42). Mark included a tiny detail that shows just how sufficient Jesus is to meet our needs. After the people had eaten their fill, the disciples “picked up twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish” (v. 43). There were leftovers! Jesus went beyond what they needed.

Surely this miracle had an impact on the thousands gathered there, but the greatest beneficiaries should’ve been the twelve disciples. Through all the day’s events, Jesus had been teaching His disciples.

- » Jesus had led the disciples to that spot for rest.
- » Jesus had asked the disciples to help feed the people.
- » The disciples saw every aspect of the miraculous feeding unfold. In fact, many in the crowd may not have realized where the food had come from or even that a miracle had occurred at all.
- » The disciples were the ones who cleaned up afterward. Twelve disciples picked up twelve baskets of scraps—one for each of them.

Unfortunately, they missed all this. Right after this event, the disciples were again crossing the lake. They were caught in a strong wind on the Sea of Galilee, but Jesus walked to them on the water and calmed the wind. At this, the disciples “were completely astounded, because they had not understood about the loaves” (Mark 6:51-52).

Jesus wanted His disciples to see He was also sufficient for them personally. And He is sufficient for us too—each of us. Wherever Jesus has brought you, He will sustain you, for He is the only one who is able to fully provide for you—physically and spiritually.

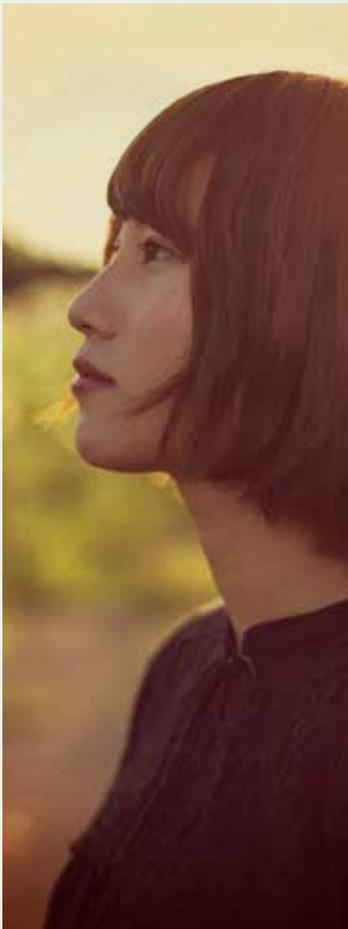
***Where do we have opportunities to participate in God’s provision for others?***

#### QUESTION 5

"The will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us!"

BILLY GRAHAM

## THE GREAT PROVIDER



***In what area of life do you most need Jesus' provision right now?***

***What truth from today's study helps you trust Jesus for this need?***

***In the space below, write out a brief prayer giving this need over to Him.***

## LIVE IT OUT

How can you put your trust in Jesus' care and provision this week?

- » **Identify.** What is your point of greatest need? Be consistent in asking God to address your need. Over the next few weeks, watch and observe how God works.
- » **Obey.** How do your unmet needs limit your willingness to obey God? Make a conscious decision to live out your faith in spite of your unmet needs. Pay attention to what God does in your service and your personal faith.
- » **Care.** Be a part of God's provision. As a group, identify a real need in your community and collaborate to meet the need. Don't pick a small project. Instead, identify a need that is bigger than your own resource capacity. Ask God to be part of the solution and build a plan to help. Put this plan in motion and report on any progress toward meeting the identified need.

Jesus knows what we need and has compassion when He sees us trying to fill our needs in our own strength. **He seeks to help us and sustain us in every area of life—and we can trust Him to do so.**



*My thoughts*