

✦ **Goal:** To explore the miracle of sharing what we have so that everyone has enough.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

This story of the miracle of Jesus' taking a child's lunch and making it feed a hungry crowd can be found in each of the four Gospels. It's also probably included in every children's Bible storybook. The *Common English Bible* describes it as "Miraculous Provision," and it is like other miracles in that category—the wedding at Cana in the Gospel of John and the miraculous catch of fish that's also told in all the Gospels. As you read this story in your Bible and then in *Growing in God's Love*, notice the actions of Jesus. He took the bread, gave thanks for it, and then gave it to the crowd. Now consider communion/ eucharist. There are four actions that are modeled after Jesus' giving of this sacrament to his disciples in the upper room: take, bless, break, give. Here in this story, we get a glimpse of the sharing of a simple meal in community where there was enough for all, and even leftovers. All were fed. No one was hungry. Would that it be so today.

Find an additional reading about this text at bit.ly/GLJohn6Commentary.

Connecting with the World

✦ The story *Stone Soup* is a European folk tale that has been told in many variations and in different countries, even ones called *Cactus Soup* and *Quill Soup*. It is basically a story about the beauty of sharing and how small individual gifts can create something wonderful for a whole community. Read *Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth (Scholastic, 2010) or watch the YouTube video "Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth: Children's Books Read Aloud on Once upon a Story" (bit.ly/GLStoneSoup, 7:43).

✦ Many communities have feeding programs that involve gleaning—sharing surplus foods from farms, grocers, and restaurants so that hungry people are fed. Go to bit.ly/GLGleaning and find out what is available in your community by checking out the Gleaning Map tab.

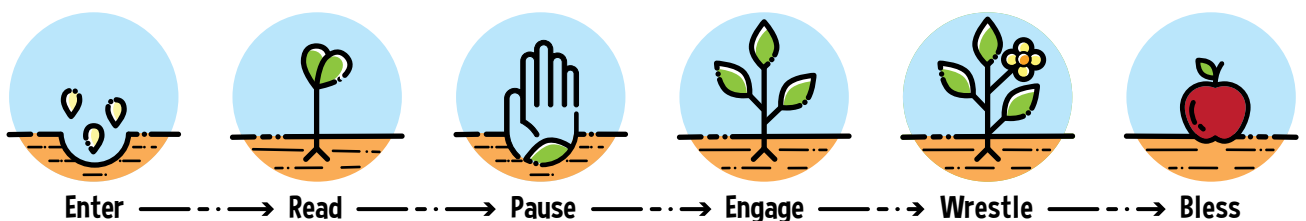
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

When you consider the basic things we want children to know and experience in life, at the top of the list is sharing. As you probably know, this is a hard thing for a child to learn, especially when it's sharing a toy or sharing that last piece of cake with someone else. But when children experience adults in their life sharing or even participate themselves in taking food to someone, or serving a meal at church or a shelter, or packing bags for the food pantry, then they begin to make the connections between these actions and God. We bless food, we bless hands who serve, and we bless acts of sharing, and in so doing a child's life of faith grows.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and in that action of blessing, the miracle was accomplished. We often think of miracles in terms of healing. This story offers us a chance to think about how after a blessing, a simple act of sharing food becomes a miraculous occasion. Pause for a minute and reflect. In what ways have you been blessed by the kindness of others? In what ways have you shared a loaf of bread, a container of homemade soup, or a conversation with someone else and counted that as a blessing in your life? Daily activities of sharing nourish our lives of faith. Simple acts over time remind us of our connections with one another.

God, for the bread of life that you provide, we are grateful. Open our eyes to those around us who are hungry. Amen.



Leading

Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Carpet squares or cushions
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Newsprint
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- ✓ Fish-shaped crackers
- ✓ Ziplock plastic bags
- ✓ Basket
- ✓ Small cups, napkins
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Mural paper
- ✓ Glue sticks

Preparing to Lead

Begin by exhaling deeply. As you exhale, release any worries or distractions you are carrying with you. Take three deep, slow breaths. As you breathe, focus on your exhale. Imagine God's love washing over you. Pray, "Loving God, open my heart to hear your Word and help me to lead with compassion. Amen."

Read John 6:1–15 and make note of anything that surprises you. Then read "A Boy and His Lunch" in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 264). Reflect on the following questions:

- ✓ Who do you identify with in this story, and why?
- ✓ What are some of your gifts or resources that you can share with others?
- ✓ How can you practice trusting in God's abundance this week?

Recall the names and faces of the children you will lead. Are there upcoming birthdays or other joys to celebrate? Are any of the children experiencing an especially hard time? Pray for them and yourself as you prepare to learn together.

Before the children arrive, arrange a comfortable seating area with carpet squares or cushions in a circle. Have the battery-operated candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* nearby.

If you are going to do the "Fish Crackers for All" activity, be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options. Put random amounts of the fish-

shaped crackers in ziplock plastic bags, at least one bag per child, and place them around the room.



Enter into sacred space together.

As the children arrive, greet them by name. Invite them to join the circle. When everyone has arrived and settled into the circle, welcome them again. Draw attention to the candle and turn it on. Tell them the candle reminds us that God is present with us as we learn together. Go around the circle, inviting each child to share their name and one "high" and one "low" from the week. Go first as a way of demonstrating this practice.

Invite the children to take a deep breath out. Then take three deep, slow breaths together. Invite the children to close their eyes. Open with this echo prayer:

Loving God, /
thank you for being with us. /
Help us to feel your love in our hearts /
as we learn together. /
Amen. /



Read a story of God's people.

Begin by asking the children what they like to take or buy for lunch at school. Ask if they have ever shared their lunch food with others. Share that today's story is about a miracle that happens after a young boy shares his lunch with Jesus. Turn to page 264 in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* and read "A Boy and His Lunch."

Some schools do not allow children to share lunch items with other students because of dietary and food allergy concerns.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children into a time of quiet reflection. Tell them that you will watch the clock for one minute as they quietly think about this story. Invite the children to think about what their favorite part of the story is.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Engage the children in conversation about the story using the following questions:

- ✦ Why do you think the boy gave his lunch to Jesus?
- ✦ Imagine having one loaf of bread. Suddenly, there are five loaves. Then there are ten loaves! What would it look like to see more and more food appear? How would you feel?
- ✦ Imagine if you were one of the hungry people in the crowd and suddenly you were passed a basket of food to eat. How would you feel? What would you say or do?

○ Scarcity, Abundance, and Sharing

- ✦ Write the word *scarcity* on the left side of a piece of newsprint. Invite a volunteer to say the word. Wonder what the word means and what other words mean the same thing. Write the children's suggestions below the word *scarcity*. Some ideas might be *not enough*, *very little*, *lack of*, and so forth. Point out that the word *scarcity* sounds like the word *scared* and that they even start with the same four letters! Explain that when people engage in scarcity thinking, they are afraid that there will not be enough for them. Wonder:
 - In this story, who was scared there would not be enough food?
 - Have you ever been afraid there would not be enough of something, such as enough toys or treats, at home or at school?
- ✦ Write the word *abundance* on the right side of the newsprint. Wonder what the word means and what other words mean the same thing. Write the children's suggestions below the word *abundance*. Some ideas might be *a lot*, *a large amount*, *more than enough*, and so forth. Explain that when people engage in abundance thinking, they believe there is more than enough for everyone and generously share what they have with others. Wonder:
 - Who practices abundance thinking in this story?
 - What happens when the little boy and Jesus practice abundance thinking?
 - What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us in this story?

Affirm that although it is normal to feel afraid that there will not be enough, God shows us time and time again that there is enough—that there is more than enough love, food, and compassion for all of us. Jesus teaches us not to be afraid or to fall into scarcity thinking. Comment that the miracle in this story could be thought of as one of radical sharing. After Jesus and the little boy shared what they had, others in the crowd began to do the same. As the baskets were passed, people added the scraps and extra food they had with them to the basket, resulting in a surplus at the end. The miracle occurred when people moved from a mindset of scarcity to one of abundance and trust in God.

Choose one or both options:

○ The Miracle Song

- ✦ Tell the children that they will watch a video with a short song about the story of the boy, his lunch, and what Jesus did with it. Encourage the children to sing along and follow the motions as the song becomes familiar. Show the YouTube video “PreK Miracle Song with 5 Loaves and 2 Fish” (bit.ly/GLMiracleSong, 0:33). Play the video again so that the children may join in singing.

○ Drawing a Picture

- ✦ Provide paper and coloring supplies. Invite the children to draw a picture of this miracle story. Suggest that they choose one scene in the story, perhaps one they liked best or one that surprised them. As they draw, play the YouTube video “Two Little Fishes and Five Loaves of Bread” (bit.ly/GLTwoLittleFishes, 2:50) by Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Invite the children to share their pictures with one another.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Choose one or both options:

○ Saying Thank-You to God

- ✦ Tell the children that when Jesus received the fish and loaves from the boy, he took the food and then said thank-you to God before sharing it with others. Ask the children if they have any favorite prayers that they say or sing before sharing a meal at home. Invite them to teach this prayer or song to the group. If few or no children have mealtime prayers to share, teach them one

Leading

or more of the following prayers and encourage the children to teach a prayer to their families:

Thank you, God, for the food before us.
Thank you, God, for the friends beside us.
Thank you, God, for the love between us. Amen.

Food to eat. Food to share.
Thank you, God, for all your care. Amen.

For food to eat (*raise hands to mouth*),
and friends to share (*hold hands out*),
for those we love everywhere (*place hands over heart*),
we thank you, God (*put hands together in prayer*). Amen.

- Fish Crackers for All
 - ✦ Tell the children that there are small bags of fish-shaped crackers around the room, one for each person. Invite the children to find the crackers and gather in a circle. Have the children open their bag of crackers and empty it into a common basket.
 - ✦ Invite the children to give thanks, leading them in mealtime prayer. Use one of the prayers above in “Saying Thank-You to God” and have the children repeat after you. Give each child a small cup and napkin. Pass around the basket of crackers. Invite the children to use their cup to scoop out a few crackers and then pass the basket to the next person, making sure to leave enough for others. As they eat, invite them to imagine sharing a meal with Jesus, the disciples, and five thousand other people.

Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions.
Make substitutions or provide alternative options.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Gather for a “huddle prayer” by huddling close together, like a sports team does. Use the following prayer or one of your choosing:

Generous God, thank you for your love and the many ways you care for us. Help us to care for one another by sharing what we have so that everyone has enough. And all God's people said, “Amen!”

As you conclude, turn off the candle.



Grow with more.

- Sharing Our Gifts
 - ✦ Provide copies of Resource Page 1 and invite the children to write about or draw pictures, gifts, or resources they can share with others in the bread and the fish. When they have finished, have the children cut out their bread and fish and glue them to mural paper. Assist with cutting as needed. Invite a volunteer to title the mural, “Sharing Our Gifts.” Display in a common space in your church so that others may see the gifts and resources that the children can share with others.

