

SMALL GROUP STUDIES LEADERS NOTES

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION BIBLE STUDIES



tearfund

Following Jesus where the need is greatest

Feeding of the five thousand

Mark 6:30-44

This series of bible studies are designed to be used in your small group, however they also contain additional 'Going Deeper' background notes at the end for a deeper understanding and for use as a sermon guide. The studies have been created from Tearfund's work around the world using the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) process.

CCM is Tearfund helping the local church work with its community, sharing a vision to address local needs using their own resources. Around the world it is an approach that has brought remarkable transformation to local churches and their communities

OVERVIEW

The aim of this Bible study is to help us understand something of the ways in which God invites us to partner with Him in bringing solutions to the challenges and needs we encounter in our communities. We might summarise this by suggesting that without *God's involvement* we cannot meet these needs, but without *our partnership* God will not act.

Moreover, this study aims to help us move from a position of feeling powerless and lacking any resources to address overwhelming problems by helping us realise that the very limited resources we may have are sufficient when we surrender them to God who is able to multiply their effect.

INTRODUCTION

Can you think of a time when you felt overwhelmed by the sheer size or scale of a challenge or task you were facing?

What did it feel like?

What did you do?

STORY

Mary's husband left her with four children. She lived in a mud hut with one goat and earned enough doing casual labour to put food on the table, but there was never enough and they were always hungry. There was nothing leftover to pay for school fees to keep the children in school.



One day she stumbled upon a Church doing one of the Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) Bible studies, looking at the story of 'Feeding the 5000'. Mary heard people talking about a God who was concerned about hungry people! This wasn't a God who was only concerned with people going to heaven - he cared about their quality of life here on earth!

Mary was inspired to start planning for a different kind of future with her children. She went home and told them that there was a God who cared about them and He was going to help them so that they wouldn't be hungry anymore, but they all had to work together.

They started growing crops to sell and raised enough money to buy some chickens, then pigs and finally two cows! The cows enable them to plough larger areas of land and therefore a greater harvest, more food for the family to eat and to sell. The cows also provide milk and meat for themselves and to sell.

As a family they have worked together and managed to save up a dowry for her eldest son to get married, and they are working to raise a dowry for her second son. Mary has used some of the income to help her other two children go to school.

Without the Church Mary would have continued struggling to make ends meet with no hope of life ever changing. Now, God's word has been planted in the hearts of her family and they have an appetite to work together to see God transform their lives.

DISCUSS

Read Mark 6:30-44

- Q** How would you describe the response of the disciples to the presence of a huge, hungry crowd?
- Q** How would you describe Jesus' feelings for and attitudes towards the crowd? How does this differ from that of the disciples?
- Q** Take a close look at the process by which food is eventually provided for the crowd. Make a list of the particular things Jesus does to make this happen, and another list of the things the disciples do.
- Q** What does this tell us about the ways in which Jesus wants to work in partnership with us for the sake of others? What particular steps might he be asking us to take in order that the needs of those around us might be met?
- Q** Jesus empowered the disciples to meet the needs of others. How might we act towards those in need in our community in order to empower them to meet their own needs?
- Q** As we think about the challenges facing our own community and our own lack of resources, what particular encouragements are there for us in this passage?

ACTION

Break into twos or threes:

- Q** The disciples had only very limited resources yet Jesus multiplied them to feed an enormous crowd. What resources do I have which God might multiply and use for the blessing of my community?

These might not be merely material resources, but skills, time etc

PRAY

Pray for one another for wisdom in deploying these resources for the sake of God's Kingdom and that God might multiply them.

GOING DEEPER

The position in which we find the disciples in this passage is very similar to that facing so many of us as we journey with Jesus today. Exhausted by the demands of following Jesus and serving others, even their short break away from people is interrupted by the gathering of a large crowd with, no doubt, many demands. As evening falls the disciples are alarmed that the crowd show no signs of leaving even though the place is desolate and there is no food. Their impulse is to ask Jesus to send them away, nothing can be done. We often want to do the same with those whose needs are beyond our capacity to meet. Our tendency is to focus on problems rather than possibilities. Equally, just like the disciples, we tend to push the problem entirely onto Jesus to solve by his own exclusive efforts (as opposed to asking him how we might work together). Many of our prayers are rather like the request of the disciples - Jesus, please take this responsibility off our hands!

Jesus however is not content for people to remain in need. He has compassion for them (34) and wants to see them fed. However his way of acting is in partnership with the disciples. They play a key role in finding the food which will be multiplied (identifying resources), in distributing that food to the people (v41) - it seems that the multiplication actually took place as the disciples gave the food out, and then in gathering up the leftovers. Jesus wants us to identify the resources God has already given us and others, no matter how inadequate they seem, and to deploy them towards the meeting of needs.

“Jesus needs what we can bring him. It may not be much but he needs it. It may well be that the world is denied miracle after miracle and triumph after triumph because we will not bring to Jesus what we have and what we are. If we would lay ourselves on the altar of his service, there is no saying what he could do with us and through us. We may be sorry and embarrassed that we have not more to bring – and rightly so; but that is no reason for failing to bring what we have. Little is always much in the hands of Christ.”

(William Barclay)

We're Christians passionate about ending poverty. We go to the places of greatest need, responding to disasters and helping communities to see their own potential to overcome poverty. We won't stop until poverty stops.



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