

Title: ENCOUNTERING MIRACULOUS PROVISION

Text: Mark 6:30-44

A Disciple-Making Object Lesson

- A Get-away in a Quiet Place

- A Shepherd Provides for His Sheep

Understanding the Loaves

- Past Provision

- Daily Provision

- Lasting Provision

CONVERSATION STARTER

- Share about a time when you craved rest because you were emotionally and physically exhausted due to busyness. Did your pursuit of rest ever get interrupted by the needs of another: a spouse, child, friend, parent, etc.? How did that state of exhaustion affect your ability to be compassionate with others around you?
- Read Mark 6:30-44. What was Jesus' original intent for the disciples when they went away in the boat? What eventually moved him to change his plans? What does Mark mean when he describes the people as "sheep without a shepherd"? Why do you think Jesus challenged the disciples to provide food after they chided him to dismiss the crowds (see verse 38)? What elements in this story parallel the Lord's Supper? Why are these parallels significant?
- Read Psalm 23. Why do you think David described the Lord as his shepherd in verses 1-4? How does the image of the Lord as shepherd relate to the image of the Lord as host in verses 5-6? What are some specific ways David finds comfort and provision from the Lord according to the psalm?
- Read the excerpt below. This is Yancey's commentary on John's version of the feeding miracle (Jn 6:1-15). Do you agree with his broad assessment of Jesus' ambivalence to performing miracles? Why or why not? Do you think Yancey is correct when he says that miracles "rarely encouraged repentance and long-term faith"? Why or why not?
- What are some specific ways the Lord has shown you compassion in the past? What are some current situations for which you would like God's compassionate care? How does the reality of Jesus as our Good Shepherd inspire hope in the difficulties of life?

EXCERPT FROM: *The Jesus I Never Knew*

BY: Philip Yancey

The feeding of the five-thousand illustrates why Jesus, with all the supernatural powers at his command, showed such ambivalence toward miracles. They attracted crowds and applause, yes, but rarely encouraged repentance and long-term faith. He was bringing a hard message of obedience and sacrifice, not a sideshow for gawkers and sensation-seekers.

From that day on, Jesus' teaching had a different twist. As if the back-to-back scenes of acclamation and rejection had clarified his future, he began to talk much more openly about his death. The odd figures of speech he had used against the crowd began to make more sense. The bread of life was not magic, like manna; it came down from heaven in order to be broken, and mixed with blood. He was talking about his own body. In the words of Robert Farrar Capon, "the Messiah was not going to save the world by miraculous, Band-Aid interventions: a storm calmed here, a crowd fed there, a mother-in-law cured back down the road. Rather, it was going to be saved by means of a deeper, darker, left-handed mystery, at the center of which lay his own death."