

7. As you think about the kingdom of God, how would you describe the tension of the “already, but not yet”?

8. In what ways do you observe the kingdom of God in everyday life?

John 6:1-15

Lesson 10

For November 30 2008

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LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on November 30, 2008

Feeding of the 5,000

As you think about the miraculous signs of the previous chapters and the events leading up to the miracle in this week's passage, consider the great impact that is taking place. Jesus is revealing the kingdom of God. The old kingdom of darkness is slowly giving way to the new kingdom of light. While the work of the cross is yet to be done, Jesus is revealing the truth and character of God one miracle at a time. In this passage we will find:

Key Points

- God's great generosity
- God's amazing grace
- God's abundant kingdom

Throngs of people were following Jesus. While a number of people had been touched by the miracles of Jesus, this day, perhaps 20,000 people would experience God personally. They would be the recipients of his generosity and grace.

The people of that day were anticipating the long-awaited Messiah. They were looking for a king that would usher in a new era, a better life. No doubt the oppression of Roman rule had taken its toll. Yes, a new kingdom was in order, but the kingdom of God would look much different than the kingdom they envisioned. They wanted political and religious freedom. God's kingdom offers something far greater—freedom of a different kind. What will this kingdom be like? It is ruled by a good, kind, benevolent and generous King, and we, his subjects, are the recipients of his love and grace.

The people of that day experienced the astonishing abundance of God's generosity and grace. Jesus provided a spacious place to sit down with "plenty of grass". He provided food: "as much as they wanted". There was so much food left over that the twelve baskets (one for each disciple to carry) were also overflowing. This is a small window into the kingdom of God, a glimpse of what is to come. God's great generosity is beyond measure, yet often it is difficult to grasp. Why? We live in the "already, but not yet". The kingdom of God is at hand. It is the here and now, but only in part. In any given day we experience the tension of life's daily grind, along with the joys and surprises of God's amazing generosity and grace!

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- In this passage Jesus is about to test the faith of his disciples and stretch them beyond their means. They would be challenged to figure out how to feed 20,000 people, organize the distribution of the meal, then pick up the leftovers. Not knowing where Jesus was headed and what would take place next, they acted in obedience and faith. They did what they could do, and watched God do what only he can do.
- This sounds like many of our leadership preparation today. Leading a Small Group has its challenges. There is spiritual food to prepare, logistics to tend to, and the uncomfortable uncertainty of not knowing exactly where God will lead. Yet your obedience, due diligence in study, and utter reliance on the Spirit to move and work in hearts expresses, in part, the kingdom of God. When lives are changed, we experience a measure of what the disciples experienced that day. Take time to thank God and worship him for his kindness, generosity, and grace to you, and for choosing you to be part of expanding his kingdom.

Group Preparation

- You might want to spend some time this week in recounting the great blessings of God, and worshipping him for his love and grace.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been the recipient of someone's generosity? What were the events that surrounded the gift? Was it a surprise? What did it do for your relationship with them?
2. Have you ever received a gift that you felt entitled to receive or felt that you somehow earned? If so, what did that do to your level of gratitude to the giver?
3. In what ways do we sometimes take God's generosity for granted, or refuse to accept his great love or grace? What are some reasons why we resist him?
4. How have you experienced God's great generosity? How do you express your gratitude to him?
5. In what ways do we experience God's abundance when physical and material resources are very limited?
6. What transforms our hearts from following Jesus merely for what he can do for us to following him because he is worthy of our very lives?