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JESUS PROVIDES



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

QUESTION #1

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THE POINT

Jesus cares and meets the needs in our lives.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Operation Christmas Child® is an event in which individuals pack shoe boxes with toys and gifts for children. In 2016, more than eleven million boxes went to kids all over the world.¹

I have a friend who delivers these boxes to children. On one occasion, he was delivering to a crowd of children in Bosnia. The children had no way of knowing what was inside their boxes, opening them with joy to find coloring books, yo-yos, dolls, and more.

My friend noticed a young boy off in a corner, and 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, my friend was stunned into silence. The boy pulled out a portable CD player—the perfect gift for a child who can’t see!

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

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Mark 6:34-37

³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”

Working in ministry can be unbelievably exhausting. R. Kent Hughes highlighted the demanding life of ministry with a poem: “Mary had a little lamb, ‘twas given her to keep. But then it joined the local church, and died for lack of sleep!”²

The disciples surely were feeling like that lamb at this point in the Gospel of Mark. Why?

- ▶ They’d been out among the people where “they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them” (Mark 6:13).
- ▶ They were mourning the death of their friend and forerunner to the Messiah, John the Baptist. (See vv. 17-29.)
- ▶ Jesus’ popularity was at an all-time high, which meant the encroaching crowds were constantly swarming—constantly pressing in with more and more needs.

Realizing they were becoming exhausted, Jesus proposed a break: “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while” (v. 31). It must have felt like the most welcome command to their weary bodies. Sometimes, permission to simply stop and rest feels like an inexpressible gift.

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

QUESTION #2

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!

Have you ever had days like that? It's been a long day (or week!) and all you want to do is come home so you can rest and relax. Instead, you're greeted with a mountain of problems and obstacles to overcome as soon as you pull into the driveway. So it was with the disciples: they needed rest and refreshment—a need Jesus acknowledged—but even more people with more needs were waiting for them when they got to where they were going.

Here's a truth: 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." This was a common theme with Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew records a similar moment: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

When Jesus looked out on those crowds, 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 what that something was. These people were even willing to run all the way around a lake to follow Him and hear what He had to say.

Jesus sees us the same way. He knows what we need and has compassion when He sees us trying to fill our needs in other ways and places. Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), not to beat us over the head for getting lost in the first place. He knows all the ways we've been broken—and He desires to provide for us and make us whole again.

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

QUESTION #3

A RESTING PICTURE

Use the space below to create something that represents rest for you—the kind of rest that is both satisfying and energizing. You can draw a picture, write a list, tell a brief story, or do anything else that represents true, life-giving rest.

What steps can you take to bring Jesus into your moments of rest each week?

"The fellow that has no money is poor. The fellow that has nothing but money is poorer still."

—BILLY SUNDAY

Mark 6:38-44

³⁸ And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

As a father of two children, my job is to provide for them in two ways: physically and spiritually. In the same way, Jesus modeled the right way to provide for people on the shore of that lake. Those in the crowd were hungry to learn from Jesus, so He fed them spiritually—“he began to teach them many things” (6:34). But the people were also just plain hungry. So Jesus provided for them physically, as well.

Sometimes it’s easy to think spiritual things are all that matter. But God created us as whole beings: spirit, soul, and body. Physical needs are important, too. As the apostle James wrote: “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” (Jas. 2:15-16).

How do we balance the importance of meeting physical needs and spiritual needs?

QUESTION #4



The disciples noticed the physical needs of the crowd, but their solution was purely practical: 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).

Jesus was calling His disciples to do the impossible; after all, it would take two hundred days’ worth of wages (see Mark 6:37; Matt. 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 dinner rolls today. That was it. Not nearly enough to get the job done.

Of course, Jesus is always enough to get the job done. Jesus “said a blessing and broke the loaves,” and then He distributed the food among the people—and it never ran out. “They all ate and were satisfied.”

Surely this miracle had an impact on the thousands gathered there, but the greatest beneficiaries should have been the twelve disciples. After all:

- ▶ Jesus led *the disciples* to that spot for rest.
- ▶ Jesus asked *the disciples* to help feed the people.
- ▶ *The disciples* saw every aspect of the miracle unfold.
- ▶ *The disciples* picked up twelve baskets of scraps—one for each of them.

Unfortunately, they missed it. Right after this event, the disciples were again crossing the lake when they were caught in a terrible storm—the same storm in which Jesus walked on water to save them. At this, the disciples “were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves” (Mark 6:51-52).

Today, don’t miss the truth that Jesus is sufficient for you. 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.

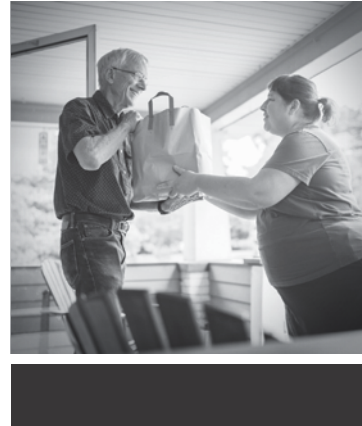
Where do we have opportunities to participate in God’s provision for others?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you put your trust in Jesus' care and provision this week? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Communicate.** Take five minutes to thank God for bringing you as far as He has, for giving you what He's given you, and for doing what He's done so you can have a relationship with Him.
- ▶ **Count.** Make a list of the ways you have seen God provide for you in the past. Then, make a list of things that you need Him to provide now. Pray over both lists each day this week.
- ▶ **Care.** Be a channel of God's care and provision in the life of someone else. Find one person with big needs this week and help that person out of love for Christ and because of the way He has provided for you.



We've all received gifts in our lives. Some of us have received gifts that were especially meaningful or transformational. All of us have the chance to receive the life-giving, life-changing gift of a relationship with Jesus—the only One who can truly meet our needs.

My thoughts

1. samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/
2. R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* (Crossway, 2015).

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLJesus**