

Church and Food Part 2

Jesus did give food to the people who were following Him. Here we will study the following Scripture and find out on what basis Jesus provided food for the crowd:

“13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. 14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. 15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” (Matthew 14:13-21 KJV) Jesus had compassion on the people who were following Him so He healed their sick. And as the place where the people met the Lord was a desert place, and it was already getting late, Jesus was not willing to send the crowd away to go to the villages and buy themselves some food. So He multiplied the bread and the fish to feed them. So the Lord here considered two reasons why He offered food to the people, *first*, because it was too late, *second*, it was a desert place far from any nearby source of food. * Now many link church meetings and Bible study to food and they say that Jesus gave the hungry crowd food to eat. Jesus gave food for the reasons mentioned above. The people followed Christ on foot and were willing to stay with Him late not because they expected food from Him, but because they were glad to hear and enjoy His teaching. * When we combine our church meetings and teaching sessions with food, we will find that many people will come and attend. The focus will shift to the non-spiritual things and we need to be aware of that. * The church is not a restaurant that people come to eat from, but a meeting place to receive the Word of God, the spiritual food, that will bring God's blessings into their lives as they obey.

The church can offer some physical food to keep the teaching session going on for people who stay for long hours and are far from the sources of food.

There is another occasion that Jesus provided food for the crowd. *“29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. 30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: 31 Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. 32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven,*

and a few little fishes. 35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. 38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.” (Matthew 15:29-38 KJV) Jesus fed the people who stayed with Him for three days. So when the people are aware that they need to stay long hours for teaching sessions or for doing certain service unto God, then it is better that they come prepared with their own food to sustain their body for doing God's work. Or the church for such conditions should think as Jesus thought ahead of time to provide food for those who are coming from a far distance and staying long hours.

Also, we should notice that Jesus did not waste many resources to feed the people. He used only two kinds of food, seven loaves of bread and little fish, both nutritional in value. People of our times will opt to cook more food to please the crowd and stay out of the confrontation.

God is concerned about the food of His people who are in the mission fields doing His work. God's house, the church should also have concern for the food of the people who are engaged in mission work. *“3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?”* (Matthew 12:3-4 KJV) Jesus justified the act of David and his men when they ate the consecrated bread in the house of God to satisfy their hunger because they were fleeing from Saul who was after David to kill him. They were on a mission. *“1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? 2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”* (1 Samuel 21:1-6 KJV) God provided food for David and his men from the house of God because they were on a mission, doing the very work of God. They were in distress and in a state of emergency and the Lord provided them from His house, His church, the food they needed to sustain their physical body to go on and continue to serve Him.

In the book of 3 John, there is an emphasis on the importance of receiving and spending on the brethren who are sent by God to do the mission work. *“5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.”* (3 John 1:5-8 KJV) Apostle John had recommended that support be given to those

who had dedicated their lives to serve Christ. They were honest people, and the proof of their honesty was that they hadn't received money from the non-believers, the Gentiles. So their motive was clean in serving the Lord and truly such kinds of workers are eligible for the help of the church.

Further Scriptures support hospitality toward the Lord's work and toward those who are in missions of serving the Lord:

A. "28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." (Luke 24:28-30 KJV)

B. "5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance." (Acts 10:5-10 KJV)

C. "8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him." (Acts 21:8 KJV)

We learned from these Scriptures to support the Lord's work and to be hospitable in supporting those who are engaged in the mission work of God.

"1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten." (John 6:1-13 KJV)

In the above passage that we read in John, we can see and witness the wonderful miracles that Jesus did by providing food for a crowd of people about five thousand men. The people followed the Lord because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. People and crowd of people will continue to come to the Lord because of certain needs in their lives, like healing, miraculous solution to problems, provision of food, and some other needs.

The Lord was with His disciples when the crowd came seeking for Him. The Lord and His disciples worked side by side. Therefore when the crowds came to the Lord, they met the disciples and when they came to the disciples then they met the Lord. **From this arrangement, we must understand that if we are disciples, then we must behave and act as disciples. Jesus will not treat us or consider us as He considered and treated the crowd.**

The crowd that came to Jesus didn't have faith, didn't have food and they lacked other things like healing, salvation, and personal relationship with God. They didn't know the Word of God and they weren't aware of prayer and they didn't know how to hear the voice of Jesus. But the disciples were opposite to them in their understanding of spiritual things; they had faith, personal relationship with God through Christ, they knew the Word of God and the promises of God. Furthermore, they had the gift of prayer; they were trained by God and knew Him for long. They were good stewards of their resources. They were good planners of events that God wanted them to hold in their lives.

The Lord would certainly expect from us, His disciples, to be a great help, a support and co-workers with Him to help Him in dealing with the new crowd of people. The Lord would expect from us as disciples the following:-

1. Faith in Christ to do miracles: People and crowds ultimately would be directed to Christ and we need to have faith in Christ that He will do something to reveal Himself and His power in our midst.

2. Concern and affection for the coming crowd: People and crowds have many needs and concerns, but the disciples should have the concern to help the crowd to meet their needs.

3. Responsible and accountable for their calling and ministry: God would expect from us to be disciples with accountability. The crowd of people that came towards Jesus proved to be challenging to the disciples, where the latter's accountability towards the ministry was put to the test. Jesus tested His disciples with this question, **"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5 KJV)** The disciples answered Him in a way which showed that they were not responding to what God had called them to do. **"7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:7-9 KJV)** Both these answers showed that the disciples were reluctant to act with a sense of responsibility in what they were called to do.

4. Trusting God and putting what they have in the hand of God: **"8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:8-9 KJV)** The five loaves of bread and the two fish were not sufficient from the disciples' point of view,

for they overlooked the fact that when the food was placed in the hands of Jesus, miracles would happen, needs would be met and people would get enough. **Many disciples do not trust that God can sustain them and the ministry God had given them, despite their small jobs and the small income. Many look for sponsors to support them financially, in reaching the lost. Many look for people who can support them in funding a crusade, but the basic things that we have discussed are not in their minds.**

5. Attentive to His voice and obedience in applying His instructions: In the passage from the book of John, Jesus spoke three statements to His disciples. His disciples responded to the Lord's instructions and truly Jesus did a marvelous miracle and met the need of a big crowd. **The three statements that Jesus spoke further expounds to us how Jesus met the needs of the crowd and how He will enable us to continue to serve Him if we are transformed in the way we think and act with regard to stewardship, as mentioned in the Bible.**

a. Jesus addressed the problem: He did that when He said, ***“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5 KJV)*** In that particular situation, Jesus pointed out to His disciples what was needed to be addressed at that moment. **As disciples of Jesus, we cannot make our own plans and go ahead with doing our own things. Our lives, our time, and our resources are all God's and not ours. We may have certain plans but Jesus may have another plan and thought for us that He wants us to do. Therefore we need to be attentive to what Jesus wants to direct us to do in the next stage of our lives.** The disciples at that moment of their life and ministry with Jesus were expected to be responsible to help the growing crowd and supply their needs. **In this manner, we need to be ready to receive ministries and care for others who are lost. We need to prepare ourselves with resources and think wisely ahead of time to manage the growing needs for the ministry.**

b. Jesus gave instruction in the process of solving the problem: He did that when He said, ***“Make the men sit down.” (John 6:10 KJV)*** Jesus instructed His disciples to make the people sit down and He did the rest. The disciples were bewildered when Christ mentioned that the crowd's need for food should be met. In their mind, they were probably contemplating different alternatives, but finally, Jesus requested them to do a simple thing and He did the rest to meet the need. **When you are faced with certain problems, you need to be attentive to the voice of Jesus to hear from Him as to what you need to do.** Jesus just told them, ***“Make the men sit down.” (John 6:10 KJV)*** Jesus did not say ‘go and buy’, He did not say ‘cook’, nor did He say ‘send the crowd away’. **The point that we need to understand, to solve any problem is we need to hear exactly what He speaks to us regarding a particular situation and do it accordingly.**

c. Jesus gave instruction to prevent the problem from coming back: He did that when He said, ***“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” (John 6:12 KJV)*** Jesus did not want His disciples to waste, He did not want them to lose anything, and He wanted them to be a good example to others around them. If the disciples had nothing left in their hands, then they were worse than the non-believers in the management of their lives. The disciples of Jesus were baffled by the big crowd. Jesus here instructed them to gather the extra and keep it aside so that when they were faced again with a crowd of that proportion, they would have something to share and meet the need of the crowd of people who are coming to Him. Jesus cared for those people who came after Him and He fed them with bread and fish. After they all had enough to eat, Jesus said to His disciples, ***“Gather up the fragments that***

remain, that nothing be lost.” (John 6:12 KJV) Jesus wanted them to realize that they should not waste any food. He wanted to teach them and give them a good lesson on how to be a good steward and how to save and preserve food. Did Jesus teach them that because He wasn't capable of performing the same miracle again? Most certainly not. It was to teach them the value of saving. *** Not only on food do we need to apply this principle but on money, water, electricity, time, and other things as well so that our service and ministry unto the Lord will continue. * Many disciples waste and do not use their mind to save and use wisely what God has given them for the next crowd. Good Stewardship is like a prophylaxis to avoid putting ourselves in a similar problematic situation.**

Let us pray . . .

My prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins, who was buried and rose from the dead on the third day to give me eternal life. Lord, thank you for the teaching about food and how the way to be used in serving you. Lord thank you for all the rebukes, the corrections and the admonishments that I received from your Word that revived me and made me understand your will and ways and encouraged me to continue to stand firm against all the wrong practices about food in the life of the church and ministry.

Confess your sins now to God. Repent of your bad stewardship for money, your wasting of resources and spending much on food and using food inappropriately in the ministry. Repent of doing your own will and plan and not the will nor the plan of God. Repent of behaving as the crowd and not as a disciple of Jesus. Repent of your non willingness to suffer for Christ and follow Him in the way that He wants you to serve Him. Lord forgive me, I repent of the following sins, _____.

Lord I commit myself to all the principles that I heard today from your Word about food in the life of the church and ministry, the principles of good stewardship and how to behave as a disciple of Jesus. Let us kneel down now at the feet of Jesus. Lord I kneel down at your feet to hear your voice. Lord speaks to me, I am willing to listen and obey you. Lord I commit myself to do things according to your instructions. Lord speak to me and take me out from the following problem _____.

Lord, I pray for my Brothers and Sisters who committed their lives and accepted your Word and are willing to serve you and suffer for you. Lord use their lives as good examples to others to follow you. Lord protect them and provide all their needs so they will continue to serve you.

Lord bless us and sustain us as a church as we continue to teach your Word to your people, direct them to your plan in their lives, what you want them to do and how to be good stewards with all the resources that you gave to them. Lord we commit ourselves also to teach and apply all what we learned in this message about the right use of food. Lord give to us more of the Holy Spirit gifts to evangelize and to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and with the message of the Word of God. Lord, we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church and fulfill the vision of the church, ‘Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God’. Lord prepare us for your coming, to go with you when you come. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be

with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus' name, Amen.

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