**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# Jesus feeds 4,000

### MEETING AIM

To discover that Jesus is amazing.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 15:32-39

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This is the feeding miracle less visited. In this story, Jesus feeds 4,000 men (not counting women and children) rather than 5,000, and this miracle happens in a Gentile area rather than a Jewish one. As often with the disciples, they don’t seem to have the best memory – it’s not long since Jesus fed 5,000 (in Matthew 14:13-21), so you would think that they would guess at what Jesus is going to do. Yet, they don’t; and Jesus once again shows his nature and character, demonstrating his Lordship over his creation and his compassion for people.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and ask the children to share about the week they have had. Ask the children what their favourite food is.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** free-play equipment, including food play

Set out all the toys and free-play equipment and invite the children to play with whatever they would like. Join in with the children’s play if they invite you! If you have food-play equipment, then continue your chat about what the children’s favourite food is.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** tablecloth; cushions or beanbags; paper plates; crackers (fish-shaped if possible); cups and water

Ask the children to help you set out a picnic area, spreading the tablecloth on the floor, and arrange the cushions or beanbags around it. Give everyone a plate and some crackers (be aware of food allergies and have different options available if you need to) and a cup of water. Have your crackers and water together, chatting about what the children think the story will be about. Keep the bag of crackers next to you and tell this story:

Jesus had been travelling around the country telling people about God, healing people and teaching his friends. He was changing people’s lives!

He had been healing people and teaching them for a long time, and the crowd had nothing to eat. They were very hungry. Jesus felt sorry for them and wanted to give them something to eat. The disciples looked around them – there was nothing for miles around. Only the thousands of people in the crowd.

“Where are we going to get enough food for all these people?” they said to Jesus.

“Well, what have you got?” Jesus asked.

The disciples searched their bags and found seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Jesus took the food and told the crowd to sit down. He thanked God for the bread and fish and gave them to his friends. They started to share the food, and it kept coming and coming. *Reach into your bag of crackers and share more with the children. Then pull out another handful and put it on your own plate.*

Everyone had enough to eat! In fact, there was so much food that there was lots left over! How amazing!

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Continue sitting in your picnic area and eat the crackers. As you do so, ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* What was your favourite part of the story?
* How do you think Jesus fed all the people?
* What do you think Jesus’ friends thought when they shared the food out?
* What do you think they did with all the leftovers?
* What does this story tell you about Jesus?
* Do you want to ask Jesus anything? What do you want to ask him?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** large pieces of paper; art materials

Beforehand, collect a range of art materials and set them out ready for the children to use. At this point in the session, show the children the art materials and encourage them to create a picture that represents what they think about the story, who Jesus is or anything that they are thinking about today.

As they work, chat about the story and encourage the children in their creativity. This is space for the group to process what God has said to them today. It doesn’t matter if they produce a finished picture or even if the picture seems to have nothing to do with the story. God will be speaking with the children and working in their lives – the picture they create is almost incidental.

If any children want to show their pictures to the rest of the group, let them do so.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** large sheet of paper; marker pen

If you did the prayer activity in Session 1, then use the same piece of paper. Ask the children how God has answered some of the prayers you wrote down in that session. If you didn’t, start afresh today with a new piece of paper.

In the centre of the paper, write “Jesus is amazing”. Ask them to think about if Jesus is amazing, what do they want to talk about with him today? Write each suggestion down on the paper and pray a short prayer asking Jesus to help with that. After the first two or three suggestions, ask the children if they would like to pray a short prayer about each suggestion, rather than you doing it.

When all the children have told you what they want to talk to Jesus about, say a closing prayer, thanking Jesus for being amazing and caring about us. Keep the sheet of paper safe for next week.

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