



Five Loaves and Two Fish

Matthew 14:13-21

Welcome to 'Together, Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we cannot meet.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at www.reflectionary.org

[More reflections and crafts here.](#)

Here is what you will find in each resource pack:



A Word in Your Ear

A Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age.



Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage.



Inner Space

A blank space for you to record your thoughts, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes a creative approach.



I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study, perfect for younger children and those who like to immerse themselves in the Bible world.



Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passage so that you can listen while resting your eyes.



Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!)



All Together Now

Suggestions for activities throughout the week that link with the Bible passage.



High 5

Suggestions for spending time with God.



A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

Matt 14:15-21

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.



Food for Thought

OK, this is a really familiar story. You could recite it backwards, in your sleep, with one hand tied behind your back. Nothing to see here, folks. Move along.

But God's word is living and active, and if we ask God to open our eyes, we can learn new truth even from a passage that is very familiar. It can help to use a different translation from our usual, or trying a contrasting approach, such as the meditative style of *Lectio Divina*.

We will read this story in the context of the events that Matthew chose to record just before and after it, to see if that casts some light on the importance of this event. It is one of the few that is recorded in all four gospels, so there must be a reason for that.

Q: Why do you think that all four gospel-writers recorded this miracle, when they didn't all record some things we might think important (eg, Beatitudes, Jesus' birth, Prodigal Son)?

Matthew records this event just after that rather gruesome account of Herod's step-daughter/niece dancing at his party, and getting John the Baptist's head as a reward. (Quite glad that my teenaged daughter only wants a phone!)

John is often compared with Elijah, and his message chimes the last of the warning bells of the Old Testament prophets.

Q: What parallels can you see between John's message and style of delivery, and that of the Old Testament prophets? How are Jesus' message and delivery different?

After Jesus fed these twenty thousand or so people, Matthew describes a series of incidents, each full of Old Testament echoes. Jesus went up a mountain by himself to pray. He walked on the water as if it were dry land. He called Peter to walk with him, and when he was unable Jesus took him by the hand and drew him to safety. Jesus brought peace to the chaotic waters, and healing to all those living under the shadow of death.

Q: How does Matthew portray Jesus as the new Moses, and his kingdom as the new creation? What other echoes of the Old Testament can you hear in Jesus' ministry?

With the passing of John the Baptist, the Old Testament canon closed. The one the prophets had pointed to had arrived. The promise of God, that they had proclaimed to often deaf ears, was fulfilled in our hearing. The law is on our hearts and the promised Holy Spirit lives in temples made of flesh, not stone.

Q: What remained the same in the Old and New Testaments? What changed? Why do you think that Matthew chose to arrange these three stories in this order?

Look at the familiar story again, perhaps now with fresh perspective. What significance can you see in the details that Mathew chose to record? Read the passage slowly and take time to be still and listen. What might God be saying to you through this?



Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?



Looking Closer

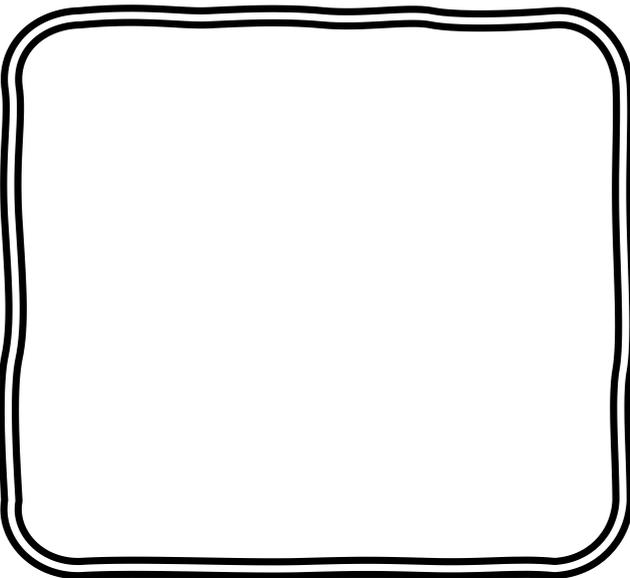
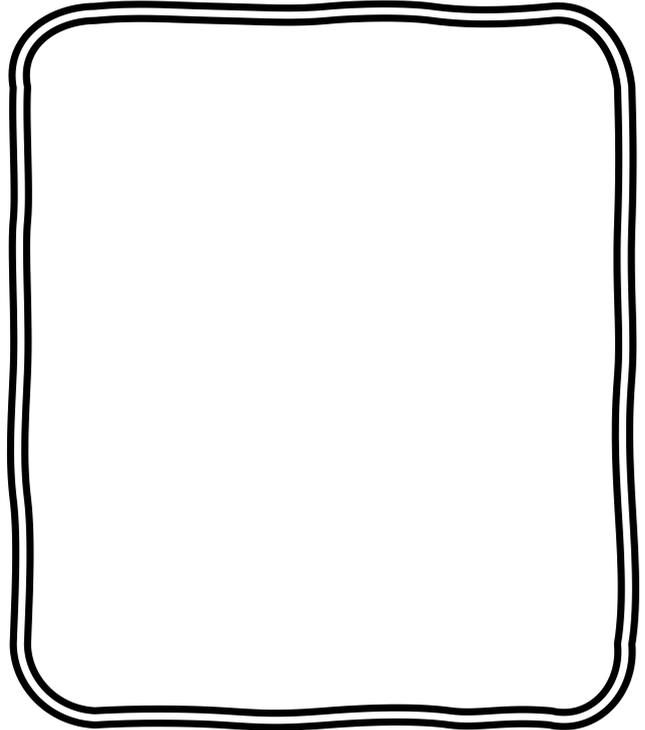
Fish finger sandwiches, who doesn't love them? Or sardines on toast? I guess the lad in this story liked them too.

lad in this story liked them too.

What lad? And have you ever wondered where the disciples got the five loaves and two fish from? It seems a bit weird to have a couple of random fish in your pockets.

Well, wonder no more! Check out John 10:1-13. John adds a bit of detail that the other gospel writer miss. One of the disciples, Andrew, found a lad in the crowd who had some food. I guess it was his packed lunch.

What do you think he looked like? Would you have come forward with your lunch?



I wonder what the other disciples thought. Again, John helps us out with the details.

The disciples had suggested that the crowd should pop down to MacDonaldis or Greggs to get some food, but Jesus answered that they, the disciples, should feed the crowd.

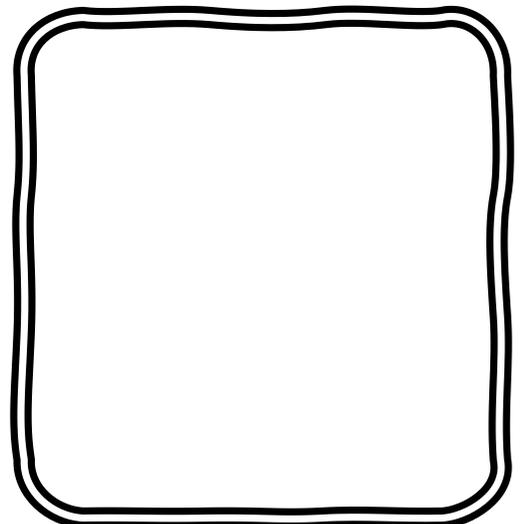
What? How could they do that? Philip said, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Don't be daft, Jesus. That's impossible!

Does God ever ask you to do things that seem impossible?

And then Andrew tootles up with the lad and his lunch. What a rubbish idea! As if that small amount of food would be any use at all. Don't waste Jesus' time with it.

But Andrew does 'waste' Jesus' time with it, and Jesus seems to think it's a good idea. He takes the food, blesses it and gives it back to the disciples. Five thousand families sit down on the grass and twelve bewildered disciples pass out the food ... and keep passing it out ... and keep passing it out ...

What do you think the disciples said to each other as they gave out the food?





I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

I wonder what I can hear today.

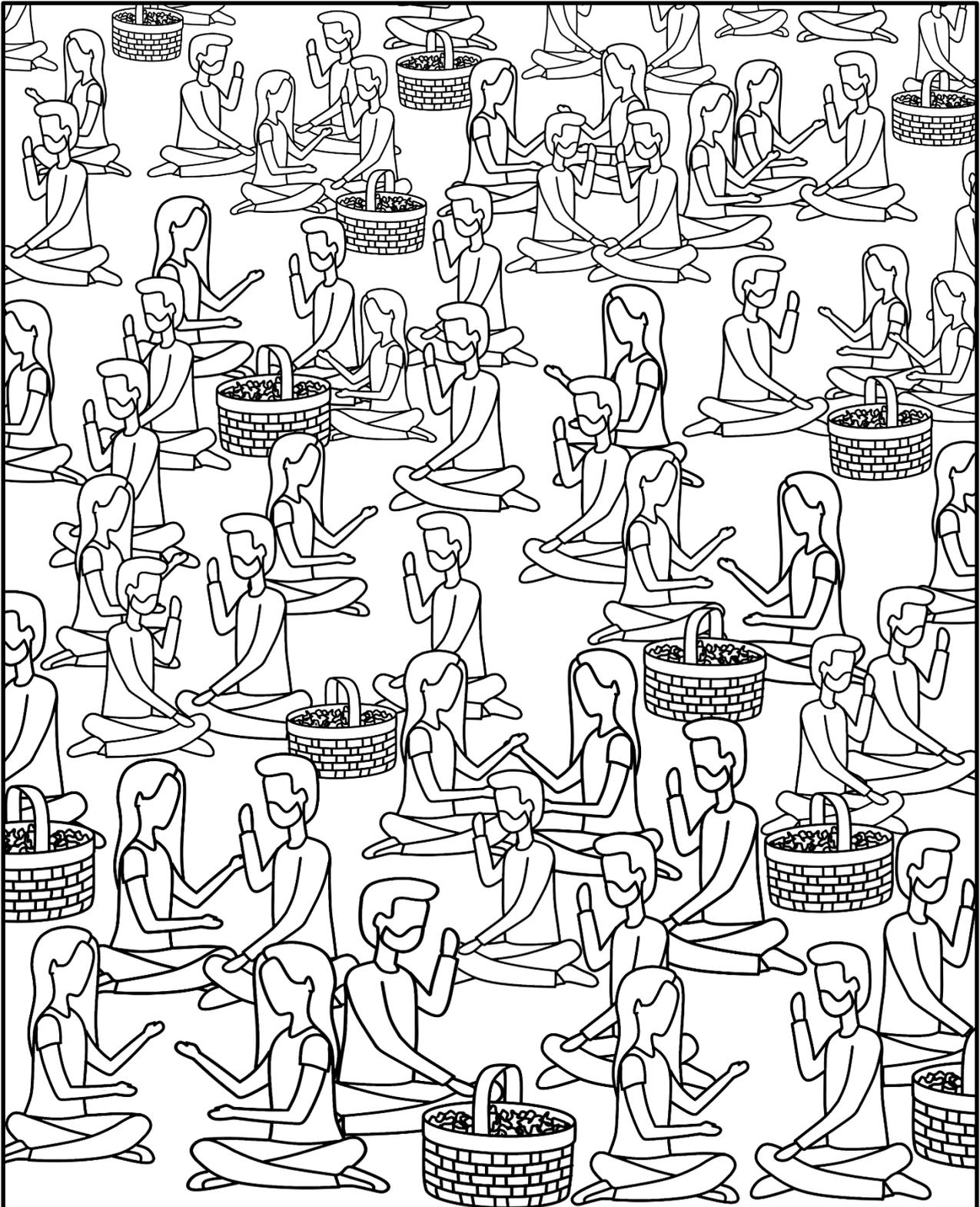
I wonder what will change today.

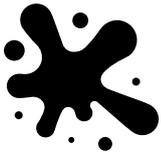


Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Matthew 14 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)





Creation Station – Salt dough Food

Make some salt dough bread and fish – great fun for kids and adults too!

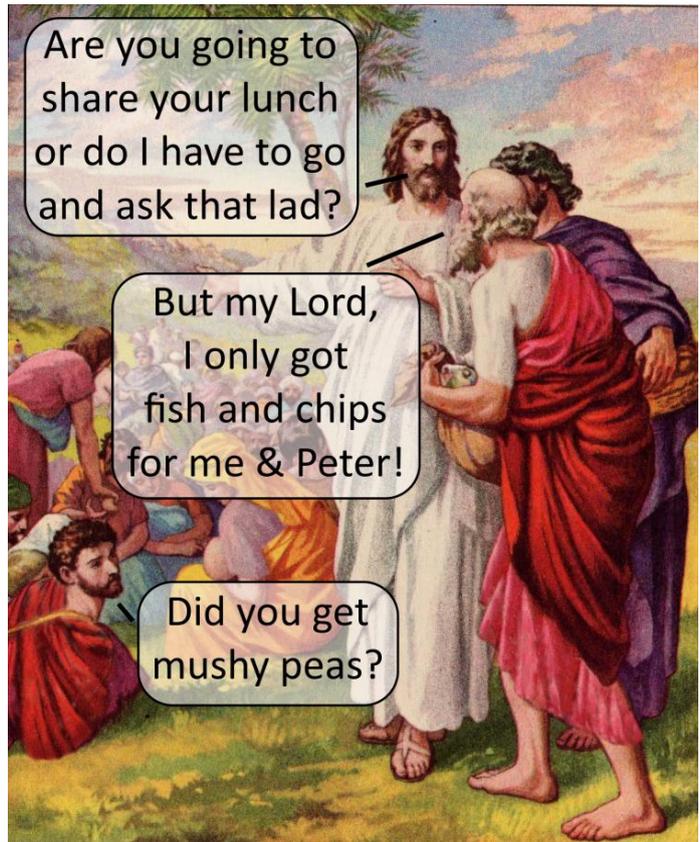
This microwave recipe will dry in seconds instead of the usual hours or days.

You will need:

- Plain flour
- Salt
- Water to mix
- Microwave oven
- Tools for shaping (eg teaspoons, pencils)

What to do:

1. Use flour to salt in 2:1 ratio by volume (eg 2 mugs of flour and 1 mug of salt) and add water until the mixture forms a ball.
2. When you have made your items, put them on plates and microwave them in 10-second increments until they are dry and hard.
3. You can paint your models or varnish them if you want to keep them (salt dough doesn't survive getting wet).



Ideas for what to make:

Sardine sandwiches: Roll or press out a flat dough square and cut it into two triangles. Roll the leftovers into fish shapes and make a sandwich to remind you of the story.

Fish bowl: Cut a round fish shape out of flat dough and mark fins etc. Place it in a small bowl or cupcake case to hold the sides in a curved shape while cooking.

Keyring/ bag dangler: Make a bloomer-style loaf or a fat fish with a hole going through it. Varnish when dry and thread a cord or keyring through the hole.

Paperweight: Make a large loaf and inscribe "I am the bread of life" on it. Varnish after cooking. (Hint, a hollow loaf will dry better.)

Tea-light holder: Mould some dough around a tea-light then form it into a fish or a loaf of bread. Remove the tea-light for cooking.

Beads (for necklace / bracelet / keyring / bag dangler): Shape chunky fish and bread beads around a wooden barbecue skewer. Make more than you need in case some break. Paint and varnish them when dry and thread them up for fishy fun jewellery.



All Together Now

They all ate and were satisfied.

Although our world produces enough food for everyone, not everyone gets enough. Here are some ideas for activities you could try during the week.

- Have a 'fast day'. Get a small plate and put on it all the food you'll eat that day. Make sure it all fits on the plate, and when it's gone that's it. Nothing else. Hungry? Drink some water.
How does it feel when the plate is empty and you still want to eat?
- Contact your local food bank and ask what you can do to help. Then do it.
- Like running? Organise a 'Hunger Run' (good for a youth group). Let people in your community know when you will be passing then jog around with back packs (and a bell or hooter so they know you're there) and collect food stuffs to donate to your local foodbank.
- Make up some nice packed lunches and deliver them to homeless people in your local city centre. Have a little chat while you're there, too. Remember that folks living on the streets are real people with lives, just like the rest of us.
- Why not start a 'Love In Action' group at your church? Ask what people can do (mow a lawn, provide a meal, help with shopping) to put in the bank, and then give EVERYONE a voucher to redeem when they need something.
- Check out the charities that sponsor children in schools (girls particularly) or goat banks (seriously, it's a thing). Or you could even build a bog! (toilet / lavatory / smallest room) Perhaps your family / church / youth group / school could do some fund-raising. Check out [Good Gifts](#), [Send a Cow](#), [Toilet Twinning](#) and others,

My ideas:

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing ideas.

Which will you do this week?



High 5

Spend five minutes talking and listening with God. Here is one way:

Luke's account tells us the five loaves and two small fish came from a small boy in the crowd. I suppose it was his lunch. This helps up to remember that God can use whatever we bring to him, no matter how seemingly small and useless. On the plate below, draw your 'lunch' and offer it to God.

Perhaps you are good at listening to people. Put that on the plate.

Perhaps you are energetic, graceful or a top scorer on your sports team. Put that on your plate.

Perhaps you are worried, over-busy, angry at God or full of doubts. That can go on the plate too. Even the bits we're not so proud of can be offered to God. (I suspect that the two fish, having sat in the boy's basket all day, were a bit pongy but Jesus didn't mind.) Whatever you have, offer it to God for his use, and see what God can make of it.

Dear God,

Here is what I have to offer you. To be honest, it does not look like much to me, and some bits I would rather were not there, but this is me and I offer what I am to you. Amen.

