

# Five Loaves and Two Fish

Mark 6:30-44



# Five Loaves and Two Fish

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUNDAY



This Sunday is the third in a new series of stories from the Gospel according to Mark. This Gospel's main message is that Jesus' arrival on earth ushers in a new era: the Kingdom of God is near.

This Sunday focuses on Mark 6:30-44: Jesus feeds a large group of people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. With the **4-8 year-olds**, the focus will be on Jesus himself throughout this series. Today we will focus on the way Jesus ensures that a little bit of food is enough for a large group of people.

With the **8-12 year-olds**, we will focus on a range of different people playing a part in the stories. Today's story is all about the disciples, who are looking for solutions to their problems in the wrong places.

## 2. CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



The story of Jesus feeding a lot of people begins with the remark that the disciples have returned. They have been sharing the good news on their own. After the story of Jesus feeding the people, we read about Jesus walking on the water. Both that and this story show that the disciples have a lot to learn.

In Mark 6:30-44, there are a number of connections to Old Testament stories. Just like in the story of Jairus' daughter, Jesus does things Elijah and Elisha did: he makes sure food does not run out ((1 Kings 17:7-16 and 2 Kings 4:1-5).

In addition, in this story, Jesus calls the people "sheep without a shepherd". The image of a shepherd taking care of sheep is common in the Bible. It could be used negatively, to comment on leaders who behave as bad shepherds (for example in 1 Kings 22:17 and Ezekiel 34:5). But also positively, to talk about God looking after his people like a shepherd looks after his sheep (for example in Psalm 23, Psalm 100:3 and Isaiah 40:11).

In the story we read in Mark 6, Jesus gives his own interpretation of the word "shepherd": he teaches these people about God. Later on, the story also has a connection to Psalm 23: just like the shepherd in that psalm, Jesus feeds the people in fields of green grass, and it is like a banquet.

The story about Jesus feeding the crowd is also in other gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:1-13). And Mark shares another story in which Jesus feeds many people (Mark 8:1-9).

## 3. EXPLANATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



Today's story is easy to summarize: Jesus teaches a large group of people. The people get hungry, and Jesus feeds them, although there is far too little food for everyone. But such a summary overlooks an important aspect of the story: the disciples' response, and what they have to learn about what it means to follow Jesus.

The disciples have just returned from a trip in which they have shared the good news independently. They don't get any time to rest: too many people still want to listen to Jesus. Jesus looks at the people with pity, because they are like sheep without a shepherd, and he continues to teach them.

When evening falls, the disciples urge Jesus to send the people away. They have been able to listen to Jesus' teaching, but now they have to take care of themselves again.

And then Jesus shows how his task as a shepherd means more than just teaching people about God. Just like a shepherd does not leave sheep to fend for themselves, Jesus does not send the people away. He asks his disciples to feed the people. The disciples only consider their own limitations, and they see that there is far too little. Jesus shows that that is not what is about: things you might never have expected are possible for him.

Jesus tells the people to divide into groups and sit down. This way, he ensures that a crowd of individuals becomes a community. What Jesus does next, will have been very familiar to the people at the time: just like any Jewish housefather, he thanks God at the beginning of the meal and then he hands out the food. The miracle Jesus has done only becomes obvious when the food does not run out and there is a lot left.

This story has two special numbers: seven and twelve. Five loaves and two fish makes seven. In the Bible, that number symbolizes something that is complete. The twelve baskets refer to the twelve tribes of the people of Israel. But also more generally to something that is complete, just like "seven".

# Five Loaves and Two Fish



## 4. FROM THE BIBLE

### 4-8 years

With the younger children, we will focus on Mark 6:41.

*“Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.”*

### 8-12 years

With the older children, we will focus on Mark 6:37.

*“The disciples asked, ‘Do you want us to go and spend two hundred silver coins on bread in order to feed them?’”*

## 5. WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

### 4-12 years

#### During the church service

- a thick sheet of paper
- a pair of scissors

### 4-8 years

#### The Picnic

- a rug for a picnic
- a basket or a backpack
- a Tupperware container with food
- a bottle with something to drink
- a wallet with some coins

#### Sharing

- enough picnic rugs for everyone
- for each child a (plastic) bowl
- food that can easily be divided (bread, grapes, cherry tomatoes et cetera)
- if you wish, nice decorations (like flowers)

#### Find the Small Picture in the Bigger Picture

For each child:

- the handout
- a red, a green and a blue pencil

### 8-12 years

#### Looking for the Solution in the Wrong Place

For each child:

- a sheet of paper
- a pen

And also:

- a child who is willing to be your assistant
- a broad container or tray with all sorts of objects, like: a pencil, a pencil sharpener, a washcloth, a rubber duck, a ball, a table tennis bat, a spoon, a fork, a glass, et cetera.

#### Bible passage

- a bible

#### Erase It

For each child:

- a sheet of white paper
- a gray pencil
- a piece of bread

And also:

- coins

#### A Bread Basket

- bread dough for your favorite type of bread (make this in advance)
- an ovenproof bowl with a diameter of 4 inches (10 cm), covered in aluminum foil
- a rolling pin
- a brush
- oil for greasing
- milk
- an oven
- a baking tray
- two sheets of parchment paper

#### If You Share, There Is ...

For each child

- the handout
- a pen or pencil



# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

### During the Church Service



#### 6. CHILDREN'S MOMENT IN THE SERVICE

##### Sharing Is More

If you share, you end up with less ... right? Well, the children discover that that isn't always the case.

*What do you need?*

- a thick sheet of paper
- a pair of scissors

Let's start!

- Show the paper to the children and ask them how many corners the paper has. (Answer: four)
- Tell the children that you would like to give someone a corner of your paper. Cut off a corner and give this to a child.
- How many corners are left? (Answer: five)
- Repeat this a few times.
- The children discover that the paper ends up with more corners if you give away corners.

### During the Children's Service



#### 7. TO START OFF

##### 4-8 years

##### The Picnic

Today's story is about many people listening to Jesus. But then, evening falls ...

*What do you need?*

- a rug for a picnic
- a basket or a backpack
- a Tupperware container with food
- a bottle with something to drink
- a wallet with some coins

*Let's start!*

- Tell the children that you have a great idea: after the church service, we'll have a picnic with the whole church. Show the children what you've brought.
- Then look at the children with a worrying frown: What do you think, is it enough for everyone?
- Ask the children to come up with solutions to the problem.
- Tell them that today's story is also about a very special picnic where there isn't enough food for everyone. And then something unexpected happens!

##### 8-12 years

##### Looking for the Solution in the Wrong Place

The disciples are looking for the solution to feeding the people in the wrong place. In this assignment, the children experience what it is like to focus on something that is not really the point.

*What do you need?*

For each child:

- a sheet of paper
- a pen

And also:

- a child who is willing to be your assistant
- a broad container or tray with all sorts of objects, like: a pencil, a pencil sharpener, a washcloth, a rubber duck, a ball, a table tennis bat, a spoon, a fork, a glass, et cetera.

*Let's start!*

- Give each child a sheet of paper and a pen.
- One of the children is your assistant. This assistant walks around the room with a container full of objects, so that everyone can see them.
- Ask the other children to write down what they see.
- The assistant leaves the room with the container with the objects.
- Have the other children answer the following question. They can use their notes.
- What color are the assistant's shoes?
- Is the assistant wearing a watch?
- What color is the assistant's shirt?
- Was the assistant wearing earrings?
- et cetera.
- Call back the assistant to check the answers.
- Is it true that the children were paying more attention to the things in the container than to the assistant? Explain that in today's story, the disciples were looking at the wrong things, too.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

### 8. PRAYER AT THE START OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE



Tip

Sit down in a circle for this prayer. You could light a candle.

Good God,  
You have made the earth  
with enough food for everyone.  
And yet, people are hungry  
because we find it difficult to share.  
Teach us not to keep everything to ourselves.  
Teach us to do what Jesus did.  
He shared what he had.  
Help us share what we have.  
Amen.

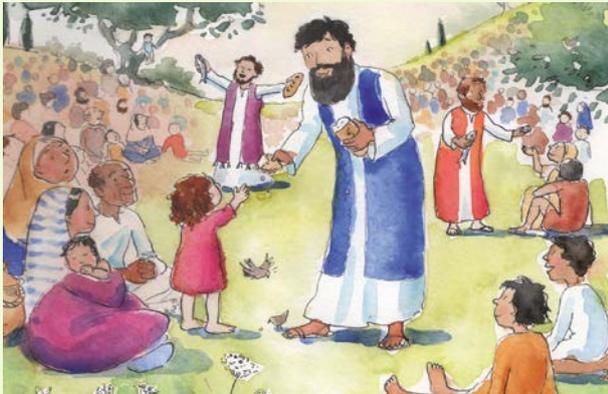
### 9. BIBLE STORY



4-8 years

Mark 6:30-44

Tell the story to the children. While you talk or after reading the story, look at the picture together. Ask the children to look carefully and say what they see. You could also use the older children's Fact File for more information.



#### Five Loaves and Two Fish

We've had such a special week! We, Jesus' friends, were allowed to go out and minister for the first time. In groups of two we shared stories about God. And real miracles happened! We healed people, just like Jesus does!

Now, we've got back together again for the first time. Jesus is telling a large group of people about God. More than five thousand people have gathered! They listen to Jesus so carefully that they hardly notice it is getting dark. Wait a minute ... with a jolt I sit up. Jesus doesn't realize what time it is. I should warn him as quickly as possible! I carefully tap Jesus on the shoulder.  
"Ah, Philip, what's the matter?"  
"It's getting dark and there is no food for sale anywhere near. We should quickly send the people home!"

Jesus thinks, and then looks at me and the other disciples, "You feed them!"  
"What?" I call out, "That much food costs much too much money!"  
"Have you had a look how much food we have with us?" Jesus asks.  
I look at him in surprise. It will never be enough to feed all those people!  
Another disciple, Andrew, comes to my aid.  
"Five loaves and two fish, master."

"All right", Jesus says. "Let the people form groups. Then we can divide the food."  
I will do what Jesus says, but don't get it. How can we ever share five loaves with five thousand people. Everybody will just get one crumb! What is Jesus up to? Jesus holds the bread and the fish in his hands. He looks up at the heavens.  
"Thank you, God, for this food."

And then we have to hand out the bread. I give the first piece to a little girl. It is quite a large chunk of bread, but when I walk on, there is still some bread left. The next piece I hand out to an old man. Now the bread must be running out, but when I look around, my jaw drops. All around me there are people enjoying their food in the grass. I look at Jesus' hands, and Jesus is still breaking bread! This is much more than those five loaves and two fish! If Jesus continues like this, there will be bread left over. Wait a minute ...

All of a sudden I understand what is going on! Jesus has done another miracle. Of course! I can't believe I never thought of that! I am a little embarrassed and tap my forehead.

Now remember, Philip: If you believe in Jesus, amazing things can happen!

## Building blocks of the Sunday

# Five Loaves and Two Fish

**8-12 years**

*Mark 6:30-44*

### Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

The apostles returned and met with Jesus, and told him all they had done and taught. There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have time to eat. So he said to them, "Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest a while." So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.

Many people, however, saw them leave and knew at once who they were; so they went from all the towns and ran ahead by land and arrived at the place ahead of Jesus and his disciples. When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw this large crowd, and his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things. When it was getting late, his disciples came to him and said, "It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. Send the people away, and let them go to the nearby farms and

villages in order to buy themselves something to eat." "You yourselves give them something to eat," Jesus answered.

They asked, "Do you want us to go and spend two hundred silver coins on bread in order to feed them?" So Jesus asked them, "How much bread do you have? Go and see."

When they found out, they told him, "Five loaves and also two fish."

Jesus then told his disciples to make all the people divide into groups and sit down on the green grass. So the people sat down in rows, in groups of a hundred and groups of fifty. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. Everyone ate and had enough. Then the disciples took up twelve baskets full of what was left of the bread and the fish. The number of men who were fed was five thousand.

## 10. FACT FILE



### Bread and Fish

In Jesus' days, bread was very important. People ate flat loaves of bread with every meal. They dipped their bread into sauces or ate cheese with them. Bread was easy to pack when they were travelling. Fish may appear less convenient for travelling. But by salting, pickling it (laying it in salty water for a while) or drying it, it lasted longer.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

### 11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



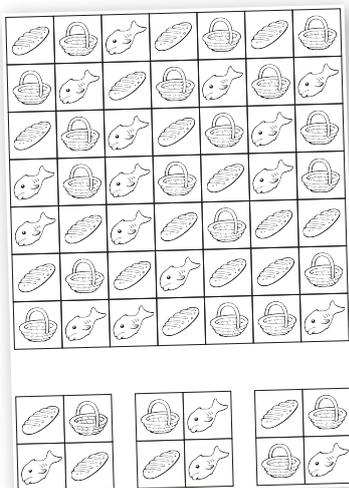
Below, there are two kinds of questions you can discuss: “knowledge questions” and “thinking questions”. You can look up the answers to the knowledge questions, for example in the story. But the thinking questions can keep your group thinking. There are no wrong answers in those!

#### 4-8 years

- It's late. Jesus does not want to send the people home without food. He asks his friends to see how much food there is. How much food do the disciples collect?
- Why does Jesus want the people to sit down in groups? How do you sit if you eat at school? With all the children or in a smaller group? Which do you prefer?
- Jesus thanks God for the food. Do you ever thank good for your food? What else do you thank God for?
- What does Philip mean when he says, “If you believe in Jesus, amazing things can happen!”

#### 8-12 years

- Why do the disciples want Jesus to send the people away?
- Jesus tells his disciples to do something. What? What do you think of that?
- The disciples first think of money to buy food for the people.
- What solution would you think of to the disciples' question: How do we get food for everyone?
- The disciples are looking for the solution (money) to the problem (food) in the wrong place. What advice does Jesus give them?
- What do you think Jesus wants to show his disciples in this miracle?



### 12. DOING



#### 4-8 years

##### Sharing

Jesus shares what he has. Of course, the children can do the same!

*What do you need?*

- enough picknick rugs for everyone
- for each child a (plastic) bowl
- food that can easily be divided (bread, grapes, cherry tomatoes et cetera)
- if you wish, nice decorations (like flowers)

*Let's start!*

- Divide the food among the children, making sure that one child or a small group of children has one kind of food. Ask the children whether this is the best way to divide the food. No? Have them divide what they have. At the end, all children should have all kinds of food in their bowl.



*Tip*

You could also have a real picknick. It is nice to do this after the service, together with the parents. Make sure everyone takes something to share with the others.

#### 4-8 years

##### Find the Small Picture in the Bigger Picture

Today's story is all about bread and fish. The loaves of bread and fish that is left, is collected in baskets. Can the children find the small picture in the bigger picture?

*What do you need?*

For each child:

- the handout
- a red, a green and a blue pencil

*Let's start!*

- On the handout there are lots of sections.
- In each section, there is a loaf, a fish or a basket
- At the bottom, there are three squares.
- Each square consists of four sections with a drawing of a loaf, a fish or a basket.
- The children look for the squares in the big picture and give them the right color.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

**8-12 years**

### Erase It

With the miracle of the bread, Jesus erases the disciples' solution (of buying food with money). In this experiment, the children can copy this.

#### What do you need?

For each child:

- a sheet of white paper
- a gray pencil
- a piece of bread

And also:

- coins

#### Let's start!

- Place a coin underneath the sheet of paper.
- Using a gray pencil, carefully scratch the paper where the coin is until its imprint can be seen.
- Repeat this a few times.
- Take a piece of bread and knead it into a ball.
- Rub the piece of bread over the imprint of the coin.
- Remove the crumbs from your paper.
- What do you see?

#### Explanation:

The bread works as an eraser. The pencil's graphite sticks to paper, but it sticks to bread even better. The coins can barely be seen if you rub over them with your piece of bread.



*Tip*

White bread works best.



### A Bread Basket

The disciples collect the food that is left: twelve baskets full of bread and fish. Using bread, make your own bread basket.

#### What do you need?

- bread dough for your favorite type of bread (make this in advance)
- an ovenproof bowl with a diameter of 4 inches (10 cm), covered in aluminum foil
- a rolling pin
- a brush
- oil for greasing
- milk
- an oven
- a baking tray
- two sheets of parchment paper

#### Let's start!

- Cover the bowls' outsides with aluminum foil (shiny side up).
- Roll the dough as thinly as you can, into a square shape
- Cut the dough into strips of about 0.4 inches (1 cm).
- Preheat the oven to 220 degrees centigrade (420 Fahrenheit)
- Place the bowls on the table upside down
- Brush the aluminum foil with oil, so that removing the bread will be easy.
- Starting at the top, place the strips of dough on the bowl – you'll end up with "spider legs".
- At the top, press the strips together.
- With the other strips, you will weave horizontally: first go over the vertical strip, then under. Repeat this until you come all the way around.
- Then take a second strip of dough, and repeat, et cetera.
- Cover the bread basket with a little bit of milk.
- Bake the bread in the oven for about twenty-five minutes.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

### If You Share, There Is ...

What happens if you share? This puzzle helps children discover. The marked letters form the solution.



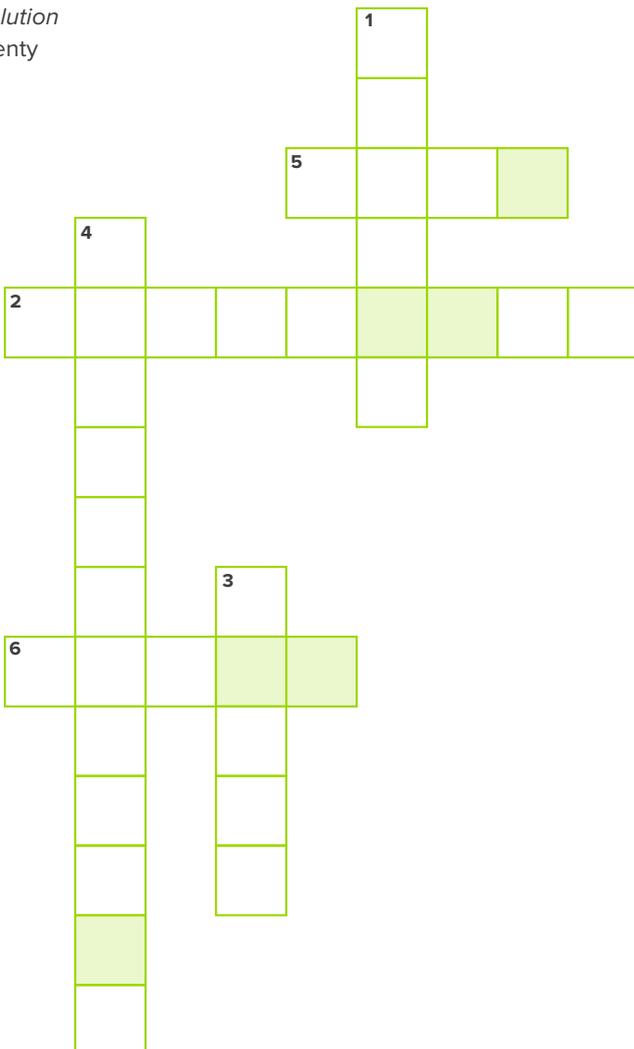
### What do you need?

- For each child
- the handout
  - a pen or pencil

### Let's start!

- 1 The people have to sit down in ... (groups)
- 2 Which people are asking Jesus to send the crowd home? (disciples)
- 3 Who does the miracle in this story? (Jesus)
- 4 How many people have eaten the loaves and the fish? (five thousand)
- 5 What brings Jesus and his disciples from one place to the next? (boat)
- 6 The disciples don't have enough ... to buy bread. (money)

Solution  
Plenty



### 13. BLESSING

In the Bible, there is a blessing for all people. It is a wish that we often hear at the end of a church service. And we say this blessing to each other:



**“May the Lord bless you and take care of you; May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.”**

### Numbers 6:24-26



### Tips

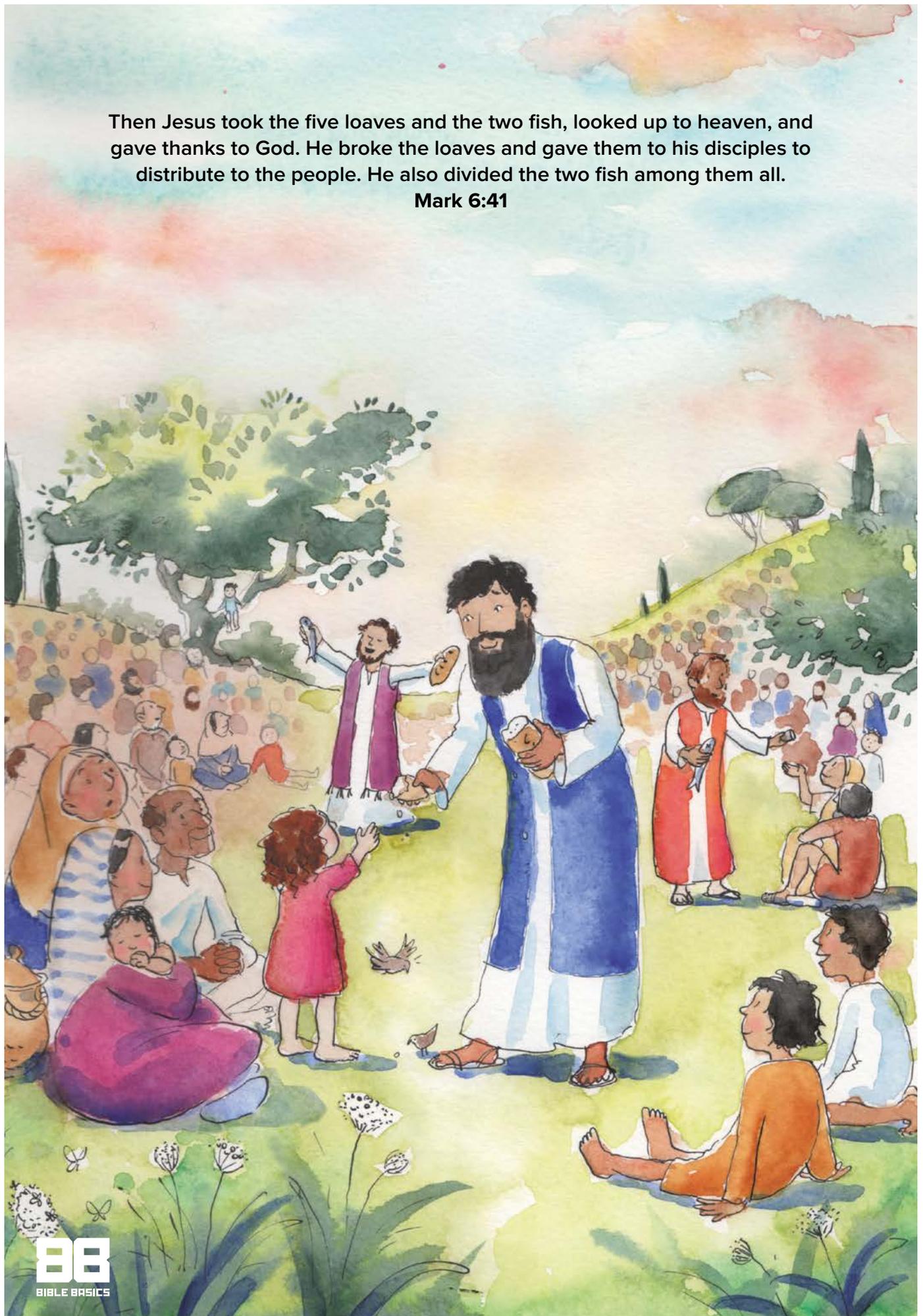
- Stand in a circle and hold hands.
- Let three children say one sentence each, or say the entire blessing together.

### COLOFON

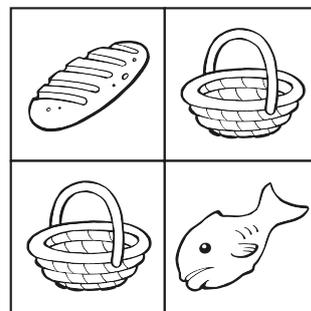
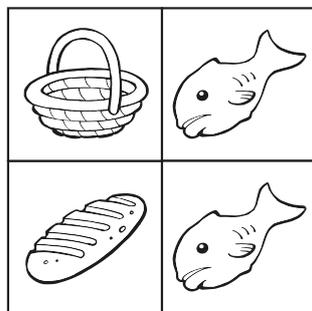
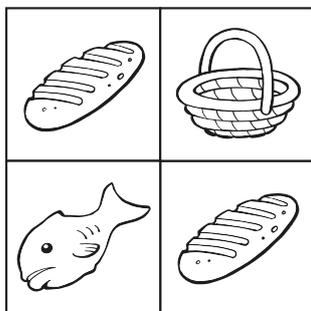
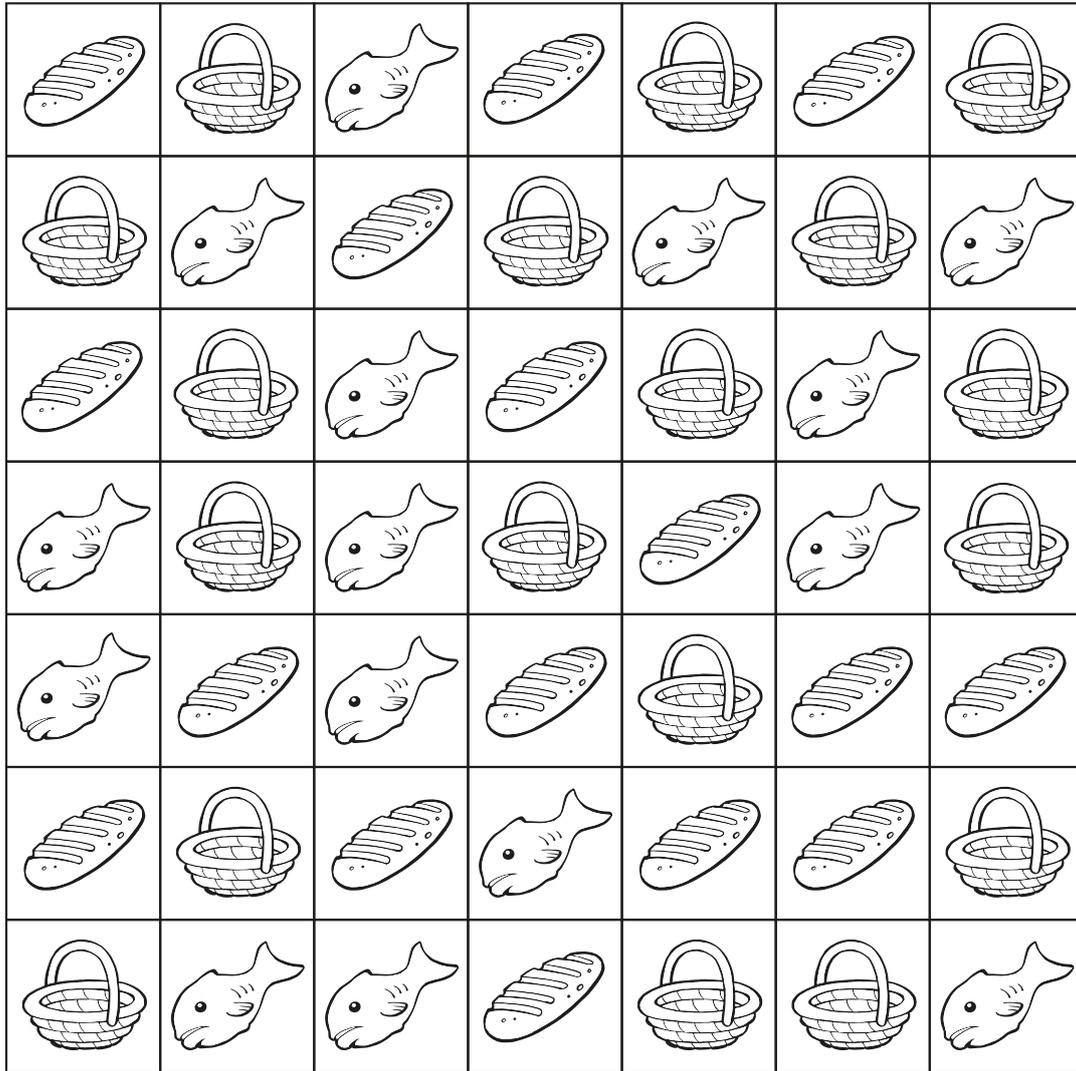
Text: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap  
 Bible passages: Good News Bible  
 Retelling Bible story: NBG/Melanie van de Peut  
 Translation: NBG/Erica Kramer  
 Illustration: NBG/Liza-Beth Valkema  
 Handout 4-8 years: NBG/Bart den Heeten  
 Design: Frivista  
 DTP: Villa Grafica

Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

**Mark 6:41**



Handout (4-8 years)  
**Five Loaves and Two Fish**



# Handout (8-12 years)

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

The disciples asked, “Do you want us to go and spend two hundred silver coins on bread in order to feed them?”

Mark 6:36

### ERASE IT

With the miracle of the bread, Jesus erases the disciples’ solution (of buying food with money). In this experiment, you can copy this.

*What do you need?*

- a sheet of white paper
- a gray pencil
- a piece of bread
- coins

Let’s start!

- Place a coin underneath the sheet of paper.
- Using a gray pencil, carefully scratch the paper where the coin is until its imprint can be seen.
- Repeat this a few times.
- Take a piece of bread and knead it into a ball.
- Rub the piece of bread over the imprint of the coin.
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- What do you see?



*Tip*

White bread works best.



### BREAD AND FISH

In Jesus’ days, bread was very important. People ate flat loaves of bread with every meal. They dipped their bread into sauces or ate cheese with them. Bread was easy to pack when they were travelling. Fish may appear less convenient for travelling. But by salting, pickling it (laying it in salty water for a while) or drying it, it lasted longer.



# Handout (8-12 years)

## Five Loaves and Two Fish

### IF YOU SHARE, THERE IS ...

What happens if you share? This puzzle helps children discover. The marked letters form the solution.



- 1 The people have to sit down in ...
- 2 Which people are asking Jesus to send the crowd home?
- 3 Who does the miracle in this story?
- 4 How many people have eaten the loaves and the fish?
- 5 What brings Jesus and his disciples from one place to the next?
- 6 The disciples don't have enough ... to buy bread.

The crossword puzzle grid consists of the following structure:

- 1**: A vertical word starting at the top right, 3 cells long.
- 2**: A horizontal word starting in the middle left, 8 cells long. The 6th and 7th cells are shaded.
- 3**: A vertical word starting in the middle right, 3 cells long.
- 4**: A vertical word starting in the middle left, 4 cells long.
- 5**: A horizontal word starting in the top right, 4 cells long. The 4th cell is shaded.
- 6**: A horizontal word starting in the middle left, 4 cells long. The 3rd and 4th cells are shaded.

Below the grid is a **SOLUTION** box consisting of 6 shaded cells.