



SMALL · PRAYERFUL · AVAILABLE · RELATIONAL · KERYGMATIC

SPARKLER 1: A Picnic with Jesus

Leaders can invite their group to a picnic or just a simple gathering. A potluck, with everyone bringing something small, would fit the topic of the session! The gathering is deliberately relaxed, with a short presentation and even songs for you to play. Our hope is that you enjoy your time together as a group, reflecting on how God abundantly feeds us.

The Discussion Questions are in blue. You can pose them within the presentation or save them until the end, depending on what your group prefers.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the opportunity to gather outdoors and celebrate the joys of your creation: the fresh air, the colorful trees, the tasty food, and our fellow companions on the journey. Bless our time together. Teach us again, this day, to accept your gifts with grateful hearts. Amen.

(If not outside: Lord God, thank you for the opportunity to gather once again to celebrate the joys of your creation: a beautiful world, a roof over our heads, tasty food, and our fellow companions on the journey. Bless our time together. Teach us again, this day, to accept your gifts with grateful hearts. Amen.)

Opening Joke: What do you call a deacon, a priest, and a bishop asking for food at a restaurant? Holy Orders! 😊

Opening Question: What is your favorite picnic food?



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WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

Presentation: We often associate a picnic with an abundance of food. Sandwiches, fried chicken, pasta salad, potato salad, watermelon, other fruits, and lots of desserts. Is anyone hungry now?

Over and over in the Bible, we hear that God will provide us with abundant food. In Exodus, we hear that when the Israelites are wandering in the desert, God sends them manna each morning.

Exodus 16:4a, 11-15: Then the LORD said to Moses: I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion. The LORD said to Moses: I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have your fill of bread, and then you will know that I, the LORD, am your God. In the evening, quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all about the camp, and when the layer of dew evaporated, fine flakes were on the surface of the wilderness, fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

This is an example of God providing for us our "daily bread."

- How does God provide the things you need daily?
- How does it make you feel when you realize God is doing this?

As we move to the New Testament, we hear in all four Gospels the story of the loaves and fishes.

Here is Matthew's version: (14: 13-21) When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." [Jesus] said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to



the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

In this reading, we see Jesus providing more than enough for the people who were there, once again feeding us abundantly. And setting the example that we should picnic with him.

- In our earlier sessions during *God Loves Me*, we examined how abundantly God loves us. Is this different from how God feeds and nourishes us?
- The reading mentions that “all ate and were satisfied.” How are we satisfied by the Lord?
- We have often heard the expression “Food is love.” Does this only consist of actual food?
- To be fed, we actually have to accept what is being offered us. Do we accept what the Lord is offering?

Later in the same chapter of John’s Gospel where he describes Jesus feeding the multitudes, Jesus preaches the Bread of Life Discourse. He describes himself, saying, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

God has now moved from providing our physical needs to also providing our spiritual ones, with love and care for us lavishly overflowing onto us. In the same way that the Woman at the Well moves from obtaining regular water to seeking the Living Water, Jesus leads us from satisfying our earthly needs with fish and loaves to sustaining us spiritually through the Eucharist.

- In your earlier discussions (either tonight or during *God Loves Me*), did you talk about how the Eucharist is a way that Jesus richly loves/feeds us?
- If not, how *does* Jesus feed you?
- Knowing that the Eucharist is Christ feeding me in a special way, do I desire to receive Eucharist more often?

But it is not only the bread that is transformed in the Eucharist. We who receive Jesus are **transformed by the presence of Jesus around us and within us**. Through this miracle, God transforms the hearts and minds of those who are open to accepting him.



- Do you have any experiences of being “transformed by the presence of Jesus around us or within us?”
- Knowing that the Eucharist transforms me, do I feel “sent out” to do God’s work? In what way?

Jesus feeds us today as we gather, whether that is for Mass and receiving his body, or in a gathering like this, where we are the Body of Christ and we find him in each other.

Discussion Questions: (These are the same questions as above.)

- How does God provide the things you need daily?
- How does it make you feel when you realize God is doing this?
- In our earlier sessions during *God Loves Me*, we examined how abundantly God loves us. Is this different from how God feeds and nourishes us?
- The Matthew reading mentions that “all ate and were satisfied.” How are we satisfied by the Lord?
- We have often heard the expression “Food is love.” Does this only consist of actual food?
- To be fed, we actually have to accept what is being offered us. Do we accept what the Lord is offering?
- In your earlier discussions (either tonight or during *God Loves Me*), did you talk about how the Eucharist is a way that Jesus richly loves/feeds us?
- If not, how *does* Eucharist feed you?
- Knowing that the Eucharist is Christ feeding me in a special way, do I desire to receive Eucharist more often?
- Do you have any experiences of being “transformed by the presence of Jesus around us or within us?”
- Knowing that the Eucharist transforms me, do I feel “sent out” to do his work? In what way?



Play song: *I am the Bread of Life*

(<https://youtu.be/Gl8y2wAMiWk>) or: (Go to Youtube.com. Search: I am the Bread of Life - Lift Our Voices Music Ministry) Reminder: There will be an ad before the video plays.

Intentions

Closing Prayer: Lord, we thank you for our time together. We praise you and ask your blessing to come upon each of us. We lift up our intentions to you, knowing that you will nourish us and care for us always. Transform us and send us out to do your will. Protect us all and help us grow in your love until we meet again. Amen.



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I am the Bread of Life (Suzanne Toolan) lyrics:

I am the bread of life
He who come to me shall not hunger
He who believes in me shall not thirst
No one can come to me
Unless the Father beckons
And I will raise you up (3)
On the last day.

The bread that I will give
Is my flesh for the life of the world
And if you eat of this bread
You shall live forever (2)
And I will raise you up (3)
On the last day.

Unless you eat
Of the flesh of the Son of Man
And drink of his blood,
And drink of his blood,
You shall not have life within you.
And I will raise you up (3)
On the last day.

I am the resurrection; I am the life
If you believe in me
Even though you die
You shall live forever.
And I will raise you up (3)
On the last day.

Yes, lord I believe
That you are the Christ
The son of God
Who has come into the world.
And I will raise you up (3)
On the last day.



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