



SESSION **1**

Bread of life



MEETING AIM

To explore what Jesus meant when he said: "I am the bread of life."



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 6:1-15;22-59



BACKGROUND

This very concrete example of Jesus providing physically for people mirrors the abstract idea that Jesus also provides spiritually. Children of this age will struggle with this abstract concept, but it will be enough to lay the foundations for future engagement with this story, as well as wondering together about the Jesus who can multiply food!

+ CIRCLE TIME



As the children arrive, sit them in a circle. Ask them what their best meal has been this week. You may need to make suggestions. What made it the best meal? What was the occasion? And the location? Was it their favourite food? Did something happen to make it special? Did anyone eat outside? Say that today's Bible story is about a giant picnic.

+ INTRO ACTIVITY



You will need: a 'loaf' of playdough (many recipes available on the internet)

Divide the playdough into balls, one for each child. Ask them to mould their balls into a variety of shapes, for example a favourite food or animal, a smile, a hand, and finally a bread roll. Discuss how many shapes and types of bread there are. Bread is one of the most basic things we eat.

Say that Jesus was with a crowd of people. He made it truly special by giving everyone some bread and fish when they were hungry. They would never forget that.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: a lunchbox; five small bread rolls; two tins of tuna; scarf

Ask an adult to play the role of Jesus and give them the scarf to wear. The children are the 'crowd' with Jesus sitting with them. Give a child at the back of the crowd a lunchbox containing five small bread rolls and two tins of tuna. The child should hide the lunchbox behind them. Tell this story:

Imagine having a picnic outside. Everyone has had a long walk to get to the picnic spot. Imagine you've got sore feet, but you're sitting down now. What's more, Jesus is in the crowd and you've come to hear him tell some of his great stories. You're really excited about this.

The adult being Jesus moves to the front of the crowd, so everyone can see them. Jesus starts talking and telling stories. Everyone listens. *Jesus mimes talking.*

As the afternoon passes, your tummy begins to rumble. You could do with something to eat. But there's one problem: you were in such a hurry to listen to Jesus that you forgot to bring any food. Maybe someone will share their picnic with you? *Get the children to look around.* Has anyone brought any food? No! What are we going to do?

Jesus notices the crowd is getting restless. *Jesus asks what the matter is. The children say they're getting really hungry. He encourages the child with the lunchbox to come forward. Jesus unpacks the box and shows the children what's inside. He takes one bread roll in each hand, raises them and thanks God.*

Jesus then tells his friends to share the bread and fish with everyone. They give bread and fish to everyone. How many are in the crowd today? The crowd with Jesus on that day was many times bigger, needing at least a school playground for everyone to sit down. Amazingly, from just these five bread rolls and two fish there was enough food for everyone and some leftover. It was a miracle. Only Jesus knew how that could happen. Hurray for Jesus! *Everyone cheers.*

The crowd went home and told their mums, dads, grandmas, cousins and friends. Soon, everyone in the countryside heard what had happened. *Let the children get up and go to different corners of the room and act out telling others.*

The next day another crowd gathered round Jesus. *Move to another part of the room and sit the children down.* This crowd wants Jesus to do another miracle. *Encourage the children to shout: "Come on, Jesus! Do something else."*

Jesus reminds them that many, many years before this, God had done something extraordinary for his people. God's people were wandering around

in the desert without any food. Then, every morning when they woke up, they discovered meat and bread lying on the ground. They stopped being hungry. It was a miracle!

Jesus reminds the crowd that he'd done something just like that yesterday when he gave them the bread and fish. Jesus could do that because he was God. Then he says something amazing. "I am the bread of life. If you come to me, you will never be hungry."

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

- What is it like to be hungry?
- What did Jesus mean when he said: "I am the bread of life"? Did he mean he could bake enough bread to keep on feeding people for ever and ever?
- Jesus meant another sort of hunger. What might that be? (If necessary, explain that if we really, really want to have Jesus as a friend, it's like being hungry. Jesus says he will be our friend if we ask him, and that means we won't have to be hungry for God. He's with us all the time.)

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: white bread; milk; two small bowls; food colouring; clean paintbrushes; a toaster or oven

Give each child a slice of white bread. Pour enough milk into two small bowls so that it just covers the bottom, then add some food colouring. Each child can paint something that reminds them what they've thought about today. Use clean paintbrushes and 'paint' the bread sparingly with the milk. Toast the slices for each child to eat their slice. (Remind them this is not paint, but milk and food colouring!) By eating the toast, it's as though what they have discovered through today's story has become part of themselves.

+ PRAYER



After you have eaten, sing a thank-you song, or say a known grace used at a local school. You could write out some short prayers thanking Jesus for food and drink, for his care, for Jesus himself and for hungry people. Children can select their favourites to take away.