



## TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL SESSION 5

### 1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the Session 5 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 5
- his or her own Bible, a pen, and a notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- a pack of colored pencils (at least three colors per student)
- masking tape or duct tape
- two picnic baskets or paper grocery bags, 10 small loaves of bread, four cans of tuna fish, two tablecloths, eight paper plates, eight sets of plastic utensils/silverware, and eight plastic cups/glasses (Check to see if the cans of tuna fish need a can opener.)
- one 3-by-5-inch card for each student
- optional: grape juice, bread, small cups, and a basket or plate for communion (See the Optional Close in Wrapping It Up.)

### 2. Session Intro

#### GOALS OF SESSION 5

As students experience this session, they will—

- examine the expectations and commitments of those who followed Jesus after seeing his miraculous signs.
- compare their level of commitment to both the crowd's casual commitment and the apostles' genuine commitment.
- be challenged to imitate the apostles' commitment.

#### PRAYER

After your group has gathered, pray that your students will be open to a disruption in their lives. Pray they will be called out of their spiritual and emotional comfort zones and that they'll welcome this call.

#### OPEN

*Loaves and Fishes Picnic Relay*

Before the session, pack two picnic baskets or paper grocery bags so that each contains the following items: five small loaves of bread, two cans of tuna fish (or if you're brave, two fresh fish from the market), one tablecloth (to use as a picnic blanket), four paper plates, four sets of plastic utensils/silverware, and four plastic cups/glasses.

With masking tape or duct tape, designate a starting and a finish line on opposite sides of the room. Divide your students into two teams. Then have each team divide in half, sending half of each team to the far side of the room (behind the finish line), while the other half of each team lines up behind the starting line.

When you say, “Go!” the first person on each team at the starting line takes a picnic basket and runs to the finish line, where he or she uses every item in the bag to set up a picnic of loaves and fishes. Once he or she has set up all the items, the first person tags the next teammate behind the finish line, who then packs the items back up and runs to the starting line. He or she hands off the basket to the next person behind the starting line. This continues until all the members of one team have unpacked or packed the basket. This team is declared the winner.

When the game is over, ask—

**How many people could you realistically feed with this picnic of bread and fish?**

**How many do you think Jesus fed with just five loaves and two fish?**

**Have you ever been in a crowd that size? (Or, what’s the biggest crowd you’ve ever been in?)**

**Did you worry about your safety in that size of a crowd?**

*Make the turn toward Bible study by encouraging students to weigh in on the positive and negative impact crowds and crowd manipulation can have on thought, politics, and culture.*

Transition into the study by saying something like—






**It didn’t take long for Jesus to start attracting massive crowds. They followed him everywhere. In John 6 we hit a major moment in Jesus’ ministry when he had an opportunity to greatly influence a crowd that followed him.**

### 3. Digging In

*What I Saw at the Miracle Meal*

Share that in this session, the group will focus on Jesus’ convicting teaching near the end of John 6. But to gain a better understanding of this teaching, they’ll need to see the event that preceded it. Because it’s a familiar scene to some, remind them to watch for details they’ve never noticed before.

As students read John 6:1-15 from their Scripture sheets, have them—

1. Use three colors to mark the various people in this passage: the crowd    , Jesus’ disciples  , and Jesus .

2. Key in on words such as *saw* and *realized* and draw a pair of eyes or glasses  over what the crowd saw.

When most have finished (it’s okay if some haven’t), work as a group to pull as much detail as possible from the passage. As they discuss the following questions, record their observations on the whiteboard.

**Look over your sets of “eyes” in John 6:1-15. What did the crowd see? How did they react to what they saw?**

What They Saw	How They Reacted
-They saw miraculous signs Jesus performed on the sick (v. 2). -They saw the miraculous sign of feeding the 5,000 (v. 14).	-They followed Jesus around (v. 2). -They began to say Jesus was a prophet who had come into the world (v. 14).

Have them look at John 6:24-31, where the crowd rejoins Jesus after the miraculous meal. Ask—

**How did Jesus describe what they were looking for?**

*You're not looking for a sign; you're wanting more food (v. 26)!*

**In what two ways did Jesus challenge the crowd?**

*-Don't work for food that spoils; work for food that endures to eternal life (v. 7).*

*-The work of God is to believe in the one he has sent (v. 29).*

Explain that at this point, Jesus told the crowd a few things God's people had never heard before. Before moving on, make sure the students understand the way Jesus' audience was thinking. Have someone read John 6:14-15 and 28-31 aloud. Then discuss—

**How would you describe what the crowd was thinking?**

*-They were sure Jesus was the prophet for whom they were looking.*

*-They were expecting to make him king, to establish a political kingdom.*

*-They were looking for signs similar to what Moses had done.*

**4. Digging Deeper**



*Crowd-Pleaser?*

Share with the group that they'll do the next exercise alone with God. Before they go, give these instructions—

- 1. Find places of solitude—maybe a corner of the room, a hallway, or an empty room nearby.**
- 2. You'll need your Scripture sheets, journal pages, and colored pencils.**
- 3. For the next few minutes, you'll be doing the Digging Deeper exercise on your journal pages as a personal retreat. Get alone with God and experience on your own Jesus' life-shaking words.**

Students will read John 6:30-58, looking for key things Jesus said about himself and those who "come to" or "believe in" him. We've listed some possible observations for your reference below.

**Jesus on Jesus**

*-He's the bread of life (v. 35).*

*-He came down from heaven to do the will of God, who sent him (v. 38).*

*-He is the living bread that came down from heaven (v. 51).*

*-He gives this bread for the life of the world (v. 51).*

*-His flesh is real food (v. 55).*

*-His blood is real drink (v. 55).*

**Jesus on Those Who Come to Him**

*-They'll never go hungry or get thirsty (v. 35).*

*-Jesus will never drive them away (v. 37).*

*-They'll have eternal life (v. 40).*

*-Jesus will raise them up on the last day (v. 40).*

*-The Father draws them to Jesus (v. 44).*

## 5. Taking It Inward

### *Crowd Comparison*

When most have finished the exercise, call the group back together. You may want to discuss a few of the Digging Deeper questions before delving into these:

#### **Who do you think you're more like—the crowd or the Twelve?**

*If they're unsure, ask them to consider what they tend to think about more: what they'd have to give up to follow Jesus, or what they might gain by following him. Consider asking these follow-up questions to push students to think through this answer:*

*-Which of Jesus' teachings do you find most difficult to live out during your normal day?*

*-What could Jesus have said to make it easier to live the Christian faith?*

*-What part of the Christian faith have you put off with the thought, I'll do that when I'm older?*

#### **The multitude was in the middle of a big miracle, but they couldn't see past their own desires—such as food, easy teaching that was fun to hear, or their personal expectations of Jesus. Are we ever guilty of the same thing? In what ways?**

*You could ask the group what they typically pray for. This will give a clue as to their expectations of Jesus.*

#### **The crowd had a definite expectation of Jesus—they wanted to squeeze him into their mold. In what ways do we do that today?**

*-We lock in a childhood picture of Jesus and never update it by getting to know Jesus, spending time with Jesus.*

*-We expect Jesus to move in our lives the same ways today (or in the future) as he has in the past.*

#### **Following Jesus today goes against popular culture, just as it did in Jesus' day. Every day, we're confronted with the same question Jesus asked the apostles: "Do you want to leave, too?" What are some ways we get asked that question?**

*Look for situations such as when we're tempted to sin, when it seems like not being a Christian would be easier, or when friends make us feel stupid about believing in God.*

#### **How can Peter's answer help in times like these?**

#### **Many so-called "disciples" turned away from following Jesus when his words began to disrupt their lives. How has Jesus' presence disrupted your life—and how have you handled it?**

## 6. Cross-Checking

### *Interrupting the Regularly Scheduled Programming*

After several students have shared, have a volunteer read Matthew 7:13-14 aloud. Ask the group to listen to the kind of commitment Jesus demanded in these verses. After the volunteer has read the passage, ask students to describe the level of commitment in their own words.


## 7. Wrapping It Up

### *Broad Versus Narrow*

Remind the group that the kind of disruption Jesus is calling for here isn't necessarily a commitment to serve as a missionary in a foreign country. The disruption he's asking for is a new level of intimacy—"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains [abides] in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Share with your students again the two possible levels of relationship with Jesus, as well as the consequences. You may want to write these on the whiteboard:

1. **"Broad Gate" Relationship—the crowd's mentality; it doesn't stand up to the test of eternity.**

2. **"Narrow Gate" Relationship—the intimacy of Jesus' apostles; it leads to eternal life.**

Before closing in prayer, read Matthew 7:13-14 again. Hand each student a 3-by-5-inch card, and ask them to draw a simple gate  on their cards. Have them write, "Enter through the narrow gate," on the back of their cards to take home as a reminder that Jesus wants a very intimate relationship with each of them.

**OPTIONAL CLOSE:** Jesus' words in John 6 dovetail nicely with communion. Consider preparing ahead of time an area nearby for your group to receive the Lord's Supper together. This can be a time for students to think about their level of commitment to experiencing intimacy with Jesus. We also suggest communion in Session 11 as a way to experience Jesus' sacrifice.