

The feeding of the 5000 is such an important miracle that it is the only one recorded in all four Gospels. When you look at all the details given by all four of them, you will have a better understanding of what happened, but can you spot the ONLY word Jesus doesn't understand?

Jesus has recently heard about the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. His human part probably just wants to be alone with His earthly grief, which explains why he went by boat to other side of the lake. However, the crowd followed Him around the lake gathering up more people as they walked. His response is not one of irritation or of self-pity but of compassion. He had just started his ministry and He knew that they were looking to Him for help and support. So, He fed their spiritual needs with seven parables and nurtured their physical needs by healing the sick and feeding them. He cares about every aspect of our lives.

When Jesus is asked to "Send the people away" He tells his disciples to do the seemingly impossible, "**You** give them something to eat". In John's version we are told that Jesus is testing their faith. The disciples thought the problem was a lack of food, but Jesus saw the bigger problem which was a lack of faith. If God asks us to do the seemingly impossible, He is doing it to test our faith. It is as if God is saying, "Do you trust me?" Your answer is not for His information; it is to show **you** how much faith you really have; it is not to shame you, but to strengthen you. In James 1:2-3 we read: "you will face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy. ³Your faith will be tested. You know that when this happens it will produce in you the strength to continue."

When you do have a problem there are three different approaches you can take. Some people are led by 'feelings' addressing problems with their emotions: using phrases like "I just feel that..." That's a pretty scary way to make decisions because your feelings can be misleading or at least inconsistent over time. Others are led by 'figuring', solving problems with their analytical minds. They use phrases like, "I think...". In John's gospel, Phillip thinks he has it all worked out "Let's see, 5,000 people (oh times 3 if you include women and children) at 2 shekels a meal, divided by a month's wages..." and says "Lord, half a year's wages would not be enough". But God's maths is different. When we distribute food, we divide it, but when Jesus does it, He multiplies it! Human maths, "Five loaves and two fish divided by 15,000 = IMPOSSIBLE. God's maths, "Five loaves and two fish all times the power of God = 15,000 full stomachs remainder 12 baskets.

There are 'feelers' and 'figurers' but the third way to resolve a problem is to be led by 'faith'. You can recognize them a smile away because they say things like: "I believe that God can..." There was at least one 'faith' person in the crowd that day. The little boy who offered his five loaves and two fish. He didn't know what would happen; he just decided to trust Jesus with his food. That is what faith is. You do not know exactly what will happen, but you trust God. I would have liked to have seen the look on the little boy's face as he watched Jesus supersize his happy meal! The disciples said, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish." Jesus said, "Bring them here to me." Their 'only' was enough for Jesus to make plenty."

So, the only word Jesus doesn't understand is... ONLY!!!...The disciples said, "We have here ONLY five loaves and two fish." Jesus didn't even consider the word 'only'...The disciples were led by feelings and figures, thinking in human terms for a logical way to meet the crowd's hunger, they were not thinking of their 'faith'; they did not consider the possibility of a MIRACLE from GOD which would meet the needs of everyone!"

Jesus multiplied 'only' that tiny meal until everyone was fed. It is yet another example of God's nature to always provide more than enough. One of my favourite Bible promises is Ephesians 3:20, "God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by His power that is working in us".

You may be thinking, "I only have so little to give. Jesus says, "It is enough, bring it to me!" God has been performing miracles with 'only's' for centuries. Adam was *only* a pile of clay. David was *only* a shepherd boy with *only* a slingshot. Mary was *only* an unwed teenage mother. They said that Jesus was *only* a carpenter's son.

God is asking us the same thing today. What's that in your life? You say, "It's 'only' my job." God says, "Lay it down before me.". "It's 'only' my meagre abilities." "Only? I don't understand that word. Lay it down before me." So, it's not what you have, but what God's power can do with it. Jesus did four simple things when He received the little boy's food. He looked to heaven, He gave thanks, He broke the bread, and then He distributed the food. If you want your 'only' to be transformed through God's power, you can do the same four things. Turn your heart to God, give thanks to God, accept your brokenness and look after others before yourself. Isaiah wrote that God said, "My powerful arm will make everything right among the nations". Your 'only' **can** make a big difference. Amen.