**PREPARATION**

> Spend the week studying Luke 9:10-17. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

> Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.

> Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.

> Focus on the Main Point. Jesus multiplied five bread loaves and two fish to feed thousands after the disciples doubted that such provision could ever be attained. God's financial model doesn't make human sense, but the kingdom is an alternate reality in which trusting God with what you have and walking in obedience always ends up with you having more than enough for your needs. Christ calls us to learn to live by the economics of the kingdom of God and not by the math of the world.

**INTRODUCTION**

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

**What is the most generous gift you have ever received? How did it make you feel?**

**Americans are some of the wealthiest people in the world, but do you think Americans are generous with their wealth? Why or why not?**

**What excuses do people sometimes make for not being more generous with their resources (time, money, and energy) toward others? What excuses have you made?**

The disciples were tired and everyone who had followed Jesus to Bethsaida was hungry. They couldn't see a way to provide for the 5,000 people who had gathered to hear Jesus teach because they were focused on what they didn't have. If we hope to live generously toward others and honor God with our money, our thinking about what God can do with our meager resources needs to shift.

**LEARN**

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:10-12.
How do you think the disciples felt when the crowd showed up? What’s the difference between Jesus’ response and the disciples’? What does each response reveal about their character?

What obvious solution to the dilemma of hunger did the disciples miss? What did their proposed solution show about their level of understanding of who Jesus was?

What circumstances today tempt us to place limits on what Jesus can do in our lives?

Jesus had spent the day teaching the multitude, and mealtime was approaching. The disciples demonstrated their practical side when they insisted that Jesus send the hungry crowd away. The verb send is an imperative, indicating they ordered Jesus to dismiss the crowd instead of suggesting that He do so. However, Jesus turned the tables on their thinking.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:13-17

Ironically, the disciples had just returned from a mission where they practiced divine power, given to them by Jesus, to meet people’s needs (Lk. 9:1-6). Now they seemed oblivious to the possibility that He could provide food where little or none existed. When faced with the crowd, a supernatural solution never crossed their minds. Jesus, however, thrives on doing the impossible when it serves the higher purpose of glorifying God.

Why do you think Jesus told the disciples to give the people something to eat? How was Jesus challenging them to shift their expectations and understanding of His kingdom?

How can we join Jesus and serve others like the disciples did by distributing food? Think beyond food pantries and food kitchens. In what other areas can we serve?

How did the miracle of feeding over 5,000 people demonstrate that Jesus cared about every individual in the crowd?

How can we take seriously Jesus’ concern for others and reach more people in His name? In what ways is Pinelake already doing this?

With the attention of the disciples on the seemingly impossible challenge, Jesus shifted their thinking by showing them that He had the power to provide. As fast as the disciples lined up to receive food, Jesus doled it out, serving group after group. This helped them come to grips with their lack of faith that was holding them back.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Paul wrote the church at Corinth to encourage them to be generous in giving to the Christians in Jerusalem who were living in extreme poverty due to the persecution that had broken out there. Paul makes clear that God wants us to use our resources to honor Him. When we consider how we might glorify God with our money, we will be generous, not out of obligation, but out of joy.
How does the principle of sowing and reaping in verse 6 contradict our culture’s view of money? How might your view of money need to shift to be more in line with Jesus’ kingdom priorities?

What does it mean to give “under compulsion” (v. 7)? Have you ever done this?

If we hope to make a practice of living generously, why is it important to shift our motives for giving?

What does the gospel tell us about God’s generosity toward us? How does that free us to be generous?

God freely gave up his only Son on the cross for our sins. This was not something that we deserved. If God gave us what our sins deserve, He would send us to eternal punishment. Furthermore, we will never repay God for this gift. When we see how generous God has been toward us through the sacrifice of His Son, we will not be able to help but shift our thinking about our money and resources. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate picture of generosity and it should motivate us to give to those who cannot repay us. Doing so is a tremendous means of pointing people to Christ.

When does God bless us with material things, how does He expect us to respond (vv. 11-13)? Why do you think God blesses us with material things?

Paul says that God would enrich the Corinthians in every way so that they might “be generous in every way” (v. 11). When we live this way, those to whom we are generous will give thanks to God. Paul says that people will see that our generosity flows from our confession of the gospel (v. 13) and will glorify God because of it. When we give, our motive must be to glorify God. If we have any other motive, our generosity will be short lived and will not point others to Christ. As we seek to live more generously, let us remember that “God is able to make all grace abound” to us so that we may “abound in every good work” (v. 8).

LIVE

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives. Create some talking points for the group by looking at the practical implications of the lesson. Get group members to talk about the real life implications of the passage. Look at what can be applied specifically to Pinelake.

Luke pointed out that everyone ate and was filled (Lk. 9:17). Jesus provided more than a snack—everyone there had all they needed to satisfy their hunger. After the crowd ate their fill, the disciples gathered the uneaten food, which filled 12 baskets of leftovers. This emphasized the adequacy of Jesus to generously provide.

What does this story reveal about Christ’s provision for our needs? What does it reveal about the means Christ will use to meet those needs?

How do we misunderstand Jesus’ power with attitudes of “it’s not possible” and “here’s a little something but it won’t make much difference”? How does our thinking on God’s provision and
generosity need to shift?

Since little becomes much when placed in Christ’s hands, what is our responsibility?

**LEAD**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage impact the way that you lead at Pinelake and interact with people outside of Pinelake.

How can we place our loaves and fish in Christ’s hands? In other words, how can we be generous with what Jesus has provided for us?

How might we see our impossible situations as Christ’s effective strategy to teach us and grow our faith?

How might a group project to meet people’s physical needs increase our Christian sensitivity and fellowship?

**PRAY**

Praise God for giving so generously to meet our needs. Thank Him for showing us what generosity looks like by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Pray that we would trust God’s provision and live lives of generosity toward others, not because we feel like we have to, but because we want to glorify God with all we have.

**FOLLOW UP**

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - How can you get involved in meeting the needs of those around you? Refuse to be stopped by the size of the need; do something to help and trust God to provide.
  - In what ways would Christ be pleased and honored by your commitment to meeting the needs of others? In what areas may you need to shift in your thinking?

- The challenge to memorize 2 Corinthians 9:7-8.
Jesus and His disciples had retired to a town called Bethsaida. This fishing village was situated at the north end of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan River. Capernaum, the city that served as an unofficial base for Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, lay nearby on the western side of the river. Peace and quiet eluded Jesus and the apostles. The adoring crowds found out their location and followed. Jesus welcomed them.

Consistency dominated Jesus’ approach to ministry. He related to this multitude as He did in other situations. Jesus taught them about the kingdom of God. He explained the need for God to be enthroned in human hearts. Like any good teacher, Jesus repeated this message often in hopes of it hitting home with His hearers.

This encounter lasted until late in the day. Day’s end meant the approach of mealtime. The disciples demonstrated their practical side when they insisted that Jesus send the crowd away. The verb “send” is an imperative, suggesting that the apostles ordered Jesus to dismiss the crowd instead of suggesting that He do so. He had spent the day teaching and meeting the needs of the multitude. The disciples, however, never considered His ability to address the pressing need for food.

The disciples suggested that Jesus send the people into more populated areas nearby to find food and lodging. The Twelve felt the crowd ought to take care of their own hunger. Being in a deserted place meant there would be little to no possibility of the crowd’s finding hospitality from residents.

Ironically, the disciples had recently returned from a mission in which they practiced supernatural power bestowed on them by Jesus to meet people’s needs. Now they seemed oblivious to the possibility of His ability to provide food where none existed. Give the Twelve some credit, however. They did notice the hungry and called Jesus’ attention to them.

Jesus turned the tables on the apostles when they wanted Him to send the hungry away. Jesus identified a disconnect in the disciples. They had met the needs of people on their recent training mission. When faced with the crowd, however, a supernatural solution never crossed their minds. Jesus, however, refused to dismiss the people so quickly. That’s why He suggested the disciples do something themselves.

The Twelve, however, failed to “get it.” Their minds considered only the logical solution of food they had on hand. Five thin pieces of bread and two small fish would not go far. Furthermore, they possessed insufficient resources to go and buy food for such a crowd.

The estimate of 5,000 men in the crowd overwhelmed the disciples. This number probably did not include the women and children also on site. The situation represented an insurmountable task. Jesus, however, thrived on doing the impossible when it served the higher purpose of glorifying God. Jesus instructed the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of about 50 each. Organization of the large crowd into more manageable-sized groups allowed for an orderly distribution of food.

The disciples followed Jesus’ instruction and had the people sit down. In this position the people might receive and consume the food more comfortably. Jesus took the bread and fish after the disciples organized and seated the crowd. He availed Himself of the resources at hand. As He did later at the Lord’s Supper before His death, Jesus filled the role of Host at the meal.

Jesus began by looking up to heaven. He sought God’s approval and expressed gratitude to the Heavenly Father for the food as He blessed it in prayer. This prayer of thanks followed typical Jewish tradition at a meal. Then Jesus started the distribution. He kept giving food to the disciples to set before those in the groups. That Jesus kept giving indicates a repetitive activity. As fast as the disciples lined up to receive food, Jesus doled it out. They
served group after group.

Take note of how Jesus involved the disciples in this ministry. This helped them come to grips with their lack of faith that prohibited them from providing food. Jesus showed them how to feed the people. It gave the disciples a chance to get practical experience in meeting needs.

Luke pointed out that everyone ate and was filled. No one in the crowd went hungry. Jesus provided more than a snack. Everyone there had all they needed to satisfy their hunger. After the crowd ate their fill, the disciples gathered the uneaten food. They collected 12 baskets of leftover pieces. The Greek word rendered “baskets” denotes a large container often used by soldiers to carry their provisions on a mission. The leftovers, then, amounted to a significant quantity of food. This emphasized the adequacy of Jesus to provide more than enough.

Did the crowd know the origin of the food? We can only speculate. Possibly the crowd only partook of the result of the miracle. For certain, however, the apostles were aware of the supernatural nature of the feeding. This makes sense. At this point in His ministry, Jesus was directing more explicit instructions to His disciples about His true role. They had expressed a lack of faith, not the whole crowd. So Jesus used this miracle of multiplication to bolster the apostles' faith deficiency.