# Jesus met 5000 Guests

#  John 6:1-15 #118

Jesus had been teaching that He came from God who was His Father. The Jewish leaders would not believe Him. They claimed to be true to Moses, their great ancestor. But Jesus said that even Moses would accuse them. The conflict became heated.

So, Jesus took His 12 disciples, left that place, and went to the far shore of the sea of Galilee into Gentile territory. He took them all up a hill and taught them some things – but the lesson they remembered was what happened next.

It was the season of the year to remember the defining event of the people of Israel – Passover. About 1500 years before, when their ancestors were slaves in Egypt, there arose among them a great leader called Moses. He met God personally and was on first name terms with Him – His name, “I am”. By the power of God Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt and into a desert where they camped for 40 long years. There God supplied them with food and water from nowhere until they entered their promised land of Israel. Every year since then they celebrated these events at Passover. The Israelites of Jesus’ day all knew that story well. But they were having trouble figuring out where Jesus fitted into the picture of God at work among them. A few more pieces of this puzzle were about to fit into place.

The disciples were sitting around enjoying Jesus’ company in a deserted place. They looked up to the sight of a great crowd of people coming towards them. These people had walked right around the lake. They had been so impressed by Jesus’ miracles that they had begun to believe that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. Could He be their king. They had missed the connection with Moses. The disciples and the crowd are all about to get a good lesson. The stage is set – out in the desert.

Seeing this great crowd the hearts of the 12 disciples sink. They are meant to be taking a break. But Jesus welcomes the crowd. And they keep coming. The disciples want to get away from people. Jesus sees an opportunity. There is a problem. The people are hungry and tired after a long walk around the lake. It is now meal time. They are in the middle of a desert. They have become guests. All of them. They might be uninvited guests but Jews take the duty of hospitality very seriously. What are they going to do? Jesus makes it the disciples' problem. He says to Philip, **“Philip, where shall we buy food for these people to eat?”**

Philip feels stupid. There are no shops and no food anywhere. It is a test to see what he is thinking**. “Eight months wages would not buy enough food for each one to have a bite,”** he said.

He does the maths, and it doesn’t work.

There are no shops out here anyway.

Even if there were, shops don’t stock this much food.

Even if they did, it would be too heavy to carry.

The disciples stand there. Jesus is staring at them. They look at each other. ‘We are stuck in the middle of a hospitality crisis.’

Andrew finds a little boy with a packed lunch – five small barley loaves and two small fish. How embarrassing taking a kid’s lunch to solve their problem. Shrugging his shoulders, He breaks the awkward silence. **“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish”.**

Small is the word. They are all feeling very small. Jesus is still looking at them, testing them, allowing them to feel totally inadequate, before He does what He has planned to do all along.

“OK Jesus, you’ve made your point – it’s our job but we can’t cope.” They are finally in the very place Jesus wanted them; feeling inadequate and looking to Him for a solution. This is the same lesson they have been getting right through their training. It is their job to help people but they must look to Jesus and trust Him and draw on His resources because their own abilities are completely inadequate.

**“Have the people sit down”,** Jesus tells them. So, they scatter in 12 directions telling all the people to sit down – all 5,000 men plus women and children. Philip brings the boy with his lunch and he gladly gives it away. Jesus takes it in His hands, lifts His eyes, and gives thanks to God. Then He begins to distribute food – small loaves and small fish – the same as in the boy’s lunch.

Men from each group come forward. There must have been 100 groups, with 50 men in each. Five to ten men from each group come forward and collect enough for themselves and women and children. They each come right up to Jesus – where they each find plenty of food. Laden with bread and fish they take it back to their families along with their report. “You won’t believe this – but there is plenty of food, all coming from the hands of Jesus.”

“Where did He get it from?” they all ask.

“Don’t know. But take some – it’s fresh, it’s delicious. There’s plenty”.

“Where is Jesus getting this food from?”

It is Passover season. The story of Passover is on peoples' minds. All their ancestors were out in the desert where God fed them manna and quail every day. Here they are in a deserted place and Jesus is feeding them, all of them. Some of them begin to see a connection here.

“Jesus did claim that God was His Father.”

“It was God who provided our ancestors with food in the desert.”

“Was Jesus the one behind the food our ancestors ate in the desert?”

 Everyone is totally impressed.

The after-dinner discussion is on one theme. Who is Jesus? The disciples know that because after everyone had enough to eat, Jesus said to His disciples, **“Gather the pieces that are left over”.** So, they each took a basket, went to each group and over-heard the discussions - about Jesus. Some of them were getting the Moses connection. Large crowd; out in the desert; heaps of food; from nowhere.

“Well it must have come from somewhere.” The men who brought the food back were trying to convince their group, “It came right from the hands of Jesus”.

“Really?” More and more of the crowd begin to make the link.

“The very festival we are here to celebrate is happening for real once again, right here among us – Passover food from God.”

“You don’t mean Jesus claims to be God?”

“Was He the great leader Moses used to talk to?”

Some were heard quoting what Moses had written from their own scriptures.

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (Moses) from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Others agreed,

“Yes, this Jesus must be the One Moses was talking about. Food in the desert makes the connection!”

Most of them were expecting the appearance of a great prophet who would be like another standout leader of theirs, David, who was a great warrior.

But they had overlooked the other writings about Messiah being humble and suffering.

The disciples returned to Jesus after picking up the left-over pieces and each put his basket down. They are totally amazed. Not that there is so much left over, but so little. They look at each other with this sinking feeling. Jesus has provided, from his own hands, exactly enough for 5,000 men and their families to have their fill. Then, His 12 disciples have picked up the leftovers. There is just enough for each of them. No more and no less. That makes Jesus the host, this crowd are His guests and we disciples are their servants eating the scraps after the guests have eaten and after we have cleaned up. The disciples had believed that Jesus was training them to be leaders! But here they are having just obeyed orders to do the job of servants. Common workers!

As this new thought was sinking in, and they were picking up the scraps of food, the crowd was getting louder. If this carries on, they will soon be putting the pressure on Jesus to become King of Israel. Jesus knows what they are thinking and He leaves fast. He doesn’t look back. He goes up a mountain by Himself. That leaves the 12 disciples to face the crowd who have questions. They want answers.

“We don’t know the answers”.

“We don’t know where He got the food from”.

“No, He’s not going to be King, at least not today”.

“No, we don’t know where He has gone”.

“We are just as confused as you”.

By evening the crowd have gone away. The disciples go down by the lake. There is no sign of Jesus. So, they get into a boat and push off.

**Jesus met 5000 guests** “Get real” questions

1.

1. Who did Jesus tell to give food to the crowd?
2. What festival was soon to be celebrated?
3. What was a strong value in Jewish culture?
4. What had their ancestors eaten in the desert?
5. Whose food did Jesus take and give thanks to God for?
6. Where did all the food for the crowd come from?
7. Who had predicted a great leader would arise among them?
8. What was the title given to this great leader?
9. What role was Jesus training his disciples for?
10. Who had supplied all their food in the desert?

Boy God Hospitality Jesus Mana

Moses Messiah Passover Philip Servants

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|  | **Questions of the story** | **Personal questions** |
| 2. | What was their financial problem? | What is your financial problem? |
| 3. | What solutions did they consider? | What solutions have you considered? |
| 4. | What was wrong with their solutions? | What is wrong with your solutions? |
| 5. | What prevented them from trusting Jesus? | What prevents you from trusting Jesus? |
| 6.  | What did they experience about Jesus’ ability to meet this need? | What do you believe about Jesus’ ability to meet your need? |
| 7. | What tasks did Jesus appoint them to do? | What has Jesus appointed you to do? |
| 8.  | What surprising role did Jesus have for them? | What role does Jesus have for you? |
| 9. | What did they learn about “Who is Jesus”? | What do you believe about “Who is Jesus”? |
| 10 | What did they come to believe Jesus could do for them? | What do you believe Jesus can do for you? |

1. Deuteronomy 18:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)