

The Right Equation: A Look into John 6:5-12

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Mathematical problems are solved when the missing factors are known: example $1+1= \underline{\quad}$ or $1+\underline{\quad}= 2$. In either case, we have the solution to this problem. Our certainty as to the correctness of the missing digits is strengthened by the knowledge of what is needed to make the outcome correct. Having worked such problems in the past, we are practiced at solving them. While solving mathematical problems by discovering missing numbers might be easy, what can we say of real human issues which are far beyond our ability to solve? Mathematical problems need a WHAT but people need a WHO. Consider the passage that will serve to prove this thesis that people need a WHO.

St. John 6:5-13 (Amplified).

5. Jesus looked up, then, and seeing that a vast multitude was coming toward Him, He said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread, so that all these people may eat?

6. But He said this to prove (test) him, for He well knew what he was about to do.

7. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennies' [forty dollars] worth of bread is not enough that everyone may receive even a little.

8. Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

9. There is a little boy here, who has [with him] five barley loaves and two small fish; but what are they among so many people?

10. Jesus said, Make all the people recline (sit down). Now the ground [a pasture] was covered with thick grass at the spot, so the men threw themselves down, about five thousand in number.

11. Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks He distributed to the disciples and the disciples to the reclining people; so also with the small fish, as much as they wanted.

12. When they all had enough, He said to His disciples, Gather up now the fragments—the broken piece that are left over—so that nothing may be lost and wasted.

13. So accordingly they gathered them up, and they filled twelve hand baskets with fragments left over by those who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

I will examine six areas: **(1) the problem, (2) the plan, (3) meager provisions, (4) giving thanks, (5) abundance, and (6) leftovers.** I will show through this examination that **Jesus is the WHO that people need in dealing with the human issues that this life presses upon us daily.**

The fifth verse speaks of a vast multitude coming toward Jesus. **The second verse** says that a great crowd was following Him because they had seen the signs (miracles) which he (continually) performed upon those who were sick. **The tenth verse** numbers the multitude at about 5,000. The number declares the enormity of the problem. With Jesus and his disciples, the number is thirteen. What can thirteen men do to arrest the hunger of 5,000 people! Why not send all of these people home! Jesus asks a disciple a question, “Where are we to buy bread so that all these people may eat”

Verse Six.

The question was not raised because Jesus needed his disciples to brainstorm, but rather as a test. Was the Master expecting the disciple to come up with the right answer? The dominant point in verse six is that Jesus already knew the solution to the problem. He had the plan in mind even before Philip’s answer came. **The Lord’s solution would be perfect for the situation at hand. It is always the case—the perfect solution for the problem.** Think for a moment about Paul’s predicament in II Corinthians 12:7-9. *And to keep me from being puffed up and too much elated by the exceeding greatness (pre-eminence) of these revelations, there was given me a thorn (a splinter) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to rack and buffet and harass me, to keep me from being excessively exalted. Three times I called upon the Lord and besought [Him] about this and begged that it might depart from me. But he said to me, **My grace—My favor and loving-kindness and mercy—are enough for you,** [that is, sufficient against any danger and to enable you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect—fulfilled and completed and shows themselves most effective—in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ, the Messiah, may rest—yes, may pitch a tent [over] and dwell—upon me!*

Verse Seven

Philip’s answer was no doubt sincere. *Two hundred pennies’ [forty dollars] worth of bread is not enough that everyone may receive even a little.* The New International Version puts it this way—*“Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.”* How much bread could forty dollars buy? What market was there nearby which could supply the amount of bread necessary to quiet the hunger of the 5,000? One may well wonder if a Wal-Mart would carry enough bread to do the job! There are times when money is not the answer to the most serious

problems. There are some health problems so significant that money cannot begin to touch them. If the problems had life, they would probably think the idea of solving them entirely with money was laughable. No doubt a lot of head shaking would go on. It is not unwise to depend on people who can address the problem with the right kind of resources, that is, if they are willing to devote those resources. Not everybody is that willing—even family can let you down!

Verses Eight and Nine

Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, There's a little boy here, who has [with him] five barley loaves and two small fish; but what are they among so many people? Here we find ourselves confronted with the provisions. Remember that the number of people is 5,000! There are times that our lot seems similar as the one in this case. Our problems are much like the number of people, and our solution much like the five barley loaves and two little fishes.

Verses Ten and Eleven

Jesus said, make all the people recline (sit down). Now the ground [a pasture] was covered with thick grass at the spot, so the men threw themselves down, about five thousand in number. Jesus took the loaves and when He had given thanks He distributed to the disciples and the disciples to the reclining people; so also with the small fish, as much as they wanted. Enter the missing equation—Jesus! With men the outlook was impossible. Bring the Son of God into the picture and there you have it—the solution! **The confidence**—*make all the people recline.* **The faith**—*Jesus took the loaves and when He had given thanks He distributed to the disciples and the disciples to the reclining people; so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.* Five thousand hungry people were satisfied at the feeding. They had eaten as much as they required. The hunger was appeased. But how? A miracle! The power of God was manifested through the Son. Never had such a thing been done by another man. No doubt the disciples were astounded as they passed the food around they came from the five loaves and the two small fish. Twelve men feeding five thousand—that would mean in a mathematical sense that each disciple passed out provisions to approximately 417 people (were it done this way). By this time in John's account, Jesus had performed several notable miracles. In John 2:7, 8, there was the water to wine at the marriage feast at Cana. A nobleman's son was healed in John 4:50-54. An impotent man was healed in John 5:8. All of this is testimony to the presence of the Son of God. How then shall we doubt!

Verse Twelve

When they all had enough, he said to His disciples, Gather up now the fragments—the broken pieces that are left over—so that nothing may be lost or wasted. So accordingly they gathered them up, and they filled twelve hand baskets with fragments left over by those who had eaten from the five barley loaves. Here is the surplus. There was enough to feed the five thousand and to spare. When Jesus is

present in the picture, there will always be enough to take care of any situation. When we follow the Master's commandments, the Father stands ready to hear our petitions and answer them. We have this assurance by way of the Holy Spirit. Your problems in God's hands are no problems at all. He will turn them into solutions.



