

# thESource *Retreat*

## Bread of Life: A Servant Event Lock-In

by Bruce Wurdeman

### Objectives

- To provide opportunities for participants to grow in their relationship with and appreciation for Jesus, the Bread of Life.
- To grow in commitment to and awareness of the servant role to which Christ calls His people.
- To provide a meaningful devotional experience for members of the Christian community who are unable to attend worship services.

### Introduction

It is an amazing fact from Scripture that God regularly uses the ordinary to accomplish the spectacular. When creating humans, He used dust and wind (breath). When the children of Israel needed food, He sent not caviar but bread (manna). When humanity needed a Savior, He came as a baby. When humanity needed salvation, He gave it through water and the Word. When the Christian needs strengthening for ministry, He brings it in bread and wine.

This lock-in/servant event is intended to focus on the ordinary substance of bread with the prayer that God will use that also to accomplish the spectacular.

In this event participants will bake loaves of bread to be shared with the congregation and community shut-ins. When delivering these "love loaves" they will also share a brief devotion focusing on Jesus, the Bread of Life. During the course of the event, the participants should also focus on their relationship with Jesus, the Bread of Life, and His call to be servants.

### Suggested Guidelines for Planning the Event:

1. Involve key youth in the planning process.
2. Try to plan a Saturday evening through Sunday noon lock-in so that you can incorporate a "Blessing of the Loaves" into the Sunday morning worship service.
3. Publicize well in advance.
4. Locate a good, but simple, bread recipe or invite a baker, parent or grandparent to assist with the bread baking.
5. Encourage or require youth to attend the entire event. A lock-in of this nature loses its effectiveness when participants attend only part of the activities.
6. Make arrangements with your pastor for the "Blessing of the Loaves" in the Sunday morning worship.
7. Ask your pastor for names of shut-ins who would appreciate a visit from the youth.
8. You may want to consider baking one or two loaves of bread for use in a Sunday morning Communion service.

### Suggested Schedule

#### Saturday

6:00 p.m.	Arrival, icebreaker games
6:45 p.m.	Bible study, "Jesus, the Bread of Life"
7:45 p.m.	Break
8:00 p.m.	Games
9:00 p.m.	Bake bread for shut-ins
11:00 p.m.	Devotion

#### Sunday

8:00 a.m.	Worship with "Blessing of the Loaves"
9:30 a.m.	Bible study, "Fed to Serve"
10:30 a.m.	Deliver bread and share devotion with shut-ins
Noon	Lunch, reflection time and closing worship

## **Bible Study: Jesus the Bread of Life (Saturday evening)**

Begin by having the participants identify all of the servings of bread that they have eaten during the course of the day. Include pizza crusts, rolls, buns, etc. Help them to see that today, as in Biblical times, bread is the "Staff of Life."

Divide your group into four smaller groups to consider the following passages:

Bread in the wilderness - Exodus 16

Elijah and the ravens - 1 Kings 17:1-6

Elisha and the miraculous feeding - 2 Kings 4:42-44

Feeding of the five thousand - John 6:1-15

Each small group should consider the following questions:

1. What physical need was apparent in the story?
2. How was the need met?
3. How did God use bread in this story?
4. How would you have felt if you had been one of those whose need was met?

After about 15 minutes, bring the groups back together to share insights gained during their discussion. As a large group, then use John 6:25-59 as a basis for further study. Note that this discussion between Jesus and the Jews takes place just one day after the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:1-15. The following questions may be of some assistance in your discussion.

1. The Rabbis of Jesus' day taught that, when the Messiah came, God would once again send the manna that Israel received in the wilderness. How do Jesus' words in verses 32-33, 48-51 relate to this teaching?
2. How is Jesus like the bread that God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness?
3. In what ways does Jesus surpass the God-given bread in the four stories above? What needs does He meet?
4. Verses 52-59 are probably an allusion to the Lord's Supper. How does Jesus use bread to meet our needs in this Sacrament?

Conclude the Bible study with a prayer thanking God for His physical and spiritual food, for Jesus, the Bread of Life, and asking for His blessing on those who will receive the bread to be baked this evening.

## **"Blessing of the Loaves" (Sunday morning)**

In this Sunday morning worship service, plan to have several of the lock-in participants bring forward the loaves to be distributed to shut-ins. If the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated, the bread for the Sacrament could also be brought forward at this time. If this is to be done during the time of the general prayer, the pastor, youth and congregation could use the following litany:

### **Litany for the Loaves**

- Pastor: When the people of Israel saw the manna, they said to one another, "What is it?" And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."
- Youth: O Lord, may people who receive these loaves be reminded of Your daily providence and care.
- People: We thank You, heavenly Father, for Your gift of bread: for continually providing for our needs of body and soul.
- Pastor: And the people of Israel spoke against God and Moses, saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and water and we loathe this worthless food!"
- Youth: May those who receive these loaves be led to receive all of Your gifts with thanksgiving.
- People: O Great Provider, we confess that we often grumble and complain about our lack of luxuries while ignoring our provision of the necessities. For Jesus' sake, forgive our sins and lead us to a spirit of thankfulness.

- Pastor: Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."
- Youth: May this bread serve as a reminder of Jesus, the Bread of Life, who gave His life so that we might live forever.
- People: Heavenly Father, lead us to a greater appreciation for the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Bring us to an increased faith in Him as the bread of life who has earned for us the gift of eternal life.
- Pastor: And as they were eating, He took bread, and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take eat, this is my body."
- Youth: May these loaves remind the recipients of the spiritual strengthening available to them in Word and Sacrament.
- People: Gracious God, lead us to see you at work in our lives through Word and Sacrament. Continue to strengthen us with Your spiritual food and prepare us for greater service in Your kingdom. These things we humbly ask in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life. Amen.

### **Bible Study: "Fed to Serve" (Sunday morning)**

As a large group or in small groups, brainstorm a list of useless items. For example: a hammer without a handle, snow tires that crack and split in freezing temperatures, an umbrella that shrinks when wet, etc.

All the physical and spiritual feeding that Jesus does for us is not intended to make us "fat and lazy" Christians. God does not want useless Christians, but useful ones. He calls us to a life of service.

Read John 13:1-20.

The Evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke, when reporting on the Passover celebration, focus on the institution of the Lord's Supper. John, however, does not mention this event. Instead he focuses on the behavior that this spiritual feeding of body and blood—bread and wine—is to produce.

Discuss:

1. What point is Jesus making with the foot-washing object lesson?
2. How is this philosophy different from that of the world around us?
3. Why does Peter react as he does?
4. What factors make it difficult to live a life of service to others?
5. How can these obstacles be overcome?

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

The issue here is not one of earning salvation by doing good works, but one of faith showing itself in love and in service to others.

1. List those acts of service that Jesus highlights in this section.
2. Notice the question posed by the "sheep" in verse 37. What does this tell us about their service?
3. What does He mean by "the least of these" (verse 40)?
4. Ask the group to share ideas about people they would classify as "the least of these."
5. What factors make some people difficult to love and serve?
6. How does Jesus empower us for service even in these difficult situations?

After making assignments for the delivery of the loaves (teams of two or three, with an adult driver, might work well), allow time for each participant to pray for their assigned person by name. This could happen as a group prayer or as a time for silent prayer and meditation. Send the group out with a benediction.

### **A Devotion to be Shared with the Shut-ins (Sunday morning)**

1. Begin by engaging the recipient in conversation. Older people often like to talk about the past. Try to move the conversation to the subject of God's past blessings.
2. Say, "We brought you this loaf of bread because we thought you might enjoy eating it, but also because we hoped to bring you some joy as it reminds you that Jesus is the Bread of Life."

3. Read John 6:35-40.
4. Share together how Jesus has provided for you physically and spiritually.
5. Share a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus' physical and spiritual feeding.
6. Sing together "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

Have the youth select one or two verses from John 6:35-40 to print on 5x7 index cards to leave with the loaves in the homes of the shut-ins.

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