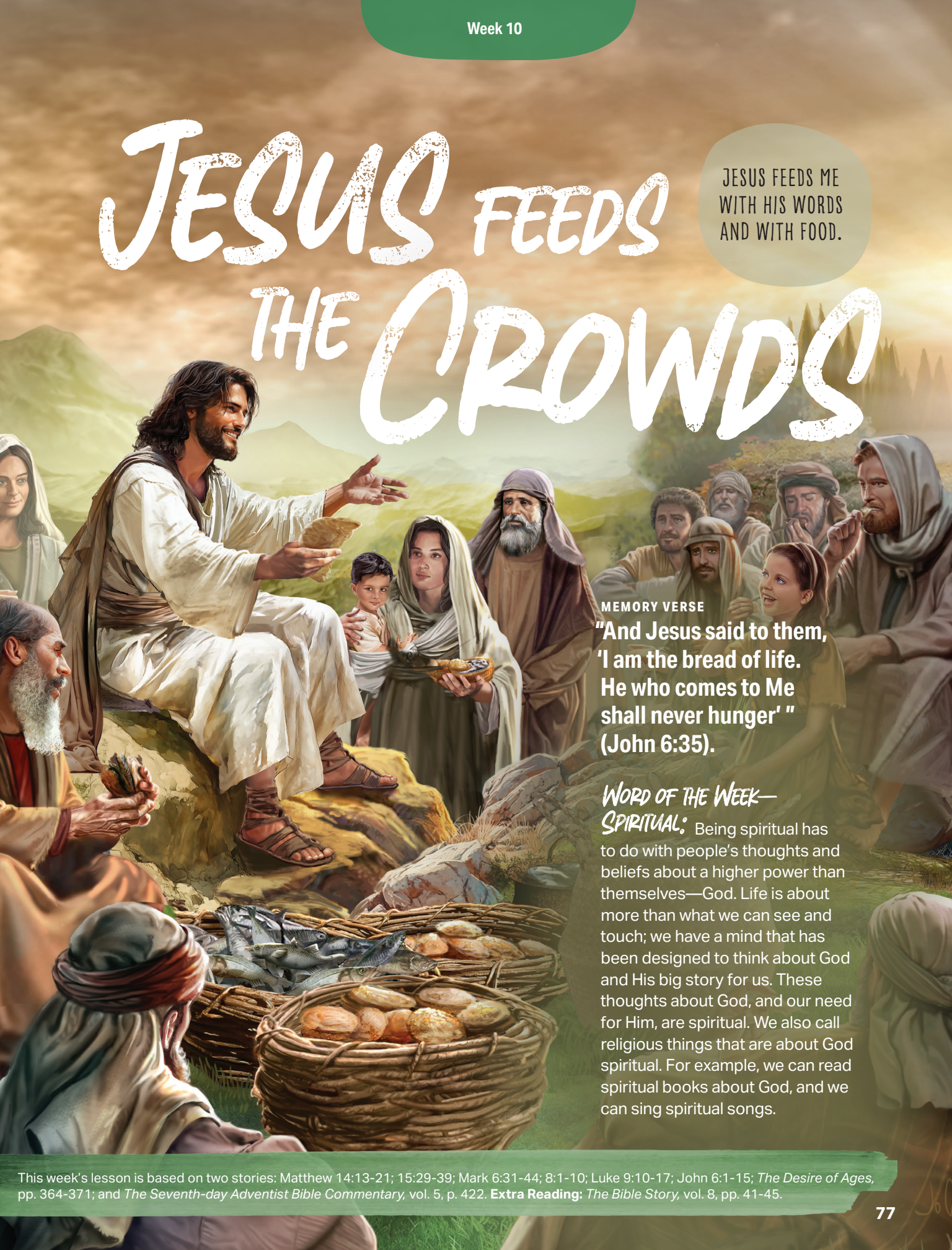
Jesus Feeds the Crowds

Jesus feeds me with His words and with food.



MEMORY VERSE

"And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger' " (John 6:35).

Word of the Week—Spiritual: Being spiritual has to do with people's thoughts and beliefs about a higher power than themselves—God. Life is about more than what we can see and touch; we have a mind that has been designed to think about God and His big story for us. These thoughts about God, and our need for Him, are spiritual. We also call religious things that are about God spiritual. For example, we can read spiritual books about God, and we can sing spiritual songs.

This week's lesson is based on two stories: Matthew 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 6:31-44; 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15; *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 364-371; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, p. 422. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story,* vol. 8, pp. 41-45.

☐ SUNDAY

"Come and Rest Awhile"

The disciples dragged their feet in exhaustion. Some sighed. Others yawned. As traveling preachers, they had been constantly on the go and constantly surrounded by people. Long days of missionary work had worn them down. Even now a crowd swarmed around them as they gathered to Jesus to tell Him of their news.

They hadn't seen Jesus for a while, and He longed to be with them—just them! He knew they needed to be with Him too. What did He invite them to do? **Read Mark 6:31.**

Jesus knew about their physical needs: they were tired and hungry. He also knew about their spiritual needs: they needed time with God. He knew just the place where He could meet both needs. It was a lonely spot near Bethsaida at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. The lush green grasses and trees and the wide blue skies would refresh their weary minds and bodies. Even the boat ride across the sparkling lake would be a lovely break. So they set out right away.

As they spent time together, Jesus taught and encouraged His disciples. His words spoke into the quietness and fed their tired hearts. They talked together about God's work and how to do it better. They rested, they thought, they prayed. And after a while their energy began to return, along with hope and courage.

We need quiet time with Jesus, just as the disciples did. He longs to give us love, encouragement, and wisdom to energize our minds, just as food energizes our body. Jesus loves to feed us with His words from the Bible in our quiet times with Him.

Do: Think about Jesus and His disciples resting in a quiet place. Take your Bible to a quiet place to be alone with Jesus. Read Matthew 11:28. Pause and think, then pray. Your time with Jesus can be as short or long as is meaningful for you.

For You, Parents: Sometimes the demands of parenting may threaten to overwhelm you with tiredness. Remember: " 'He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest awhile.' Christ is full of tenderness and compassion for all in His service" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 360).

Pray: Thank God for the quiet times you enjoy with Him.

Think . . . Then Talk About It

- *Where is your favorite quiet place?*



MONDAY

Hungry to Hear

The crowds who had been in Capernaum with Jesus missed Him immediately. Some had seen Him sail away with His friends, and word quickly spread. Eager people hurried around the lake on foot. They were so fast that they beat Jesus and His disciples there.

Many travelers were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, so they stopped and joined the multitude (great number of people) too. Pretty soon 5,000 men had gathered, not counting women and children. When Jesus saw this huge crowd, what did He do? **Read Mark 6:34.**

Jesus felt sorry for the people. They were really hungry to hear His words, for the priests and rulers didn't feed them much spiritual food—just rules and laws instead. So even though Jesus, like His disciples, needed quiet time with God, He began to teach the people about God's love.

Jesus spoke of a kind and forgiving God who cared. He taught the people how to be saved. He healed those who were sick. He encouraged those who were lonely. This was how He filled everyone's hearts with spiritual food. The day seemed like heaven to them, and they didn't even think about eating, or drinking, or going home. They thought only about Jesus, the wonderful spiritual teacher they had followed.

Our friend Jesus doesn't just feed us spiritual food in our personal quiet times with Him. His words feed us in groups and crowds too. We may learn from His words in Sabbath School, Bible class at school, in the church service, or in a home group. Jesus will use every opportunity to feed us spiritual food, for He Himself is "the bread of life" (John 6:35). He knows we can't live without food to eat, and we can't live a happy Christian life without spiritual food either.

Do: Find Capernaum and Bethsaida on a Bible map. The distance from Capernaum around the lake to Bethsaida was about four miles (6.4 kilometers). Across the lake was about three miles (five kilometers). Would you like to have walked or gone by boat to see Jesus? Plot your course.

Pray: Thank God for the spiritual food He feeds you in different places and in different ways.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Why did Jesus teach and heal, even though He needed time alone with God?*
- *What did Jesus mean when He said He is "the bread of life" (John 6:35)?*



Do: Go for a nature walk with your family to feed bread or seeds to birds, ducks, or other animals. Alternatively, set up a bird feeder with seed, closer to home (yard/balcony). As you watch the birds or animals eat, think about what God has taught you today.

Pray: Thank God for feeding you the spiritual food you need.

☐ **TUESDAY**

Hungry Tummies

The shadows lengthened, and the day grew chilly. But the crowds still sat and listened. Jesus had been teaching all day without food or rest, but He put His tiredness and hunger aside and kept on explaining God's love and power and grace. He wouldn't leave the people who needed Him so much. He knew that feeding them with His words was more important than feeding His own tummy.

Finally, when the sun was low in the western sky, the disciples told Jesus how hungry they were, and that the people must be hungry too. What did they ask Him to do? **Read Mark 6:36.**

Jesus replied, "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).

The disciples looked at Jesus in surprise. They said, "We can't buy enough bread to feed all these people! We would all have to work a month to earn enough money to buy that much bread!" (Mark 6:37, ICB).

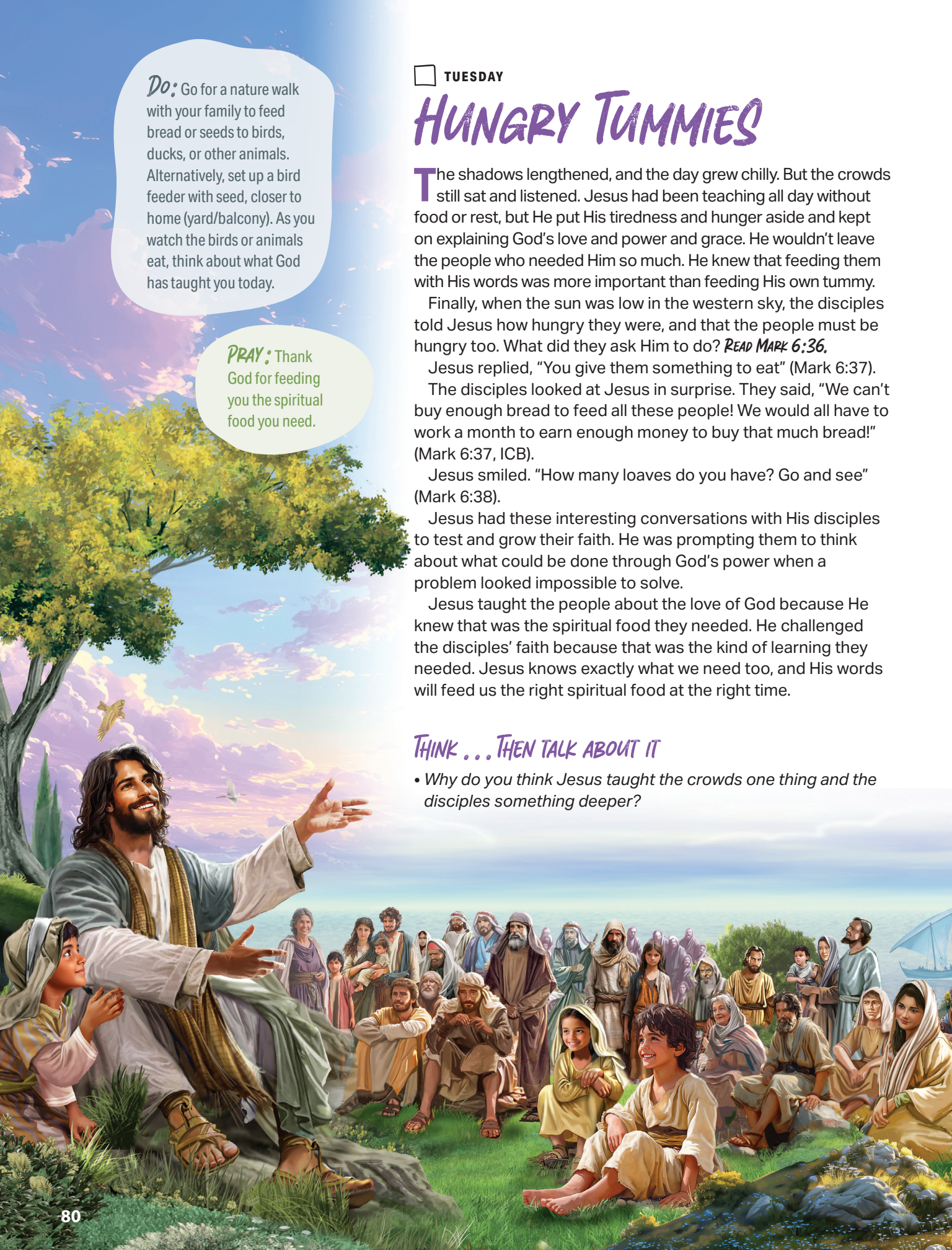
Jesus smiled. "How many loaves do you have? Go and see" (Mark 6:38).

Jesus had these interesting conversations with His disciples to test and grow their faith. He was prompting them to think about what could be done through God's power when a problem looked impossible to solve.

Jesus taught the people about the love of God because He knew that was the spiritual food they needed. He challenged the disciples' faith because that was the kind of learning they needed. Jesus knows exactly what we need too, and His words will feed us the right spiritual food at the right time.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Why do you think Jesus taught the crowds one thing and the disciples something deeper?*





WEDNESDAY

One Little Lunch That Multiplied

It was almost nighttime, and empty tummies in the crowd were rumbling. Somehow Andrew found a little boy who hadn't eaten his picnic lunch: five little barley loaves and two small fish. That wasn't much. The tiny lunch was hardly enough to even mention to Jesus!

Jesus knew exactly what He could do with it, so He told the disciples to "make them all sit down in groups on the green grass" (Mark 6:39).

What did Jesus do next? **Read Mark 6:41.**

It was a miracle! The people scratched their heads and blinked their eyes in surprise. *How could thousands of barley loaves come from just five?*

Their heads couldn't explain it, but their hearts understood. They now felt sure that Jesus loved them and cared about their everyday lives. They believed He was a powerful God who wanted to look after them.

Jesus took the only food they had—a common meal of bread and fish—and multiplied it. He can take the simple things we bring Him, such as our talents and offerings, and do the same. All the men, women, and children in that happy crowd ate and ate until they were full. After the crowd had finished eating, the disciples collected 12 big baskets of leftovers!

Jesus fed the people's hungry tummies that day. But He also fed them new spiritual food. He showed them God's way of giving, and how to pass it on. God gave Jesus the power to multiply the food. Jesus gave the food to the disciples to give to the people. The people gave the food to each other, and then they took some of the leftovers home to give to family and friends.

What a wonderful story the happy crowds had to tell. Jesus had fed them in more ways than one. He wants to feed both our tummies and our hearts.

Do: Plan to bake some bread rolls together and think of how you can pass these on to someone or a charity, just as the disciples did. Alternatively, you could sell them to friends/neighbors and use the money for the mission offering.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *How would you have felt if Jesus had multiplied your lunch?*
- *What might the people have said to one another as they ate together?*

Pray: Thank God for feeding you every day.

THURSDAY

Miracle Maker

Jesus, the master teacher and healer, continued to love people and meet their needs wherever He went. He met them in towns, villages, and out in the countryside.

Once again Jesus sat on a mountainside surrounded by a huge crowd. This time He was on a different side of the Sea of Galilee, in an area known as Decapolis. The crowd was different too. The people in the crowd near Bethsaida had been mostly Jews—descendants of Abraham. This multitude were mostly Gentiles—foreigners who were made to feel unworthy of God's love.

But Jesus didn't see them that way, and they knew it. Full of hope, the crowds swarmed around Him. They brought people who were deaf and blind. They brought those who couldn't speak, and those who were sick. They brought those who lived with a disability and couldn't get there themselves, and "laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them" (Matthew 15:30). What did the people do when they saw these miracles? **Read Matthew 15:31**.

For three whole days Jesus stayed with them, healing, helping, and loving them. By the third day of camping out near Jesus, the people's food had run out, and they were hungry. Jesus didn't want to send them away with empty stomachs, so what did He do? **Read Matthew 15:32-36.**

Once again Jesus used what they had—a tiny bit of food—and multiplied it to meet a great big need. This time 4,000 men and their families were blessed by God's power. Jesus had fed and loved a crowd of Gentiles, showing them that His blessings weren't only for the Jews—God loved them too!

Like the Gentiles, some people have been made to feel they are not good enough for God. We may feel like that ourselves sometimes. But God's love and spiritual food is for *everyone*, no matter who they are or how they feel. Jesus works hard to show us this truth today, just as He did on the mountainside.

Mission Challenge: Make a new connection with someone around your age, then try talking to them about God. You may try this conversation starter: "I can see God at work in my life in this way. . . . Have you ever noticed that God is working in your life too?

Do: Paste pictures of your favorite foods on the outside of a jar. Place the jar on your table at mealtimes. Invite family members to put money in the jar. When it is full, give the money to ADRA or another organization that helps hungry people.

Pray: Ask God to help you love everyone, as He does.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Imagine you were there among the crowd. What would you have seen, tasted, heard, smelled, and said?*



FRIDAY

Food Miracles Every Day

Fueled

A poem by Marcie Hans

Fueled
by a million
man-made
wings of fire—
the rocket tore a tunnel
through the sky—
and everybody clapped.

Fueled
only by a thought from God—
the seedling
forced its way
through the thickness of black—
and as it pierced
the heavy ceiling of the soil
and launched itself
up into outer space—
no
one
even
clapped.

We may never see Jesus multiply bread as He did on the hillside. But every day God is working little miracles to feed millions of people. Farmers and gardeners prepare the ground and plant the seeds, but only God can make them sprout and grow. It is His power that produces the crops for harvest. "He gives food to every living creature. His love continues forever" (Psalm 136:25, ICB). Think about this the next time you say grace before a meal.

Think . . . Then Talk About It

- *What is the difference between how humans respond to a man-made rocket and how they respond to the way a seed sprouts and grows?*
- *Why do you think the responses are so different?*

Parent Faith Talk: Share your response to the poem "Fueled."

Friday Night

Share and Praise

- If you have a bubble wand, take turns blowing and popping bubbles. Each time you pop a bubble, thank Jesus for one of your favorite healthy foods.
- Recite your memory verse for your family and explain what it means.
- Listen to or sing the hymn "Wondrous Love" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 162). Talk together about what you love about God and how you see that He loves you.

Family Journal

- What new things have you learned from Jesus this week?
- How would you describe spiritual food? What are some examples?

Pray

As a family, open your food cupboard and gather around it as you hold your Bibles. Thank God for providing you with food to eat every day, and for feeding you with His words.



SABBATH

The Miracle Well

Sunita looked at the small cup of water sloshing gently in the bucket as she pulled it up out of the well and tried to hold back the tears. This was the family's second well, and like the first, it was nearly dry. Soon the well would be empty!

Sunita, her husband, and their family depended on water for their farm in western India. No rain had fallen for such a long time, and now, with the wells nearly dry, they were desperate. They needed to dig another well. Usually a well driller would have to drill several holes in different places to find water, but Sunita and her husband had only enough money to pay the driller to dig one hole.

A new Christian, Sunita had faith that God would help them find water. Her husband, however, was Hindu, and wanted to perform a Hindu ritual in the field to find water. Sunita pleaded with him not to, and finally he agreed. Then she asked God that water would be found quickly when the well digger drilled a new hole.

The pastor and church members prayed and thanked God for Sunita's faithfulness, and they asked for God's help. They prayed that Sunita's husband would see that God cares for His children and provides all their needs.

When the well digger arrived at the farm, the pastor and the church members came too. No one knew where to dig, and Sunita told those gathered that the family had only enough money to drill down to 150 feet (45 meters). The pastor prayed, "Lord, bless this land, and may it give enough water to meet the needs of Your children." Then the well digger got to work in a spot the pastor and church members had chosen.

THUMP. THUMP. He drilled to 50 feet (15 meters). No water.

THUMP. THUMP. To 100 feet (30 meters). No water.

THUMP. THUMP. Another 50 feet.

He stopped drilling and said, "I'm at 150 feet. It will cost more money if I keep digging."

The church members prayed again and pleaded with the well digger to drill just a few more feet.

Moments later water gushed from the ground.

Sunita was so excited—and so pleased her husband had witnessed God's power! She shared the amazing answer to prayer with all her neighbors too. "We prayed, and God answered our prayers with a miracle! He blessed us!"

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