

# YOU Give them Something to Eat

On a Sunday morning in my small church, I walked into the worship center, and the youth minister pulled me aside and said, "Pastor Bob had a little emergency with his mom and dad in Toledo. He flew out last night, and he asked me to preach, but it's been a crazy week and I'm totally gassed. Would you mind preaching?" The pre-service music had already started, and we were thirty seconds before the first song. He didn't wait for a response. He just walked up on stage to do the welcome.

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I was a little woozy. I had to sit down. I whispered to my wife, Darlene, "I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do. He didn't even wait for an answer." I can speak, but I'm kind of a planner. Should I just say, *We're just going to worship, take up the offering, and pray?* I flopped my Bible open in the seat next to me. This fortune cookie approach to getting a word from God rarely works. Jesus speaks from intentional study, not just flopping the Bible open and reading the first thing. I tried that once during a difficult day with Darlene, and the red letter verse I read was, "Woman, why are you crying?" I didn't try to work that into the situation. But this time, the first red letter words my eyes landed on were these: "You give them something to eat."

It was from the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. The disciples were trying to get Jesus to make a public announcement that the multitude should go back home because the show was over, and they didn't have a fish and chips stand within ten square miles of the deserted place. But Jesus, the Creator of the universe, said casually to the disciples, "*You give them something to eat.*"

That Sunday, I saw spiritually hungry people settling in for worship, and I had the spiritual equivalent of two eggs, a box of macaroni, a can of beans, and a three-year-old can of sardines. Lots of times I've heard Jesus whisper, *You give them something*. Why would an all-powerful God ask that of me? There are far better solutions out there! He wouldn't leave well enough alone. "You give them something." In these moments, I do what we all do when Jesus asks and we say "yes": I start looking for scraps of something to use, things I forgot that I had, crazy ideas, and risky moves that I'm hesitant to try. I offer it. He takes it. He blesses it. And amazing stuff happens. Here's the thing: What I have is not extraordinary. Quite the opposite. It's not extraordinary until He gets His hands on it. It's just how the whole thing works. He wants to involve us in the process. It's all Him, but we get to come along for the ride.

He does this all the time. Jesus whispers to the disorganized mom, the introverted hostess, the stuttering leader, the guy with a sketchy past, the penniless widow, the uneducated mentor, the overwhelmed dad, and the inexperienced coach, *You give them something*. Perhaps because when these people succeed, there will be someone saying, *If God could use that person, there must be something to this thing they call gospel*.