



**SESSION 4: A SECOND HELPING  
(EMPOWERMENT/SYSTEMS-BASED THINKING)**



## **SESSION 4: A SECOND HELPING (EMPOWERMENT/SYSTEMS-BASED THINKING)**

**Feeding of the five thousand, John 6:5-13**

**Elijah's double feeding in the desert, 1 Kings 19:1-8**

**Outreach with a new demographic. Collective action.**

For directions on preparing for each session, review the “Accompaniment Bible Study Introduction.” Please note that in order to provide you with flexibility and choices in adapting each session to your particular setting, this facilitator guide contains more material than can be covered in a one-hour session. The guiding questions in the right column indicated in red provide the core elements of the study and should be ample material for a one-hour session.

### **SUMMARY**

Given the pace of change in our lives, the phrase “The only constant is change” is quite apt for our age. How does the church remain faithful in a time of high transition in our lives, our neighborhoods and our world? How do we respond in a time of high anxiety with the good news of the angels, who regularly proclaim, “Do not be afraid”? Paradoxically, the answer for stressed-out disciples and a worn-out prophet comes in a vision of abundance rather than scarcity.

### **ACCOMPANIMENT VALUE: EMPOWERMENT**

As we accompany one another, we struggle to recognize and name power as it affects our relationships. When we recognize that relationships have asymmetries of power, and struggle to balance and correct those asymmetries, we are working to empower ourselves and one another. Learning to let go of power — to become Vulnerable — is an act of empowerment, as is recognizing and standing up to power that hobbles people in their walk through life.

### **ACCOMPANIMENT CAPACITY: SYSTEMS-BASED THINKING**

Learning to perceive the connections and interdependencies between self and other, between groups of people, between people and the earth, recognizing asymmetries of power in relationship, and connecting the dots between our personal lives and systemic realities.



<p>Welcome participants as they come in. Give a special welcome to anyone who is new to the group.</p>	<p><b>Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min)</b> <i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>
<p>CROSS-GENERATIONAL TIP: To start conversation about change in our world, plan ahead to be able to show participants the video <b>Did You Know? Pace of Change</b> at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YpdcWe4ooQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YpdcWe4ooQ</a>.</p> <p>Changes to highlight might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing changes or development around the church</li><li>• Ethnic/demographic change</li><li>• Pace and technology</li><li>• Global economy</li><li>• Global Christianity and Interfaith engagement</li></ul> <p>In preparation for this class, do a little research on your congregation's history — the year it was founded, did the early members share a cultural or ethnic background, were services held in a language other than English, etc. If possible, bring copies of pictures or printed histories of the congregation. You could also invite a long-time member of the congregation to be a special guest for this session.</p>	<p><b>The only constant is change (8 min)</b></p> <p><i>In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, talk about what has changed for your congregation since it was founded — whether that was 50 years or 100 years ago. What is different in your community? In the world?</i></p> <p><i>How do people in the congregation and community feel about these various changes?</i></p>
<p>Have some fun with participants trying to imagine what it would be like to try to set up a meal for such a huge crowd out in the middle of nowhere — no McDonalds or grocery stores to run to! Don't get hung up on whether this miracle was more about people sharing what they already had or if Jesus actually multiplied the fish and loaves in the end. Instead, invite participants to enter the story by thinking creatively</p>	<p><b>What are they among so many people? (8-10 min)</b></p> <p>Read John 6:5-10a</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>What is the biggest meal you have ever attended — a wedding, birthday party or church gathering? What would it be like to be put in charge of an impromptu meal for 5,000?</p>



<p>about the details — the plates, napkins, what to do with all the fish bones, etc. If your congregation hosts some kind of community meal, imagine 5,000 people showing up instead of the regular 500!</p> <p>Create some space for participants to talk openly about the ways that the community may feel stretched by the changes around them. Point out that Jesus and the disciples were already feeling pressed by the pace of change and the demands of a growing movement, even before this story! Here’s how Mark 6:31 introduces the story: “Jesus said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.”</p>	<p>What do you think went through the disciples’ minds when Jesus first told them, “Make the people sit down”?</p> <p>When you think back to the changes that have taken place in your congregation or community, are the changes or demands that make you feel like the disciples in this story?</p> <p>John says that Jesus asked Philip where to buy bread in order to “test him.” Are there times when you feel as if your community is being “tested” by the changes around you?</p> <p>Have you or your congregation felt like Andrew, who having assessed the available resources, wonders “what are they among so many people”?</p>
<p>Many pressures can impact the way congregations feel about their ministry: financial challenges, changing demographics in the neighborhood, internal conflicts, etc. A mindset of “circling the wagons” can at times be a very natural response. However, the language and content of this biblical story — and its connection to Jesus who is himself the bread of life given for all — invites us to imagine a different way of being in the world. In John 10:10, Jesus says “I have come, so that you may have life, and have it abundantly.” This image of abundance is prevalent in the biblical story, some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manna in the desert in Exodus 16</li><li>• The jar of flour and the jug of oil of the Widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:8-16</li><li>• The wedding at Cana in John 2:1-11</li><li>• The miraculous catch in Luke 5:1-7</li><li>• Jesus as the bread of life that satisfies our hunger and thirst in John 6:35</li></ul>	<p><b>As much as they wanted (8-10 min)</b></p> <p>Read John 6:10b-13</p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Notice the shift in the terms used in the story, from images of scarcity (“Six month’s wages would not buy enough” and “What are these among so many”) to those of abundance (“There was a great deal of grass in the place” and “As much as they wanted”). What changed? What are other biblical stories where you see this shift from scarcity to abundance?</p> <p>The Gospel writer connects this story to the story of the Last Supper by the phrase “Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them.” How might this connection help shape our understanding of the challenges and opportunities our congregation or community is facing?</p> <p>Who are the people in your congregation or community who speak in terms of abundance rather than scarcity in this time of change? Where do you see abundance in your congregation?</p>



<p>Every Sunday our communities gather around the table of the Lord, and we are fed, strengthened, and sent. Explore with participants how the weekly worship of the community can equip us to lead in a time of transition and opportunity for our communities. Many congregations introduce communion reminding us that “Christ is the host, and all are welcome to the table.” How might this statement shape the way we approach ministry with new folks moving into our neighborhoods and community?</p>	
<p>Use the following brief introduction before reading the story from 1 Kings:</p> <p>Elijah was one of the greatest prophets in Israel. On the mountain when Jesus was transfigured, Moses represented the law and Elijah the prophets (Matthew 17:3). The story in 1 Kings 19 takes place between two other well-known “mountain top” experiences for Elijah — his victory over the priests of Baal at Mount Carmel and his encounter with God on Mount Horeb. This story, however, takes place in a valley, both figuratively and literally. Elijah is on the run from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, who have vowed to destroy him as he destroyed their very profitable Priest of Baal enterprise. Like the disciples in the earlier story, Elijah feels he is at the end of his rope. “I am no better than my ancestors.”</p> <p>In preparation for this session, familiarize yourself with the outreach and social ministry of your congregation, local ministerial association, synod, or denomination. You can find a short video of the ELCA World Hunger at <a href="http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger">http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger</a>.</p>	<p><b>Get up and eat (8-10 min)</b></p> <p><b>Read 1 Kings 19:3-8</b></p> <p>What do you hear? What do you notice? What stands out to you?</p> <p>Like Elijah, many people find themselves far away from home, running either from danger or poverty in their place of origin. Share a story of someone you know who found him or herself figuratively “under a solitary broom tree.”</p> <p><b>The angel of God comes to a worn-out Elijah (“I am no better than my ancestors”) and offers him sustenance. How does your congregation, area faith community, or denomination act as the angel in the story: inviting those in distress to “get up and eat”?</b></p> <p><b>The angel of God comes to Elijah, not only once, but twice. If Elijah is to do more than survive, he needs a “second helping.” The church can be good at that first helping, the one that gets people over the hump and helps them to survive. In what ways do we — or can we — as a church follow the angel’s example and serve that “second helping,” the one that helps those in need not only to survive, but to live abundantly?</b></p>



<p>Explore with participants ways in which the church can pursue not only charity, but justice. What are some “second helping” kinds of ministries in your community and congregation? Explore ministries like the ELCA’s Advocacy Office (<a href="http://www.ELCA.org//Advocacy">www.ELCA.org//Advocacy</a>) or the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (<a href="http://www.lirs.org">http://www.lirs.org</a>).</p> <p>EXTRA: Consider using the following quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who challenge the church to work for structural changes in our society:</p> <p><b>“On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life’s highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”</b>(Speaking at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination).</p>	
	<p><b>From Head to Heart (3 min)</b></p> <p><i>Encourage participants to connect today’s conversation with their lives throughout the week. You could open it up and invite everyone to share ideas on how they would like to do this during the week or share some of the suggestions below.</i></p> <p><b>New Neighbors:</b> Spend some time this exploring your neighborhood, community or region. Perhaps there are new immigrants moving into your community — if so, plan to visit some of their businesses, churches, or community organizations. Or perhaps your community attracts elderly who move to your area for retirement or</p>



	<p>students to attend college — where might you be able to meet some of these new neighbors, connect with them, hear their stories?</p> <p><b>News Scan:</b> Be attentive this week to the way that immigration is addressed in the local, regional, and national media. Does a mindset of scarcity or one of abundance dominate the way new comers are portrayed? What is the conversation like in your congregation, your work environment, or your family?</p> <p><b>Out of the Waters: Resisting the Power of Fear:</b> Re-discover the story of Exodus along with recent immigrants to the United States in this Bible study available at <a href="http://lirs.org/faith-on-the-move-series/">http://lirs.org/faith-on-the-move-series/</a>.</p> <p>Watch “<b>Grand Torino</b>” (2008) directed by Clint Eastwood. This story explores the shift from anxiety to possibility in the unlikely alliance between an elderly, long-time resident of a declining neighborhood and his young immigrant neighbors.</p> <p>Watch “<b>The Spitfire Grill</b>” (1996) directed by Lee David Zlotoff, which tells a “second helping” kind of story about a woman recently released from prison who finds redemption working in a small-town café.</p>
	<p><b>Closing Prayer (3 min)</b></p> <p><i>You may offer an opening prayer or invite a participant to lead the group in prayer.</i></p>