

## Introduction

### *Leader's reflection*

Within these resources there are several references to healing miracles and Jesus making people whole again through His healing of them. It is important to note that this is a reflection on how these would have been seen at the time, rather than any statement on the wholeness of people living with disability in our contemporary world.

The key idea to get across here, and possibly within your sessions if you feel it is appropriate, is that in the world that Jesus lived in, a disability was a barrier not just to individual wellbeing, but also to life within the community. This is not the case nowadays, and as such this should be used as a tool for interpreting the actions of both able bodied and disabled people, rather than any statement on the place of disabled people within the Kingdom of God.

## Water into Wine Reading: John 2:1-12

### *Leader's reflection*

All the miracles of Jesus do more than tell us that Jesus can do miracles. They communicate something of who he is, something about him, deeper truths that we don't see in his words, and which are only apparent on deeper inspection. Water into wine is one of those which looks completely different on deeper inspection.

But first, on a practical level, this story is amazing.

Anyone who has ever been to or been involved in a large wedding knows the levels of stress involved. Months of planning all coming down to one day; it's going to be stressful. But then, to have something run out!

To make it worse, this wedding would have been a village wide celebration, with people even traveling from the surrounding countryside to attend. The celebration would have gone on for several days, with plenty of food, wine and fun. Although not enough wine. And so Mary decides to fix things. She calls on Jesus and tells the servants to do as he says.

The 6 water jars are filled with water. Six represents incompleteness, in this case the incompleteness of the work of God through the people of Israel. This link is made clearer by the fact that the jars used would have been used for ceremonial washing as part of cleansing rituals before worship. The jars are filled to the brim, showing Jesus' fulfilment of what has come before. The old is being filled by the new, which is going to be transformed. The water to wine shows this transformation.



This miracle then, is completely Christological; its purpose is to reveal Christ's purpose and it does that brilliantly. Even down to the wine being better than the wine used at the start of the banquet tells us how much better the new way that Jesus is bringing will be. The amount is important too, not just enough to get by, but more than enough. Jesus' redemptive work will be more than enough for those who follow.

There could even be an implication of Jesus' rejection by the people of Israel. The people who have had too much to drink to be able to tell how good the new wine is could represent the established people of Israel and those in authority, while those with clear heads are able to appreciate the new, better, wine for what it is. Alongside that, the practical and real time impact that Jesus' actions have in this story are palpable. He saves the day for the families of the wedding. He provides between 120 and 180 gallons of wine, showing the generosity of God.

In this passage, we see a picture of what Jesus has come to do; to replace the old with the new, and to give generously in love to those who trust in him.

<b>Aim</b>	To explore what Jesus did to help but also the further significance of the miracle.
<b>Main points to cover</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. This was the first of Jesus' miracles.</li><li>2. Jesus responded to a need.</li><li>3. Jesus was generous in what he gave.</li></ol>
<b>Focus On</b>	Introducing the idea that miracles tell us more about who Jesus is.

## Activity ideas

Put the young people into small groups and have them define what they think a miracle is. Come back to this definition: “an effect or extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a supernatural cause.” Explore what the young people think of this definition. Spend some time explaining that while this is part of what a miracle is, there is more to it. Miracles also tell us something about Jesus, about who he is, and what he values. They explain to us who he is in a way which adds to what we see of him through his words.

Visual aid. Bring in as many 1 litre bottles as you can, and play some sort of game with them like skittles or slalom. Ask the young people how many of them would be filled by the wine that Jesus made. Explain that the amount of wine produced would fill between 540 and 810 1 litre bottles. Use this to start to explore Jesus’ generosity and why he gave so much.

Where do I underestimate God’s generosity? Often we have a view of God which essentially involves Him putting up with us. We might see ourselves as being a bit annoying to God, and that if we step too far out of line He will become sick of us and give up on us. The abundance of wine in this story is a picture of how generously God forgives us. Demonstrate this with a cup and a jug of water. You will also need something to catch the water from the cup as you overflow it. Pour some water into the cup and explain that the cup represents us and the water God’s forgiveness. Talk about how we often think of God forgiving us just enough for us to get by, and that as we go through life we might overuse that forgiveness so that it runs out. Pour more water into the cup to overflow it, and explain that God’s grace is always more than enough for us. Jesus didn’t forgive us just enough, but more than enough. As a response, and a sign of thanking God for His grace, have the young people come as they feel ready and pour water into a different cup. You may want to say some words together as a sign of this response as well. Finish by explaining that because of God’s generosity, our proper response is to ask God to guide us as we walk with Him, leading us to live the best possible way we can with Him.



## The man with the paralysed hand

Reading: Mark 3:1-6

### *Leader's reflection*

This story is one of a series near the beginning of Mark grouped together by theologians as 'controversy stories'. They show Jesus challenging accepted wisdom and authority through his words and actions. Through these stories he challenges; perceptions of authority and the forgiveness of sins; who was considered acceptable and unacceptable; fasting and Sabbath laws. These stories combine to show Jesus as a challenger to accepted ideas on these, and when taken together show why the pharisees were so concerned at the end of this reading that they decided to plot to kill him. It makes it no less shocking, but shows a more three dimensional picture of the pharisees than the pantomime baddies they are often seen as.

In this reading Jesus stretches the interpretation of Jewish law at the time, rather than directly challenges it. Even the pharisees would have agreed that one must act to save life on the sabbath, but Jesus seems quite a long way from saving life in this reading. This man is not in danger of death from his withered hand, what would be lost by waiting until the next day to heal him?

Instead here there are two things going on. The first is a challenging of the incredibly strict interpretation of the Law to the point that it does harm rather than good. Refusing to heal or treat someone on the sabbath because they are not in danger of death is tantamount to doing harm; if you can help, you should.



The second is a deeper and more fundamental challenge to the idea of saving life. We are often cushioned from seeing the impact of disability in the ancient world by the society we live in. We will often do as much as we can to ensure that a person living with a disability is given the chance to live as full a life as possible, even if we fail at times. The underlying assumption is that disability is to be overcome rather than tolerated. Those with disability in the ancient world would have been seen as a burden on the family. If you can't earn, you are a drain on the family. However loving a background they came from, this would have been the overarching feeling.

This man is therefore not living in the fullness of life. He is not able to participate fully in life, and so his life is less than it should be. In healing him, Jesus is making a statement that life is more than having a heartbeat. Life is participating in community, family, creation. In John 10:10, Jesus says that, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' The man with the withered hand is given the opportunity to fully participate in life, to no longer feel a burden to his friends and family, to become a full member of society.

When Jesus speaks of saving life on the Sabbath, His idea of life is far greater, far deeper, and far more inspiring than we often think of.

<b><i>Aim</i></b>	To help the young people explore how they can bring joy and life into the world for the people around them.
<b><i>Main points to cover</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Jesus cares about us completely.</li><li>2. Jesus is willing to risk anything to help those around him.</li><li>3. We should try to live in a way that allows us to help those around us.</li></ol>
<b><i>Focus On</i></b>	Jesus shows his love for the man through his actions despite the consequences.

## *Activity ideas*

There is more to life than breathing... Ask the young people to think about what things they value most in life. What are they things that their lives would look different with/without. Put them in small groups and ask them to agree a list of the three things they think are most important in life.

What did Jesus think of life? Explore this story from the point of view of the man with the withered hand. Get the young people to think about what a normal day would look like for him? What things would he not be able to do? What things could he do? Ask them to think about the same question for him after he has been given the use of his hand. What things can he now do? How does his daily life look different? Ask them now if they think Jesus was saving the man's life by giving him use of his hand. Explore their answers and ask them what that shows us about what Jesus thinks of what life is?

How can I bring life to others? One of the recurring themes of the life is Jesus is the joy he brought to those around himself. This joy came from what he did for people, how he helped people see themselves differently, how he made people feel loved and cared for. That is part of what we, as followers of Jesus, are supposed to do for the people around us. Ask the young people to think, either in small groups or individually, of the things they can do, and the things they can stop doing, that will bring the same joy to the people around them. Think about how you can make some kind of commitment to carrying this out

### The healing of Peter's mother in law Reading: Luke 4:38-40

#### *Leader's reflection*

While this reading is very short, it shows us some important things about what Jesus was able to do, as well as how he was received by those around him. When reading stories such as this we can get caught up on certain details which, to our modern eyes, seem strange items to add. Peter, or Simon as he is still called here, invites Jesus to his home after a busy day in the synagogue commanding unclean spirits.

Welcoming guests into the home was, and still is, a significant part of Jewish culture. Ensuring that they are well fed, looked after, comfortable and generally cared for is important far beyond the polite hospitality we would expect in western culture. It would also be expected that any host would shower their guest with kind words, praising them for the things they have done. Indeed, who was invited into a home was not a private family thing, but a public display of support for that person and what they stood for. Incidentally, this is why Jesus causes such a stir by dining with the 'wrong' sort of people.

By inviting Jesus into his home, Peter is saying publicly that he supports Jesus. But all is not well, Peter's mother in law is ill with high fever. This could have been life threatening, and so what comes next would have been a complete surprise to the early hearers of these stories. Jesus not only heals her, he heals her so completely that she is immediately able to get up and attend to her role as part of the host family, waiting on the guests.



Various (older) commentaries remark how this shows us that the proper response to healing is service. However, I think that is missing the point. What this is showing us, again, is Jesus believes that life is more than existence. Peter's mother in law is so completely healed she is able to serve, but she is also able to speak, laugh, listen, care for those who arrive later, and participate fully in what occurs next.

Verse 40 shows us the power of what Jesus was offering to those around him. After the sun set, and therefore after the Sabbath was over, many ill people either come or are brought to him. Imagine the scene of Peter's house in chaos as sick, diseased people enter and are healed. They are brought back into the fullness of their lives, they enter broken and leave complete.

### ***Aim***

To see why people wanted to be around Jesus so much, and how we can learn from that.

### ***Main points to cover***

1. Peter's mother in law is in serious trouble because of her illness
2. Jesus shows both his power and his love by stepping in and healing her.
3. Peter's mother in law is healed so completely she is able to get back to normal.

### ***Focus On***

Jesus loved, brought life and joy, and cared for all who came to him. This is what should shape how we live our lives.



**Activity ideas**

What's so special about Jesus? Have a Flipchart paper with WWJD across the middle of it and ask the young people what it stands for. Ask them to then fill up the paper with words and phrases that they think show WWJD in action. Now ask them which of these things on the list is particular to Jesus, and which of them could be replaced by another person. Dig into this until you have things that apply only to Jesus. We can lose sight of what makes Jesus so unique, by reducing him to just another nice person. Instead, to understand why people came to him in the numbers they did, we need to try and see what made Jesus so unique.

Who came to Jesus? Ask the young people to look back at v40, and list the different types of people who came to Jesus. The lost, rejected, and hurting people came to Jesus. Explore how these people would have been treated by the priests and other religious people at the time. Ask the young people to think about ourselves, and the people that we ignore or reject. Who do we try to spend time getting to like us, and who do we ignore so we don't look bad. Ask the young people if Jesus made the same distinction, or whether everyone who came to him was welcomed. Make the point that the people who Jesus was critical of were those who tried to look good, who tried to be important. Ask the young people if this is a challenge to them.

I want to be more like Him. Jesus shows us what it means to love those around us, to care for those who come to us for help. Ask the young people to think through ways that they are like Jesus, but also areas that they think they need to ask God for help to be more like him. If they can't think of anything, they need to think harder and challenge themselves. If you feel it is appropriate, have them each share an area that they want to be more like Jesus in. Have them pray for each other to ask God for help with that area of their life over the next week.



## The healing of blind Bartimaeus

Reading: Mark 10:46-52

### *Leader's reflection*

The story of Bartimaeus being given his sight is one that is familiar to many of us, and on the surface seems a pretty standard (if such a thing exists) healing miracle from the life of Jesus. But below the surface something far more interesting is going on. The placing of this story in Mark is interesting. It comes at the end of a section of teaching on discipleship and what it means to follow Jesus, and this story is described in one commentary as a 'living parable', or a real life illustration of what Jesus has been talking about.

This story, as we will see, is an illustration of what it means to follow Jesus.

As with the story of the man with the paralysed hand, we need to be aware of the cultural lens through which we read this story. While a blind person today faces many challenges the rest of us cannot understand, our society tries to support them to allow them to live as full a life as possible. This simply wasn't the case in the time of Jesus. People like Bartimaeus would have been taken to busy places in the city by their family to beg, so that they could contribute in some way to the life of the family financially. But, apart from this the overwhelming feeling would have been one of burden on the family. Bartimaeus would have spent his days sitting at the gate hoping for the kindness of strangers.

So, when he hears that Jesus is passing through he seizes his opportunity! He cries out to Jesus to 'have mercy' on him, but those around him shush him. Jesus is a busy man, with important things to do. Why would he be bothered about a blind beggar? Jesus, however, shows he doesn't see things the way others do. He stops and makes time for Bartimaeus, and has him brought to him. Importantly, when the blind beggar is brought to Jesus, he doesn't assume what Bartimaeus wants, but asks him.



Bartimaeus is given his sight, and immediately begins to follow Jesus on the road. The implication of the language here is not simply that he follows Jesus in his travels, but begins to follow him as a disciple, learning from him as others do. This is why the placement of this story in the gospel is so important. Bartimaeus is manifesting what it means to be a disciple. He trusts in Jesus enough to ask for healing, Jesus declares that his faith has healed him, and his response is to throw off his old life and begin to follow Jesus.

Trust, leading to faith, leading to response. It is like Mark is trying to say that, at the heart of all this talk about discipleship, this is what really matters. Through the miracle, Bartimaeus is given fullness of life. He is able to participate in life fully, where before his life was a pale shadow of what he was meant for. Jesus opens the door for us to fullness of life, if we have the faith to call out to him and ask.

<b><i>Aim</i></b>	To explore how Bartimaeus is an example of what it means to follow Jesus as a disciple.
<b><i>Main points to cover</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. There is more to this story than healing.</li><li>2. Bartimaeus's life was completely transformed by Jesus.</li></ol>
<b><i>Focus On</i></b>	Bartimaeus's response to Jesus.

**Activity ideas**

What is the subtext here? Ask the young people to read through the story and summarise it for you in a few bullet points. Ask them if they think there is anything else to the story than meets the eye. If they say yes, ask them to go back through the story and pull out the subtext. If they answer no, have them look at verses 51-52 and pick out some key words. The key words they are looking for are, 'Rabbi', and 'follow him'

What is the most important thing about being a Christian? Ask this question of the group and put all their answers on a Flipchart as they say them. Hopefully(!) at some point the idea of following Jesus should come up. When it does go back to that idea and get them as a group to think of three things that show what it means to follow Jesus.

Bringing it back to Bart: Ask the young people to re-open their Bibles to the reading and go through the story, highlighting the following three things that show what it means to be a follower of Jesus; 1. Bart trusts in Jesus enough to ask him to change his life. 2. Jesus calls Bart to him and changes his life forever. 3. Bart follows Jesus (Make sure to emphasise that the language Mark uses implies heavily that Bart became a full disciples of Jesus). This is what underlies the miraculous story of the healing of Bart, a story of calling and discipleship, which show us what it means to follow Jesus. To finish, ask the young people to think about where they are in the story, and spend some time talking to God about it.



## The healing of the paralysed man Reading: Mark 2:1-12

### *Leader's reflection*

This is another very well known healing story from Mark, and if we are not careful we can become blind to its greater significance through our familiarity to it.

Jesus is described as being, 'at home' and so a great many people gather to his home to hear him speak. Remember that to invite people into your home was a public statement about the sort of person you were, and so it should be no surprise then that there is a mix of people listening to Jesus, including the scribes who are offended by what happens next.

As a side-note it is worth considering why the scribes were there listening to Jesus at all. This story takes place near the start of Mark, and Jesus has been making quite a stir already. At the time there were a great number of people who would offer their interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, and the scribes and Pharisees would travel around to listen to them to either see if they had any good interpretations to offer, or to keep an eye on what they were teaching to ensure that significant misinterpretations of the Torah did not spread too far. So, the scribes in this story are here to check Jesus out, and they do not like what they see, or rather hear.

Jesus's teachings are rudely interrupted by an act of vandalism, when the roof is taken apart above this head, and a paralysed man is lowered down in front of him. (Bear in mind what was said in the reflections for both the man with the withered hand and blind Bartimaeus regarding those members of society who lived with a disability.) As with blind Bartimaeus, Jesus responds to the faith before him, but this time it is the faith of the man's friends rather than his own.



Again, Jesus shows that he sees the world differently, because the man's paralysis is not the first thing that he mentions. Instead he declares the man's sins forgiven. For many of us this can be a challenging part of this story. We value the use of our bodies so highly that we cannot think of anything being more important, yet simply by ordering things in the way he does, Jesus challenges our materialistic view of the world. Also, by separating the forgiveness of sins from the healing, Jesus is challenging a 'you get what you deserve' worldview of the time, in which physical suffering was the result of sinfulness.

In the end, to show that he has the power and authority to forgive sins, Jesus heals the man of his paralysis. As with other healings, the recovery of the man is not just dramatic but also immediate. This stuns those who witness it, and 'all...gave glory to God.' Considering the way the Gospel authors usually pick out those who dissent, we can assume that the scribes who were so skeptical are also won over, and are part of this group of worshippers.

### *Aim*

To consider how our faith can benefit others

### *Main points to cover*

The friend's faith and commitment to the paralysed man enabled him to encounter Jesus  
 Jesus priority is the man's rightness with God  
 Jesus healing power is miraculous

### *Focus On*

Jesus's forgiveness of sins as the first thing he does for the paralysed man.



**Activity ideas**

People should get what they deserve... This view is often still simmering below the surface of many conversations: eg. those who are poor deserve it because they cannot take care of their money; those who are ill are ill as a result of not taking care of their bodies; those who are unemployed are unemployed because they cannot be bothered to look for work. Ask the young people if they can think of examples of where they can see this attitude in the world. Have some recent examples from the news read to fill the gaps, if they can't think of any. Ask them if they think God gives us what we deserve. Get them to explore this in some depth. Do we deserve forgiveness? Do we deserve what God gives us? Make sure that this discussion leads to the young people knowing that God gives us all we need even when we don't deserve it, because He loves us, and that is an encouraging thought.

How far would you go for your friends? Within this story is a challenge that can sit uncomfortably with us. This man's friends were so determined to help him that they were not put off by crowds or even by a roof in the way. They went to extraordinary lengths to help their friend. Ask the young people to imagine the story of these friends. How had they helped him in the past? How had they supported him in his living? What would their future friendship look like? If you have a story from your life that shows how you did not stand by a friend in this way, and it is appropriate, share it here. Ask the young people to think about how they stand by their friends. Do they stand by them through thick and thin? Are they there for them no matter what? This could be an uncomfortable thing for some of the young people to reflect on, so don't necessarily ask them to share. Have the young people think about how they could be friends like the men in this story to the people around them.

Faith has made you well. Ask the young people what they think Faith is. See if, in groups, they can come up with a definition in one sentence. Discuss their answers together. What will probably come out is faith is about believing, it is about knowing something. Essentially, that faith is a theoretical idea. Ask them if they think there is more to faith than belief. Ask them to look at the faith of the friends in the story again, and how did their faith show itself. Help them see that the faith of the men lead them to act, that the acting was a part of their belief, not a separate thing. Ask the young people if the way they act is part of their faith. Challenge the young people to think of a way over the next week that they could act out their faith in their lives in the way that the man's friends did.





## Calming of the Storm Reading: Mark 4:35-41

### *Leader's reflection*

Once again in this story, we are taught more about who Jesus is and the incredible power he has at his command.

This story follows a significant chunk of teaching from Jesus to a large crowd, and there is a sense that he would like to get away for a bit of peace and quiet. As they are crossing over, the Sea of Galilee, a storm comes up out of nowhere. Because of its location, this is not an uncommon occurrence. Often strong winds blow up storms with little notice. However, as has been mentioned many times before, this one must have been pretty bad. There are at least four fishermen amongst the disciples, and they are scared for their lives.

But Jesus is sleeping peacefully on a cushion in the back of the boat. It is possible that he was tired from speaking to so many people. But the disciples wake him, scared for their lives, and he rebukes the storm.  
And it stops.

What always amazes me about this story is the response of the disciples to what happens. They are terrified of Jesus, they ask each other "who is this?". It makes you wonder if they woke Jesus up to help them bail out water from the boat.

This story has a direct link back to two occurrences in the OT. The first is at the very beginning, in Genesis 1 and 2. God, creating the world, used His voice to speak creation into being. In using words to show his power over nature, Jesus is giving a parallel with God in creation to show us who he is. Water in the ancient eastern world was a representation of chaos and destruction. This is not surprising when you live in a part of the world that rarely sees rain, and when you do it causes flood. Jesus has complete command over the water, showing his power and



mastery over the chaos of the world. The second is the crossing of the Red Sea. Although in that story, it is God who works through Moses to split the sea, there is still a parallel. The wild, untameable sea is brought to obedience through the work of a man.

The story goes beyond just saving the disciples. In verse 36, it says that there are other boats on the lake with them. What would the people in those boats make of the sudden disappearance of the squall? Jesus not only saves those in the boat with him, but his words affect the whole world around him in a real and tangible way.

As with all of the miracles, there are wider themes at play here, and lessons and meanings we can take away which apply to our lives. Jesus is with us through the storms in our lives. He stands with us, and can calm our storms, because when we trust in him. This can sound trite and clichéd, but when you go through the storms and realise that Jesus is with you, that he stands with you, your perspective changes.

### ***Aim***

To wonder at the amazing power of Jesus and what it tells us about who he is.

### ***Main points to cover***

1. The scale of the storm to be scary to a group of men who were used to sailing.
2. The actions of Jesus and their incredible power.
3. The response of the disciples.

### ***Focus On***

Parallels between the Old and New Testament stories.



## *Activity ideas*

Using the largest water container with an open top you can find, explain to the young people that you want them to find a way to make the water still after you have stirred it around. Give them a few minutes in groups and some materials to use, and have them come back together to try out their solutions. Evaluate how effective the different ways are, and then introduce the reading.

Print out the reading onto pieces of paper. Get the young people into groups and ask them to read through this story. As they read it, ask them to highlight or mark on the paper any bits that stand out to them. Feedback as a group, and discuss what they bring up. Read through a second time, this time marking anything they overlooked either because they know the story well or because other bits seemed more important. If this goes well, ask them to think of any stories in the OT that might be similar to this, giving clues to lead them to the parting of the Red Sea, and to creation. Explore the similarities with them and why this is important.

Explore the idea of the disciples being scared at the end of the reading. Sometimes when we encounter Jesus we are comforted, sometimes we are scared. Look at the power that Jesus has, and what he is able to do in the reading. Contrast that with the way he treats us with care and love. Ensure that the emphasis in this is on the comfort, care and kindness that Jesus shows us.

### Feeding of the 5000 Reading: John 6:1-14

#### *Leader's reflection*

There have been numerous attempts to explain away this miracle over the years. Maybe the people there were inspired by the boy bringing forward his food, and so shared what they had and everyone had enough? That was the real miracle, that everyone shared. Or perhaps it is spiritual food that they are talking about, and Jesus fed them spiritually until they were full and there were 12 baskets of spiritual leftovers. Personally, I don't believe these attempts to explain it away.

Once again, there are parallels here with the OT. Through their wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were fed daily by God, with the miraculous appearance of manna from heaven. For 40 years they were reliant on God for their everyday needs.

This story starts with Jesus being followed by a huge number of people because of what they have seen him do. He has performed signs and wonders, and so they want to spend time around him. The title of the miracle strangely understates the magnitude of the miracle, as they only count the 5000 men and do not say how many women and children were there.

In all of the accounts of this miracle, the initial loaves and fish don't appear miraculously, although in John we see that a boy has brought them forward, a detail absent in the other stories. Jesus takes them, blesses them and shares them so everyone has enough.



Jesus takes what we have, and magnifies it for his glory. The 5 loaves and 2 fish become enough for a crowd of thousands. In the same way, Jesus takes the gifts and talents that we have, and when we use them for his purposes, they are magnified. This is more important than we realise. Jesus doesn't miraculously bring the food out of nothing, but uses what is available. In the same way, Jesus allows us to be part of the process of bringing his word into the world, so that it, us, and the people around us, can be transformed by it into people who reflect his glory, grace and goodness.

There is also a message here about the provision of God. Jesus doesn't provide just enough for everyone. Everyone had enough to eat and there were leftovers. God is generous in his provision for us, he gives us what we need, when we need it, when we trust in Him.

What does this mean for us in our everyday lives? God's provision in practical terms has been down talked a lot recently, in response to the rise of the prosperity gospel. As such, we don't often talk about how God provides for us, or we point to those extraordinary times that he does this. But each and every day we are subject to God's provision. The food on our tables, money in our banks, the air that we breath, is all part of God's provision. In this miracle, Jesus is reminding us that he provides for us daily, not just in extraordinary times.

**Aim** To wonder at the absolutely ridiculous of the scale of the miracle.

**Main points to cover**

1. Why were the crowd following Jesus? What did they want from him and what had brought them to him?
2. The initial bread and fish don't come from nowhere; they are given and Jesus multiplies them.
3. Jesus gives more than is needed. In a similar way to the water into wine miracle, he is generous with what he gives.

**Focus On** The role of the boy in all this - he brought forward a little and Jesus transformed it into a lot.



**Activity ideas**

Exploring the scale. If possible, before the session either print off some small fish and loaves, or ideally, use anchovies and dough balls to explore the scale. Pick out two fish and 5 bits of bread, and ask if this would be enough to feed; 1 the people in the room. 2 the people in the church, 3 the people outside the church. Ask the young people to think how many people they could feed with that much food, and how much they might need to feed all the people in church.

As a group, make bread together. Each of the young people can have their own piece to make and take home with them to bake. Once you have made the mixture and cleaned up hands, talk about the boy in the story, and how the bread that he brought to Jesus had been made like this. It was normal bread that Jesus used to do something amazing. We are normal people, can God use us to do amazing things.

The young boys pack up. This is a great reading for exploring the gifts and talents that outyoung people have, and seeing how they can use them to serve God. Explore the idea of the picnic being given by the boy, and that Jesus made the picnic far more than he could have imagined. Explain that the same is true of us and our talents. God takes them, and uses them in ways we could never imagine. Ask the young people to write down individually the skills and talents they have. You may need to encourage them to look beyond the things we normally look for in church, such as public speaking, musical talent etc. and look more holistically at themselves. Then get them into pairs, and help each other look at the talents and skills that they each have, and explore different ideas they might have for each other. Bring this together by explaining that, like the boy, God can use our skills in ways we can't foresee, and so we shouldn't limit ourselves to the ideas we have had this morning.



**Jairus's daughter**  
**Reading: Mark 5:21-43**

*Leader's reflection*

There are two miracles for the price of one in this reading; Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman.

This story starts with a bit of a surprise. A man of authority in the Jewish community, a synagogue leader, coming to him to ask for help. With the view of those in authority of Jesus at this point we can infer two things. First, that Jesus has been having a real impact on the lives of those he has come into contact with and second; Jairus is desperate for help, and is willing to ignore the religious authorities to get the help he believes his daughter needs.

We can also see the compassion that Jesus feels for him in the immediacy he has in going with the man. With other miracles, there are often questions as to what the person wants, but here Jesus sees the need in the man and goes with him.

This sense of urgency is, however, somewhat offset by the next part of the story. A woman who has been bleeding for 12 years follows in the crowd, wanting to touch Jesus cloak so she that can be healed.

There is a lot to unpack in such a short part of the story. First, the woman's bleeding would have meant her continued exclusion from the Jewish faith for those 12 years. This would have been far more serious than we can imagine, with all society being based around worship at the synagogue and temple, and all community coming out of that. This woman would have been excluded completely from that because of something she had no control over.

So she touches Jesus cloak in the hopes of being healed, and is healed. There is far more to this than meets the eye. As this takes place, a prophecy about the Messiah in Malachi 4:2 is fulfilled: about the Son of Righteousness having healing in his wings. This seems cryptic until you know about the type of clothes Jesus would



have been wearing. As a Jewish man he would have been wearing a prayer shawl, which would have had tassels at its edge. The name for these tassels was tzitzit. This is also a word for wings. So when the woman touches the edge of Jesus' cloak, she touches the tassels, or the wings, and is healed.

Jesus notices this and stops, pressed in by a crowd on all sides, and asks who has touched him. In the midst of a crowd, Jesus was able to tell who had needed him most, and who had trusted in him to do it. He speaks to the woman, which is far more than she expected to happen, and tells her that it is her faith in him that has made her well.

While all this is going on Jairus' daughter has died, and men come from his house to tell him this. But Jesus tells him to pay no attention, to not be afraid, and to believe. Jesus then takes Peter, James and John in with him, and tells the mourners to be quiet, as the girl is only asleep. This seems a strange thing to do, as they know she is dead, and it is no surprise when they laugh. We will come back to this in a moment. Jesus enters the room where the girl is and tells her to get up. She does.

After this happens, Jesus instructs them all to not tell anyone about this. This seems like another strange thing to do, but does link to the mourners. This is clearly not a sign or wonder for people to witness and be amazed by. This is Jesus responding with compassion to the needs of a father who is desperate for help. By telling the mourners that the girl is asleep, it will be less shocking and need less explanation that she is up and about.

Jesus does and has healed in public in front of others. The man with the paralysed hand on a sabbath springs to mind. But there, the miracle served two purposes. First, to help a man who had a paralysed hand. Secondly, to show the pharisees their error in overly relying in their interpretation of scripture to blind them to the needs of the people around them. Here, there is no point to be made, only joy to be brought to a family.





<b>Aim</b>	Explore the impact Jesus had on the everyday lives of the people in this story.
<b>Main points to cover</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How important Jairus' social position is in showing how desperate he was for help.</li> <li>2. Jesus doesn't brush off the woman in need, even though he is on his way to somewhere already; he shows his care and attention for her.</li> <li>3. The miracle is done secretly and not in public- it isn't about showing who Jesus is to others, but about his care for that family at that time.</li> </ol>
<b>Focus On</b>	The way the woman was excluded from society because of her condition, Jesus' compassion for her, and his compassion for Jairus' family.

**Activity ideas**

Explore how incredible it was that Jairus went to Jesus in the first place. Pick out some readings of the Jewish authorities speaking against Jesus and what he was doing, and look at Jairus' position in the society; a prominent Jew with authority in his local community. Look at these things next to each other, and look at how desperate Jairus must have been to go to Jesus, as it endangered his position and his standing, but he valued what mattered.

Ask the young people to map out their different social groups, and where the centre of them is. This may be school, church, sports club or somewhere else. The point is that it is the place where they have most of their social connections. There may be some crossover and a venn diagram could be the best way to map this. Get them to think about what their life would be like if they were excluded from one or all of these places because of something outside their control. Make the point that this was the case for the woman who was healed- she had been excluded not just from temple, but all aspects of her society, because of her condition.



**Game: Pick up keys, with a twist.** Ask a young person sit on a chair in the middle of the room with a heavy set of keys underneath the chair. The person must either wear a blindfold or keep their eyes closed. Pick another young person to try and steal the keys without the person on the chair noticing. If the person on the chair notices, they need to point towards where they think the noise came from. The twist is that, to win, the person on the chair then needs to name the person trying to get the keys correctly. Play this through a few times, and then use it to illustrate the difficulties of identifying the woman in the crowd. Make the point that Jesus was aware enough of what was going on and the people around him to know something had happened, and to identify the woman.

**Where do I avoid risks?** Sometimes we try as much as possible to avoid taking risks either with our faith or in our everyday lives. It would be great if part of the response to this story would be your young people praying for each other. Get them into pairs or threes, and have them share something that scares them about living out their faith. It may be that they are worried people will think they are strange, or they will be picked on for it, or they are worried that God will ask them to do something that scares them. Ask them to be brave in what they share, and then get them to pray, preferably out loud, for each other. If this is something your group are not used to hearing done, give them an example of a really simply prayer to show they don't need to use the 'right' language or 'correct' words.