

The story of the feeding of the 4,000



Read the Bible story

A couple of weeks back, we read about Jesus feeding 5,000 men and their wives and children. In today's story, he feeds 4,000.

²⁹ From there, Jesus went along Lake Galilee. Then he climbed a hill and sat down. ³⁰ Large crowds came and brought many people who were crippled or blind or lame or unable to talk. They placed them, and many others, in front of Jesus, and he healed them all.

³¹ Everyone was amazed at what they saw and heard. People who had never spoken could now speak. The lame were healed, the crippled could walk, and the blind were able to see. Everyone was praising the God of Israel.

³² Jesus called his disciples together and told them, "I feel sorry for these people. They have been with me for three days, and they don't have anything to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry. They might faint on their way home."

³³ His disciples said, "This place is like a desert. Where can we find enough food to feed such a crowd?"³⁴

Jesus asked them how much food they had. They replied, "Seven small loaves of bread and a few little fish."

³⁵ After Jesus had told the people to sit down, ³⁶ he took the seven loaves of bread and the fish and gave thanks. He then broke them and handed them to his disciples, who passed them around to the crowds.

³⁷ Everyone ate all they wanted, and the leftovers filled seven large baskets.

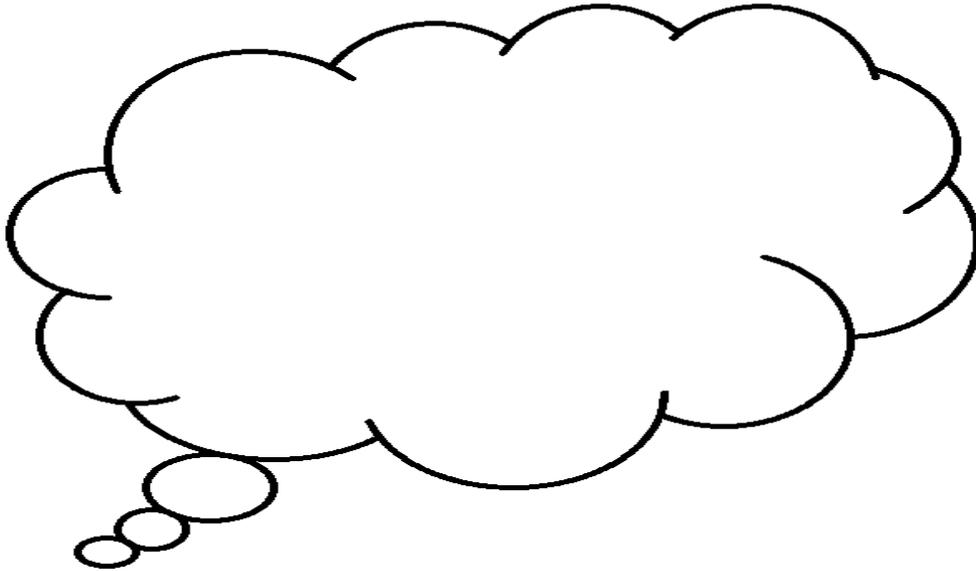
³⁸ There were four thousand men who ate, not counting the women and children.

(Matthew 15.29–38, CEV)

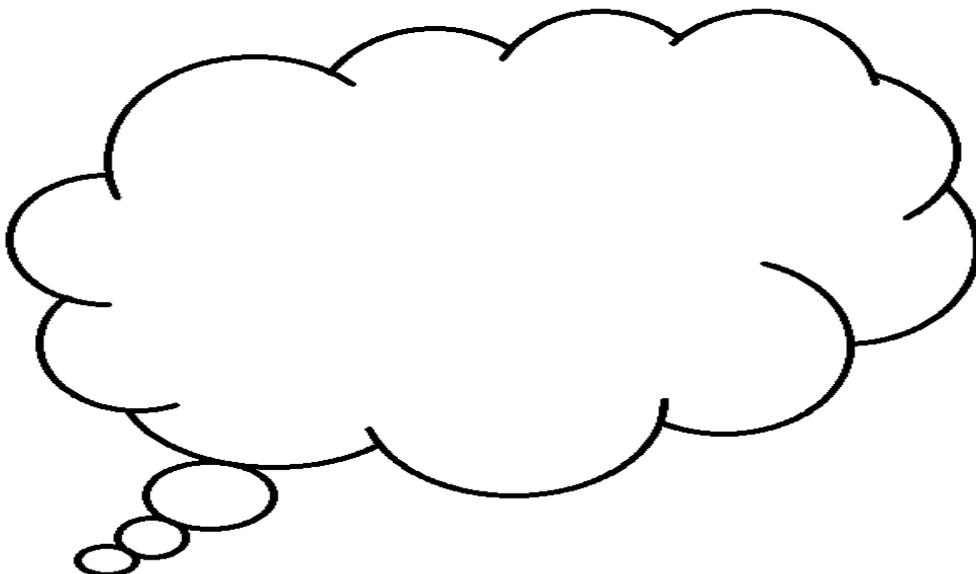
Questions to answer

- 1. Today's story describes how Jesus healed people. What things does it say he healed people of?**
- 2. What effects did Jesus' healings have on the people in the crowd?**
- 3. How many loaves of bread and how much fish did the disciples find they had?**
- 4. How much food was left after everyone had eaten?**

Imagine you are one of the disciples who was with Jesus. It has been a long, tiring day and you have all those hungry people who have come to see him. What do you think that the disciples would have been thinking or feeling? In the thought bubble below, write the kinds of thoughts the disciples might have been thinking when Jesus said they were going to feed all these people with seven loaves of bread and a few fish.



In this thought bubble, write the thoughts that the disciples might have had after the crowd had all been fed.



The Decapolis

This story is very similar to the previous one, when Jesus fed 5,000 men.

When Jesus fed the 5,000, he was with people who (like him) were Jewish, at Bethsaida by the shore of Lake Galilee. Today's story is very similar, but it happened in a different place, and with different people. The place was called the Decapolis, which means 'ten cities' in ancient Greek.

'deca' = ten

'polis' = city

The people who lived in the Decapolis were 'Gentiles' (this word means 'people who aren't Jewish'). Jewish people didn't really have much to do with Gentiles. They didn't eat the same kinds of food or wear the same kinds of clothes or believe the same things. Jesus, though, saw that they were hungry and made sure that they were fed. It didn't matter to him that the people were different from him.

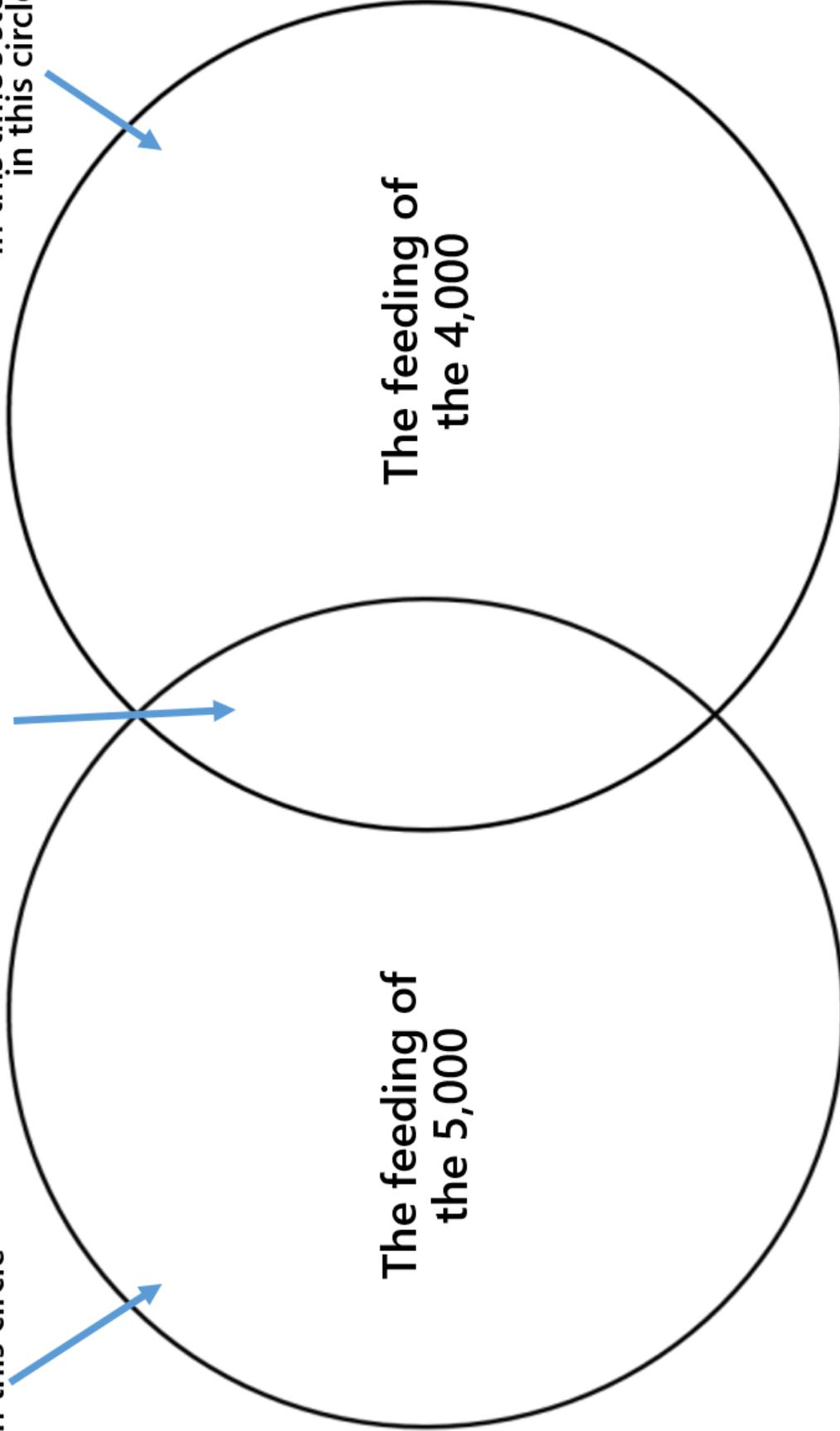
The Decapolis was over 20 miles away from Bethsaida, and in Jesus' day, they had to walk to get from place to place. Ask an adult in your house about a place that is 20 miles from where you live. How long would it take you to get there if you were walking?

On the next page, there is a Venn diagram to show how far the stories of the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 are similar to each other. Follow the instructions and complete the diagram.

Write the things which
are only in last time's
story in this circle

Things which are in
both stories go in the
middle

Things which are only
in this time's story go
in this circle



Fun for all summer

In our story, Jesus reached out to people he didn't know and who were different from him by feeding them when they were hungry. Below are some fun things you can do each week this summer to extend friendship to others. They are all easy and fun.

- Paint some Kindness Rocks and when the paint is dry, in permanent felt tip, write a word on each rock that is something that makes life better (friendship, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, health, laughter, energy, etc). Once they are painted and dry (you can coat them with clear varnish so the rain doesn't ruin them), leave your rocks where lots of people will pass with a sign that says, 'Take the rock you need and then pass it on when you meet someone else who needs it.'
- Share some books Are there some books in your house that you no longer read? Ask a parent if it is OK for you to give these books to someone else or a charity shop.
- Write a letter Why not write a letter to a grandparent or older relative and tell them what you have been up to? What has been good for you? What has been difficult? Tell them about something funny that has happened to you. What have you noticed that has changed in your neighbourhood, family or town recently?
- Do some research on a country you don't know much about. See if you can find out about their food, sports, climate, customs, houses, schools and holidays. What would you like about living there? What do you think you might find difficult about living there? Tell someone in your family all about what you learn about this country.
- Learn five words in sign language You never know when it might come in handy. Go to the [British Sign Language website](#) to get some ideas. Maybe you can even learn to finger spell?

Let's make it

No matter how old you are, it's always fun to make things out of play dough. Can you make seven loaves of bread and a few fish? Or can you make baskets of what was left over? (Look at the Bible reading to check the numbers). Or maybe you can retell the story using play dough shapes of bread, fish, people and baskets. Below is a recipe to make your own play dough if you don't have any around the house. Remember to have an adult help you.

Play dough recipe:

- 350 g plain flour
- 200 g salt
- 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 500 ml lukewarm water
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (coconut oil works too)
- Food colouring (if you wish)

Instructions

1. Stir together the flour, salt and cream of tartar in a large pot. Next add the water and oil. If you're only making one colour, stir in the colour now.
2. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Continue stirring until the dough has thickened and begins to form into a ball. Remove from heat and then place inside a bowl.
3. Allow to cool slightly and then knead until smooth. If you're adding colours after, divide the dough into balls (for how many colours you want). Start with about 5 drops of colour and add more to brighten it. If you knead the dough while it's inside a bag it doesn't stain your hands.
4. Store the play dough inside the bags to keep soft. If stored properly it will keep soft for up to three months.

Some questions to think about or discuss as a family

Despite the 4,000 people being Gentiles, Jesus felt compassion for them because they had been with him for three days and had nothing to eat. What does Jesus' concern for these Gentile people show us about him?

Sometimes people are afraid of people who are different from them, but Jesus set an example by reaching out to people who were different. He had compassion on them and healed them and gave them food until they had enough to eat. You might be moving up to secondary school in September, where you will meet lots of new people, some of whom will be different to you.

How many ways can you think of in which people can be different? How do you feel when you meet people who are different from you?

Jesus felt sorry for the people in the crowd. Is there anyone in the world you feel sorry for? What might you be able to do to help them?