



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 1: Multiply - Scarcity vs Abundance

Dinnertime was approaching, stomachs were rumbling, and the growing crowd was getting restless. As the sun was getting low in the sky, the disciples nervously looked around. Who was going to feed this hungry crowd? We all have those moments where we look at our lives and our challenges through the lens of our own humanity, with our finite abilities and strength. Over the next 3 weeks, we are going to look at what happens when we trust in the resources of an unlimited infinite God, instead of trusting in our own human limitations.

BACKGROUND:

The story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 was recorded in all 4 gospels. During this moment in Jesus' life, He had just found out about John the Baptist's death. This would have been a painful and exhausting time in His ministry here on earth. As Jesus and the disciples tried to find a place to be alone, grieve, and rest, the crowds had followed them. Even during this moment of personal exhaustion and grief, Jesus had compassion on the crowd. He saw their needs and felt called to help. He began to teach, heal, and minister to them. This is where each of the gospel passages below begin...

John 6: 5-15

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" **6** He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" **8** Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, **9** "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" **10** Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). **11** Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. **12** When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." **13** So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. **14** After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Matthew 14:14-21

14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. **15** As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." **16** Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." **17** "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. **18** "Bring them here to me," he said. **19** And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. **21** The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Mark 6: 34-44

34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. **35** By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. **36** Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." **37** But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages[e]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" **38** "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." **39** Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. **40** So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. **41** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. **42** They all ate and were satisfied, **43** and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. **44** The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Luke 9:11-17

11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. **12** Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." **13** He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." **14** (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." **15** The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. **16** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. **17** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

MONDAY: The Lie of Scarcity

Scarcity is defined as the gap between what we need and what we perceive to have available. It is the basic belief & fear that we don't have enough. It's the "cup is 1/2 empty and no one is going to fill it up but me" type of attitude. This can show up in many forms. It can be scarcity of time, money, food, attention or love, energy, friends, and the list goes on. It's easy to see this whenever there is a big snowstorm or some sort of supply shortage predicted. Suddenly all the stores run out of toilet paper, bread, or bottled water as everyone hoards random items to be sure they have enough. Of course, we can also see this in our regular daily lives. At work, it may look like a person not giving their team proper credit, because they fear acknowledging others somehow diminishes their own contributions. In relationships it can look like control, possessiveness, and jealousy, as someone fears there isn't enough love and energy to share. This ultimately leads to greed, competition, defensiveness, fear, and anxiety in almost every aspect of our lives. It blocks us from the joys of thankfulness and generosity. This lie can often be the root cause of FOMO (or fear of missing out). We can overcommit and even take unhealthy opportunities or risks as we desperately rush through decisions for fear of missing out on something, or letting something "good" pass us by. We can also hold onto possessions, relationships, or opportunities too tightly or for too long because of these fears. Scarcity mindset is a self-focused, self-reliance, self-provision, and self-preservation mindset. It puts us in the seat of God in our lives, and it is a posture of trying to be in control. This is a space that will lead to stress, anxiety, failure, and eventually burnout. We were never created to be in this space.

Of course, this is not a new concept. We see this scarcity lie in the very beginning with Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3, they believed that God was holding out on them. Even though God gave them an entire garden of fruit to eat, they chose to eat from the one tree that God told

them not to. They believed the lie that God was trying to keep something good from them. In our story of the loaves and fish, the disciples looked at this massive crowd of 5,000 men (Side note: there were possibly an equal or greater amount of women & children that were not counted that day), and knew they didn't have the human capability to feed them. For perspective we can think about the entire outdoor concert venue at Wolf Trap filled to capacity, and maybe more. That's a lot of hungry people! We can certainly relate to their feelings of anxiety and overwhelm as they look over the crowd. Logically their first reaction is to suggest sending the crowd away so they could get their own food. However, Jesus said "you give them something to eat". I can just imagine their faces going white, and this feeling of confusion and dread. Can't you just hear them whispering, "what is Jesus thinking, we can't do this"? Phillip even tries to "educate" Jesus, as if Jesus didn't understand basic economics, when he tells Jesus how long they would each have to work to feed everyone. Their scarcity mindset is a bit ironic as the disciples had literally witnessed Jesus doing 100's, maybe 1000's of miracles by this point. Yet, they still looked at this crowd through the eyes of their own human scarcity. The disciples couldn't see or imagine past their own human abilities, even though they were literally in the presence of God. This is how much the lie of scarcity can blind us from the goodness and abundance of God.

Where in your life are you blinded by the lie of scarcity? Where are the spaces you find yourself being competitive, jealous or defensive? Are you hoarding money, time, or other resources for fear of not having enough? Do you rush to grab every opportunity for fear of missing out on something? Where are the areas in your life that it's difficult to be thankful or generous? When you look at the root of your deepest fears, is their an element of not having (or being) enough?

TUESDAY: The Truth of God's Abundance

The opposite of scarcity is abundance. Abundance is the knowledge that you have or are enough. It's also believing that there is always going to be enough in the future. Of course, this mindset is only possible through an abundant God. As humans, we are limited and our resources are always finite. In contrast, God is completely unlimited and His resources are infinite. Therefore, there is no way to live an abundant life as humans without the power of a abundant God. When we rest in the truth of God's abundance, we believe that God will provide enough resources, opportunities, time, energy, love, friendships, and support for everyone, including ourselves. This allows us to believe in the unlimited possibilities of what God can do with what we have, rather than focusing on what's missing. An abundant mindset looks at the glass as 1/2 full and believes that God will provide the opportunities to fill it back up again. This mindset give us the freedom to hold our money, opportunities, relationships and successes with open hands. When we trust in God's abundance, we have no need to compete, defend, fear, or to be jealous of the resources & people around us. This mindset allows us to approach our daily lives with a sense of calm, God-confidence. We can take time to pray and make wise decisions, instead of desperately jumping into things for fear of missing out. We can confidently know if one door closes, another will open, and trust that God has a plan. When we have this God-confidence, we are more likely to share in our successes, and lift others up without jealousy or needing to be in the spotlight ourselves. We start to see challenges as opportunities rather than threats. Unlike scarcity, the abundance mindset is God-focused, God-reliant, and fully trusting in God's provision and protection. We don't need to defend ourselves, or provide for ourselves, or compete and hoard to get what we need. We can allow God to be in control of our lives, and seek to follow Him instead of the exhaustion, stress, and burnout that comes from trying to do it all on our own.

Paul is an excellent example of this abundant mindset. In his letter to the Philippians, while he is incarcerated in a Roman prison, He wrote these abundantly optimistic words. Many of us might have verse 13 memorized, however, they certainly take on a new meaning when we

realize where Paul was when he wrote it. This is the abundant way he looked at his life, as he was content with or without his own physical freedom.

Phil 4:11-13

“11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”.

Paul's life was abundant because of God. Throughout scripture we see that not only does God promise His abundance towards us, but that God's very nature is abundant. We worship an abundant and trustworthy God! Paul wrote about this again in his letter to the Ephesians. This is evidence of the abundant love, strength, power and fullness of God dwelling in us.

Ephesians 3: 16-20

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Spend time in prayer today, and slowly read over these verses above. Where are the spaces that you need to trust God in His abundance? Write them down and pray over them today.

WEDNESDAY: Scarcity Mindset Makes God Small

When we have a scarcity mindset, as believers, it is often because we have made God too small in our lives. We are viewing God through a human lens. Just as the disciples did in this moment with Jesus, we put our own human limitations on a God that has no limits. Philip tries to explain to Jesus how long they would have to work to get the money to feed the crowd. Then, Andrew questions Jesus about how far a small boy's lunch would go to feed the huge crowd. We can only imagine what Jesus must have thought about this. They all seem to doubt there is any way to feed a meal to such a large group. The irony is that the same God who created the heavens and the earth is standing right in front of them, and they don't see how he could feed them just one meal. We might be judging the disciples as we read this, but how often do we end up asking God these same questions? We question and we doubt in our daily lives as well. We might wonder whether God can provide opportunities, resources, relationships, protection, grace, and even acceptance. We might be reluctant to even ask God for these things, because we don't truly believe He can or would provide it for you. Even though He is the God that “knit you together in your mother's womb” (Psalm 139), the God that conquered death and gave His life for you, the God that created everything seen and unseen, the God that knows when you sit and when you rise (Psalm 139), and who even knows the number of hairs on your head (or lack of - Luke 12:7). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13). He is not, and never was, a small God. He is capable of doing more than we could ever think or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Even with all of this knowledge, we often ironically wait until all our human ideas have been exhausted before we pray and ask God for help. How many times have you said, “well, all I can do is pray about it now” ?

These verses in James, warn us about this way of thinking. Our doubt makes God seem too small, and our challenges seem too big. This is the root of the lie of scarcity. The lie tells us that He is not enough.

James 1:6-8

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Where are you making God small in your life? Where does God feel like not enough? Where are your challenges and doubts tossing you like waves in the wind? What do you need to trust the almighty God with today? Pray and ask for His forgiveness, then prayerfully give over the lies that you have been believing.

If you are struggling with doubt, its is ok, ask for His help just as the father did in Mark 9:23-24:

23 “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

THURSDAY: Scarcity Mindset Leads to Burnout

Matthew 11:28

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

What happens when the lie of scarcity tells us “it’s all up to me”? We can begin to pour out and overextend in ways that God never intended for us to. Then we can begin to dread the work God has called us to. The work is not bad, but we get weary because we are carrying it with fear and self-reliance instead of faith and dependance. The disciples are in this space as they look out at the huge crowd and begin to grumble as they question Jesus. How are we going to feed them? How could we possibly afford the cost? How long would we have to work to get enough food? There’s no way we will have enough. We’ve all been there, and maybe some of us are there right now. We are overwhelmed, stressed and burned out. Our “huge crowd” moment might be job loss, financial strain, overcommitments, strained relationships, a health diagnosis, or anything else in your life seems impossible right now.

How does this happen, and what can we do about it?

1. **We forget who provides.** The Israelites did this in the desert (Exodus 16:2-4; 17-20), and we see the disciples doing it here with Jesus as well. How quickly we forget how good God is, and has been. **Take a moment to remember the times that God has provided in your past.**
2. **We act instead of abide.** We see this in the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), and we see this with the disciples as they scramble and try to send the crowd away on their own. **What would it look like to prioritize presence over performance?**
3. **We view burnout as the cost.** Just like Elijah under the broom tree (1 Kings 19:3-8), we will burn out trying to do it all ourselves. Remember that burnout isn’t a sign of our failure to do something God asked us to do. Burnout is a sign that we are doing more than God has asked, and carrying more than we were meant to carry. Notice that God doesn’t rebuke Elijah in this moment. Instead, He gives Him rest, food, and His presence. **Give over the burden of burnout guilt to God today. God doesn’t want or expect you to run alone, or**

on empty. Ask God what His provision of abundant rest & presence looks like for you today.

4. **We forget that we need the vine.** We are the branches, and apart from the vine we can do nothing (John 15:4-5). Jesus is our life source. Burnout happens when we attempt to create fruit without being attached to the vine. **Pray and ask God what it looks like for you to spend time staying connected to Him daily. Where might you need to prune away the things in your day that are keeping you from Him?**

FRIDAY: Looking Up

Just as Jesus did in Matthew 14:19, the cure to the lie of scarcity is looking up. Gratitude is one of the key elements to shifting from the lie of scarcity to the truth of God's abundance. Keeping our eyes on Him helps us to see that the source of abundance is not in WHAT we have, but in WHO we look to.

Psalm 121:1-2

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Colossians 3:2

"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

Think about how Jesus took this one tiny lunch and thanked God for it. He needed well over 5,000 meals, yet He thanked God for the one meal He had. By thanking God, Jesus gave God the glory for the blessing of the meal in His hands. Instead of focusing on the lack of the other 5,000 meals, Jesus focused on His Father. He knew the goodness & abundance of God. He knew that God could provide as many meals as they would ever need or want. This is what happens when we fix our eyes on Him. The Bible is full of stories where those that had a "little" by human standards, focused on God and were blessed by His abundance.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, there are many many more in Scripture and most likely in your own life as well! Take a moment to read and pray over these verses today, and also reflect on the moments in your life where God has blessed you with His abundance & grace.

1. **1 Samuel 17** - David and Goliath - 5 small stones killed a warrior giant
2. **Matthew 17:20** - Mustard Seed of Faith - God says all we need is the tiniest seed of faith to move a mountain
3. **Luke 21:1-4** - Widow giving coins - Jesus said her small coins were worth more than anyone else gave that day
4. **1 Kings 17:13-14** - Widow with one last meal never ran out. God filled her jar daily with the ingredients to make bread
5. **Judges 7** - Gideon - God used a fearful man, and only 300 troops to defeat a vast army
6. **Exodus 4:10** - Moses - God used a man that had murdered someone, and couldn't speak well to speak to Pharaoh and free his people

Take some time today to pray and begin to make a gratitude journal if you don't already have one. Think about the areas that you are most anxious and fearful, or most competitive and jealous. Be honest with yourself, even if it's hard. Then begin a gratitude list for each of these areas.

Thank God for each and every blessing - no matter how big or small! Keep the list going over the next few weeks and see how God uses this focus to begin shifting your mindset on Him.