

WORSHIP AND INSTRUCTION FROM THE LORD

When the Lord came into the world, the Sabbath became a day of instruction in Divine things and for meditation things relating to salvation and eternal life.
(see *True Christian Religion* 301)

The Lord wants everyone to have natural *and* spiritual nourishment. Just as natural food feeds our bodies and keeps them healthy, spiritual food feeds our minds, giving us the truths that can help us follow the Lord. Worship services at church, school, or home can help us set aside special times to turn to the Lord with receptive minds—eager to hear the teachings of His Word.

READ: “Approaching the Lord in Worship” by the Rev. David R. Simons (*for teens*)

It is a spiritual law that the Lord can flow into our minds and hearts, only so far as we approach Him. The first thing of all worship, then, is to approach the Lord and look to Him so that He can fill our minds with His truth and our hearts with His love.

READ: “Worship as a Family Activity” by Joseph David

This article explains nine major benefits of family worship and includes a list of practical suggestions on how to include worship in your family’s life.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Seeking Instruction from the Lord (*teens and adults*)

Explore various ways of getting spiritual nourishment from the Lord’s Word.

FOR REFLECTION: Natural and Spiritual Food Pyramids (*teens and adults*)

Reflect on the correspondences of the foods we need to keep our bodies and spirits healthy.

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

Eating and drinking, in the Word mean to eat and drink spiritually,
which is to be instructed, and by instruction both to infill the life,
and appropriate to oneself good and truth, consequently intelligence and wisdom.
(*Apocalypse Explained* 617:3)

There are many stories in the Word that mention eating and drinking. Since these activities symbolize getting spiritual nourishment, these stories can help us understand the importance of getting both kinds of food.

READ: “Spiritual Hunger” by the Rev. Ragnar Boyesen

In order to be truly nourished, the spiritual body in each of us must have both good and truth taken into it. If we are not nourished, but are subject to spiritual famine, the evils of life and the falsities of faith will rob us of spiritual power.

READ: “Feeding the Right Dog: The Key to Spiritual Life” by the Rev. David Ayers

The two dogs, fighting for control, represent the states of temptation which follow a person on his spiritual journey, where he must freely choose to follow either his own natural tendencies or the Lord’s truths. Which dog wins and gains control over us is dependent on which one we feed. But what does it mean to feed a dog, and how do we do this?

ACTIVITY: Stories about Food in the Word (*ages 9 and up*)

Brainstorm a list of stories in the Bible in which eating and drinking are mentioned. You may want to reread one of the stories together—keeping in mind that eating and drinking mean getting spiritual nourishment. You might prefer to have each person take a different story to reread and then compare them. Who is eating? Who is drinking? What are they eating or drinking? Do they provide the food or is it provided for them?

Another follow-up activity would be to make or gather some of the food and drink that is mentioned in the stories, read a quotation (a few sentences) from each story, and then enjoy the food together.

MATCHING CARDS: Food in the Word (*ages 6 and up*)

Cut apart these cards and then match the color pictures up with quotes from the Word.

FOR REFLECTION: Food in Art (*teens and adults*)

Explore ways food has been depicted in art throughout history and what the significance of the different kinds of images might be.

MANNA FROM ON HIGH

Manna is called the “bread of the heavens,” because it rained down from heaven with the dew, but in the spiritual sense the reason is because it flows down from the Lord through the angelic heaven.... [N]o other bread than that which nourishes the soul of a person.

(Apocalypse Explained 146:4)

The children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness after escaping from Egypt, and they had no food to eat. Then the Lord caused manna to fall to the ground each day and also sent them quails. The Israelites had to do their part, gathering the food and preparing it, but they had a steady supply of food. This natural food—manna and quails—symbolized spiritual nourishment, and the Lord provides us with this kind of nourishment as well. Our part is to make the effort to gather and use what the Lord wants to give us.

READ: “Manna” adapted from a Jacob’s Ladder Level 3 Lesson (*for families*)

In this story we have the powerful lesson that the Lord can provide everything we need for our lives. He knows we need food for our souls as well as for our bodies. The Lord asks us to collect the spiritual food He sends us, just as the Israelites went out each day to collect the manna.

PROJECT: Gathering Manna (*ages 2-7*)

Print a copy of the color picture for each child, trim the edges, and then mount on yellow cover stock. (If your printer can handle cover stock paper, you can print the picture directly onto it and then trim the edges a bit.) Give children little pieces of round pasta or couscous to glue onto the picture—some on the ground and some in the woman’s bowl.

COLORING PAGE: The Israelites Gather Manna by Donald Moorhead

ACTIVITY: Manna from Heaven (*ages 8-12*)

Divide a circle in half. On the left side draw a picture of Israelites picking up manna or just glue some little balls of “manna” made with flour, olive oil, water, and any of the following optional ingredients: salt, honey, coriander powder. On the right side of the circle, write examples of hidden

or heavenly manna from the Lord's Word. This idea can be adapted so that a group (family, Sunday School class, etc.) work together to make a mural showing both kinds of food.

COLORING PAGE: Gathering Manna by Robert R. Glenn

ELIJAH IS FED BY RAVENS AND HELPS THE WIDOW

*He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.
(Psalm 107:9)*

The story of Elijah gives us other examples of how the Lord provided food in a miraculous way (see 1 Kings 17). First, the Lord told Elijah to go to a brook and drink from that brook. And there the Lord commanded ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat every morning and evening. But there was a drought in the land, and the brook dried up. Then the Lord told Elijah to go to a city where he would find a widow who would feed him. With the last of her flour and oil, she made a cake of bread for Elijah and then found that the Lord multiplied her flour and oil so that she would not run out of food to feed herself and her son.

READ: "The Bread of Heaven" by the Rev. Morley Rich (*for families*)

It is only in the Word that we find that bread that is the "staff of life. Only there can we find the food that will give us the strength and energy to do what the Lord wants us to do.

READ: "Elijah Was the First to Eat" by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss (*for adults*)

Can we see what the Lord is telling us about our own life when there is spiritual famine? When we are deeply unhappy, there seems to be no way out. But really, there is one simple yet earth-shaking way. There is one way that seems so simple we tend to ignore it....

READ: Collecting Vessels: New Church Education by the Rev. Bradley Heinrichs (*for adults*)

Both our stories about Elisha and Elijah involve vessels and widows.... Truths are the vessels into which the goodness and love of the Lord flows. New Church education is all about providing appropriate vessels for our children.

PROJECT: Finger Puppets for the Elijah Story (*ages 3-8*)

Color and cut out the finger puppets of Elijah, a raven, the widow, and her son. As you retell the story, let your child dramatize the miraculous ways that the Lord provided food.

COLORING PAGE: Elijah Fed by the Raven by Jacqueline S. Bostock

PROJECT: Elijah Fed by Ravens (*ages 5-9*)

Make a bird out of yarn pom-poms and then have it bring bread to Elijah.

COLORING PAGE: Elijah Meets the Widow by Marguerite L. Acton

COLORING PAGE: Food for the Widow and Her Son by Marguerite L. Acton

JOURNAL PAGE: Giving from a Small Store

How can you give to others, even when you feel as if you have very little to offer?

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

[W]hen He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all.

(Mark 6:41)

The Lord taught a multitude—thousands of people—by giving them spiritual food. Then He provided them with natural food in a miraculous way. He asked what food was on hand and was told that there were five loaves and two fish. He blessed the bread, broke it into pieces, and then gave it to His disciples to distribute. The Lord also divided the fish. And the food was multiplied so that thousands of people ate and were full, and yet there were twelve baskets of food left over.

READ: “Eat and Be Satisfied” by the Rev. Fred Chapin (*for teens and adults*)

When the Lord blessed the bread and the fish, and distributed them to the people, the food represented the spiritual good and truth, which He offers to every man and woman. Even though initially it was a small amount, the Lord enabled it to fulfill everyone’s needs.

READ: “Feeding of the Five Thousand” by the Rev. Arne Bau-Madsen (*for little children*)

On His journeys the Lord was often accompanied by great crowds of people. These people were so amazed and impressed with the Lord’s miracles and teachings that sometimes they just forgot everything else and followed the Lord, without bringing anything to eat.

READ: “The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes” (*for children*)

Perhaps the disciples wondered whether any would be any food left for them? Yet, after they had been giving and giving, they ended up, not with *less* food than they started with, but *more*!

PROJECT: Diorama of the Lord Feeding the Five Thousand (*ages 8-14*)

Color the background scene, the figure of the Lord, and the boy carrying a basket of bread and fish. Cut out the figures of the Lord and the boy, and then assemble the diorama.

COLORING PAGE: Feeding the Five Thousand by Jacqueline S. Bostock

PROJECT: Bread and Fish Mobile (*ages 3-7*)

Color and cut out the 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes, then assemble them into a mobile.

ACTIVITY: Blessings on the Bread of Heaven (*all ages*)

Say these blessings at mealtimes to help you think about the ways that the Lord nourishes our minds and our bodies.

PROJECT: Spiritual Food

Color and cut out the loaves of bread, each with a quotation from the Word. Then color the Word on the accompanying page, and glue the loaves onto the picture of the Word as indicated.

PROJECT: Feeding the Five Thousand—A Bread Recipe

Bake 5 (small) loaves of bread to enjoy with your family, Sunday School class, *etc.* as you reflect on the miracle of feeding the five thousand. Or use the loaves to act out the story.

COLORING PAGE: Feeding the Multitude by Robert R. Glenn (*for older children and teens*)

This line drawing depicts this miracle and has a quote from Matthew 15:36 in calligraphy below.

PROJECT: Feeding the Five Thousand (*ages 5-8*)

Make a picture of the Lord with His arms ready to hold a basket (or used the drawing provided). Cut out this figure and glue onto a background piece of paper. On a separate piece of paper, draw an open basket and glue it so that it looks like the Lord is holding it. Then take 2 narrow strip of paper. On one strip, draw many loaves of bread. On the other strip, draw many fish. After an adult cuts 2 vertical slits in the basket (and through the other layers of paper), the strips of bread and fish can be threaded through the slits from the back, so that 5 loaves and 2 fish are shown at first. Pull on the strips to show how the Lord multiplied the food so that all could eat and not be hungry.

SING: Five Loaves and Two Fishes by Lori Odhner

ACTIVITY: Doing the Math—Multiplying the Loaves and Fishes (*ages 11 and up*)

How many loaves and fish would it take to feed 5000 people without a miracle? What do the numbers in this story mean spiritually?

OUR DAILY BREAD

*Heavenly bread consists in all the good of love and faith which comes from the Lord.
(Arcana Coelestia 9412:2)*

In the Lord's Prayer, we ask for our "daily bread", just as the manna was provided each day (except for the Sabbath day) to the Children of Israel in the wilderness. The Heavenly Doctrine indicates that we are to pray for "daily bread" partly in recognition that the spiritual nourishment that we receive from the Lord is not our own or from us—it is the Lord's love and wisdom with us.

READ: "Our Daily Bread" the concept article by the Rev. Cairns Henderson

What are we asking for when we pray for our daily bread? The food of the human spirit is good and truth from the Lord. The Lord does not provide for our welfare to eternity by a single act. He continually offers us food that is suited to our present state.

SING: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

FOR REFLECTION: Read the Prayers for Teens, Adults, or Children

SING: Lamp of Our Feet

JOURNAL PAGE: Bread from Heaven

What delights did the Lord send you today? What are some ways to remind yourself to look for and take joy in these small blessings to feed your soul day by day?