

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI
THE WORSHIP OF GOD • SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

Song of Focus
“What Is in Your Hand?”
Words and Music by Ed Varnum
(with a nod to “Malaguena”)

1. Have you ever had a time when God shows you some great need?
And you think, “I’m sorry. It’s more than I can meet.”

Just like God said to Moses, “Go to old Pharaoh.
Tell him, ‘Almighty God said, ‘Let my people go!’”
Moses said, “I have no power.” God said, “What’s in your hand?”
“It’s my staff, my Lord.” “Throw it down, pick it up again.”

Moses released it to the Lord o’er the sandals he once shod,
and the staff of Moses became the rod of God!

2. Jesus taught five thousand until the close of day.
The disciples said, “They’re hungry, Lord! Send them all away.”
Jesus said, “You give them food.” “Lord, I don’t think we can!”
“Go and see what you have.” “Only five loaves, two fish in hand.”

Jesus took the loaves and fish, thanking God for this gift,
And the five thousand were fed until they all were filled!

3. When God touches your heart, showing you some great need,
speaking justice to power or hungry lives to feed,
like those disciples long ago, trust God and take a stand.
Giving thanks to God, release what’s in your hand.

What is in your hand?
What is in your hand?

The Scripture
Mark 6:34-44

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” And he said to

them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So, they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

**The Message
Momentum Matters**

David McGee

**Director of Partnership Development and Communications
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Synopsis: Standing before a hungry crowd, Jesus told his empty-handed and perplexed disciples, "You give them something to eat!" How can we be expected to respond to enormous need with what seems like minuscule resources? In the face of seemingly impossible circumstances, Jesus calls all of us as his disciples to simply evaluate our situation and take the only step we can: the one that is right in front of us. The momentum generated by a small act of generosity can trigger a wave of powerful impact and influence. As many at Broadway prepare to "Run for Central America" on Labor Day, we'll get to hear about modern-day multiplication miracles in Central America and be inspired to take meaningful steps in our own community.

"[Jesus] answered, 'You give them something to eat.'"

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My name is David McGee. It's a real honor for me to be here, speaking in my home church. We've been at Broadway Christian Church since 2010 when we had recently moved from El Salvador. When we joined, our kids had just turned ages 4 and 2.

For those of you who know our story, we went to EL Salvador on our honeymoon in 2002 with the idea of being there for three months. The three-month honeymoon turned into seven years, and I still have the privilege to work with ENLACE all these years later. It is also a great joy that my home church, Broadway, has been partnering with ENLACE now for almost ten years.

For those of you who don't know, ENLACE is a church-based community development organization working in El Salvador (where it was established), Guatemala, and Nepal.

The word ENLACE means to link or connect in Spanish, and essentially that is what we do. We connect local churches with their community leaders so that together they

can analyze what resources they already have, appreciate, and maximize those resources to make lasting change in their communities.

This is an exciting weekend, because not only do I get to share with you a little about what churches are doing in El Salvador during the COVID crisis, but many of you are joining in with these efforts by being part of our 10K run tomorrow. Your walk, run, roll, or ride for Central America tomorrow with us is a great way for us to continue to link or connect with those churches there.

So, due to my work w ENLACE, in the pre-COVID world, I used to spend a lot of time on airplanes. Do you remember that? When people used to get on planes and go places?

On one of my trips, I'm in Houston. Super tired. Multiple delays. Finally get on the plane. And after multiple delays there's nothing like feeling the "main cabin door" being shut, seeing the jet bridge move away, and you start pulling out. Headphones in, head against the window, and the knowledge that you're tired enough to sleep through most if not the entire flight. So, I conk out...completely. Like one of those sleeps that is so deep that when you wake up in public setting, you're immediately embarrassed, because you're sure you were drooling or snoring or something. But anyhow, sure enough, I wake up to us pulling into the gate. Yes! The best kind of flight is one you can't even remember. I sleepily get off the plane, walk into the terminal, hit the bathroom. It's not until I'm coming out of the bathroom that I finally realize I have no idea where I am.

Apparently when I fell asleep, we had gone out to taxi for take-off, they discovered the mechanical problem that was causing the delays wasn't getting fixed. So, they canceled the flight and brought us back to the gate for deplaning. We were still in Houston. Of course, me, with headphones and drool on my shirt, hadn't heard a thing. But since, in my mind, I was already in St. Louis, when I walked out of that bathroom, I got one of those crazy feelings of being completely disoriented. You think you're going somewhere, but it turns out, because of whatever circumstances, you're not.

We've all had them...like waking up in a hotel in a total panic on your first night of family vacation with no idea where you are. Or the moment when you discover that you've been driving on the wrong road for many miles. This feeling of disorientation highlights the fact that we typically think (or at least feel, even if unconsciously) that we have a direction, we have momentum, we're headed in a defined direction. In general, momentum is hard to stop, and this is especially true of our "mental momentum". Unless there is an abrupt surprise, or it takes some intentionality to reset our direction and momentum.

In our Scripture today, we have Jesus' disciples needing to be re-oriented. They need a momentum reset. They had a particular direction in mind, but in typical Jesus-fashion, he had a different way of viewing the situation. He intervenes and teaches them how to make a course correction that guides them AWAY from simply thinking about themselves and TOWARD a focus of compassion and provision.

In this very well-known story of the feeding of the 5,000, from the gospel of Mark, we'll see that Jesus' moment-changing process was to Analyze, Appreciate, and then take Action.

So, let's take a look.

The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle (besides the resurrection) to appear in all four gospels, and even in one of them twice when Jesus is feeding the multitudes. Along with the Sermon on the Mount that includes such concepts as loving your enemy, this is clearly an important topic for Jesus and his early followers.

In Mark's version of the story, the vent begins a few verses before what we typically consider. The apostles come back to see Jesus after a time away where they've been working hard. They had been sent out. They come back to give a report to Jesus, to brag about all the incredible work they had done. In short, they just want a moment to connect with Jesus to catch up with him.

But because there are "many people coming and going" they don't even get a chance to eat. So, Jesus says, "Come on, I'll buy you a burger." (More literally, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.") So, they hop on a boat to find this "quiet place" where maybe they'll grab a bite to eat, hang out with Jesus, and get some much-needed rest.

Meanwhile, throngs of people race along the shoreline to cut them off. It says they all ran and got there ahead of the disciples. This was not shaping up to be the afternoon that the disciples had envisioned.

And worst thing about it is Jesus' response when he gets off the boat. He sees 10,000 people, and he has "compassion" on them. He says they're "like a sheep without a shepherd." Well, isn't that cute! When are we gonna get some food?"

he disciples immediately jump in to remind Jesus of their plans "This is a remote place. It's getting late. Hey, Jesus, why don't you go ahead and send these people away so that they can get something to eat?" Of course, the implication is that will give THEM (the disciples) a chance to get something to eat.

I picture the disciples here to be not unlike my own kids when they haven't eaten breakfast, since they slept in a bit later on Sunday morning. They come to church, and we promise them Pasta Factory and Randy's Frozen Custard after church, Then Jenny and I are hanging around in the narthex chit-chatting for 20 minutes until I hear, "DAAAD!"

"Jesus (whiny voice), when are we going to leave? Jesus, I'm hungry. How much longer? Can we go now? Jesus, this is a remote place. Its late. Send them away so they can get food."

You see, their minds are still on food. Their momentum is rolling towards food. They analyze the situation, and they have one-track mind focused on getting what THEY want. They cannot see the need and opportunity right in front of them.

We all have a one-track mind from time to time. I was an ambitious 12-year-old when I fell in love with the sport of snow skiing...on the 'hills' of western Pennsylvania. (Notice, I said "hills" and not "mountains"). We lived within an hour of one of these hills that offered a few dozen runs that would take you about 45 seconds to get to the bottom of it once you mastered the tuck position. They even offered "night skiing" on weekdays where you could chatter your way down slopes that were more ice than snow. But what do you expect from snow machines that would pump out water above your head every time it hit 28 degrees?

The dream of my young life was to go experience REAL mountains "out west" somewhere. After a few years of skiing, I talked my dad into us taking a trip out to Colorado with some friends of ours where I could experience skiing in REAL mountains.

Skiing had become my obsession, but my dad hadn't skied more than a handful of times, so to get him prepped, we went out night skiing after school a few times. Like a good son, I took him straight to one of the few black diamond slopes, which consisted of about 100 vertical feet of steep bullet-proof ice (textured only by the Snowcat tread), followed by a flat section.

Of course, I invited my dad to go first. Like most of the beginner or intermediate skiers, who attempt the hill, he puts his skis sideways and tries to cut his edges into the ice. However, he begins to lose control and gains a ton of speed as he hits the bottom of the steep section where there's just these piles of man-made snow that are more like sand than snow, after being scraped off the face. So, he hits one of these piles, gets all twisted up, and goes down hard.

I race down and see my dad laying there writhing in pain. He looks up and says, "Call the ski patrol. I snapped my ankle."

And the first words out of my mouth, naturally, were, “Are we still gonna go to Colorado?”

I have never been able to live this down, and rightfully so. My family helps me remember it still. There is my father writhing in pain, and all I can think about is what this means for me and my goal of going to Colorado. Pretty embarrassing looking back on it. He did snap his ankle. And by the way, we did still go to Colorado, but with my dad on crutches.

But the point is, I had a one-track mind. And as much as I loved my dad, my 12-year-old momentum, my trajectory, was going to Colorado, and nothing was going to stop me.

In our biblical story, the disciples have a one-track mind. and they had perfectly good intentions. They just wanted some food, some peace and quiet, and a chance to hang out with Jesus. But Jesus makes it clear that their one-track mind / momentum / trajectory is not allowing them to see a need (an opportunity for compassion) that is right in front of them.

So, the disciples had used the excuse that all these people must be hungry, when in fact, the disciples were just hungry, so he should send the crowd away. Jesus turns it around on them and says, “You know, you’re right. These people are hungry. You give them something to eat.”

“Say Wha? Huh?”

That was not the answer they were expecting. They quickly do some analysis for Jesus, calculating just how ridiculous the idea was. They do the numbers. “Gotta be 10,000 people including women and children. Even if you could find \$2 tacos, that’s \$20,000. That’s half a year’s wages!”

Jesus seems to ignore their calculations and instead of looking at the problem and how ridiculous and big it was, he simply asks, “Whatdya got? How many loaves do you have? Go and see.”

After checking around quickly, they found a kid with five loaves and two fish. That’s what they found. In short, the disciples analyze and say the problem is simply too big. They clearly don’t have what it takes. Or even more precisely, they analyze and then say, “That’s not our problem. We’ve got problems of our own to take care of” We’re headed to a retreat with Jesus and WE”RE the ones who are hungry.”  
Mountainous problem. Miniscule resources.

But in order for the miracle to happen Jesus takes their mind away from simply from getting what they want and redirects them towards compassion and provision. He takes a different approach to the analyzation. Jesus Analyzes with a different perspective. It is a perspective that Appreciates what is in front of them and directs the disciples to take Action with what they have in hand, with what is already available to them. He makes it look pretty easy ... like all pros do.

That is the biggest takeaway from this story in all five accounts in the Gospels. When we analyze with an appreciative perspective, and we are faithful and generous with what we have in hand, we will often be surprised at just how much good can be done with so little.

This was the gist of a message that I heard from a pastor when we first moved to EL Salvador. The first sermon I heard (translated, of course, because I couldn't even count to ten in Spanish then) was about the feeding of the 5,000. It forever changed my life to hear a pastor, living in a remote village, who had never received a formal education, who lived in an area with the highest infant-mortality rate in the Americas, an area with no clean water, about a dozen latrines per 10,000 people, no access to health care, limited access to education. He pastored a church of about 25 people, most of them single moms living on less than a quarter.

He takes this story, analyzes his situation, and decided maybe he would take Jesus seriously. Jesus told the disciples, "You give them something to eat." The pastor's invitation was, "Let's start feeding our 5,000." To them, their 5,000 was their community. It became an impoverished church serving its community instead of waiting around for the community to serve them.

Victorio and his leaders Analyzed, Appreciated, started to take Action by sharing what little resources they had, connecting WITH their community to resolve issues together. The momentum that has been gathered is incredible. All these years later, that community has been changed through access to clean water and sanitation, education, a local clinic, and a team of local health promoters, improved nutrition, better housing. It happened because of faithfulness with what seemed like minuscule resources to combat a mountainous problem.

Their metaphorical "loaves and fish" have truly been multiplied. And right now, fish are literally multiplied and being fed to the hungry. People are literally being fed by fish, during the COVID crisis. In the lockdown, the United Nations has declared this the greatest hunger crisis in more than a century. Families have been waving white flags by the roadside and from their small homes to declare their extreme need for food of any kind – starving.

But churches have been responding. One church, Perla Preciosa, in Guarnecia has been doing just that. Within the first few weeks of COVID crisis this church started doing something. Again, realize this is a small, rural congregation comprised of farmers and day laborers living below the poverty level. They are providing clothing, food, and hygiene aid for over 300 people.

They realized that some of them lived near a river. Others lived close to a lake. They start fishing early in the mornings. They tell stories of being able to catch fish like never before. We have video images of the back of a pickup filled with fish in huge tubs. And some of the families that were receiving food began to share what they may have had.

Here is a side note to our Scripture of the day. Theologian William Barclay suggests that no respectable family during this time would have been out on a journey without a satchel of food. He suggests that as the boy started sharing with the disciples, others began sharing what they had. That inspired others to share what they had. Then others began sharing, and before long they realized that together they had an abundance of food. The gratitude, compassion, generosity started a momentum that couldn't be stopped. Either interpretation is equally miraculous... Jesus creating food out of thin air, or people sharing when they think they don't have enough.

Pastor Jhony Alfaro started to pastor the Perla Preciosa Church in the village of Guarnecia, El Salvador, in 2013. Over the last four years, this church of 58 members has worked with ENLACE to build effective partnerships with neighbors, local businesses, and community organizations. This work positioned them to respond with incredible speed to the current pandemic crisis. Within the first few weeks of lockdown in March, the church mobilized church and community volunteers to gather clothing, food, and hygiene aid for over 300 people. The volunteers who were also fishermen provided families with a steady source of protein for many days. They would fish early in the morning and then distribute their catch (often jumping from the bucket!) to families all afternoon. The fresh relief did not stop there, according to Pastor Jhony, "Even one family from the community gave us avocados from their harvest." You see, they had an avocado tree that was producing so many avocados, they were tired of eating them. These fishermen and farmers are also in vulnerable situations, but through great generosity and care, they gathered enough resources to serve a whole community.



The ENLACE staff began to help facilitate more and more donations from outside the community. They were so inspired by this church and Pastor Jhony's infectious and encouraging phrase that they were able to do more and more because of the momentum. Everyone was and is sharing what they have.

Notice the process. They Analyzed what they had (a river, a lake, the ability to fish). They looked upon those resources with an Appreciative mindset. They decided to take Action with what they have in hand. All because of their approach, they are changing the momentum of this crisis for their community.

"Let's do this with everything we've got!" Démole con todo. (Translation of Spanish: "Let's give it everything!")

Broadway Christian Church, I want to remind you that, whether or not you realize it, this momentum of multiplication is something that you are already a part of as a church. As Broadway approaches nearly ten years of partnership in Central America (closing in on the \$90,000 mark for Broadway's total giving) the results are many and varied.

From chicken farms that have turned into sustainable businesses that employ dozens of people, to improved cook stoves that continue to keep families healthy and reduce wood usage. To water and sanitation initiatives that have made vast improvements in health and wellness of entire communities. To supporting the ongoing church coaching that trains and walks alongside of these incredible community leaders – all like the precious pearl. Even this year's annual commitment of \$5,000 that went to help feed families, which was leveraged nearly three times by local resources. In other words, your \$5,000 was equal to \$15,000. That is momentum!

ENLACE set a goal of feeding 1.5-million meals. In actuality, 3.3-million meals have been shared during the COVID crisis. A total of 2.2 million of those meals came from local resources! Already, they are moving from Relief to Recovery with a provided agricultural and micro-finance recovery, from helping feed families to helping families feed themselves. The trajectory towards transformation has been set. Your contributions are part of this momentum. You have Analyzed, Appreciated, and taken Action. This action has been leveraged and multiplied in Central America, and with what you do here locally. You are an example of the trajectory that Christ sends us

on...a direction away from simply having a focus on our immediate problems and towards compassion, provision, and radical generosity.

And don't be surprised when Jesus sends us in a direction, that direction is towards something big, monumental.

He sends us towards things like eradicating poverty in a village, mending hundreds of years of racial inequalities right here in Columbia, Missouri, or even something as simple and yet as hard as loving our enemies.

These are all MOUNTAINOUS problems, being approached with what seems like MINUSCULE resources.

But how do you climb a mountain? By taking the step that is in front of you. What do you use climb that mountain with? With the tools that have been provided for you.

Your monthly pledge amounts, special offerings, and even doing things like coming out tomorrow morning and walking a 10K – all your efforts will be multiplied.

And so, as we are all faced with these mountainous needs.

In closing, I want to leave you with a tool, a suggestion for helping to re-orient ourselves in the face of such mountainous needs. As we saw in the beginning, it takes intentionality to reset our direction. This week, if it becomes obvious that you are headed in the wrong direction, or you feel like your momentum is taking you in the wrong direction, or you just feel OVERWHELMED by the notion of facing a MOUNTAINOUS problem with MINIMAL resources (whether that be emotional, financial, etc.) I would encourage you to take a Momentum Minute — to get reoriented, reset your trajectory.

Mr. Rogers often suggested we take ONE SILENT MINUTE. Take a full minute to think of someone who has loved you. We need space (a pause) to be able to clearly set a destination point. We need perspective. (We all love those pretty pictures of a perfectly still body of water that reflects a beautiful sunrise or sunset or a mountain scene. Just like a body of water needs to be still to reflect the beauty that lies above it, so too, we need to be “still” every once in a while, if we hope to reflect the beauty above.)

The idea of a momentum minute would be that for 60 seconds (take out a timer) to apply these three words that we talked about today. Analyze, Appreciation, Action.

Analyze with and appreciate perspective, even if what you have what seems like a few measly fish and loaves compared to the thousands of hungry faces in front of you. Try to appreciate it. Gratitude shifts everything. Gratitude re-orientates to see opportunity instead of need. Then by the end of the 60 seconds, plan your next Action realizing that no matter how ENORMOUS the problem is that you are facing, you can only take the step that is right in front of you.

Momentum matters, and our world needs the Christ-followers to help shift the momentum towards love, compassion, and radical generosity. As followers of Christ, we can start with what we have in hand, with the full knowledge that miraculous things can and do happen in the face of enormous obstacles. Jesus' trajectory often takes us away from simply thinking about ourselves and sets a momentum towards compassion, provision, and radical generosity.

That's not to say a time away to connect with God is bad. After all, Jesus himself did it all the time. We're constantly reading of Jesus going "to the mountain" to connect with the Father. If Jesus needed that, how much more do we!

And in Scripture, it often happens that when people are "on their way" to something they consider "religious" that they get a chance to put that religion into practice.

Consider these:

- The story of good Samaritan (The Levite priest who didn't want to stop).
- Disciples on their way to Jerusalem to go do "real ministry" while Jesus is stopping to hang out with an "evil" Samaritan woman at a well.

And don't be surprised that when Jesus is directing us towards something, that "something" is no small task. Feeding 10,000. Tackling poverty in a rural village. Solving racial inequalities in the United States. How about the challenge of simply loving our enemies? These are mountainous problems.

Mountainous problems !  
Minimal resources!

But how do you climb a mountain? By taking the step that is in front of you. What do you use to climb a mountain? Whatever you have in hand.

In the face of an enormous obstacle, how can we be expected to respond with what seems like minuscule resources? How can we monitor our momentum and make course corrections to set our direction?

We're going to do that by looking at one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. The feeding of the 5,000. We'll see that Jesus sets the momentum...the trajectory

towards provision and a favorable outcome. And in doing so, he incorporates three practices that we can all learn from and apply. He invites the disciples to Analyze, Appreciate, Act.

We all know how this story ends, but I want us to look at it again together in the context of what local churches are accomplishing RIGHT NOW in Central America during what the United Nations has called the greatest humanitarian crisis to hit Latin America in more than a century.

So, are we ready?

I pray that our momentum, as followers of Christ, might always be directed toward love, inclusion, and compassion.

Join us tomorrow.

May it be so.