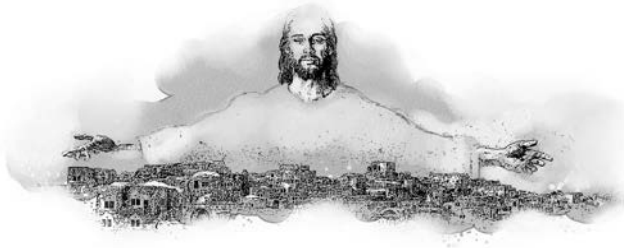


# Lord of Jews *and* Gentiles



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Matt. 14:1–21, Exod. 3:14, Matt. 14:22–33, Isa. 29:13, Matt. 15:1–20, Matt. 15:21–28.*

**Memory Text:** “‘I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles’” (*Isaiah 42:6, NIV*).

In Matthew 15:24, Jesus says explicitly, “‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (*NKJV*). No question, Christ’s earthly ministry was directed mostly toward the nation of Israel.

But, as the whole Bible shows, Israel wasn’t the only people God cared about. The reason God chose Israel was so that He could bless all people on earth. “This is what God the LORD says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: ‘I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness’” (*Isa. 42:5–7, NIV*).

It was through Israel, or more specifically through the Messiah who would arise from Israel, that God would reach out to the whole world. This week we’ll see a little more of the Lord’s outreach to all in need of salvation.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 14.

## Feeding the Hungry

One of the most well-known acts of Jesus is the feeding of the five thousand, “besides women and children” (*Matt. 14:21, NIV*). Yet, as with everything else in the New Testament, this story doesn’t occur without a context that helps us understand even more deeply the meaning of what Jesus had done.

**Read** Matthew 14:1–21. What happened right before the miraculous feeding, and what role might that event have played in what followed?

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Put yourself in the position of the disciples at that time. John the Baptist, clearly a man of God, just had his head chopped off. His disciples knew that, because they were the ones who told Jesus. Though the texts don’t say, it must have been incredibly discouraging for them. No doubt, it put their faith to the test. However, after what Jesus did next, their faith must have been given quite a boost, especially after such a letdown.

There is, however, a much deeper meaning to this story, regardless of how it might have increased the disciples’ faith. Jesus’ action of feeding the Jewish people reminded everyone of the manna that God had provided to the Israelites in the wilderness. “The tradition arose within Judaism that the Messiah would come on a Passover and that along with His coming, manna would begin to fall again. . . . So when Jesus fed the five thousand just before Passover, it should not surprise anyone that the crowd might begin to speculate whether He was the Messiah and whether He was about to do an even greater miracle—feed everyone all the time by restoring the manna.”—Jon Paulien, *John: The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1995), pp. 139, 140.

This was exactly the kind of Messiah the people wanted: a Messiah that would tend to their external needs. At this moment, the crowds are ready to make Jesus king, but Jesus hadn’t come to be king, and His refusal would greatly disappoint them. They had their expectations, and when those were not met, many would turn away from Jesus, even though He had come to do so much more than what their narrow and worldly expectations were.

**In what ways might your expectations of what you expect from God be too narrow?**

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## Lord of All Creation

After the miraculous feeding, Jesus ordered His disciples into their boat (*Matt. 14:22*). He wanted them away from the mayhem and pressure. A good teacher will shelter his or her students from what they're not yet ready to handle. "Calling His disciples," writes Ellen G. White, "Jesus bids them take the boat and return at once to Capernaum, leaving Him to dismiss the people. . . . They protested against the arrangement; but Jesus now spoke with an authority He had never before assumed toward them. They knew that further opposition on their part would be useless, and in silence they turned toward the sea."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 378.

**Read** Matthew 14:23–33. What do these verses reveal about who Jesus was and the nature of salvation?

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A revealing moment occurs when the terrified disciples are wondering who is walking on the water toward them. Jesus says to them, " 'It is I; do not be afraid' " (*Matt. 14:27, NKJV*). The phrase " 'It is I' " is another way of translating the Greek phrase *ego eimi*, which means "I am." This is the name of God Himself. (*See also Exod. 3:14.*)

Scripture time and again has the Lord in control of all nature. Psalm 104, for example, clearly shows that God is not only the Creator but also the Sustainer and that it's through His power that the world continues to exist and that the laws of nature operate. There's nothing here that hints at the god of deism, who creates the world and then leaves it alone. Jew or Gentile, we all owe our continued existence to the sustaining power of the same Lord who stilled the sea. (*See also Heb. 1:3.*)

Peter's cry, " 'Lord, save me!' " (*Matt. 14:30, NKJV*) should echo our own, because if the Lord Jesus doesn't save us, who will? Peter's helplessness in that situation reflects our own in the face of what our fallen world throws at us.

**Think about just how helpless you really are, in the sense of being at the mercy of forces so much greater than you and that you can't control. How should this reality help strengthen your dependence upon Jesus?**

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## The Hypocrite’s Heart

“Therefore the LORD said: ‘Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men’ ” (Isa. 29:13, NKJV). Though this was the Lord speaking to ancient Israel, what message is here for the church today? What are the two main issues that the Lord is warning them about, and how can we be sure that we aren’t doing the same thing?

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Many centuries after Isaiah wrote those words, Jesus quotes them while in a controversy with the religious leaders.

**Read** Matthew 15:1–20. What is the specific issue here, and how does Jesus address it?

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At some point after He returns to Capernaum, Jesus gets into a debate with the Jewish teachers about what makes a person unclean. The teachers had added to the law all kinds of regulations about external uncleanness. For example, you had to wash your hands in a certain way. But Jesus’ disciples weren’t bothering with this regulation, and when the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem pointed it out, Jesus responded as He did.

In short, Jesus strongly condemns what’s so easily a trap for anyone: hypocrisy. Who hasn’t at some point been guilty of this, condemning someone for an action (either verbally or in your own heart) even though you have done or were doing the same thing or worse? We all, if not careful, have a tendency to see the faults of others while being blind to our own. Hence, being a hypocrite tends to come naturally to us all.

**We all hate hypocrisy in others. It is always so easy to see hypocrisy in others too. How can we make sure that our ability to see hypocrisy in others isn’t just a manifestation of it in ourselves?**

## Crumbs From the Table

After feeding, healing, and preaching to His own Jewish people, Jesus makes a dramatic decision. He leaves the area of the Jews and enters the region of the outsiders, the Gentiles.

**Read** Matthew 15:21–28. How are we to understand this story?

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In many ways, this isn't an easy story to read, because we're without the benefit of voice tone and facial expressions. At first Jesus seems to ignore this woman; then, when He does talk to her, His words seem very harsh: " 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs' " (*Matt. 15:26, NIV*).

What if you tried this approach? Someone asks if they can have some of your chips, and you respond, "It is not right to toss my chips to the dogs." Not exactly a way to win friends, is it?

However, here are a few things to consider.

First, it is true that at this time the Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs, bringing the image of mangy dogs running the streets. But Jesus uses the more affectionate Greek term, "small dog" (or "puppy dog") here, conjuring up domestic dogs kept in the home and fed from the table.

Second, this Canaanite woman calls Jesus the "Son of David." This shows her familiarity with Jesus' Jewishness. Like a good teacher, Jesus dialogs with her and perhaps tests her. Craig Keener writes: "Perhaps he is requiring her to understand his true mission and identity, lest she treat him as one of the many wandering magicians to whom Gentiles sometimes appealed for exorcisms. Yet he is surely summoning her to recognize Israel's priority in the divine plan, a recognition that for her will include an admission of her dependent status. . . . One may compare Elisha's requirement that Naaman dip in the Jordan despite Naaman's preference for the Aramean rivers Abana and Pharpar . . . , ultimately leading to Naaman's acknowledgment of Israel's God and land (2 Kings 5:17–18)."—*The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 417.

Finally, it's likely this woman was an upper-class Greek woman who was part of a class that had "routinely taken the bread belonging to the impoverished Jews residing in the vicinity of Tyre. . . . Now . . . Jesus reverses the power relations, for the 'bread' Jesus offers belongs to Israel first . . . ; this 'Greek' must beg help from an itinerant Jew."—*The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 417.

This is not an easy passage, but we have to trust Jesus. By dialoging with this woman, Jesus dignifies her—just as He did the woman at the well. She leaves with her daughter healed and her faith in the Son of David ignited.

## Lord of the Gentiles

**Read** Matthew 15:29–39 and compare it with Matthew 14:13–21. What are the similarities and the differences between the two stories?

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Many people don't realize that there are two feedings of the multitudes in the Gospels: the first for the Jews, the second for the Gentiles. In both instances, Jesus has "compassion" for the people.

It's amazing, this image of thousands of Gentiles coming out to be taught, loved, and fed by this young Rabbi. Today, looking back and understanding the universality of the gospel (after all, most people reading this right now are not Jews), we can easily miss just how incredible and unexpected something like this must have appeared to the people, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. No question, Jesus was surely taking everyone out of their comfort zones.

Yet, this was always God's plan, to draw all peoples of the earth to Him. A startling verse in the Hebrew Scriptures testifies to this truth: " 'Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites? . . . Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?' " (*Amos 9:7, NIV*).

What is God saying here? That He's interested in the affairs of not only Israel but of all people? He's interested in Philistines? A careful reading of the Old Testament reveals this truth again and again, even though it had become so obscure through the centuries that, by the time the New Testament church was formed, many of the early believers had to learn this basic biblical truth.

**Read** Romans 4:1–12. In what ways is the gospel, and the universality of the gospel, captured in these verses?

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**Further Thought:** A Christian was speaking to students on a secular campus about the existence of God. After using all the common arguments, he took a different tack, saying: “You know, when I was about the age of most of you, and not believing in God, every now and then, when something would convict me that maybe God did exist, I always pushed the notion out of my mind. Why? Because something told me that if, indeed, God did exist, then—considering how I was living—I was in deep trouble.” The mood shifted, instantly. Dozens of consciences, in sync, started grinding against themselves. It was almost as if the temperature in the room rose from the friction behind all these suddenly uncomfortable faces. He clearly struck a nerve. These students, not Christians, and thus probably not too concerned about the Ten Commandments, nevertheless still sensed that all was not right with their lives morally and that if there were a God they would have a lot to answer for. As Christians, however, people who should be very attuned to God’s moral standards, we don’t have to feel uncomfortable when confronted with the reality of a moral God, and that’s because of the promise of the gospel. Whether Jew or Gentile, when confronted by our sinfulness, we can take refuge in the righteousness of Christ offered to us by faith “apart from the deeds of the law” (*Rom. 3:28, NKJV*). When we become acutely aware of our sin, we can claim the promise that “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (*Rom. 8:1, NKJV*). Jew, Gentile—it doesn’t matter. “Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Matthew 16:1–12. What do you think Jesus means when He says, “‘Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees’” (*Matt. 16:6, NIV*)? At first the disciples thought Jesus meant literal yeast. During Passover, the Jews were careful to get rid of leaven; so, they thought Jesus was instructing them not to buy bread with leaven. But Jesus had in mind something much deeper. What was it?
- 2 The love of Christ for all people should be the message that emanates first and foremost from Christianity. After all, we are struggling sinners too. None of us has any hope outside of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the message we send can, at times, seem to be one of judgment, arrogance, and superiority. Following the lead of Jesus, how can we as a church better show our compassion for all people?

## The Bridge That God Built: Part 1

Frank Kalom was a pastor in the Maramuni River area of Papua New Guinea. In this isolated and untamable region, he ministered to 21 village churches scattered among the steep mountains and valleys of his territory. One Friday he set out to visit a village on the other side of the river.

This was no easy journey, as there are no roads. Pastor Frank had only a narrow foot track to follow. First he climbed up the hill behind his house and crossed the airstrip where the mission planes land to deliver supplies and visitors, and occasionally evacuate medical emergency patients to the hospital, which was only an hour away by plane, but several days by foot. After crossing the airstrip, he began the steep descent down to the Maramuni River. This river, like so many rivers in Papua New Guinea, is swift-flowing, especially during the rainy season. Over the years, the river has cut great gorges through the soft soil and rock, and now the river flowed deep and wide.

Pastor Frank followed the narrow winding trail that led to a bridge that crossed the torrent. The bridge was a simple structure woven from bush vines. It didn't look safe, but the pastor was used to such bridges, and he crossed the river without any trouble.

Word reached the village that the pastor was coming, and happy church members ran out to greet him. They didn't often have their pastor come to minister to them. Nobody complained about the rain that fell almost nonstop.

Pastor Frank ministered to the people, baptizing new believers, marrying excited couples, and dedicating new babies born since his last visit. When it came time for him to return, villagers walked partway with him to express their love, and some gave him gifts of food for his journey home. One of the believers decided to go with Pastor Frank back to the mission station. As they walked along the trail that led to the river, they met some people who announced, "You might as well turn back. The river has washed away the bridge. It's impossible to cross."

But Pastor Frank told his companion, "I really need to get back home. We're doing God's work, and He will provide a way for us to cross the river."

The two men came to the river and saw for themselves that the bridge had been washed away. The river flowed so fast, deep, and wide that there was no way to get across. The men stopped and prayed that God would provide a way for them to cross the river.

*To be continued in next week's Inside Story.*



## The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Matthew 14:33*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Understand that Christ is the Son of God and the Lord of all.

**Feel:** Experience the power and sufficiency of Christ.

**Do:** Share the sufficiency of Christ with those in need.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Jesus Is the Son of God and the Lord of All.**

**A** What does Jesus, as the Son of God, accomplish? What does the Son do to us?

**B** If Jesus is Lord of all, what does this “all” include? What does it imply?

**C** What roles does Jesus play in salvation as the “Son of God” and “the Lord of all”?

**II. Feel: Experience the Sufficiency of Christ.**

**A** How does the sufficiency of Christ affect all areas of life?

**B** If Jesus is not the Lord of all aspects of life, can He be Lord of some?

**C** The all-sufficiency of Christ does not free us from our responsibility. How and why? What are some of these responsibilities?

**III. Do: Share Jesus With Others.**

**A** Why is sharing Jesus with others important? How do we share Jesus?

**B** How does that sharing enhance your life?

► **Summary:** Jesus is the Son of God and the Lord of all. He is all-sufficient to meet every human need. In view of that, our sight should be fixed on Him, and our aim should be to hold on to Him at all times and at any cost.

## Learning Cycle

### ►STEP 1—Motivate

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Matthew 14:12*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The death of John the Baptist left his disciples in despair and brokenness. The road ahead seemed dull and dark; John’s disciples did the only thing that was possible: they “went and told Jesus” (*Matt. 14:12*). When life seems hopeless, when loneliness is about to become our perpetual companion, when betrayal leaps from unexpected quarters, when death is hovering over us, or when the mortgage dues are threatening foreclosure, what can one do? Our lesson reminds us: go to Jesus. Share with Him—the good news and the bad. Life finds limitless possibilities when it comes to the One who is the Source of all life.

**Just for Teachers:** Matthew 14:1–12 gives us a tragic story that is heartless and ruthless. Review with the class how the characters in the story reveal life’s tragic spectrum—from distilled purity of righteousness to the lowest ebb of sin. First, there’s John the Baptist, the fearless prophet who called sin by its right name. Then there’s Herod Antipas, who lost all sense of morality and human worth and enticed away his brother’s wife to join him in sin. Third, there’s Herodias, who sacrificed both the sense of morality and the dignity of motherhood at the altar of lust. Finally, there is Salome, who became a pawn in a wicked game.

#### Discussion Questions:

❶ Mark 6:20 says that Herod admitted that John was “just and holy” and “heard him gladly” (*NKJV*). He even “feebly sought to break the chain of lust that bound him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 214. What prevents Herod from following his conscience?

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❷ “It is not lawful” (*Matt. 14:4*). That one statement of the Baptist was enough to call sin by its right name. Sin is nonnegotiable: Why must we give it up or await its wages (*Rom. 6:23*)?

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## ►STEP 2—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God’ ” (*Matt. 14:33, NKJV*). This worship and confession show that the disciples were beginning to understand the divine Person and mission of Jesus. Our lesson invites us to meet Jesus as the Lord of all, as the Son of God, as the One breaking down the walls.

## Bible Commentary

### I. Jesus the Lord of All (*Review Matt. 14:13–21, 15:32–38 with the class.*)

Behind the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000 is Jesus’ compassion toward the crowds (*Matt. 14:14*). The Greek word for compassion denotes an emotion that moves one to act from the inmost depths of one’s being. It appears an additional 13 times in the Gospels, all related to Jesus’ ministry (*Matt. 9:36; 15:32; 18:27, 33; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20*). With Jesus, compassion is not passive pity, but love, actively reaching out to feed the hungry, care for the sick, heal the brokenhearted, and even raise the dead. In every human need, Jesus saw an opportunity to make people aware that God is love, God is caring, and God is approachable—unlike in Greek culture, where gods remain unmoved and immovable by any human need.

The feeding miracles show that the preaching of the Word does not negate caring for human needs. But caring must not turn the gospel into a social revolution whereby the needs of the body take priority over the imperatives of the soul. Jesus well knew that “man shall not live by bread alone” (*Matt. 4:4*), but He also was sensitive to the fact that bread is essential to life: He “commanded the multitudes” (*Matt. 14:19, NKJV*) to be seated and served. The narrative in John 6 brings out the beautiful point that just as the body cannot live without bread, the soul, too, cannot live without Christ, the Bread of Life (*John 6:35*).

Another significant fact about the two feeding miracles is that the 5,000 plus were Jews on their way to the Passover in Jerusalem and the 4,000 plus were Gentiles in the Decapolis region. The point must not be missed: the ministry of Jesus is inclusive—one that cares for both Jews and Gentiles. He is the Lord of all, in whom emerges the new humanity without any wall of partition in between (*Eph. 2:14, 15*).

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 The disciples were “astonished” at Jesus’ command to give the multitudes

something to eat. Why do humans continually doubt that “with God all things are possible” (*Matt. 19:26*)?

② What place do miracles occupy in strengthening our faith?

## II. Jesus the Son of God (*Review Matthew 14:22–33 with the class.*)

When the sea is rough and the boat is tossed to and fro, life becomes a struggle, and fear overwhelms us. But Jesus is always there to help and save. And Jesus gave the frightened disciples a threefold faith-sustaining formula: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (*Matt. 14:27, NIV*). Between the charge to be courageous and the counsel not to fear stands the Person of Jesus: “It is I.” The Greek is *ego eimi*, “I AM”—the name by which God’s self-disclosure is so often affirmed. With the great I AM by our side, the burning bush does not burn up, the Bread of Life satisfies all our need, the Light of the world keeps us away from darkness, the Door ensures our entry into the kingdom, the Good Shepherd provides us eternal security, and we are grafted into the true Vine (*Exod. 3:2–15; John 6:35; 8:12; 9:5; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 15:1*). And Christ says to us as surely as He did to the disciples on that stormy night: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Walking the path of discipleship without fear requires that the disciple’s eyes be fixed on the I AM. But Peter wavered. His eyes moved from Jesus to the boisterous winds, and “he was afraid” and began to sink. Nevertheless, Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!” Such a cry never goes unanswered.

**Discussion Question:** Peter often spoke and acted on impulse. And yet, even in failure he knew where to reach for help. Review some of those instances in Peter’s life. Then, discuss the meaning of Hebrews 12:2.

## III. Jesus: Tearing Down the Walls (*Review Matthew 15:21–31 with the class.*)

Long before the risen Jesus commissioned His disciples to “go . . . and make disciples of all the nations” (*Matt. 28:19, NKJV*), He Himself crossed for the first time Jewish territory and entered Syrophoenicia. Through His encounter with a Canaanite woman, He showed that His gospel covers the entire human race.

The woman approached Jesus for the healing of her demon-possessed daughter. Against all odds stacked against her (a woman, a Gentile speaking to a Jew), she approached Jesus with the only tools she had—not in her hand but in her heart. *First, she loved her daughter.* In Roman and Greek cultures, girls were not considered an asset. A demon-possessed daughter was even worse. Yet, this mother showed that every child—boy or girl, healthy or sick, sharp or dull—is a precious gift from the Creator. In her search for a cure, the mother came to the right place: Jesus.

*Second, she had faith.* She identified Jesus as Lord and as the Son of David—faith enough to cast her burdens at the feet of the Messiah. But Jesus’ response seems harsh: “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (*Matt. 15:26, NKJV*). Then came the decisiveness of faith-based prayers, etched out long ago in that night-long encounter: “I will not let You go unless You bless me” (*Gen. 32:26, NKJV*). The Canaanite woman makes her own “Jacob’s” plea: “Thank You, Lord, for treating me not as the scavenger dog of the street but as *kunarion*, a pet dog of children of the house. Let me be a *kunarion*. I don’t ask for bread, but just those crumbs.”

Jesus hailed that humble reach as an act of great faith. And faith brings victory. That movement from love to faith to healing gave a commanding message for generations to come: in Christ there is no east or west.

**Discussion Question:** What barriers do you see in your church or community that need to be penetrated in order to spread the ministry of the gospel?

### ►STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** Read the following to the class and then discuss the questions that follow: “The greatest want of the world is the want of men . . . men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 57.

**Thought Question:** In this world of compromise, half-truths, and open sin—no different from the times of John the Baptist and Herod—how can this “greatest want of the world” be met?

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### ►STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** One important lesson we learned this week is the love and all-sufficiency of Christ.

**Activity:** In your community there must be many who are in need—hungry, emotionally exhausted, lonely, sick, et cetera. Have your class identify some who are in need and work out a plan to meet those needs.