



## One Small Barley Loaf

by J.E. Smith, Nevada City, California

*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?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. (John 6:5-6)*

So, picture this. Here's a woman in her early forties (me), who'd been removed by God from the ministry of music in the church more than three and a half years prior. I'm feeling insignificant, at best. Unexpectedly, God opens the door for me to produce and direct the annual Christmas gathering for our Women's Ministry. I had been out of the creative loop for what seemed a lifetime, and here I am, in charge of a team that had to fill two hours with music and other creative elements. Time was short. Resources were short. Experience was very short ... and rusty.

Of course, God was bigger than my lack, and, as I was reading His Word one day, He encouraged me with this miracle recorded in John 6, the feeding of the five thousand.

God already had a plan for that crowd when He asked His disciples to feed them. I knew He had a plan for this women's gathering, too. I didn't have to produce one. I just had to discover the one He'd already made. It didn't matter that I was rusty and inexperienced. It didn't matter that I was someone's third-ditch choice. It didn't even matter that I didn't have a plan when I stepped in. God had a plan, and it was good.

"Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'" (John 6:7)

I loved Andrew as I read this. How did he have the guts, the gall, to make such a ludicrous suggestion? Anyone could see his answer was woefully inadequate; yet, he wanted to help. The boy had probably offered his lunch, and Andrew couldn't refuse such a sweet, innocent offer. He had to pass it on, didn't he? But, I think he did more than make the boy feel good. I think Andrew did what he could. He offered what had been given to him. He gave all he had.

At that moment, I realized that this was all God wanted from me. I had to give my best effort. I had to take each step as it came to me and leave the results in God's hands. Each day, I would do what I was aware needed doing. Some days, it was a couple of phone calls. Another day, it was surfing the net for material. I didn't know what I'd find, and I didn't have to worry that I wouldn't find the right things. All I had to do was make my best effort and expect that God would lead me as I went along.

I couldn't guarantee a program. I couldn't guarantee quality or people's response. All I could do was give my completely inadequate offering and trust God to multiply it. Even in my best moment, my contribution to God's work is only a small barley loaf compared to the great work that is His.

I don't know about you, but I find this to be truly good news for those who are involved in worship ministry. God isn't asking you to be perfect or to have everything all figured out. All you have to do is give Him your barley loaf and look for what He will do with it. Expect Him to work. You don't have to be the most gifted person on the team. Just put your best effort into your role. If you do that, you have succeeded. Let me say that again. You have succeeded.

Don't look to the results of your efforts to determine your success. The results are in God's hands. And, as you work, you can wonder, with confidence, what God will do to multiply your efforts.

*Holy God, I give You the glory for all good things You do in and through me. Please help me to rest in Your ability, and not my own, as I do the work You've given me to do. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

### GOING DEEPER:

1. Can you tell of a time when you felt under-qualified for a task you were given?
2. Did you feel as though your reputation was on the line?
3. How does it affect your stress level to realize that God alone is responsible for the outcome of your work?