



# POWER *for* LIVING

April 7, 2024

I Can Do All Things Through Christ



## Hide and Seek

**M**y dog loves to play hide and seek.

Although Charlie is a Golden retriever-poodle mix, I suspect she inherited a far heavier portion of Golden retriever genes than poodle. Not only does she

look and shed like a full-bred Golden, she maintains both the dopey sweet temperament and clinginess of the beloved breed.

Linked to her intense clinginess is a corresponding need to constantly know my whereabouts. She follows me everywhere. If I get up from the couch, she gets up from the couch. If I'm heating up leftovers in the kitchen, Charlie is heating up leftovers in the kitchen. If I'm in the restroom and don't fully close the door, in no time, Charlie is in the restroom, gazing at me from only inches away. One can sense her panic as she arises from a nap or reenters the house after playing in the backyard to realize I am not within her peripherals.

Immediately running room-to-room in a crazed flurry, she frantically combs through the entire house, only stopping when she has effectively located her beloved owner.

Fully appreciating her concentrated seeking efforts, I began to deliberately hide from her. We made a game of it. I began hiding in easy spots just out of sight, such as in the open closet or behind the bedroom door. It took everything in me those first few times to conceal my giggling as I peeked out from my hiding spot



“I Want to Be Like Charlie”

BY EMILY MARSZALEK



to see Charlie trotting through each room, desperately searching for her missing mother. As soon as she would find me, her delight detonated from within. Jumping on me with all four paws at zero gravity, she would lick my face and sprint around the house, beyond pleased with her superb searching abilities.

After no time, Charlie began to recognize these elementary level hiding spots and would immediately search them upon beginning our hide and seek game. I swiftly had to refine my strategy and think of more innovative spots to challenge her.

Once I shimmied underneath my bed, only inches to spare between my face and the wood under-frame. As I heard the pitter-patter of Charlie's paws trotting through the house searching for me, it appeared I had finally stumped her. She even retraced her steps, searching each room a second and third time, her unease rapidly escalating. As my own anxiety began to mount as I became claustrophobic under the bed, I released a couple playful sounds to alert her to my whereabouts.

Finally locating me underneath the bed, her enthusiasm was so great that she slithered her own body halfway under and began slathering my face with sloppy kisses. Attempting to lurch free of her wet tongue, I smacked my face on the bed's wooden under-frame, earning a fresh wound on the bridge of my nose. Coworkers found it quite amusing in the weeks to come when I explained that the source of my battle scar was an exuberant game of hide and seek with my pup.

Witnessing Charlie's dedicated efforts to locate me when separated, coupled with her overwhelming desire to always be close to me, has often made me reflect on my faith and relationship with my own

## Do I pursue God with the same enthusiasm that Charlie pursues me?

Master. *Do I pursue God with the same vigor and enthusiasm that Charlie pursues me? Do I have an equally strong desire to always be near Him? Do I find Him when I fervently seek Him?*

Reading stories in the Old Testament where God reveals Himself both physically and audibly in powerful ways to His followers, I'm constantly left in awe. How amazing it would be to have God speak to us from a burning bush as He did Moses, personally calling out to us and making His presence known. How phenomenal it would be to see Him lead us in a pillar of cloud or fire as He did the Israelites when we need direction and aren't sure which path to take. Or when we're being particularly stubborn or oblivious, how extraordinary it would be to see Him enable a donkey to speak, as He did with Balaam.

Although God may not reveal Himself to us in the dramatic manner we see illustrated in the lives of some Old Testament figures, that is not to say God doesn't speak to us or make Himself known, as He certainly does. He speaks and reveals Himself



through His unchanging Word. He discloses Himself through the silence. He connects with us through music. He displays Himself through the tapestry of stars above us on a clear night, through the compassion of a neighbor, through the smile of a stranger, through the tender love and

fellowship with Him through prayer, and pursue Him with all our hearts.

Just as Charlie yearns to always be near me and engages in a fervent search when I'm hidden from her sight, let us strive to pursue God with such spirit and ferocity that through every trial and every achievement,

*Just as Charlie yearns to always be near me  
and engages in a fervent search when I'm hidden  
from her sight, let us strive to pursue God ...*

companionship of a pet, and so much more. The channels by which God reveals Himself to us are infinite, we only have to open our eyes and look. We only have to seek Him.

God wants to be known and wants to be found, and we can cling to His promise, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV). He too promises that when we ask, it will be given to us, when we seek, we will find, and when we knock, the door will be opened to us (Matthew 7:7).

As these verses remind us, however, we have an integral part to play in these promises coming to fruition. We won't find God if we don't make an effort to seek Him. We won't know Him if we don't spend time in communion with Him. Ask, seek and knock are all action words. God wants to be found and wants an intimate relationship with each of His beloved children, but it takes effort on our part. We must take the time to study His word, enjoy

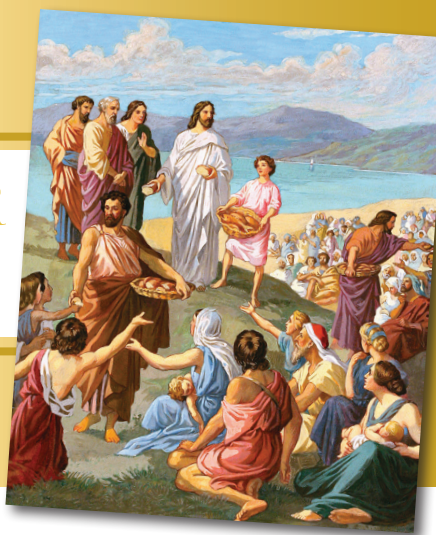
we will not stop seeking. The deep longing to be near Him must never grow faint. And even in the seasons of desperation when it seems God is no where to be found, we can hold true to Jesus' words that those who seek will find. The world around us may shake and crumble, but God's Word and promises will never change and will never fade. He promises that when we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him, and that is a promise we can cling to, especially in periods of spiritual drought and difficult or lonely seasons of life.

Every time I play hide and seek with Charlie and experience the elation of being found and witness Charlie's elation in our reunion, I'm reminded of how joyous it must be for God to see us fervently seek Him. And how joyous it is for both Him and His children to find Him and to know Him. When we pursue Him with innocence, love and longing like Charlie pursues me, we will always find Him. 📖

# JESUS FEEDS OVER FIVE THOUSAND

BY MATTHEW LOCKHART

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## SETTING THE SCENE

*Upon receiving the news that Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee) had John the Baptist beheaded, Jesus seeks to take leave with the disciples to a quiet place for a respite. However, a large throng of people persists in their pursuit of him, and Jesus has compassion on them.*

## Bread and Water FROM JOHN 6

After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. (It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, “Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?” He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

Philip replied, “Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money to feed them!”

Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. “There’s a young boy here with

five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?”

“Tell everyone to sit down,” Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, “Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted.” So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, “Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!” When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

That evening Jesus’ disciples went down to the shore to wait for him. But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn’t come back, they got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum. Soon a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough. They had rowed three or four miles when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. They were terrified, but he called out to

them, “Don’t be afraid. I am here!” Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. But don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval.”

They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?”

Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.”

## TRUTH FOR TODAY

Because of his deep compassion, Jesus was concerned not only with people’s spiritual needs but also with their physical well-being. Then, as now, some mistakenly see him primarily as a miracle man or meal ticket. However, “the bread of life” (John 6:35) wants to provide people with “the food that endures to eternal life” (verse 27, ESV).

The ready availability of cheap bread can distract from our real need, and a quick meal temporarily masks our deeper hunger. We too often settle for fast food instead of feasting on that which nourishes our souls. If our focus rests solely

on the immediate supply—*What’s for dinner?*—we’ll miss knowing the Source.

*Don’t settle for a quick meal when a feast awaits.*

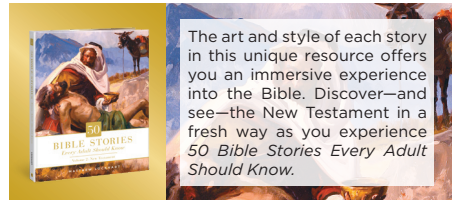
### FYI

The feeding of the five thousand is the one miracle of Christ outside the resurrection that is recorded in all four gospels, but it’s not the only large-scale picnic. Both Matthew and Mark note another instance where Jesus fed nearly as large a crowd (four thousand men). Accounting for women and children, it’s likely both crowds were in excess of ten thousand people.

According to Matthew’s account of the miracle of Jesus walking on the water (Matthew 14:22–33), Peter stepped out of the boat and walked toward Jesus.

### Flashback

Jesus feeding a crowd is reminiscent of God’s provision of manna (bread from heaven) for the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. (You can read about it in volume 1 of *50 Bible Stories Every Adult Should Know*, or see the book of Exodus.)



The art and style of each story in this unique resource offers you an immersive experience into the Bible. Discover—and see—the New Testament in a fresh way as you experience *50 Bible Stories Every Adult Should Know*.

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by MARLO SCHALESKY

## Watch Out for Oak Moths



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**E**www. A tiny, greenish-white worm dropped onto the picnic table in front of me. I flicked it off. What did one little worm matter? It was hardly bigger than a grain of rice. Too small to worry about. Another worm dropped. I frowned and looked up. More little worms hung from the oak tree above me. I scowled as my ten-year-old daughter pushed the second worm off the table.

“Mom, what are they?”

I sighed. “Oak moth larva.”

“They don’t look like much.”

“Not now, but that little worm, and all the others, will make little cocoons...”

She smiled. “Like butterflies?”

“Yes, and no. They’ll make cocoons like butterflies, but what will that hatch is not nearly so nice. These will turn into ugly white moths. They’ll swarm the trees and eat the leaves and hurt our oak trees.”

“Yuck.”

“Yep. And our trees will look all scraggly and sickly.”

“These tiny little things will do all that?”

I grimaced and flicked another

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS

SUNDAY

Mark 6–7

MONDAY

Mark 8–9

TUESDAY

Mark 10–11

WEDNESDAY

Mark 12–13

THURSDAY

Mark 14

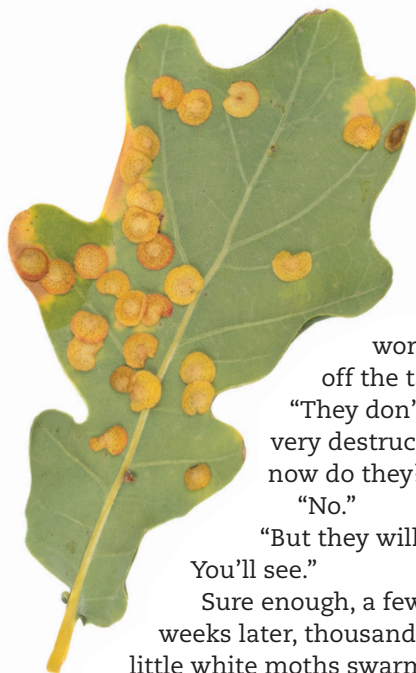
FRIDAY

Mark 15–16

SATURDAY

Luke 1





worm  
off the table.  
“They don’t look  
very destructive  
now do they?”  
“No.”  
“But they will be.  
You’ll see.”

Sure enough, a few weeks later, thousands of little white moths swarmed around our oak trees—little white specks that flew and fluttered, and devoured the signs of life around them. So every day the trees looked a little sparser, a little browner, a lot less healthy. The moths didn’t kill the trees—they couldn’t. But they did stunt the trees’ growth and make them much less than they were meant to be.

Those oak moths reminded me of the little bad habits I sometimes let hang around in my life. They’re small, and wormy, and don’t seem like much. But once they hatch, they wreak destruction on the things that are good, healthy, and full of life—they chew away at the fullness that God intends for me. Sure, they won’t outright kill me, but they do eat away at the peace, vision, and wonder of who I am to be in Christ.

And that’s not the life God wants for me. Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV) says, “You were taught, with regard

to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Oak moths are the little fluttering bits of my old self with its corrupted desires and unhealthy attitudes. I am not meant to be covered in oak moths. I’m not meant to have those little wormy things hatch and eat at all that God has promised and is doing in me. God has made me new. And I want to live free of the moths. I want to grow strong and full, filled with life.

Those little worms may not seem like much, they may not seem important. After all, how destructive could they be? A little harsh word here, a bit of gossip there. A little lie, a bit of unkindness, a small, selfish act. What does it matter?

It matters as much as oak moth larvae. Those little sins will soon make cocoons and hatch into a thousand devouring creatures, eating up our peace, our joy, our vitality in Christ.

So next time a little worm drops on the picnic table of my life, I’m going to pay attention. It matters. God calls me, and you, to wholeness and holiness, to be made new.

In our lives, there can be no place for oak moths or their wormy larvae, no matter how small.

**Marlo Schalesky**

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Find out more about her and her books  
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