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THE RIGHT STUFF  
John 6:1-14  
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We have been talking about Locker Life-Savers, things our kids can put in their lockers or book bags and keep in their hearts to help them stay safe, strong, and successful in the crowded hallways of life.

Today we are talking about having the right stuff, and here is what I want all our kids to know today. **They already have the right stuff to be successful and a key player in the game of life.** We keep telling them that they have to go to school in order to succeed, and on one level that is true. They need an education. They need to know more stuff.

But on another level, they already have what it takes. What concerns me is that in the hallways, with all the pressures and stresses of trying to measure up to someone else's standards, whether it is teachers or other students, they might forget that they already have what it takes. Or worse, they might begin to believe that they just don't have what it takes like everybody else seems to have.

*They might lose sight of the miracle that is waiting to happen through them.*

Let me see if the story of the boy with bread and fish in John 6 helps.

The boy in the story doesn't get much attention. He is like a prop, an extra in a drama, like a pizza boy who shows up at your door with your pizza and then goes away after handing it to you and you will likely never see him again nor do you care to. The boy in the story seems to be there simply to provide the bread and fish.

But I want to focus on him because he was more than a prop. He was a real boy. He was essential to what happened. He was part of Jesus' plan to feed all 5000 men along with their families. I think he is an example of someone who had the right stuff in the right place at the right time.

See if you agree with me. We don't know, but let's imagine that this boy was supposed to get home with those five loaves of bread and two fish. By the way, barley loaves were the bread of the poor.

Anyway, maybe his mom had sent him into the village to shop for the family. Suddenly, he gets caught up in this huge crowd, maybe 20,000 strong, and someone grabs his collar and begins pulling him in the direction of a man who seems to be in charge. He doesn't quite know what is happening, but the man who has grabbed him is saying to the man in

charge, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"

The boy instinctively pulls his things to himself. He has to get home with his groceries. His family is depending on him. He really doesn't hear the man in charge tell everyone to sit down because he is thinking how to escape, but then it happens.

The man in charge takes the bread and fish out of his arms and begins breaking it into pieces and handing the pieces to the man's helpers. And the man in charge never stops. He keeps filling basket after basket with the bread and fish, and the helpers walk their legs off delivering it to the people sitting in the grass. They are like pizza delivery boys, handing it off and disappearing to take another basket to another family. And the boy just stands there staring, thinking about what he will tell his mom when he gets home empty handed. She will never believe this. But really, he thinks to himself, this is pretty cool. And the more he thinks about it, the cooler it gets, until he realizes that it was his bread and his fish that made possible the miracle. In the hands of the man in charge, his little bit of food made thousands of people glad they were there that day. It doesn't say, but I bet he went home with some of the leftovers, and it doesn't say, but I bet he was one of those who wanted to know more about this man in charge they called Jesus.

Now here is my question to our kids. What are the bread and fish that you have to share with the world? What do you have that in the hands of Jesus could make a difference in the life of someone else? Okay, let me say it this way.

*What God-given gift do you have that in the hands of Jesus could make a difference in others' lives and help them come to know the Lord of the universe? The One who feeds our souls and satisfies our longings for God?*

I Corinthians 12 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Paul compares the church to a human body. He says every member of the body has a God-given gift. Every member counts and each person's gift is essential. You have something that in the hands of Jesus can make a difference in others' lives. What do you have?

In 1924, Eric Liddell, a British runner, competed in the summer Olympics. He became famous, partly because he refused to run a race on Sunday. Above all, he served his God and wanted nothing more than to honor God with his running. At one point, he said, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." With his speed, he helped others to see God.

What do you have that in the hands of Jesus can make a difference in the lives of others?

Someone said our kids don't need to be molded, they need to be unfolded. That is another way of saying that each of our kids has the right stuff. And all they have to do is to put their stuff in the hands of Jesus. And Jesus will take their stuff and use it to make a difference in the world.

At this time I want us to hear from some of our youth as they share how they put themselves in the hands of Jesus and made a difference in New Orleans.

[Youth who went to New Orleans to help with hurricane recovery speak to the congregation.]

With the pressure and stress of school getting ready to start again, I want our kids to be prepared for all eventualities. I want them to rise up and do their best, to reach all their God-given potential this year. I don't want them to succumb to any of the things that can pull them down and cause them to stumble and fall or to doubt themselves or to doubt God.

Each of our kids matters to God. Each is important to God's plans for the world. To them, we say, "Don't let anyone tear you down. Don't doubt yourself. Don't judge yourself in comparison to someone else. Don't try to be what you are not. You've got the right stuff."