



## Thoughts on the Journey

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In 1997, after attending a wedding in Venezuela, my family and I decided to take advantage of our stay in South America and travel through the Andes Mountains. We headed west from Barquisimeto, the city where we had been staying. You could tell where the city ended and the terrain began to change. We shared the road with trucks picking up field hands who work the plantain and banana plantations. The stop-and-go along the way would normally have been irritating, but the slower pace gave us an opportunity to see how the people lived. There were few houses, and mostly dilapidated shacks that told a story of abject poverty and substandard living conditions: a far cry from the city from where we came.

The lower elevations of the mountains were hot and humid. We were fortunate to have air-conditioning which made our ride pleasant, but not so for the people along the way. I had packed substantial food for the journey because we were warned that there are little to no eateries along the way and those that were open, might pose a risk of food poisoning.

It was time to take a bathroom break and grab a bite to eat, so we pulled over to a rather crude roadside stop. I was not prepared for the conditions, but the hole in the ground that served as a toilet, would have to do. We then opened the cooler in the trunk of the car where I took sandwiches, snacks, and drinks to feed my kids. Within minutes, a group of about ten children seemed to come out of nowhere and began begging for food. It was obvious from their emaciated frames that they suffer from hunger. At that moment, I had to decide whether to feed my three children or the children who were far hungrier. I took one sandwich and divided it into three pieces, giving it to my little

ones, and the rest I distributed to the children who were begging for sustenance. I was thrilled that there was enough for everyone, but I drove away knowing it was a temporary fix for their long-term hunger.

In John's Gospel, Jesus ascends up the mountain to be with His disciples. People had been following Jesus because of the miracles He was performing. It was a crowd of about five thousand. When Jesus realized they needed to eat, as a test, He asked Phillip where they could get food to feed them. Knowing the magnitude of Jesus' request, Andrew stepped forward to say there was a boy in the crowd who had five barley loaves and two fish.

**“Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted.”**

When the people had their fill, Jesus instructed His disciples to gather the leftovers so none would be wasted. The crowd marveled at what they witnessed, being sure that He was the Prophet who was to come into the world.

John's gospel brought my memory back to that scene in Venezuela. At the time, I remember thinking I have experienced being hungry, but never had I experienced abject hunger. But I have experienced other kinds of hunger: hunger to be loved, hunger to be valued, hunger to feel relevant, hunger to fill the holes in my soul that sometimes made me feel empty. It is Jesus who fills my hungers and gives me peace. I have found this truth that comes from Psalm 145: *“The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.”* Trust Him!