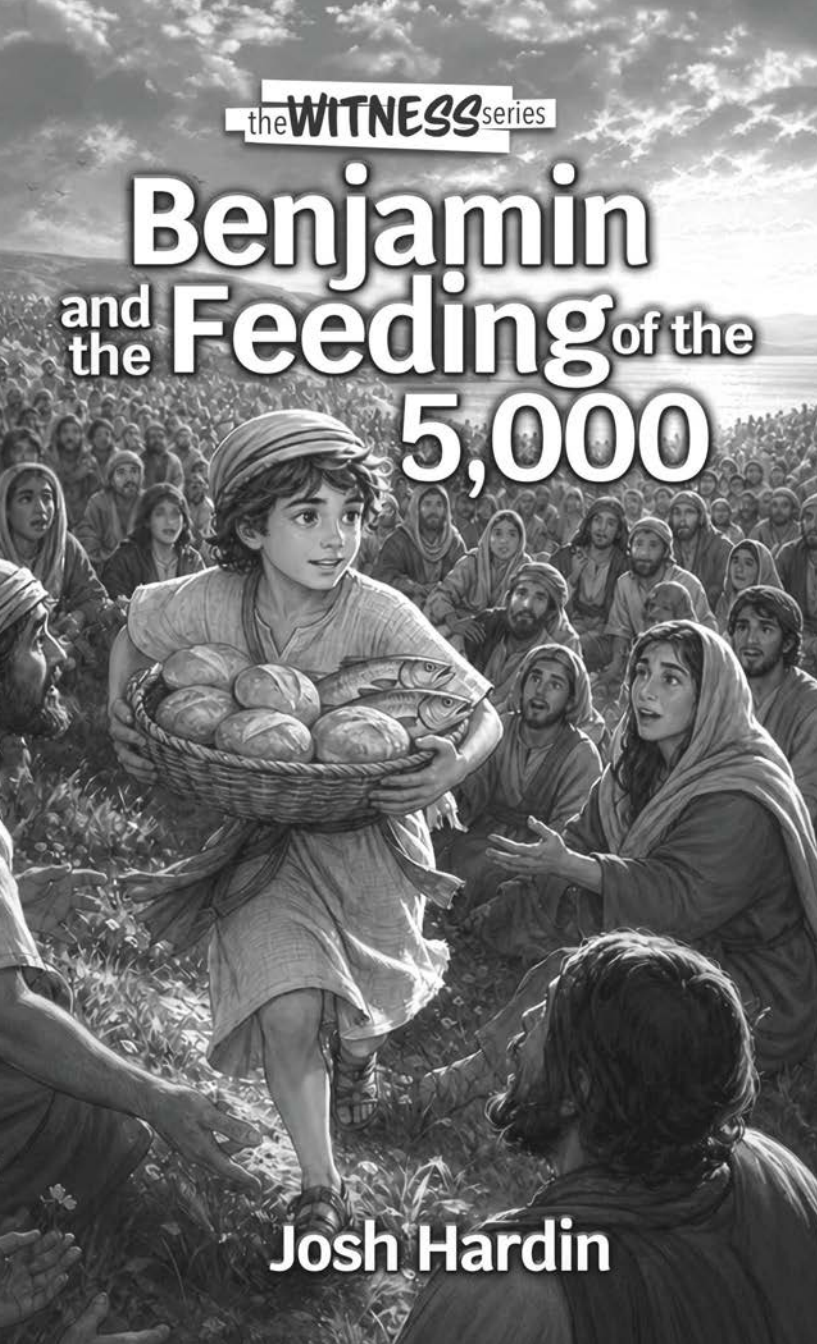




the **WITNESS** series

Benjamin and the Feeding of the 5,000

Josh Hardin

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the **WITNESS** series

The **Witness Series** is a collection of books based on biblical stories but told through the eyes of a fictional character who might have been present at a particular event. The character who witnesses each story is a young person, usually between the ages of eight and seventeen.

I took great pains to ensure that the story in your hand does not change **any details** found in the Bible. Since many of the characters in this story are fictional, there will be some elements, especially dialogue, that are not included in the Bible. However, these should in **no way** contradict what the Bible says. If they do, it is unintended. So always remember that the story happened the way God says it happened in the Bible.

The series has this thought at its foundation: “Suppose that we could hear this Bible story from the eyes of a young person who saw it firsthand, who was there when it happened.” Each of the stories in this series will be based on that idea.

—Josh Hardin

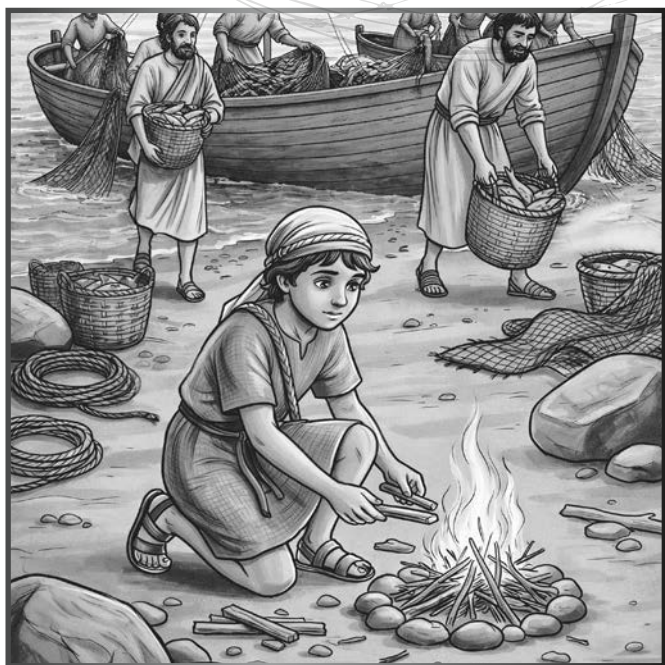




Benjamin and the Feeding of the 5,000

For this story, we will suppose we can hear the story of how Jesus fed the 5,000 from a boy who lived in Capernaum, whose father was a fisherman and knew Peter and Andrew, James and John, and who followed the crowd to hear Jesus.

The story includes many of the miracles Jesus performed and times He taught in Capernaum, leading up to the feeding of the 5,000. These events are scattered across the early chapters of the gospels, but can be primarily found in Matthew chapters 4 through 6, Mark 1 through 6, Luke 4 through 9, and John 1 through 6.





Chapter 1

Benjamin loved the sea. He loved to watch the waves rock back and forth, up and down, white and blue, and spray into the air. He loved to smell the fresh wind blow in from the water, to feel it ruffle his hair and cool his face. Most of all, he loved to watch the fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee, bobbing up and down, and to watch the men as they threw their empty nets into the water and hauled them back up full of flopping fish.

Fish. Benjamin loved fish, too. His father Jacob was one of the fishermen Benjamin watched out on the sea, catching fish to sell and to feed Benjamin, Benjamin's mother, Sarah, his sister, Abigail, and his grandmother, Ruth. On most days, Benjamin was allowed to go to the sea where his father worked and watch him fish — after he finished any chores his mother gave him. From

the beach, Benjamin would watch his father and his partners on the boat, throwing the nets, hauling in fish.

Sometimes he even went fishing with his father, but never during work. He was too young, only nine, and would get in the way of the men working. But he loved when just he and his father could go fishing together. His father would tell him stories of Israel. Of how God saved Israel from Egypt, of how Moses led the people in the wilderness while God fed them manna and quail, of Joshua and the battle of Jericho. And his father would tell him of how one day God would send the Messiah to rescue Israel again and establish a kingdom that would never end.

Even though he was young, Benjamin did have jobs. Benjamin had to make the fire on the pebbly beach so the fishermen could cook lunch. When he saw the boats coming to shore, he would get the fire ready for them. That way, they wasted no time and could immediately go back to work fishing after they ate. He made the fires for many of the fishing boats, not just his father's. Sometimes the men would give him money for his work. After the fishermen went back to work, he had to make sure all the fires were out again.

After all the fishing was done, he would go with his father and sell fish in the market. He would

tell all of the fish sellers how many fish they caught, and how fresh they were, and how good they would taste. "You're the best fish salesman in Capernaum," his father told him.

It was a good thing he had the jobs to do, or his mother would make him stay home. "He'll fall in the water while you're not watching," she said.

"He swims better than the fish I catch," answered Jacob.

"He doesn't need to be out there by himself while you're fishing," she told Jacob, concern etched on her face. "He'll get hurt or lost."

"Everyone knows him, and he knows his way around the coast better than some of the men do," said his father. "Besides, I sell more fish when he's with me. He's the best fish salesman in Capernaum. I've got to have him!"

His mother pushed her lips into a frown and shook her head. "He's too young," she said, but not so forcefully.

"I was his age when I started helping my father," said Jacob as he put his arms around Sarah.

"Fishing is a good business, and he loves it. He's not too young to learn."

So, his mother let him go. Each day, she packed him a lunch of bread and dried fish, and before

he left, she kissed him on the cheek and reminded him to be careful.

Some days his mother did not let him go to the seashore but instead made him stay home to help with chores. This happened especially when a harvest had just come in and they had to thresh grain. Benjamin did not like to carry wheat, nor thresh grain, nor sit and grind the grain in a bowl with the grinding stone. He liked to be out by the sea or in town, watching, looking around, talking to people — not stuck at home. He liked to fish. And he was going to be a fisherman.

His father was right. He did know everyone, and they knew him. When he wasn't watching the fishermen, or preparing the fires, he could wander through town, and through the market and see all the fish and fruits and grains and tents for sale, and he could explore up and down the shore, meeting the other fishermen. He knew them all by name. Some of them were gruff and didn't speak much. Some waved but were too busy to talk. Others were friendly and always made sure he would have a fire ready for their lunch.

The friendliest, thought Benjamin, was Andrew. He and his brother Simon had several boats and a fishing business with old Zebedee and his sons, James and John. Andrew always spoke to Benjamin and asked him to have a fire.

“How many fish did you sell yesterday?” he would ask Benjamin.

Benjamin would tell him, “Oh, more than two days’ worth. At least ten litras.”

Andrew looked at him from the corner of his eye. “Benjamin, you know the commandment about not bearing false witness.”

“Really, I did!” exclaimed Benjamin, then hung his head sheepishly. “Well, almost. And it was more than the day before.”

Andrew laughed. “I believe you. You know how to sell to every vendor.”

Andrew also asked about his family. “How is your grandmother?” he would ask. He knew she lived with them and was getting older. Sometimes Andrew would bring her some dried dates, which were her favorite!

Benjamin liked most of the fishermen, but he liked Andrew the best.

Then one day, Andrew stopped coming to the sea.

At first, Benjamin thought he was sick. Or had gone on a trip. But then he noticed that Simon and James and John had stopped coming, too. Old Zebedee was still there. *Surely, they’ll come back and help again*, thought Benjamin. Then a

week went by, and none came back. Instead, other men were working with Zebedee now. Benjamin could see them from the shore, and he could see by the way they moved and threw nets that none were the men he knew. When Benjamin asked some of the other fishermen, he found out that Zebedee had hired new workers.

“Where is Andrew?” Benjamin asked Zebedee one day at lunch. “When will he come back?”

Zebedee was stretched out on his side, on the smooth rocks of the beach, beside his small fire. He ate his fish wrapped in flat bread. He tilted his head and gave Benjamin a long stare.

Finally, he said, “I ask God that myself, little Benjamin. I believe the answer is that he won’t be coming back.”

“Never?” asked Benjamin. “But what will he do?”

“God has given him different work,” said Zebedee. “He and his brother, and my sons . . .,” he paused and looked into the fire, then turned back to Benjamin, “... have found the Messiah.”

Benjamin’s eyes grew wide. The Messiah! Like the stories his father told him?

“But, what could He want with them? What does that mean?”

Zebedee laughed. "I don't know what it may mean someday," he said, "but what it means today is that you will miss your friend, and that I have to hire new fishermen." He stood up with a groan, leaning on his old knees to rise, and then kicked rocks and sand over his small fire. "But we will be content with what God gives us this day and will see what he provides tomorrow." He rubbed Benjamin on the head. "And today he has given both of us more fine weather for fishing."

Zebedee turned and went back to his boats, and Benjamin made sure the fire had died. He covered it with dirt and rocks, then he went up and down the beach as always, making sure his fires were smothered and out, but he kept thinking back and forth between two questions: *Have they really found the Messiah? And I wonder if I will see Andrew again?*

