

# John 6:1-15, 25-59: Bread from Heaven

## Leader Guide- 12/6/09



**Small Group Study** – Each week our small groups team works alongside Pastor J.D. to create a small group study which corresponds to his sermon that week. The study examines a related passage of scripture to the text he preaches through with the goal of challenging small groups to grow both in their confidence in studying the bible and in their application of the truths brought out in the sermon.

Context: The primary focus of John chapters 5-11 is the identity of Jesus. Through miraculous signs and extensive preaching, Jesus reveals His power, roles, and even His divinity. John records the 7 “I AM” statements that encapsulate Jesus’ self-revelation. Here are some key statements from chapters 5-11 about Jesus identity:

**John 6:35 I am the Bread of Life**

John 7:37 I give living water  
John 8:58 Before Abraham was, I AM  
John 9:5 I am the Light of the World  
John 10:11 I am the Good Shepherd (and the Gate)  
John 11:25 I am the Resurrection and the Life

The issue of Jesus’ identity arises in the face of opposition, after Jesus performs a miracle on the Sabbath. Jesus claims that, through miracles and signs, the Father is testifying to Jesus’ identity as the Savior, Messiah, and Son of God (5:16-47). The work that Jesus is doing will be the proof. In the discourse in 5 and 6, we learn that the crowds have “set their hopes on Moses (i.e., the law- 5:45)” and that they work for food (6:27) and praise from men (5:44). They are concerned about doing “the works God requires” to which Jesus answers: “the work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” The crowds are not satisfied, because they want to see more works from Jesus that prove that He is on par with Moses. Jesus has already, and will again, show that He is greater than Moses through His works.

The early Christians were called cannibals by their pagan neighbors, because they were said to be eating the flesh of their God. The response to Jesus teaching here about being the Bread from Heaven is similarly negative. In verse 60 they reject this teaching saying, “this is a hard teaching, who can accept it?” The crowds whom He had just miraculously fed were now fleeing. Though Jesus words and actions portray a powerful and life-giving identity, the people did not accept this message because they were too focused on the physical implications of His ministry.

Theme: Centuries earlier, Moses had been the first miracle worker, a prophet who had seen God and done mighty deeds in His name. Moses was their leader, redeemer, law-giver, shepherd, prophet, and intercessor. It is no wonder that many trusted Moses. However, Moses could not give eternal life. Jesus did the miracles in chapter 6- the feeding of the five thousand in the desert and walking on water- to remind them of Moses. The people’s response was to call him “the prophet (6:14 cf. Deut 18)” and try to make Jesus their king (6:15). In fact, the walking on water miracle showed that Jesus was more than just another prophet in the line of Moses, He was God (Ps. 77:19, Job 9:8).

Thus, the work that people needed to do was to believe Jesus for eternal life. That was the work that could bring life and satisfy God’s requirements. Kostenberger summarizes the point this way: “the work of God (that is, the work of God requires) is not described in terms of acts of Law-keeping but as believing in Jesus; and ... this work is really no human ‘work’ at all: it is the work of God. Jesus’ answer thus seeks to redirect people’s focus from an introspective preoccupation with ‘works of the Law’ (Paul’s term) to trust in the God-sent Messiah, Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> They were clearly searching to understand what work God wanted from them. But instead, God gave Jesus as a gift, the only gift that could meet His requirements on their behalf. This gift nourishes us and gives us eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup> Kostenberger, Andreas. Encountering John.

Aim: To eat and drink the spiritual food that God has given us in Christ.

Prayer:

- Pray that our church would feast on Jesus habitually and show more and more signs of life eternal.
- Pray that the people of Summit would communicate the necessity of Jesus to our neighbors.
- Pray that the people of the Triangle would turn to Jesus for spiritual nutrition.
- Use Psalm 34 to reflect on the Lord's goodness.

Study Questions:

What points about Jesus' identity stuck with you from the sermon on Sunday?

[6:1-15]

What had they seen from Jesus that makes them think He might be "the Prophet?"

Jesus spoke with authority, healed the sick, and did miraculous signs. These were things that a prophet had the power to do. Most recently, the people had been fed in the desert, which created the comparison to Moses.

Why do the people want to make Jesus their king?

If Jesus exhibited authority and power in the order of Moses, then perhaps He could deliver the Israelites as Moses had done. The Jewish people were scattered, living under governments that were generally oppressive to them. Some were living in their home land, but under the rule of unjust leaders both local and foreign.

Furthermore, some of the prophetic expectations of the Israelite return from Exile included strong references to the Exodus story (see Isaiah 40-66). A New Moses could be the sign that their political situation might be about to change.

Why does Jesus withdraw from the crowd?

Political power was not what Jesus was concerned about in His ministry. The essence of His ministry was to feed the people spiritually. The kingdom and the eternal life that He is offering in His 1<sup>st</sup> coming is from Heaven.

[6:25-59]

Why are people following Jesus at this point in His ministry?

Jesus says that the people are looking for Him because they are concerned about food. The people's focus had been on the physical throughout their interaction with Jesus. First, they wanted Him to establish an earthly throne, then they are looking for physical food rather than spiritual, and finally they grumble against Jesus because they do not understand that a son of Joseph can be from Heaven.

In what ways are Jesus and Moses similar figures?

Talk through how both fulfill the roles of redeemer, miracle-worker, shepherd, law-giver, and intercessor.

In what ways is Jesus greater than Moses?

It is not Moses that fed the people in desert, but God. Now Jesus feeds them miraculously. The food that Jesus gives leads to eternal life. The redemption that Jesus offers, is not just political, but out of sin and death. The intercession that Jesus provides allows us to approach God's throne boldly.

Why do the people have misgivings about Jesus' teachings?

See verses 6:26, 30-31, 41-42, 52, 60. They do not except that He has the power to give them eternal life. Their focus is on the physical while He is offering spiritual gifts. Jesus says that the spiritual gifts that He is offering are real and eternal, more real and necessary than physical food!

In verse 54, Jesus says, "whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." How do we feed on Jesus?

As we hear His words, meditate on His goodness, and put His commands into practice, we abide in Him. Doing these things shows that we trust Him for true life, and to those who trust Him will be raised by Him eternally.

Describe, in your own words, what it means to eat and drink of Jesus.

This is your chance to disciple your members in the ways that you have a personal relationship with Jesus.