

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

## Member 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?"

Why do the people want to make Jesus their king?

Why does Jesus withdraw from the crowd?

[6:25-59]

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

In what ways are Jesus and Moses similar figures?

In what ways is Jesus greater than Moses?

Why do the people have misgivings about Jesus' teachings?

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

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