

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE
We Ache for Soul Satisfaction
LESSON 5

Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6:35



WELCOME

What are some of your favorite foods? Why do you like them so much?

BACKGROUND

Each of us can identify the pang of hunger in our stomach. Some of us have even been so hungry that we feel faint or struggle to focus. Food is essential in order to sustain our lives; none of us can live without nourishment. The feeling that comes from a full belly is satisfying, yet it only lasts until it’s time for the next meal.

The book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites’ escape out of slavery from Egypt. They were led by Moses and wandered in the desert for 40 years. As they were wandering, they complained about the lack of food. Then the Lord told Moses that He would rain down food from heaven. The people would be able to pick up as much food as they needed for that day. They called this food “manna.” This miracle of manna fed an entire nation every day for 40 years.¹ There was a Jewish expectation that when the Messiah came, He would renew the miracle of manna, literally sending the “bread from heaven” again.² In reality, the “bread from heaven” was a person, Jesus.

Jesus said He was the Bread of Life and that anyone who ate this bread, His flesh, and drank His blood would live.³ It should be noted that “this was a shocking message—to eat flesh and drink blood sounded cannibalistic. The idea of drinking any blood, let alone human blood, was repugnant to the religious leaders because the

¹ **Exodus 16**

² Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971. 320

³ **John 6:53–54**

law forbade it (**Leviticus 17:10, 11**).”⁴ As usual, Jesus used shocking language and a profound word picture to teach the foundational spiritual truth that only He can satisfy our souls.

Jesus said He is the Bread of Life. He is the one who fulfills us at a deep soul level. Saint Augustine wrote that Jesus made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they are at rest in Him.⁵ He is the one who sustains our lives in this world and grants us eternal life.

1. When have you experienced soul dissatisfaction or the kind of restlessness Saint Augustine described?



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.

Context: In order to understand **John 6:22–59**, it is helpful to look at the previous experiences of the people involved. The day before, Jesus had performed the miracle of feeding five thousand people with only two fish and five loaves of bread (**6:5–13**). That evening, before He went up into the hills alone to pray, Jesus sent His disciples off to Capernaum in a boat. During the night, they encountered a sudden, severe and frightening storm. Jesus walked on water to reach them and calm the storm, and they all arrived safely in Capernaum (**6:16–21**). In the morning, the crowds that Jesus had fed learned He had gone to Capernaum, so they went there too and found Him teaching in the synagogue (**6:22–25, 59**). Enter into the story:

John 6:22–59

²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realized Jesus had not gone with them. ²³ Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. ²⁴ So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples

⁴ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1765

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I Am Statements of Christ*. David C Cook, 2011. 30

were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. ²⁵ They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. ²⁷ But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."

²⁸ They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

²⁹ Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

³⁰ They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? ³¹ After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³² Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. ³³ The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

³⁵ Jesus replied, "**I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.** ³⁶ But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. ³⁷ However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. ³⁹ And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

⁴¹ Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

⁴³ But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. ⁴⁴ For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. ⁴⁵ As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

⁴⁷ “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life.
⁴⁸ **Yes, I am the bread of life!** ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. ⁵⁰ Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.”

⁵² Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they asked.

⁵³ So Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. ⁵⁴ But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ **I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever.**”

⁵⁹ He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

2. What did Jesus note about the crowd’s motivations for following Him? (**John 6:26–27**)

What did Jesus tell them they should be focusing on instead?

3. In **John 6:28**, the crowds stated they wanted to perform God’s works too and asked Jesus how they could do so. What was His reply? (**John 6:29**)

a. How do the following verses help deepen your understanding of belief in Jesus?

i. **John 3:16**

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

ii. **Romans 10:9**

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

iii. **Acts 4:12**

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

iv. **Ephesians 2:8**

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

v. **2 Corinthians 5:17**

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

b. What do you understand "the work of belief" to mean for your life? (**John 6:29**)

4. Read this quote and respond to the following questions:
- “Many who sincerely seek God wonder what he wants them to do. The religions of the world have many answers to this question, but Jesus’ reply was brief and simple: Believe in him who God has sent. Satisfying God does not come from the work we do, but from whom we believe. What does it mean to believe? The first step is accepting Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God. We declare in prayer to Jesus, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ (**Matthew 16:16**, NKJV). Accepting Jesus means giving him control of every area of life. To believe means to yield our wills, our desires, our plans, our strengths and weaknesses to Christ’s direction and safekeeping.”⁶ Yielding is a natural byproduct of believing and trusting in Jesus, our Savior. “Believing is a relationship with the one who promises to live within, trusting him to guide and direct us to do his will.”⁷
- a. Based on this description of what it means to believe, what are some areas of life where your belief is strong?
- b. What are some areas of your life in which you struggle to believe?
- c. How can belief lead to soul satisfaction?

⁶ Barton, Bruce B. *John*. Tyndale House, 2004. 129

⁷ *Ibid.* 129

5. In **Exodus 16**, the Israelites were wandering in the desert after they had escaped from Egypt. When they complained that they had nothing to eat, God provided food each morning that blanketed the ground. The people called it “manna” and it sustained them for 40 years in the desert. In what way did Jesus correct the crowd’s statement that Moses gave their ancestors bread from heaven to eat? (**John 6:32–33**)
- a. Where in today’s culture do you see humans taking credit for their own ability to provide instead of recognizing the provision of God?
- b. Where do you see today’s culture looking for satisfaction or fulfillment from earthly things (relational, material, physical, etc.)? Where do you see this in your own life?
6. Jesus offered a different way to soul satisfaction. What was His claim in **John 6:35**?

- a. Jesus offers the ultimate spiritual satisfaction. If we come to Him in belief, we will never need to hunger or thirst again.⁸ However, we misread this if we think we are being offered an escape from life and any problems; rather, the Gospel frees us to face life.⁹ What are some of the ways you continue to experience hunger and thirst in this life, both literally and figuratively?
- b. In what ways have you seen Jesus sustain you as you come to Him in seasons of hunger and thirst?
- c. Sometimes identifying how Jesus is meeting our needs is difficult. If this is your experience now, spend some time telling Jesus about your unmet needs. Acknowledge to Him that you do not see His provision.

⁸ This offer of the Bread of Life is similar to the Living Water that Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman in **John 4:14**.

⁹ Barton, Bruce B. *John*. Tyndale House, 2004. 131

7. Underline the reassurances you find in the following promises of God, both from Jesus' continued statements to the congregation in Capernaum and from a portion of **Isaiah 49**.

a. **John 6:39–40**

And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.

b. **Isaiah 49:14–16**

*Yet Jerusalem says, "The LORD has deserted us;
the Lord has forgotten us."*

"Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child?

Can she feel no love for the child she has borne?

But even if that were possible,

I would not forget you!

See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

c. What is your response to these reassurances?

8. How did the congregation react to the teachings of Jesus? (**John 6:41–42**)

What did Jesus declare about Himself and the Father to try to convince the crowd of His ability to feed and satisfy their souls?¹⁰
(**John 6:43–46**)

¹⁰ The last day is a reference to Jesus' second coming when He will gather believers and reign with them on earth. (**Revelation 20:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15**)



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

John 6:47 states, *“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life.”* The word “believes” used here means “continues to believe.”¹³ This is not a one-time commitment but a continued belief and trust in Jesus—not simply knowing biblical answers, but knowing Jesus as a friend. This is how the Bread of Life satisfies our souls. What does continued belief and friendship with Jesus look like in your life?

Consider making a declaration of commitment to that continued belief today. Speak that declaration out loud to Jesus, the Bread of Life.

You may want to pause and take communion as part of your declaration, either on your own or with your group or both. Read **1 Corinthians 11:23–26** and eat the bread and drink the cup.

¹³ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1765



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

Our satisfaction or contentment in the face of struggles and difficulties in this world can be a powerful witness. As believers, we have the Bread of Life who satisfies us at a deep soul level. Take some time to write out or share a story where you have experienced something difficult but remained steadfast in your belief and been satisfied in your soul. Sharing stories like this is an opportunity to witness. Practicing and repeating our stories and experiences of belief grows our faith and the faith of other believers.

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.

- What are some deep desires in your life?
- What has sustained you through hard times in life?
- Share the experience you wrote about in the Witness section.
- Has there ever been a time you have felt deeply satisfied? What was that like?

TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 102.

SERMON NOTES
Lesson 5

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write their sermon notes for Lesson 5.

