

Teaching Points

The majority of what's left in John 6 consists of a lengthy discourse between Jesus and the crowd. This is the same crowd that Jesus miraculously fed in verses 1-14. These people had heard Christ teach and they had seen His miracle working power first hand. They still want to follow Him - but, as we'll see throughout this conversation, their motives weren't exactly pure.

This conversation is long and contains many excellent details about the person and work of God. Because of the amount of information contained in it, we're only going to draw out a few teaching points for tonight. Our goal is to read the conversation in its entirety (vs. 22-59) but limit our discussion to a few focused talking points. We'll revisit this passage in the next lesson and pick up whatever is left out during this first pass.

1. See how this crowd flocked to Jesus outwardly while they remained uncommitted to Him inwardly.

Jesus openly rebukes them for their shallow motives. **"...you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."** (v. 26). It seems that these people were more interested in the physical food that Jesus gave them than the message He preached to them. Let this be a warning to us - there are many who appear to follow Jesus outwardly while their hearts are actually focused on the wrong things. This whole multitude is pursuing Jesus from one side of the sea to the other and asking Him questions - but they're really only interested in earthly things. Right away, we can see that Jesus spoke directly to them. He didn't sugar coat His message to please them.

Discussion Question: What's wrong with churches that are afraid of offending the crowd and losing attendance numbers?

Thoughts: *This is nothing more than the fear of man. The Bible says we cannot fear God and man. We can only serve one master. In John 6, Jesus isn't afraid to call the crowd out (several times in this one conversation even). This is a picture of courage and conviction. Jesus loved His Father more than anything. He did not fear negative reactions from speaking hard truths to people. He loved the truth and so He refused to compromise in order to keep a large following. (By the end of this very conversation in John 6 a large portion of the crowd walks away from Jesus because of what He said to them on this occasion.)*

2. Jesus takes advantage of this opportunity to speak to them about the difference between physical food and spiritual food.

Physical food nourishes and sustains the body temporarily. The manna that appeared in the Old Testament is a picture of this. God fed the Israelites with physical bread which sustained them throughout the time of their wilderness wandering. The benefits

the Israelites received from this bread only lasted a short while. Eventually, their bodies still broke down and perished. ***“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”*** (v. 49).

There’s nothing wrong with looking to God to provide for our physical needs. The point of this discourse, however, is to set our eyes on something greater than physical food. ***“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you...”*** (v. 27)

Jesus reminds the crowd that the manna didn’t come from Moses - it came from God (v. 32). Then Jesus tells them plainly that God had provided an even greater “bread from heaven” in Himself! ***“For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life.”*** (vs. 33, 35)

Discussion Question: Take a moment to compare and contrast the manna (physical bread in the wilderness) with Christ (the true bread of God from heaven). In what ways are they similar? What difference is there in terms of the benefits they each afford?

Thoughts: *There are many valid answers. Here are a few. The physical manna only sustained the bodies of the Israelites for another day. The spiritual bread of Christ sustains both our bodies and our souls forever (everlasting life). The physical manna was only given to one nation during one season in their history. Christ, as the bread of life, is for all the nations and for all time. Eating the physical manna didn’t have any direct impact on the consumer’s relationship to God. Unbelieving Israelites could still collect it and eat it and go to bed without changed hearts. But everyone who partakes of Christ is changed dramatically from the inside out. Those who “eat His flesh and drink His blood” become whole new creations.*

3. “I AM”

We’ve mentioned how John’s gospel contains seven “signs” (miracles) that illustrate the deity of Christ. Along with those signs there are multiple “I AM” sayings of Jesus contained in John’s record. These are awesome declarations from the mouth of Jesus - openly identifying Himself as God almighty.

The first of these sayings is recorded in verse 35, ***“I am the bread of life.”*** The gravity of this statement will escape us if we’re not familiar with the Old Testament. It’s important to understand the Scriptural significance of these words.

In Exodus 3 God calls Moses to go lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Moses is amazed at the sight of God’s presence; made manifest by a burning bush that’s not consumed. Listen to a portion of the exchange between God and Moses at the bush, ***“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say***

to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)

Discussion Question: In light of this passage in Exodus, what is the significance of Jesus saying "I AM the bread of life"?

Thoughts: *Jesus is telling the crowd that He is the God who appeared to Moses at the burning bush. In other words, the very same Yahweh who talked to Moses that day (about 1,500 years prior) was now standing there talking to them. This is yet another instance of Jesus clearly declaring His equality with God. The Jews would have been familiar with this awesome name of God. What they weren't expecting was for Jesus to take this name up for Himself. In one simple statement: "I am the bread of life.", Jesus told them that He is God and that He came to bring a salvation greater than any Old Testament foreshadow.*

Prayer Focus

Spend time praising God for His triune nature. Here is Jesus declaring His equality with the Father. There is no one like our God!

Pray for our church. Pray that those who attend would not be like the crowd who only maintained an outward pursuit of Jesus while neglecting the true heart of worship.