

John 6:35  
“I am the bread of life”

Introduction

1. Jesus’ claim to be the bread of life comes in the middle of a lengthy discussion that began on the shores of the sea of Galilee and continued into the synagogue.
2. It began when Jesus was approached by the crowd that were fed the previous day in the miracle of the Feeding of the 5000, and ended with in a smaller, more intimate discussion with His disciples
3. There are three groups of people (if you will) and each presents Jesus with a question that reveals a little something about them.
4. Jesus’ responds to each group with a challenge

A. The Crowd (6:22-28)

1. We know a number of things about this crowd:
  - a. They **INITIALLY** following Jesus because they had seen “**the signs He was performing on the sick**” (6:2)
  - b. They witnessed—and participated in—another miracle: the Feeding of the 5000 (6:5-14)
  - c. They believed Jesus was “**the Prophet who is to come into the world**” (6:14):
    - 1) It’s not entirely clear what they believed about this Prophet
    - 2) Was he the Prophet from Deuteronomy 18:15?
    - 3) Was He the Messiah?
    - 4) It is more likely that their vision (or version) of a prophet was that of a militaristic leader that would rescue them from the Romans, especially in light their desire to make Jesus King (6:15)
  - d. The next day, they pursued Jesus to the other side of the sea, but this time it was for another reason: “**You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.**” (6:26)
  - e. So, their interest in Jesus shifted to a selfish desire to have their bellies filled (i.e. what they could gain from Him materially)
2. Their question to Jesus is this: “**Rabbi, when did You get here?**” (6:25):
  - a. At the risk of making too much of this question, it is interesting to note it’s total lack of spiritual content
  - b. It’s not all that clear why they were interested in the time he arrived; maybe they were upset because they missed the free breakfast they thought Jesus would provide <grin>
3. Jesus’ challenge to them is simple: stop pursuing temporary things and pursue the one thing that leads to eternal life (6:27): “**Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you...**”
  - a. Work in this passage is a metaphor:
    - 1) It represents the time, energy, investment put into pursuing something

- 2) The present tense imperative translated as “do not work” is best understood as “**stop working**” or “**stop laboring**” which suggests an already present behavior and the need to put an end to it
  - 3) Likewise, “**start working for**” should be supplied before the second clause (i.e. “but start working for...”
- b. While the reference to food is literal (the bread and fish), it’s more significant meaning is metaphorical:
- 1) They were seeking “**food that perishes**” and in this case food represents temporal and material things
  - 2) They should have been seeking “**the food which endures to eternal life**”:
    - a) Food here is that which “endures to (i.e. results in rather than lasts until) eternal life
    - b) It was something only Jesus could give them: “**which the Son of Man will give to you**”
    - c) Only He was able to give this kind of food because “**God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him**”
    - d) Later in the passage, we discover this food is actually Jesus Himself

B. The Religious (John 6:29-60)
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1. There is no clear break in the passage at this point demanding a change in audience, however the conversation appears to move from the larger crowd to those who were not just interested in having their bellies filled, but to those having some interest in spiritual matters. The evidence for this is:
  - a. Their question regarding how to do the works of God in v. 28
  - b. The inclusion of Moses and the miracle of the manna in the discussion
  - c. They are referred to specifically as Jews (6:41)
2. This group also has a question for Jesus (6:28): “**What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?**”
  - a. In some respects this may be a legitimate question for those who are genuinely interested in how to please God
  - b. Often at the heart of such a question, however, is the underlying belief that pleasing God is simply a matter of doing the right things or doing enough
  - c. This is especially true of the Jews in Jesus’ day, many of whom believed that all God required was strict adherence to the works of the Law
  - d. The “religious” or our day often believe the same thing: “If I just do the right thing” or “If I just practice the right religion”
3. Jesus has a simple response and challenge to this group: (6:29): “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.**”
  - a. Their question was one of “**works**” (plural) and what they could do
  - b. Jesus responds with only one “**work**” and He defines this work “**belief**” in the one whom God had sent
4. Unlike those in the crowd who might have walked away after realizing Jesus was no longer their meal ticket, this group sticks around, but with an argumentative spirit and hard hearts (6:30-58):
  - a. They first demand that Jesus prove Himself worthy of their belief (30-40):

- Jesus responds that He is the true bread of life who gives life to the world, and that whoever believes in Him will be raised up to eternal life
- b. They grumble and complain about his claims above (41-51)
  - Jesus responds a second time that he is the bread of life and all those who believe in Him will have eternal life
- c. They argue among themselves over what they perceived as a ridiculous idea (52-58)
  - Jesus responds a third time that He is the bread that came down out of heaven and those who believe in Him will live forever

**Jesus responds to all three objections with the same answer: I am the bread of life and the one who believes in me has eternal life**

C. The Genuine (John 6:61-71)
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1. Once again, the audience appears to get smaller—from the crowd, to the religious to those who are genuinely seeking
2. Many of Jesus’ followers left Him when His words became too difficult for them to accept (59-66)
3. Jesus posed a question to those few who were left (likely the apostles): **“You do not want to go away also, do you?”**
4. Peter’s response was that of a man who had come to accept that Jesus was truly the bread of life: **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”**

Conclusion
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1. These three groups describe three types of people:
  - a. Some have only a passing curiosity about Jesus (or God), and at best are interested only in what it gets them
  - b. Some are religious and only want to accept a Jesus or God that fits their pre-determined concept or understanding, but ultimately reject Christ when they find that’s not true or it becomes too difficult to accept the claims of the Bible
  - c. But then there are those who realize that Jesus is who he claimed to be and in Him and Him alone there is life
2. What’s interesting, though, is that we often find shadows of these three groups even among believers:
  - a. Some still focus more on material and temporal things, rather than eternal things
  - b. Some still struggle in their relationship with Jesus because it’s become more like a religion than a relationship, focusing on their own works or abilities
  - c. Some stumble, fall and “walk away” into disobedience because it can get difficult at times
  - d. Some, having shared the conviction of Peter at one point, live as if they’ve long forgotten their daily need for Christ

3. The question for us is where do we stand? Do we share the conviction of Peter and truly believe that Jesus is the bread of life, or have we become like any of these above?