

Focus Scripture:

I am the bread of life (text: John 6:35; context: John 6:25-51).

Theme: Christians believe that faith in Jesus Christ gives us access to the sustenance that really matters.

“SUSTAINED BY CHRIST”

In John 6:25-51 we learn that faith in Jesus Christ gives us access to the sustenance that really matters. Jesus calls it “the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (6:33). In this passage Jesus proclaims, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (6:35). Jesus concludes by saying, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (6:51). The Gospel of John does not record the institution of the Lord’s Supper like the other Gospels do, yet these words that Jesus speaks about His “flesh” as bread fulfills the same instructional purpose. As Jesus later says, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (6:53).

Five thousand people from Galilee saw the sign that Jesus performed with only five barley loaves and two fish. They all ate until they were full, and had twelve baskets of food fragments left over, but still they had not realized this need for faith in Jesus. Instead, they placed their faith in the food that Jesus provided, not in the provider Himself. It is true that for the sake of the food they were willing to make Jesus into what they wanted Him to be—a prophet and a king; but they were not willing to accept and believe in Him for who He really was—the bread of life. Jesus withdrew from them and mysteriously crossed over to the other side of the sea with His disciples. When they found Jesus in Capernaum they asked about when He came there, but they really wanted to know why He left them. It is this question of why that Jesus answers. Their commitment and devotion were misplaced. They quested after the “food that perishes” not after “the food that endures for eternal life” (6:27).

God the Father is the source of life in the present world and eternally in the world to come. Only faith in Jesus as the Son of God who does the will of the Father gives us access to eternal life. Jesus uses the illustration of ingesting His body and blood to speak of this faith. This way of speaking is startling and jarringly offensive, but nevertheless strikingly appropriate for what is at stake. To believe in Jesus means to take Him into our souls with the same urgency that we take food into our bodies. Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life” (6:47-48).

It is very easy to become fixated upon what God materially provides for us rather than focused upon God Himself. When this happens our chief concerns become how to get more of what God materially provides, rather than devotion to the God who provides both materially and spiritually. We make Jesus disappear along with God from our center of gravity, since He and the Father are One. Jesus nevertheless remains our access to God the Father and what the Father abundantly provides. When we ignore Jesus we shut ourselves off from that sustenance which feeds the soul. We shut ourselves off from eternal life. Behind these words of Jesus lies the principle that we, who make God our focus and receive eternal sustenance for the soul, will still be blessed by Him with sustenance for life in this world; however, to ignore eternal sustenance for the soul to pursue temporary sustenance in this world is to eventually lose both.

FOCUS QUESTIONS - John 6:35

1. What occurs to you as you read this? What questions arise for you?
2. What does it mean to hunger after Jesus?
3. When do you find you are lacking sustenance? What do you do?
4. What is your greatest concern today and where can you find the answer?
5. When you say "soul" - what do you mean and why is that important?
6. How does the practice of Communion/Eucharist deepen our hunger and thirst for Christ?
7. What does it mean to take Jesus into your soul in practice?
8. Jesus is the bread of life but that requires that you come to the table – what kinds of things prevent you from coming to the table?
9. How do you make the connection between eating and drinking Christ's body/blood and serving in your role at APU?
10. Reflecting on your life goals and priorities: does the foundation of life coming from Christ alter your ambitions? Your financial and time priorities?
11. True hunger and thirst dominate one's life – you can't sleep, concentrate, or focus on anything except the need to eat or drink. As the bread of life, only Jesus can feed this hunger and thirst. What injustices in your life make you hunger and thirst for Christ? How can Christ as the bread of life satisfy that?

Life/Discipline Application:

What does this passage mean in your school or department - consider the implications of the passage to your day-to-day lives.

Personal Reflection:

What does this mean to you - examine the implications of the passage to your own day to day life.

Additional Print Resources:

- Fuquay, Rob. *The God We Can Know: Exploring the "I AM" Sayings of Jesus*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2014.
- Harris, W. Hall III. *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. <https://bible.org>. 2009.
- Marrow, Tim. *Before Abraham "I AM!" The Claims of Christ from the Gospel of John*. Bloomington, IN., CrossBooks/Lifeway, 2010.
- Okorie, A.M. "The Self-Revelation of Jesus in the "I AM" Sayings of John's Gospels." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28/5 (2001): 486-490.
- Simmons, Billy. "A Christology of the "I Am" Sayings in the Gospel of John." *The Theological Educator* 38/1 (1988): 94-103.
- Whitacre, Rodney A. *Commentaries for the Book of John (IVP New Testament Commentaries)*. www.biblegateway.com. 2010.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I AM Statements of Christ*. Colorado Springs, Co., David C. Cook, Publisher, 2011.