

# Behold & Believe

*A Bible Study on the  
I Am Statements of Jesus*

COURTNEY DOCTOR  
& JOANNA KIMBREL



“In *Behold and Believe*, Courtney Doctor and Joanna Kimbrel have put together a study that helps us immerse ourselves in the fullness of all that Jesus meant in his ‘I am’ statements so that we can not only understand them but also find in them more reasons to love him.”

**Nancy Guthrie**, author; Bible teacher

“If we become what we behold, there’s no better focus for our gaze than Christ himself! *Behold and Believe* is a helpful resource for anyone who wants to understand (or remember anew!) who Jesus really is.”

**Ruth Chou Simons**, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author; artist; Founder, GraceLaced.com

“We often go to Scripture looking for ourselves, but we will better understand who we are and how we are to live when we have first looked long at Jesus. *Behold and Believe* lifts our gaze to Christ with deep, thoughtful study that helps us see that all of Scripture points to a Savior who is exactly who he said he was.”

**Glenna Marshall**, author, *The Promise Is His Presence*; *Everyday Faithfulness*; and *Memorizing Scripture*

“Do you need an invitation to come and sit under the word and hear Jesus introduce himself to you? This study is just that! It’s filled with rich truth wrapped in a helpful format that will cause you to see the Lord more clearly. To behold him with this kind of clarity is to believe that he is exactly who he says he is. I highly recommend this study!”

**Vanessa K. Hawkins**, Director of Community Life, Redeemer Lincoln Square, New York City

“This seven-week Bible study is true nourishment for the soul. Each week and each “I am” statement of Jesus allows the reader to know her Savior better. This is a feast—whether you’re seeing Jesus for the first time or have known him for most of your life. I cannot wait to do this study with the women from my local church.”

**Jen Oshman**, author, *Enough about Me* and *Cultural Counterfeits*; Women’s Ministry Coordinator, Redemption Parker, Colorado



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Courtney Doctor and Joanna Kimbrel

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*To Jules*

*My prayer for you is that you will see more and more of our beautiful Savior and that your seeing will lead to deep belief all the days of your life. I love you, sweet girl.*

CC

*To Eliana, Grace, and Kaylee*

*May you behold the beauty of Jesus and believe in him.*

*Love, Mom*



## ABOUT THE COVER ARTWORK

The artwork featured on the cover of this study is an original painting by Erin Spencer (b. 1979), an accomplished impressionist landscape artist whose work has been exhibited and included in private collections around the world.

Despite its overall sense of tranquility, this work contains representations of all seven of the “I Am” statements of Jesus. The sheep on the hillside convey “I am the good shepherd.” The doorway conveys “I am the door.” The pathway leading the viewer in conveys “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The vineyards in the lower left convey “I am the true vine.” The wheat field in the lower right conveys “I am the bread of life.” And lastly, the soft, warm light and emerging sunrise convey “I am the light of the world” and “I am the resurrection and the life.”

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## Introduction

I grew up in the Midwest and lived in Colorado for several years. As a result, I'm quite used to snow. However, when we moved to Mississippi, I figured that snow-filled winters were a thing of the past. But I was wrong. One January day, the flakes began to fall. Big, fluffy, white flakes of snow. And while I was excited to see my beloved snow, I was not prepared for the reaction of those around me.

I was working in a hospital, and as the news began to spread that it was snowing, everyone began running to the windows to see. Nurses and doctors barged into patients' rooms, not to check on their patients, but to see the snow. In the hallways I could hear people—patients, families of patients, hospital staff, medical providers—saying to whomever was around, “Come and see—you won't believe it!” What they meant was, for someone to believe it was snowing, that person was going to have to see it with her own eyes. Because, for most of us, seeing is believing.

Later that day, I called my parents to tell them about the snow. Do you think they believed me? Of course they did! Even though they had not been able to see it snow in Mississippi with their own eyes, they believed me because I had seen it with mine.

When we see something amazing, we want to tell others. This is what John was doing for us when he wrote his Gospel. He was an eyewitness to all he recorded. John was not only one of the twelve disciples, but he was also the one referred to as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7, 20). And John wants

his readers to behold Jesus. He wants us to see what Jesus did and who Jesus is. But more than just seeing Jesus, he wants us to believe in him.

John used the word “believe” at least fifty-four times in his Gospel. He began by telling us what John the Baptist’s role was. “He [John the Baptist] came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, *that all might believe through him*” (1:7). John told us that his reason for writing his Gospel account was to testify to what he saw with his own eyes so that we would believe: “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe” (19:35). And John ended his Gospel by saying that Jesus did a lot more than just what had been written down: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).

I think John knew that seeing is believing, so he invites us to see Jesus through his own eyewitness account. Early in John’s Gospel we read what John the Baptist said when he first saw Jesus: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29). Martha testified, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (11:27). Later we read what Pontius Pilate said about Jesus: “Behold your King!” (19:14).

Jesus is most certainly the Lamb of God who died for us, the Son of God who came for us, and the King of all kings who reigns over all things. However, in this study we are going to focus on what Jesus said about himself. Because more than what other people said about him, John gives us a front-row seat to what Jesus said. We will see that Jesus boldly and clearly proclaimed that he is the bread of life; the light of the world; the door of the sheep; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, the life; and the true vine. He invites us to come and see.

So whether you are a Christian who needs to behold Jesus again and again or someone who is curious about Jesus and wants to explore Christianity, join me as we behold Jesus. Join me in looking long and hard at who Jesus said he is. And may our beholding lead to believing—because by believing we will live.

## How to Use This Study

In this study, we want to glean important truths from God's word while also learning and applying trustworthy Bible study techniques. We'll do this by observing, interpreting, and applying each passage of Scripture over the course of five days of study.

Day 1 will always be observation—reading the passage and asking the question *What does the text say?* In this study, we'll hear from Jesus himself as he tells us who he is in the Gospel of John. Day 1 will involve slowly reading the passage several times while paying attention to details like repeated words and main ideas. You may have questions as you read. It's okay not to have all the answers or even to be a bit confused as you read certain passages. Write your questions in the margins and see if you can answer them by the end of the week.

Day 2 will focus on interpretation. We'll read the passage again and ask, *What does the text mean?* We'll focus on details like figurative language, argument, and context of the passage as we begin to interpret it.

Day 3 will continue to concentrate on interpretation by asking, *What does the whole Bible say?* We'll read other relevant and related passages in Scripture and ask the question *How does the rest of Scripture help me understand this text?*

Day 4 will focus on application. Once we've come to an understanding of the text's meaning, we'll ask the question *How can I faithfully respond?* As we pay attention to what Jesus teaches us, we'll consider what he shows us about himself, what he calls us to believe, and how we should live in response. God's word transforms how we think, what we love, and what we do. Time with Jesus changes us from the inside out.

Each week will end on Day 5 with a reflection. After reading it, you'll have an opportunity to answer some more questions about what you've learned that week.

Plan on approximately 20 minutes of study each day (or 1.5 hours each week). Each day will begin with prayer—a time for you to ask God to meet you as you study his living and active word. We recommend that you have an actual Bible in front of you rather than using an app on your phone or computer. You'll need it for cross-referencing verses, and a physical copy helps you more readily see

the passage in its context. The provided Bible passages are from the English Standard Version, but feel free to use whatever translation you prefer.

### **Memory Work**

A memory verse(s) is provided each week. Spend a few minutes each day working on memorizing it. The discipline of hiding God’s word in your heart is one that will bear much fruit in your own life and the lives of those around you.

### **Discussion Questions**

At the end of each chapter, you’ll find a list of questions for group discussion. These are based on the work you’ve done throughout the week. There is an “icebreaker” question and a “warm-up” question. Each is intended to be a quick, easy, and fun way to get the group going. Keep the answers to these short so you have plenty of time to dig into the text together.

### **Videos**

We hope to provide videos of the keynote teaching sessions from TGCW24. Each video will align with the chapters and will, Lord willing, be available after the conference in June 2024 at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/tgcw24>.

May you experience abundant life and enduring joy as you encounter Jesus Christ—the way, the truth, and the life.

These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)



## I Am the Bread of Life

**H**ave you ever been to an event where everyone wore name tags? Whether a Christmas party, a Bible study, or a networking event, red stickers that said, “Hello, my name is . . .” decorated everyone’s shirt. Name tags identify the people we’re talking to. But maybe name tags would be more helpful if instead of saying, “Hi, my name is Maria” or “Hi, my name is Herb,” they told us something about that person. Wouldn’t you rather read, “Hi, I’m a neurosurgeon who loves tacos and dogs,” or, “Hi, I’m a poli-sci student who loves to debate immigration reform”?

This week we’ll study the first of Jesus’s seven “I am” statements. These statements are like Jesus’s name tag telling us exactly who he claims to be. In John’s Gospel, Jesus taught about himself in two ways. He *declared* who he was through “I am” statements, and he *showed* who he was by performing miraculous signs. All his teaching and actions proclaimed to the watching world, *I am God!*

Our world has a lot of opinions and questions about Jesus. *Who was he really?* Perhaps he was simply a good moral teacher. Perhaps he was a servant of the people. Perhaps he was a wrongly accused man with loyal friends who wanted to see his conviction overturned. Perhaps Jesus was just a really wise



and good person we should imitate. Maybe you grew up in church and know a lot about Jesus, or maybe you've never studied the Bible before and have a lot of questions about who Jesus is.

The best way to get to know people is to sit with them and let them tell you about themselves. These "I am" statements are an amazing opportunity to sit with Jesus and let him introduce himself to you. Whether you've known Jesus for years or are just starting to explore Christianity, I think you'll find that Jesus will surprise you.

This week we'll have an opportunity to learn about Jesus through a miraculous sign that's combined with his first "I am" statement. Miraculously, Jesus fed five thousand hungry people with one boy's lunch. After their mouths tasted the goodness, their ears heard the first of the "I am" statements, "I am the bread of life."

If you are new to thinking about Jesus (or even if you've known him for a long time), it could seem strange that the Son of God compares himself to food. Over the next few days we'll find out what Jesus meant and why it's good news for spiritually hungry people.

### **Prayer for the Week**

Father God, show me yourself as you show me your Son. Give me wisdom to understand your word, and open my eyes to see wondrous things from it. Help me to see who Jesus is, to believe what is true, and to live transformed by your word. In Jesus's name, Amen.

### **Memory Verse**

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" *John 6:35*



## OBSERVATION:

*What Does the Text Say?*

### John 6:1-71

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the

sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Today we will observe what the text says. The goal of observation is to trace the storyline, ask good questions, and look for details that will help us understand the passage. Begin with prayer and then read all of John 6, paying special attention to verses 25-40.

1. This story has a variety of characters. Write down what you learn about each of them. Also, write down if you have any questions about the different characters.

The disciples:

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Jesus:

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God the Father:

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Moses:

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Joseph:

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The Holy Spirit:

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The prophets:

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The Jews:

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Simon Peter:

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Judas:

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2. How did the Jews respond to Jesus's teaching (vv. 41, 42, 52)? How did his own disciples respond (vv. 60-71)?

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3. When a word or idea is repeated, it usually means it's important. Highlight or underline every reference to *life*, *eternal life*, and *living* in the text. How many references did you find? Did you notice any other repeated ideas in the text?

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4. What did Jesus say is the work of God (v. 29)?

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5. Jesus repeatedly invited his listeners to believe and follow him. What are the results of believing in Jesus, coming to Jesus, or following Jesus, according to each of the following verses?

v. 35

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v. 36

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v. 40

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v. 44

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v. 47

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6. Just as the food we eat impacts our bodies, Jesus claimed that eating the bread of life impacts our lives. What are the results of consuming the bread of life, according to each of the following verses?

v. 50

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v. 51

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v. 54

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v. 56

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v. 57

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v. 58

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7. Did anything about Jesus or his interactions with others surprise you in this passage? What are some questions you have about the story?
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After reading today's passage, you may feel like you have more questions than answers, and that's okay! Even many of his disciples struggled with his claims. Understanding the Bible takes time, and we'll go a little deeper every day. Keep thinking about Jesus's words as you go about your day—especially at mealtime! Jesus claimed to be better than any kind of food. As you eat your meals this week, reflect on the importance of food in your own life and what it means that Jesus offers everlasting nourishment to everyone who trusts in him.

 **Memory Verse:**

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” *John 6:35*



**INTERPRETATION:**

*What Does the Text Mean?*

Yesterday we observed the details of the passage, and today we'll dig a little deeper into our understanding of what it means. Good interpretation flows from thoughtful observation, so read the passage again. Begin with prayer, asking God to give you wisdom as you study.

Read John 6.

How would you respond if someone told you, “I am the bread of life”? It's a bold claim, and many of us would dismiss it as arrogant or even delusional. But

before Jesus claimed to be the bread of life, he gave us a reason to listen. Jesus performed a miraculous sign where he fed five thousand people with only five small loaves of bread and two fish (John 6:1-15). Now imagine sitting in that crowd and having your fill of the miracle bread Jesus provided. Maybe now his audacious claim is worth considering.

1. When Jesus claimed to be the bread of life, he used a metaphor to explain something about who he is and what he accomplishes. The metaphor has two primary elements: the bread of life, and the act of eating the bread. Use the verses below to help you determine what each of these elements represents.

Bread (vv. 51-55):

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Eating the bread (vv. 35, 47):

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2. The Bible often uses “bread” to refer to food in general. What different functions does food have in our lives? How might the “bread of life” metaphor reveal what Jesus provides for those who believe in him?

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3. Jesus offered a solution for the problem of death. How were the people he addressed seeking to solve that problem? What are some ways people try to cope with that problem today? How is Jesus’s solution different?

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4. What kind of hunger and thirst do you think Jesus meant in verse 35? How do you see that kind of hunger and thirst in our world today?

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5. What does Jesus’s explanation of “the work of God” in verses 26-29 tell us about the way to receive eternal life? How does Jesus’s answer to the question, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” reveal misunderstanding in those who asked it?

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6. Jesus told the Jews that they saw him but still didn't believe (v. 36). What did the Jews believe about him that caused them to seek him out? What kind of belief does Jesus require, which they lacked? (See vv. 29, 40, 46-47, 51, 57)

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7. Jesus promised life that is available now and life "on the last day." Look back at the references to life, eternal life, and living that you highlighted yesterday. How would you describe the differences between these two categories of life, based on what you can gather from the text?

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We know what it's like to crave food that will satisfy our hunger and sustain us through the day. We need protein, fat, and carbohydrates to keep us alive, but more than that, we need spiritual food. What Jesus promised is so much greater than a free meal and a full stomach. To feast with faith on the bread of life by believing in Jesus is to receive life that lasts forever. Our bodies may die, but Jesus is the food that sustains our souls forever.

 **Memory Verse**

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" *John 6:35*



### INTERPRETATION:

*What Does the Whole Bible Say?*

Today we'll continue our interpretation of the text by exploring what other parts of the Bible have to say about the topics in this passage. Other passages of Scripture can help us understand this story in deeper ways. Begin with prayer, asking God to give you wisdom to see how the whole Bible informs your understanding of John 6, then read John 6 again before answering the questions below.

All this talk about bread of life might be strange to us, but to the Jews Jesus addressed, it sounded a lot like what they grew up hearing in the book of Exodus. At the beginning of Exodus, God's people, the Israelites, had been enslaved in Egypt for about four hundred years. God raised up a man named Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery. He brought them out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness to bring them to the promised land of Canaan. While they were in the wilderness, they became hungry, and God miraculously provided bread from heaven for them to eat. Read Exodus 16 and then answer the questions below.

1. In your own words, summarize what happened in Exodus 16.

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Scripture frequently points to the exodus from Egypt as a central picture of God's salvation. The Jews knew Exodus 16 and likely understood that Jesus was claiming to offer salvation as God did then.

2. In John 6:32, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” Fill out the chart below to show how Jesus is the bread of life that is better than the manna in the wilderness.

Manna in the Wilderness	Jesus as the Bread of Life
Example: The people couldn't keep the extra manna or it would spoil.	Example: v. 27. Jesus said he gives food that does not perish.
The Israelites grumbled at God about their hunger and later about the manna (see Num. 21:5).	v. 41
The manna left them hungry again.	v. 35
The Israelites ate the manna but still died.	v. 50

3. What would have happened to the Israelites if God hadn't provided manna? What was Jesus attempting to communicate to his listeners by comparing himself to the manna in the wilderness?

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4. Deuteronomy 8:3 explains why God provided manna, saying, “He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” What similarities do you see between this verse and Jesus’s message in John 6?

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In the Old Testament, God promised repeatedly to send a Messiah, and the New Testament tells us the Messiah is Jesus. Messiah means “anointed one,” and God promised that his anointed one would bring salvation, life, and peace. Isaiah 55 is about the coming Messiah, and just like Jesus’s words in John 6, the passage in Isaiah talks a lot about food! Read Isaiah 55:1-3, then answer the questions below.

\* How do Jesus’s words in John 6:35 fulfill this prophecy? What does that fulfillment tell us about who Jesus claims to be?

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\* How does God invite us to respond to our hunger and thirst (Isa. 55:2)? How does Jesus’s invitation in John 6 compare?

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\* What kind of language is used to describe the food and drink in Isaiah 55? How would you characterize the emotion the passage conveys? What impact does the tone of Isaiah 55 have on the way you interpret Jesus's invitation in John 6?

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\* The Bible invites us to come and feast on the nourishing bread of life, but how do we actually do that? Read the verses below and write out practical ways to eat the bread Jesus provides.

Matthew 4:4:

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Matthew 6:9-13:

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1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

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1 Peter 2:2:

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 **Memory Verse**

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” *John 6:35*



**APPLICATION:** *How Do I Faithfully Respond?*

The word of God doesn’t just give us knowledge that stays in our heads; it gives us knowledge that changes our hearts. Today we’ll focus on applying what we’ve learned this week to our own lives. Begin with prayer, asking God to encourage you, strengthen you, convict you of sin, instruct you, and reveal where he is leading you to grow.

In John 6, Jesus invites us to a meal—himself! Today we’ll think about what that means for each of us as we taste and see that he is the food our souls desperately need.

1. The crowds wanted Jesus to meet their physical needs, but when he told them he could satisfy their greater spiritual need, they left. Do you tend to focus more on your physical needs or your spiritual needs? Think about your prayers. Are they typically more about life circumstances or spiritual concerns? (And we can take all our prayer requests to God—it just helps to think about what weighs on our heart the most!)
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2. Jesus's followers asked a good question: "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (vv. 28-29). Have you believed in Jesus? Why or why not? In what ways are you tempted to work to get God's approval rather than believe by faith? What is the difference between the two? (See Eph. 2:8-10)

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3. In what ways are you tempted to provide for yourself by working harder and doing more to prove yourself rather than trusting in Jesus for satisfaction and joy? What is one specific struggle on your heart today that you can take to Jesus in prayer, asking for him to provide?

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4. Some Jews grumbled about Jesus's claim to be the bread of life from God, noting his questionable parentage. Others disputed what it meant theologically to eat his flesh. Even his own disciples said, "This is a hard saying" (v. 60), prompting Jesus to question if they wanted to leave. Write out how Peter responds. Following Jesus is not always easy. Sometimes it's really hard. If

someone asked you, “Why do you believe Jesus is the bread of life?” what would you say?

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5. When we're hungry, our stomachs rumble, and we may become lightheaded or irritable. Spiritual hunger often shows up as discontentment, impatience, complaining, or unkindness. Where do you see signs of spiritual hunger in your own life? How can you treat your hunger as an invitation to feast?

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6. In what false sources do you seek to satisfy your hunger and desires (for example, people, food, body image, adventures, alcohol, sex, or success)? How do you feel after you place your trust in those temporary satisfactions?

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7. Just as we need food every day to sustain us and satisfy us, Jesus as the bread of life sustains and satisfies us day by day. What are a few specific ways you

can meet with Jesus throughout the day? What would it look like for you to eat the bread he is offering to you?

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8. In what ways did this “I am” statement help you learn about Jesus?

What does it mean that Jesus is the bread of life?

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How does Jesus ask you to respond?

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What specific promise is associated with this “I am” statement?

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Do you ever feel that no matter how much you fill up on the pleasures of this world, you’re quickly hungry for more? We keep coming back to the same things to make us happy, or at least distract us from the pain, but no amount of scrolling, ice cream, or success can fully satisfy us (trust me, I’ve tried, especially the ice cream). Jesus calls us to stop scavenging and start feasting. Taste and see—he is so very good.

 **Memory Verse**

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” *John 6:35*

**REFLECTION**

I’ll never forget the unmistakably salty taste of fresh Play-Doh. There’s something about the bright colors that scream, “Taste me!” As a kid, I had my fair share of nibbles. Perhaps you too remember the briny taste and slimy texture. But the funny thing is, as a kid, I kept going back for more. *Maybe this time it will taste as good as it looks*, I thought. But I was always disappointed.

Expecting Play-Doh to taste delicious might sound silly, but when it comes to our spiritual food, we often look to things that can’t meet our deepest needs.

Food has two major functions, to sustain and to satisfy. Food keeps us alive, but it is also a source of delight. But food isn’t the only place we look for sustenance and delight. Too often we gulp down the hope of control, financial security, or well-thought-out plans to ensure life and safety for ourselves and those we love. Or maybe we feed on our own good works as if they can sustain us and help us earn life beyond the grave. We seek to satisfy our cravings by gorging ourselves on adventure, affection, comfort, or clout. But we are always left hungry for more. And our frail bodies and tragedy-marked world remind us at every turn that death is hunting us down. All our best efforts are never enough.

Jesus tells us that life and satisfaction are found only in him. He assures us, “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Jesus is the bread of life. All who eat this bread overcome the seeming finality of death. Yes, our bodies decay and die, but that’s not the end. Life is coming.

Jesus himself tasted death. Later in the Gospel of John, Jesus was beaten and bruised and nailed to a cross. The Son of God became a man and died in our place. Each of us deserves to die because each of us has sinned, and God in his perfect justice does not let the evils of sin go unpunished. But the one who was without sin—the one who calls himself the bread of life—experienced the fullness of death so that we might live. He paid the price of our sin on the cross, but his death was not final. Three days later, he rose from the dead. His resurrection is our hope: death has been defeated. And the resurrection is also John’s final miraculous sign in his Gospel. It’s the biggest proof that Jesus is exactly who he claimed to be—someone who has died and come back to life in three days is someone we want to learn more about!

When we nourish our souls with the bread of life, his resurrection life becomes our own. And Jesus tells us what it means to eat the bread of life: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life” (John 6:47). If we believe that Jesus is the great I am, our Lord and Messiah who died to give us life, we will live forever. If we come to him and trust him as the only one who can save us from death, we will have eternal life.

The life Jesus gives is a future reality, but it is also something we can experience right now. Commentator Colin Kruse explains that “hunger and thirst are metaphors for the human need to know God, and knowing God is the present experience of eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> Our longing for love, significance, happiness, comfort, and pleasure is ultimately only satisfied in God. Anything less is like chomping down on Play-Doh pizza—visually appealing but dreadfully deficient. Thankfully, we have access to the one who satisfies our hunger through Jesus Christ. John told us, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18). To know Jesus is to know God. Our hunger for God is satisfied as the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. It’s satisfied as we read the Bible, where God

1 Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 193.

reveals who he is. It's satisfied as we taste his goodness reflected in the good things he created.

Where are you turning to satisfy your hunger? Is it experiences or things that make you feel alive if only for a moment, or is it the bread of life that will never leave you hungry? Are you coming back to Play-Doh pies, or are you feasting on the bread of life?

1. In what areas of your life do you notice hunger or longing for more?

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2. Do you tend to view eternal life as only a future promise? How might the truth that you can experience eternal life now by knowing God change the way you live?

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 **Memory Verse**

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” *John 6:35*





### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Icebreaker:** What's your favorite meal when you are really hungry?

**Warm-up:** How does being physically hungry impact the way you feel and act?

1. Read John 6:25-71. Jesus claims, "I am the bread of life." From your study this week, what does that mean? Why do you think he described himself in that way at this moment in the story?

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2. In what ways is Jesus as the bread of life better than the manna in the wilderness?

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3. Think through the Jews, the disciples, and the people listening to Jesus's teaching. How did the different people respond? How do you see differing responses to Jesus in our world today? Does Peter's response to Jesus resonate with you? Why or why not?

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4. What does Jesus say is the work of God (v. 29)? Why is this so difficult for us? How do we try to find favor with God by our own works? Does this mean our good works don't matter? (See Eph. 2:8-10)

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5. The crowds came to Jesus to meet their physical needs, but when he told them he could satisfy their greater spiritual need, they left. Do you tend to focus more on your physical needs or your spiritual needs?

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6. In what sources do you seek to satisfy your hunger and desires (for example, people, food, body image, adventures, alcohol, sex, or success)? How do you feel after you place your trust in those temporary satisfactions?

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7. How did this text help you see, believe, and live?

What did you see or learn about Jesus?

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What do you need to believe as a result?

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How should you live in response?

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8. What was one thing from this study that encouraged, convicted, or instructed you this week?

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