

## What We Really Need

John 6:24-35

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are firmly in the stage of parenting known as the “Why?” phase. I’m sure you all know what I’m talking about. My two-year old’s favorite word these days is “Why?”

I’ll tell her: “Mom’s going to the store to buy some food.” Why?

“So we can have something to eat.” Why?

“So we don’t go hungry.” Why?

It’s not *quite* annoying yet... but it’s getting close. I try to be loving and patient and explain things to my daughter, but sometimes she just doesn’t get it. At some point every parent has just given up and said, “Because I said so. I’m the parent and I know what you really need.”

You can get a sense of that parental mentality in Jesus’ words in John 6. But with way more patience and love than we deserve. Jesus gives us what we *really* need.

But before we get to that, let’s get familiar with what’s going on at this point in the Gospel of John. Go ahead and turn with me to John 6, and let’s take a look around for a second to get our bearings.

Jesus had been healing and ministering to people for some time, and his reputation was spreading and his name was becoming more and more familiar across Judea. People were talking about this Jesus character who was doing miracles, and people were becoming excited that perhaps the promised Messiah had come. Perhaps this Jesus was the one who would reclaim the throne of David and reestablish Israel as a dominant world power.

People were very interested in Jesus, and they were following him very closely. In the beginning of John 6 we see Jesus perform the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee. You all know that story, right? He took five loaves of bread and two fish and fed over 5,000 people.

After watching this miracle, the people tried to kidnap Jesus and forcefully install him as their king. But Jesus slipped away that evening in a boat to the other side of the sea.

And this is where we pick up today, with the people excitedly searching for Jesus.

These are fascinating verses filled with rich meaning and application, but to be honest with you, I find them a little frustrating, too. Wasn't it a little frustrating to hear the people questioning and challenging Jesus? They just didn't seem to get it.

But Jesus says four things to the people who were following him. Four perfect responses, all designed to show us what we *really* need.

The first thing Jesus does in this text is CHALLENGE. **Jesus CHALLENGES.**

In verse 25, after a frantic search, the people found Jesus and they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" In response, Jesus ignores their question but challenges their motives. Did you notice that?

Verse 26: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

Jesus knew the real reason the people were looking for him. They weren't looking for a savior to forgive them, they were looking for a savior to free them from the Romans. They weren't looking for forgiveness, they were looking for independence.. They had their sights set on earthly things. They were looking for bread.

Now, we read earlier from Exodus, so it's easy to see why these people were excited about finding a guy who could produce bread from heaven. The Israelites -- these Jewish people -- had been trained and conditioned for generations to look for a promised Messiah who would, like Moses, again provide bread from heaven.

The Promised Messiah *would* come and be like Moses, but He would be much, much *better* than Moses. Jesus didn't come to provide physical loaves of bread, He came to purchase and provide something greater.

They were on the right track, but they missed the point completely. It makes me wonder: In what ways have **we** been trained and conditioned incorrectly?

We live in a very self-centered, selfish culture. No one is going to disagree with that. The world is telling us that who we *want* to be is more important than who we *should* be. The world is telling

us that nothing should get in the way of you finding happiness and fulfillment. Even the church sometimes tells us that a result of following Jesus is an overflowing cup of health, wealth, and success.

But that's all wrong. That all completely misses the point. More often than not who we *want* to be is not who God wants us to be. If happiness and fulfillment were the true goals of life, there would be chaos and rampant sin. If following Jesus meant that you'd never get sick or struggle financially, everyone in the world would be a Christian.

But that's all wrong. Jesus is challenging our incorrect beliefs just like He challenged the Jews here in John 6.

God doesn't promise a life without suffering. We all know of believers who were diagnosed with cancer, believers who lost their jobs, believers who lost children in tragic car accidents. **God doesn't promise a life without suffering.** God is faithful to use all things for your good, but that doesn't make all things good. God promises to walk *with you* in the MIDST of your suffering, and to *use* the suffering for your growth. For your benefit.

The Jews here in John 6 had the wrong motives for seeking Jesus. They were missing the point completely, and Jesus CHALLENGED their motives. Us, too. Jesus gives us what we really need.

The second thing Jesus does is TEACH. **Jesus TEACHES.**

In verse 28, after the people had been challenged about their motives and told about a food that does not perish but endures to eternal life, they ask what they need to do to get it. They think Jesus is giving them new laws to obey, or new commands to follow.

They misunderstood how to receive this heavenly bread that Jesus talked about, and Jesus very clearly teaches them the truth in verse 29.

They ask: "What must we do, to be doing the **works** of God?" And Jesus responds: "This is the **work** of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Did you notice that distinction that Jesus teaches here? They ask what works (plural!) they need to do, and Jesus says 'No, God is the one doing the work (singular!).

God's work is creating faith. It's not your work! It's not your job to muster up enough faith to be saved. Or to have *strong* enough faith to be saved.

It is not the strength of your faith, or the quality of your faith, or the amount of your faith that saves you. It is Christ who saves you.

Christ died on a cross and rose again. There's no doubting that. Christ united himself to you when you were baptized and adopted you into His family. There's no doubting that, either.

Your faith is the work of God. Don't be confident in yourself. Don't be confident in what you bring to the table. Be confident in God's work. Jesus gives us what we really need. Jesus gives us saving faith.

The third thing Jesus does is CORRECT. **Jesus CORRECTS.**

In verse 30 John records the people saying to Jesus: "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"

Isn't that ridiculous? Just YESTERDAY they had seen Jesus feed all 5,000 of them with just a few loaves of bread and fish, and yet they still have the nerve to ask him, "what sign do you do?"

It's as if they are saying, "Look Jesus. Moses gave us manna from heaven. What can you offer to us?" Don't they realize who they're talking to?

They are still hung up on the physical things. They still don't get that Jesus is talking about *spiritual* bread, and *spiritual* provision. The people were confused, but Jesus wanted to give more than mere bread. And Jesus wants to give us what we *really* need, too!

What we really need is not money. It's not health, and it's not success. What we really need is Jesus, and the faith, forgiveness, strengthening, and equipping that He provides.

The people wanted more physical bread, and a physical kingdom, and an earthly reputation and earthly freedom. But Jesus corrects them and says, "No, it wasn't Moses who gave you manna in the wilderness, it was God. God GAVE you bread, but now God GIVES you TRUE bread. You thought your manna was special, but this TRUE bread is REALLY special."

God providing manna in the wilderness was an amazing miracle. It was one of the many miraculous ways that God provided for and preserved the Israelites through their wanderings as they were led to the Promised Land.

But without Jesus, this miracle is just a story about bread. But the miracle of the manna pointed people to the TRUE bread that was to come. The TRUE bread that Jesus was offering.

But, the people still didn't get it. They still didn't realize that Jesus wasn't talking about physical bread. Jesus was talking about what they really needed.

Let's read again these last two verses, verses 34-35:

**34** *They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."* **35** *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."*

Bingo. Now they got it. The lightbulb went off and they realized that this Jesus was Himself the Bread from Heaven. The Bread of Life.

The last thing Jesus does is PROVIDE. Jesus didn't say "I am like the bread of life." He said "I AM the bread of life." Jesus Himself is the bread. Jesus Himself is the provision that we desperately need. Jesus Himself is the gift of God from heaven.

Isn't this a beautiful verse of promise? Those who come to Jesus will never hunger. Those who believe in Jesus will never thirst. We're not talking about earthly things here; we're talking about salvation. Forgiveness.

This forgiveness is what we **really** need. And this forgiveness is what Jesus longs to give us.

Jesus gives us what we *really* need. Jesus is the Bread of Life who came down from heaven in order to purchase our forgiveness and deliver our salvation.

Through His Word, He works conviction in our hearts where there was pride, and He creates trust where there was doubt. We are continually in need of this heavenly bread. May God continue that process always, of rooting out pride and doubt and growing conviction and trust in Him.

Jesus CHALLENGES our false motives, He TEACHES us the truth about what we need, He CORRECTS our false understanding, and He PROVIDES for us nourishing bread of life.

You don't need to hunger or thirst. Jesus gives you what you really need. Jesus offers to you the Bread of Life. Amen.

*PRAY: Jesus you are the Bread of Life. You lived a life without sin and you died a death that we deserved, all because of your great love for us. We are unworthy of your attention and affection, God, but we run to you and we cling to you for our forgiveness and our salvation. Give us this day this precious Bread of Life, in Your name we pray, amen.*