



# 13

## ***Hungry for Bread***

John 6:24-71

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*Purpose:* To awaken in us a new awareness of Jesus' ability and willingness to meet our needs.

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Do you realize that during your lifetime you will probably spend over thirty-five thousand hours eating? That's the equivalent of eight years of non stop meals, twelve hours a day! The problem, of course, is that even after a big meal we get hungry again. At best, food only satisfies us for a few hours.

Yet in this chapter, Jesus offers us food that satisfies our hunger forever. You can't buy it in a grocery store. It is found only in Jesus himself.

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1. The next day after being fed by Jesus, the people were hungry again, so they came seeking Him (vv. 22–25). How does he try to redirect their thinking (vv. 26–33)?

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2. How does Jesus' claim to be the bread of life (v. 35) relate to his miraculous feeding of the five thousand (vv. 1–13)?

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3. Rather than seek the bread of life, we tend to seek out food that will not satisfy. What are some of the things with which we fill our lives instead of having a God-centered focus in our lives?

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4. Read John 6:41 again. Do you think there is any significance to the fact that Jesus does not say, "I *give you* true bread from heaven," but rather "I *am* the true bread from heaven."? Explain.

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5. Based on the remarks of some in the crowd (vv. 41–42), do you think they finally understood what Jesus was saying? Explain.

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6. Read John 6:43–59. When Jesus said, “This bread is my flesh,” the crowd could think only of cannibalism (v. 52). What do you think it means to eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood (vv. 53–59)?

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**Question 6.** Some Christians think Jesus’ statement about “eating [his flesh] and “drinking [his] blood” refers to the communion service, the Lord’s Supper. On the basis of this passage they believe that the bread (Jesus’ body) and the wine (Jesus’ blood) of the Lord’s Supper are required to be saved.

However, several things argue against this interpretation. First of all, Jesus’ death is not in the picture here. The breaking of bread and partaking of wine in the Upper Room before Jesus goes to the cross seems to be a new instruction to His disciples. Most importantly, what Jesus has done in his sacrifice for our sins was done once for all, never to be repeated (Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:11-18). It seems better to understand Jesus’ statement as a figure of speech, picturing belief in him as the source of spiritual life. Just as we eat bread and drink water to sustain physical life, so we receive Christ to sustain spiritual life.

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7. Read John 6:60–71. In these verses Jesus turns away from the crowd and focuses on his disciples. How would you describe their responses to his “hard teaching”?

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Which response best describes your present attitude toward Jesus? Explain.

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8. Jesus has contrasted the two appetites found in every person—the appetite for food that perishes and the appetite for food that endures. In what ways has Jesus satisfied the spiritual hunger in your heart?

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### **The Beggar and the Bread**

A beggar came and sat before me. "I want bread," he said.

"How wise you are," I assured him. "Bread is what you need. And you have come to the right bakery." So I pulled my cookbook down from my shelf and began to tell him all I knew about bread.

I spoke of flour and wheat, of grand and barley, my knowledge impressed even me as I cited the measurements and recipe. When I looked up, I was surprised to see he wasn't smiling. "I just want bread," he said.

"How wise you are." I applauded his choice. "Follow me, and I'll show you our bakery." Down the hallowed halls I guided him, pausing to point out the rooms where the dough is prepared and the ovens where the bread is baked.

"No one has such facilities. We have bread for every need. But here is the best part," I proclaimed as I pushed open two swinging doors. "This is our room of inspiration." I knew he was moved as we stepped into the auditorium full of stained-glass windows.

The beggar didn't speak. I understood his silence. With my arm around his shoulder, I whispered, "It overwhelms me as well." I then leaped up to the podium and struck my favorite pose behind the lectern. "People come from miles to hear me speak. Once a week my workers gather, and I read to them the recipe from the cookbook of life."

By now the beggar had taken a seat on the front row. I knew what he wanted.

"Would you like to hear me?"

"No," he said, "but I would like some bread."

"How wise you are," I replied. And I led him to the front door of the bakery. "What I have to say next is very important," I told him as we stood outside. "Up and down this street you will find many bakeries. But take heed; they don't serve the true bread. I know of one who adds two spoons of salt rather than one. I know of another whose oven is three degrees too hot. They may call it bread," I warned, "but it's not according to the book."

The beggar turned and began walking away. "Don't you want bread?" I asked him. He stopped. Looked back at me, and shrugged, "I guess I lost my appetite."

I shook my head and returned to the office. "What a shame," I said to myself. "The world just isn't hungry for the true bread anymore."

I don't know what is more incredible: that God packages the bread of life in the wrapper of a country carpenter or that he gives us the key to the delivery truck. Both moves seem pretty risky. The carpenter did his part, however. And who knows - we may just learn to do ours.

- Max Lucado, *A Gentle Thunder: Hearing God Through the Storm*. p. 40-41.

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9. What does this parable say to you?

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