

# I Am The Bread Of Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] Bristol University launched a new course on the science of happiness. I'm sure it's true that most people want to feel happy.

Or at least they want to live a life that has some kind of happiness or satisfaction in it. People want a life, do they not, that has some point to it, purpose or meaning.

They want to feel loved, valued and that they matter. But what is life? And what kind of life is worth living?

Socrates, not the footballer, a Greek philosopher who lived over 400 years before Christ was born, is alleged to have said at his trial, after which he was executed, the unexamined life isn't worth living.

But then, what kind of life is worth living? Or what aspects of life should we examine?

[ 1 : 19 ] And where or to whom shall we turn for the answer? I believe that Jesus can help us in this quest, whoever we are.

Jesus declared seven things about himself that are known as the I am declarations in John's Gospel.

And these seven things that he declares about himself feed into the kind of questions that I've been raising and that most of us ask at some point and look for answers to.

So we're going to be looking at the first of those seven I am statements or declarations where Jesus says in verse 35 of this chapter, I am the bread of life.

I want to give you, first of all, an overview of the whole chapter, very briefly, because the theme of the bread of life pervades the entire chapter, chapter 6 of John's Gospel.

[ 2 : 33 ] And part of my purpose today is to, that you might go away feeling you've got a better grasp of the whole chapter, John chapter 6, whose major theme is the bread of life.

After I give you this overview, I want to continue by exploring the chapter. If you've got your mobiles or your Bibles at hand, that would be very helpful.

And after this overview, we're going to explore the chapter in more detail through three lenses. signs given by Jesus Christ, searching for Jesus Christ, and the Saviour's declaration to be the bread of life.

Firstly, then, an overview of John chapter 6. Jesus has recently moved from Jerusalem to the Galilee district, up in the highlands of Israel.

after the religious leaders wanted to kill him for healing people on the Sabbath, and using language about God, which they regarded as blasphemous.

[ 3 : 56 ] While in Galilee, a great crowd comes to listen to him. Jesus performs a miracle, or sign, we'll see more about that later, by producing enough bread to feed a crowd of 5,000 people.

Realizing that some of them wanted to try and make him king by force, Jesus withdraws from the crowd to be by himself. And sometime after that, Jesus and his disciples, not together, crossed to the other side of the lake where he had performed the miracle of the feeding of 5,000.

The crowd, realizing that Jesus was no longer where they were, at their side of the lake, found boats, and crossed to the other side of the lake, looking and searching for Jesus.

You would have heard that phrase when Walter was reading. When they find Jesus, Jesus engages them in discussion about the miracle or sign of the feeding of the 5,000.

And it's this discussion that leads to the first declaration, namely, I am the bread of life.

[ 5 : 28 ] Now, the last thing I want to say about the chapter as a whole, I want you to notice allusions and associations to the Exodus in this chapter.

For example, in verse 4, John tells us this, he incorporates this into his account, the Jewish Passover was near.

And when he performs the bread miracle, it says in verse 11 that Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks.

And later on, in verse 23, we read, after the Lord had given thanks. And the discussion is about Moses and it's about manna and it's about Jesus.

In a sense, there's two signs in this chapter. There's the sign of the bread and there's the sign of Jesus crossing the sea, walking in the sea.

[ 6 : 46 ] So there's a vivid image here and echo and association of the Exodus, of the salvation. And Jesus is really saying, I am the new Moses.

I am the new deliverer. I am the new redeemer. I am the new savior. Let's then try to tease out some of this by going through those three areas that I said I would explore with you.

First of all, the signs. Now, the signs have their own dangers. And I just want to mention those dangers firstly.

First of all, people, as we'll see, might only follow Jesus because they see him doing things that they could be interested in like eating food, like their health being improved.

That's our danger. Another danger is to fail to see, and we'll see this, the inner meaning of the sign.

[ 8 : 12 ] So, there are those dangers that we have to guard against. I should say to you that the signs, just as the I am statements in John's gospel, are a way of how John structures and develops his gospel.

And the signs are the same. Let me give you an example. Right at the beginning of John's gospel in chapter 2, we read this, what Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee, that was changing the water into wine, was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory.

And right at the end of John's gospel in chapter 20, we read this, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these are written that you may believe.

So you can see that Jesus, in performing those signs, the whole point of them is not so much to eat bread for your belly or to be fueled of this physical illness or that physical illness, but it's that you might see that he's the Christ of God because man and human beings shall not live by bread alone. Of course, we have this physical side to us, this psychosomatic side to us, and we do need bread and we do need to be kept healthy and so on, but that's what that statement means, man shall not live by bread alone.

[ 9 : 56 ] That's why Jesus resisted the tenter in Matthew chapter 4 because we're more, much more than physical beings. We're spiritual beings with all of those spiritual longings that I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon for acceptance, to feel valued, to have the chance to love and to be loved.

And this is what Jesus means when he says, I am the bread of life. He means, I am the answer to the deepest yearnings and longings of your being, whatever age you are, whatever gender identity you go with.

Let's look at some of the things that Jesus said very quickly about the signs. Look at this in verse 2 of chapter 6. A great crowd followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill.

Very good to be following Jesus. Very good to have an interest in Jesus. Are they following him? Are you following him for the right reasons?

Verse 14 After the people saw the signs Jesus performed, they began to say, surely this is the prophet who has come into the world.

[ 11 : 46 ] Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. their idea of the kind of saviour that they wanted was very different from the kind of saviour that Jesus is.

They wanted a strong ruler that would kick out the Romans who were occupying their country. they wanted to see like another man called Vladimir Putin Israel great again.

That's not the kind of saviour that Jesus was, that's why he withdrew. Perhaps you've got this interest in Jesus and you're following him but it's not really the Jesus of the Bible.

verse 26 Jesus answered very truly and you can translate that as something like this, this is how Jesus is putting phenomenal emphasis when you see this sort of language.

Absolutely I tell you, you're looking for me, not because you saw and understand that verb there saw as understood because that's what Jesus is really saying at this point.

[ 13 : 33 ] Absolutely I tell you, you're looking for me, not because you understood the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

There's great industries of Christianity isn't there? On this side of the Atlantic and on the other side. seeker churches and great crowds thronging for healing and great crowds thronging for some material benefit from the gospel.

verse 30 so they asked him what sign then will you give that we may eat it but may we see it and believe you what will you do our ancestors ate the manna and the wilderness it seems that they're thinking here was a sign that was straight from heaven can you do that okay you've been healing people you've been given as bread but what about can you do something that is so amazing from heaven Jesus said very truly I tell you it's not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven but it's my father and this and they said always give us this bread but they're still thinking if you like in a non spiritual way and then

Jesus declared I am the bread of life and then searching for Jesus in verse 24 when the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there where the bread miracle was performed they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus is that not what every denomination what every Christian church wishes that people would be searching for Jesus and there's nothing sure than this we're near the pulse of real Christianity we're near the pulse of biblical Christianity when we're searching for Jesus the pulse of Christianity has got nothing well I'll not say nothing but it's certainly not in church going it's certainly not even in reading the scriptures

Jesus said Jesus said once to people you study the scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them we can have a tremendous intellectual grasp of the scriptures are we searching for Jesus the only redeemer of humanity when they found Jesus on the other side of the lake they asked him Rabbi when did you get here maybe that's just a little clue that they don't really understand who this man is because they just use a word that means teacher and then of course it shows this conversation that it has with the people at this point in the chapter shows how much they're lacking and true understanding of what the miracle is really intended to do to open their eyes to the person who's before them his real identity don't work he says for food that spoils do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life isn't it tragic especially in our day and age perhaps we live in a consumer society where people think that they need things

[ 18 : 07 ] Jesus once said a person's life does not consist in the abundance of things that they possess if only I could have this job if only I could this phone and I'm told I need it every single day by the drip of constant advertising and images don't use your energy says Jesus don't waste away your life chasing the wind I am the bread of life I want to quickly move on now to the last part of this the signs given by

Jesus have we actually seen through the sign have we actually picked up the great truth of the sign that is the bread of life the searching for Jesus good up to a point but are we searching for the real Jesus and for the real reasons Jesus says I am the bread of life four times in this chapter who or what is the bread of life well obviously it's Jesus Christ we don't need to do a course in happiness at Bristol University the bread of life isn't some entity or magical formula or object out there the bread of life is a subject a person I am the bread of life the bread of life is

Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone he's the one that can meet our deepest needs our needs of a sense of belonging acceptance guilt God how many people did he say your sins are forgiven you they were in a spiritual prison until Jesus brought those wonderful words identity once you ditch the Christian and Judaic values you open up a Pandora's box where people wonder who am I you're someone who's very very valuable so valuable that

God gave his only son for you that God enfleshed himself for you and that God was in Christ in that cross for you and for me why do we need this bread why do we need this saviour now I'm speaking about humanity as a whole and I'm thinking of history because we are our own worst enemy we've created a world certainly in the west of inequality injustice and estrangement we've insisted on our independence from

God and have become estranged not only from God but also from our true selves history testifies to our inability to love God and to love our neighbour Christ has come to undo all this you know when you're on your computer and you do something that you didn't really mean to do and you think oh my goodness and then you see this little word undo and you just give it a wee click and it's undone wow it wasn't so easy for God yes Christ has come to undo he's he's he's he's the second and greater Adam all the mess that we make as human beings the carnage the slaughter the killing the

arrogance the pride why don't you trust him today if you haven't done so but you know this is not a take it or leave it offer there's another very important verse in this chapter and this chapter moves inexorably to

[ 24 : 09 ] Jesus Christ as the enfleshed bread that gives his being for you and for me take for instance verse 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven whoever eats of this bread will live forever then he says this bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world and then in verse 53 you've got this in the av it would be verily verily in this niv I've got it's very truly I tell you but I'm going to give again my own sort of translation to that absolutely I tell you unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life in you wow here's the pulse here's the blood here's the core here's the essence here's the center unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life in you

John's gospel you'll remember I gave a series on chapter one on what's called the prologue the first 16 or 18 verses and you remember that stunning statement and the word was made flesh the eternal word became a human being nation and in order that he might save us but we need to feed on him he needs to be in us Christianity is relational Christianity is to do with something staggering and that something staggering is that Christ is in you the hope of glory have you are you feeding on Jesus Christ have you seen beyond the physical side of Christianity the outward side the church going the reading of the Bible have you seen beyond the empty materialism that this world is able to offer you the candy floss of the world's pleasures the class consumerism this was a crossroads for the people who have this back then or just about finished you know you know in verse 66 can you believe this listen to this this is the code there's 66 of this chapter from this time many of his day his disciples turned back and no longer followed him the truth isn't easy you do not want to leave to do you Jesus asked the 12

Simon Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life we have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God who you are you with today he standing shoulder to shoulder with Peter and his confession or are you with the crowd that's walking away from Jesus the last thing I want to say it's just a wee theological point if you like when you read through John's gospel you see that John focuses his understanding of the salvation that Christ brings to us on this world life life life life indeed three of the seven I am sings refer to that John 14 6 Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life life life life

Lazarus I am the resurrection and the life life John 6 35 I am the bread of life life John 1 at the very beginning of this gospel I gave a series of sermons for you in him chapter 4 of chapter 1 was life and that life was the light of all people sometimes I wonder in our reformed state of mind that we tend to forget that justification and forgiveness and absolution if you like of your sins of your sins is not the end it's the means to experience and encounter eternal life now through and then Jesus Christ and forever is Jesus your bread of life

Amen let's unite our hearts and prayer Heavenly Father Heavenly Father as Paul puts it we're dead in our sins of the Lord to bless you that we're dead in our sins only you Lord can give us the bread that comes from heaven the life that is God's life only you Lord can give us the bread that comes from heaven the life that is God's life the life that is eternal life not even so much in its quantity but certainly in its quality that we are drawn in to that eternal life that is God himself and that we might mobilize as it were these great aspects of our being for which you created us may it be so Lord and may we stand with Peter and say to whom else shall we go

[ 32 : 52 ] Amen Amen Imagine me