

Lesson 9 Notes

John 6:22-40

Focus Verse

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'" (John 6:35)

Outline

- The Work of Heaven – John 6:22-29
- The Bread of Heaven – John 6:30-33
- The Life of Heaven – John 6:34-40

Engage

Our journey through life presents challenges, conflicts, and choices. Energizing experiences propel us forward. However, we often spend our thoughts, time, energy, and money seeking contentment that proves elusive. When our dreams fade or reality does not match our expectations, we feel disappointed and depleted. Surely life has more to offer than fleeting physical and material comforts with evaporating moments of happiness! Where can we look for meaning and purpose that will not spoil or decay? **Only Jesus Christ offers living bread—He alone completely sustains and satisfies all who come to Him in faith.** Without the life-giving, soul-sustaining bread Jesus gives, we perish.

The crowds that followed Jesus cared more about their rumbling stomachs than their hungry souls. They recognized their need for bread to sustain physical life. However, Jesus called them to recognize a more profound hunger—one that could not be satisfied with a physical meal. God planted a longing for deeper meaning, security, and purpose within every human heart. Jesus offers the only possible source of life, eternal satisfaction, and enduring hope. Jesus countered the crowd's confusion by offering unvarnished truth. Jesus calls us to believe in Him. He invites us to partake of the life only He can give. He offers to meet our spiritual needs, not just our physical cravings. **Only Jesus, the Bread of Life, can satisfy our spiritual hunger and give us eternal life.**

✦ The Work of Heaven – John 6:22-29

Having witnessed Jesus miraculously transform five loaves and two fish into an abundant meal, many people wanted more of the same. Jesus and His disciples departed because He knew the gathering crowd wanted to make Him king by force.¹ In a Capernaum synagogue,²

1. King by force: John 6:15
2. Capernaum synagogue: John 6:59

Jesus unpacked the deeper meaning behind the mountainside miracle. He responded to the people's three rising questions and their culminating demand. Only John records this discourse. What Jesus had symbolized, He now explained. **Jesus is the Bread of Life.**

The Crowd – 6:22-24

When the persistent crowd realized neither Jesus nor His disciples remained in Tiberius where He had miraculously fed them, they boarded boats and headed to Capernaum in search of Jesus. What motivated this relentless pursuit? **Were they hungry for breakfast? Did they still long to make Jesus their king? Whatever they thought, Jesus knew their hearts.** He would continue to unveil His divine authority and power because He came to seek and serve lost people. **Jesus, the rightful King, ultimate Prophet, and promised Messiah** remained on course to accomplish God's plan. **His unstoppable purposes lovingly reach toward needy and broken people.**

Jesus Speaks Truth – 6:25-27

Whether the group sought a king or desired another miracle, **they remained unaware of their greatest need.** The questions the people asked Jesus revealed their limited understanding. **Every time Jesus answered, He pierced through their shallow request to expose a deeper issue the people needed to face. Jesus swept past their initial question regarding His arrival time to reveal that they were seeking Him for all the wrong reasons. He clarified God's intended aim in the food-multiplying miracle they so enjoyed.** Every person present required the everlasting life only Jesus can give.

Jesus's Authority

In the Gospels, Jesus often introduces key authoritative statements with the phrase "Truly, I tell you." The word translated as "truly" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "amen," meaning "let it be so" or "it is so." **Jesus alone expressed His unequaled authority by beginning statements with "Amen," an expression that normally occurs at the end of biblical statements.** In some cases, Jesus underscored the importance of His words **by saying "amen" twice.** The NIV expresses this double "amen" with the words **"very truly,"** an expression Jesus used **four times** in speaking about Himself as the Bread of Life.³ **John's Gospel uniquely records this doubling, which occurs 25 times.**

Jesus's Insight

As Jesus taught the crowd, He unmasked the people's true desires.⁴ They wanted free food, physical healing, and political freedom. **Few desired the spiritual satisfaction only Jesus could give.** These people missed the point of Jesus's miracles, **that He is the Messiah who provides spiritual food that will not spoil.**⁵ **Everlasting nourishment for the heart and soul resides in God Himself, who alone offers "food" that will "endure to eternal life."** **Nothing this world offers compares to the abundant life Jesus gives.**⁶ Anyone who fails to accept Jesus remains eternally lost and spiritually hungry.

3. **Very truly:** John 6:26, 32, 47, 53

4. **Jesus knows people's true desires:** John 2:24-25; 6:64

5. **Perishable things:** 1 Peter 1:23-25

6. **Abundant life:** John 10:10

To work for food that endures means to seek Jesus wholeheartedly. **Jesus is to be the center of all our affections, activity, and effort.** People who set their hearts on seeking Jesus and His kingdom discover that He supplies everything needed to glorify and enjoy Him.⁷

Replacing this world's passing pleasures with the Lord's enduring blessings resounds as a consistent theme throughout Scripture. God desires for His people to live by an entirely different set of values and priorities. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, a believer's desires gradually change so that seeking God matters more than lesser pursuits. An eternal perspective overrules the temporary, fleeting options of the world. The Apostle Paul used a picture of "putting off" the old and "putting on" the new.⁸ **No one puts clean, new clothes on over old, dirty clothes.** Where in your life do you need to "put off" your efforts, energy, and ambitions that seek things that spoil? **"Put on" eternal satisfaction in Christ.** Ask Him to help you determine specific ways to alter your daily life toward this eternal perspective.

The Father's Seal

God the Father **"has placed his seal of approval" on Jesus.** Today, the seal of a notary public or authorized official attests to the authenticity of a document or signature. **In ancient times, officials validated documents with seals imprinted with official signet rings.** God the Father uniquely **"sealed" Jesus as the source of eternal life** for the world. We receive this amazing gift by grace from the hand of Jesus, God's Son.⁹ **Believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit, making their salvation sure.**¹⁰

God places within every human being a spiritual hunger that He uniquely satisfies.¹¹ People long for purpose and meaning that surpasses their ordinary everyday human existence. Only Jesus can fulfill this eternal longing. Many fail to understand their inborn longing for eternity as they seek passing pleasures that cannot ultimately satisfy what they crave most. **To receive Jesus is to receive God.**¹² God has provided Jesus—the greatest treasure for life and eternity.

God's Work: Believe in Jesus – 6:28-29

The people asked another question: "What must we do to do the works God requires?" However, their subtle change of Jesus's use of the word "work" to "works" revealed a deadly error. **The people requested a list of duties they could achieve on their own to receive eternal life.** Their thinking represents a common misconception prevalent among misguided human religion and people throughout time. Many wrongly seek to please God through a checklist of behavior. The rich young man, spoken of in the other Gospels, expressed this same desire.¹³ **Inherently flawed human righteousness cannot satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God.**¹⁴

Jesus said, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." God requires only one "work" to receive eternal life—to believe and receive salvation through faith in His Son. Those who come to Christ for salvation offer God-pleasing works, **but these come as a fruit,**

7. **Seek Jesus first:** Matthew 6:33

8. **Old and new:** Ephesians 4:22-25; Colossians 2:11

9. **God so loved the world:** John 3:16-17

10. **Sealed by the Holy Spirit:** Ephesians 1:13-14

11. **Hunger for God:** Ecclesiastes 3:11

12. **Jesus is God:** John 14:9-10

13. **Rich young man:** Matthew 19:16-22

14. **Not by human works:** Romans 3:20-30; 9:16; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5

The Bread of Life Discourse

We will devote **two** lessons to Jesus's important teaching in this passage known as the Bread of Life Discourse. The following outline will help grasp the flow of the message.

1. Background – 6:22-24

In Capernaum, the day after He fed a crowd of thousands from one boy's meager lunch, Jesus revealed Himself as the Bread of Life.

2. Questions – 6:25-40

Jesus used His replies to three questions and a request as an opportunity to teach the crowd who gathered around Him in the synagogue at Capernaum.¹

3. Grumbling – 6:41-51

The listeners grumbled when Jesus said He came down from heaven, but Jesus repeated His claim, promising eternal life to all who believe Him.

4. Arguing – 6:52-59

Sharp arguments arose among the crowd. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" The Lord's reply was even stronger: "Unless you eat [my] flesh ... and drink [my] blood, you have no life in you."

5. Crisis – 6:60-71

The Lord's teaching about His flesh and blood **offended** most who listened. **Many disciples turned away,** but the Twelve restated their commitment to Jesus. It seems likely that from this time on, **the flame of rebellion in Judas's heart began to burn with increasing intensity.**

1. Teaching in synagogue: John 6:59

not the source of salvation. To think that eternal life can be earned represents a fatal mistake. Receiving Jesus's righteous life and sacrificial death on our behalf is the one "work" God requires and accepts. We do not rely on what we can *do* but rather on what Jesus has *done*. To believe in Jesus is to be saved from eternal separation from God.

Every deliberate choice a believer makes to die to self and live for Christ does more than simply reveal true faith.¹⁵ **Coming to faith and growing in faith means giving up working harder to be better or doing more works to try to earn God's favor. No amount of hard work can ever earn God's favor. God does not ask us to obey to win His love or earn eternal life.** We could never do so.

15. True faith: Luke 9:23; 14:27; John 12:24-26

Instead, believers are set free to live by faith in the Son of God.¹⁶ God invites us to believe in His Son and fix our eyes on Him.¹⁷ Believers live in a loving relationship with their Good Shepherd and follow where He leads. **True obedience and good works come only through faith in Jesus.** He is the One who has done the one work God requires for our salvation: Jesus died on the cross as our substitute to pay the penalty for our sin. He is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

✦ The Bread of Heaven – John 6:30-33

Eternal Bread – 6:30-33

The people audaciously asked for another sign so they would believe. The day before, these same people ate bread and fish Jesus miraculously provided. **Like physical hunger requiring continual feeding, they sought yet another miracle to sustain their flimsy allegiance.** Their request implied that while Jesus fed 5,000, He did so only once. For 40 years in Moses's time, God sent a daily supply of manna from heaven to feed the hungry Israelites. **The crowd seems to demand that Jesus feed them like Moses did in the wilderness as a prerequisite for their faith. They sought further proof that Jesus was greater than Moses.**

The questioning crowd failed to connect God's gracious provision through Moses to His mercy and goodness. With emphatic certainty, Jesus explained that God, not Moses, supplied His wandering people with manna. **God's gift of manna only sustained the physical body.**¹⁸ The miraculous provision ended when God's people entered Canaan.¹⁹ In contrast to this perishable bread, God now offered true bread from heaven: "For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven **and gives life to the world.**" **Jesus Himself offers uniquely imperishable, life-giving, and soul-satisfying nourishment for the human soul.**

The literal and physical often blind people to the spiritual and the eternal. The Samaritan woman misunderstood Jesus's offer of living water while standing beside Jesus at the well.²⁰ Similarly, this crowd focused only on their physical needs as they demanded that Jesus "give us this bread." **The Samaritan woman ultimately recognized Jesus as the source of living water and, with blossoming faith, reached out to her townspeople.**²¹ In that encounter and this one, Jesus revealed that He is the source of spiritual sustenance. **The people in Capernaum, however, remained oblivious to the Bread of Life Himself, who stood in their presence.**

✦ The Life of Heaven – John 6:34-40

Despite the people's misunderstanding and unbelief, Jesus continued to reveal more about true personal fulfillment through relationship with Him. The people that day, like people today, asked Jesus for something. **Jesus offered them Himself.** To have Him is to have eternal life.²² Jesus, God's gift, stood before them. **They needed to open their eyes, their minds, and their hearts and receive Jesus.**

16. Living by faith: Galatians 2:20

17. Eyes fixed on Jesus: Hebrews 12:2

18. More than manna: Deuteronomy 8:3, 16

19. No more manna: Joshua 5:12

20. Woman at the well: John 4:15

21. Woman's faith: John 4:39

22. Eternal life: John 17:3; 1 John 5:12

Jesus's Seven "I Am" Statements

In John 6:35, Jesus states, "I am the bread of life," a truth He repeats three times in this chapter. This rich declaration is one of seven powerful word pictures recorded in John's Gospel. Jesus introduces these powerful sayings with the words "I am" as He reveals His identity and relationship to believers. Each revelation points to Jesus as the means of salvation and spiritual sustenance. **These statements increasingly reveal Jesus's identity as Messiah.**

I am the ...	Verses
Bread of Life (or Living Bread)	6:35, 48, 51
Light of the World	8:12; 9:5
Gate (or Door) for the Sheep	10:7, 9
Good Shepherd	10:11, 14
Resurrection and the Life	11:25
Way, the Truth, and the Life	14:6
Vine	15:1, 5

Jesus's Powerful Declaration – 6:34-35

When the crowd said, "Sir, always give us this bread," Jesus responded with the first of seven "I Am" statements included in John's Gospel (see box above). He cut through their confusion with truth. **Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." He sustains believers in this life and seals them for eternity in His presence.** Those who partake of the Bread of Life find eternal satisfaction for their spiritual hunger and thirst. Jesus delivers those who receive Him as Lord and Savior from sin, wasted lives, and painful eternities.

Jesus used the word "come" interchangeably with "believe." Both words always involve a definite action. Jesus's gracious invitation to "come" to Him characterizes His heart toward people.²³ Coming to Christ represents a "once-for-all" action where sinners receive Christ's atoning sacrifice to redeem them from the just penalty of their own sins. However, believers also return again and again to Jesus for sustaining strength, spiritual nourishment, and clarifying direction. **Jesus truly is the Bread of Life that sustains and satisfies completely.**

Jesus's Sorrowful Conclusion – 6:36

Jesus's words openly exposed the heart condition and lingering unbelief of the hungry crowd. Jesus did not soften the reality that their questions and responses revealed. These people saw

23. Come to Jesus: Matthew 4:19; 11:28; 14:29; 19:14, 21; John 1:39

Chosen by the Father

The Doctrine of Election

Jesus said, "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). God's providential sovereignty stands behind the challenging doctrine of election. Before God created the world, He chose those who would respond in faith.¹ Romans 8:29 says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...." However, God's sovereignty in election does not negate each person's responsibility to believe.² God offers an invitation for all to believe. When God draws people through His Spirit, He works through their individual faith.³

↙ Sin has so ruined humanity that no one truly seeks God.⁴ Our fallen state renders us utterly unable to respond to the gospel in faith unless God first enables us.⁵ Consider salvation as a door. A bold invitation is emblazoned on the outside of the door: "Whoever will may come." Those who take hold of God's promise walk through the door by faith to see another bold sign inside the door: "All those the Father gives me will come to me."

God's ways are inconceivably bigger, higher, and more perfect than humans comprehend. We easily miss the harmony between the twin truths of divine election and human responsibility. We should not dismiss infinite truths we cannot fully understand. God's choice in eternity past does not remove personal responsibility for unbelief in the present. The seriousness of rejecting Christ remains a sober warning. ✱

The wonder of salvation humbles and amazes us. God imparts life to dead hearts. Knowing this truth compels us to confidently share the gospel with others. Salvation, from start to finish, is God's work. All glory belongs to God. However, the responsibility to turn to Christ for salvation is ours. Will you trust God who loves perfectly and always acts righteously?

1. Chosen before time: Ephesians 1:3-14
2. Human responsibility: Psalm 81:11-12; John 8:24
3. Call to faith: Matthew 11:25-30; John 6:37-40
4. Sin's damage: Psalm 14:2-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-18
5. Drawn to faith: John 6:44

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They experienced His power but chose not to believe Him. Seeing is not believing. Faith believes, then sees. Jesus's listeners asked for physical bread without faith in Jesus's provision for their greater spiritual need. They did not seek eternal life but instead rejected Jesus.

Jesus's Stabilizing Promise – 6:37-40

The Security of Believers – 6:37-39

Jesus shifted to beautiful truth regarding those who do believe in Him. Believers are the Father's love gift to His Son. God has sealed for all eternity all who come to Jesus for ↙

salvation.²⁴ For this reason, Jesus will never turn away anyone who comes to Him. Every person the Father gives to the Son comes to Him through faith and remains with Him forever. Jesus said, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”

The Surety of God’s Will – 6:40

Jesus Christ came to accomplish His Father’s will and He did so unswervingly.²⁵ Everything Jesus said and did aligned perfectly with His Father’s promise and plan. **The Father promises that everyone who looks to the Son for salvation will receive eternal life.** Jesus expressed the same confidence in His own divine power to hold and keep those who believe in Him, in this life and forever.²⁶ New life, even heaven, is not the ultimate fulfillment of the unending life Jesus came to give His people. That awaits “the last day” when He will restore and resurrect every believer as all of creation will become better than new.²⁷

There is no deeper security or satisfaction than knowing Jesus Christ. People futilely work for “food that spoils” while Jesus alone can meet our deepest need. Every human soul longs for fulfillment this world cannot give. There is no higher calling than following Jesus. There is no greater “work” than believing in Him. **Only Jesus, the Bread of Life, can satisfy our spiritual hunger and give us eternal life.**

✦ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

A large crowd followed Jesus after He miraculously fed 5,000. Those who wanted to make Him king sought an ongoing solution to their physical hunger. Despite their tenacious pursuit, they remained blind to their real need—the new life that only Jesus provides. Jesus proclaimed Himself the Bread of Life, not just the giver of perishable bread. **Jesus, the unique Son of the Father, came from heaven to give life to the world.**

Jesus’s profound teaching explained the Father’s supernatural work to draw believers to His Son and salvation. Jesus invites all to “come” as He offers Himself as the key to this life and eternity. **Those who believe in Jesus follow Him into eternity.** Those who refuse Him in unbelief walk away from life’s highest calling and greatest prize toward eternal death. Jesus’s words set clear-cut boundaries that demand a response.

Apply It

Physical realities often blind us to spiritual realities. A crowd of hungry people enjoyed Jesus’s miraculous meal but entirely missed the point of His provision. Jesus did not leave them floundering with misconceptions about their ambitions and His mission. He offered clarifying truth. **Apart from the Holy Spirit’s help, we also remain stuck in confusion, unable to discern**

24. Sealed: John 17:6-12, 22-24; Ephesians 1:13


25. Father’s will: John 4:34

26. Forever His: John 10:28-29

27. Creation restored: Romans 8:20-23; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-5

eternal truth. Our own sinfulness leads us to ignore or miss the wealth of evidence God provides to bolster our faith. Nature and history testify to God's sovereign power.²⁸ The unified perfection of God's Word testifies to its reliability. How has the Holy Spirit raised your gaze from what you can see, touch, and feel so you might grasp the wonder of who God is and all He offers for eternity? Have you recognized your accountability to Him? God does not delight in hiding spiritual truth from us. In fact, God has made His invitation abundantly clear. The Father sent His Son and gives us His Holy Spirit to unlock our minds and open our hearts to know Him. How has God done this in your life?

We fail to adequately understand the intense hunger that rumbles within the human heart. This deep grappling for lasting fulfillment shows up in many ways. Our hobbies, hopes, dreams, and constant searching reveal the longing for eternity that God has placed within every human heart. We eat the "bread" of the world but fail to find lasting satisfaction. Jesus shocked His hearers by offering Himself as the Bread of Life. God sent His Son from heaven to meet our deepest need. When and how do you seek fulfillment from places, people, or pursuits that do not satisfy? How does God continually and compassionately invite you to flee those things and run to Christ? Maybe you have never turned to Jesus or find yourself struggling with a deep-seated need. Will you turn to the Savior? **Jesus's claims offend many yet offer eternal comfort for those who find in Him the rest their souls so desperately crave.**

Jesus will never turn away anyone who comes to Him, whatever their past or present failings. God graciously invites sinners to find the hope, healing, and restoration they desperately need. God's heart moves with compassion toward sinners. God seeks us, even when we are confused, self-seeking, and stuck in sin's traps. Jesus did not let His hearers stay mired in their shallow expectations. He called them to believe and experience more than they imagined. How have you heard Jesus's invitation to "come" to Him? **Keep responding to Him; He will not turn you away.** **As you depend on the Lord for faith to believe, He repeatedly confirms that He treasures you as His own. God loves and seeks the wayward.** He fills our gaps and satisfies the deepest hunger of our searching souls. 

28. Nature's witness: Romans 1:18-20