



HG195 *The I AM Sayings Of Jesus*
I AM The Bread Of Life

John 6:25-51

Home Group Study Notes

1 March 2020 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

We have just entered the season of Lent. What plans, if any, do you have to observe it ?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon

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Introduction

Bread is a staple part of people's diet all over the world but we know that it doesn't last, after a few days if uneaten it goes mouldy and we have to throw it away, but as well as a physical hunger that gnaws away at our stomachs we all hunger spiritually. There is an emptiness in our souls that needs to be fed and we look in many different places to feed that hunger. We try to fill it with material possessions, people, experiences, careers, drugs, relationships and they all fail us. All of the physical things that we look to for meaning and nourishment eventually fade. We keep going thinking, - just one more promotion will make us happy, just a few more £s in the bank will secure our future and then we can relax, but even when we get that promotion or fill up our accounts, you know what.. we still die, nothing can save us and that kind of food cannot keep us alive. Only Jesus can do that, only Jesus promises life everlasting. In this life the bread Jesus offers brings us spiritually alive and into a relationship with his Father, and then when we physically die he invites us to live with him forever. I mean.... there's bread.... and then there's Bread!!

The only Bread that we need

This passage tells us that Jesus is the bread of life, he is the only bread that matters and endures. Only he can quell our cravings and satisfy our souls. He is who we are looking for to fill that hole in our lives that craves nourishment, the One who makes every celebratory moment of our lives complete because we know that every good thing comes from him and he is the One we want alongside us in the most difficult and challenging of times. In Exodus 3:14 and 15 when Moses asked God his name "God replied to Moses, I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel. I AM has sent me to you.... This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations." Quite simply God Is, and Jesus says the same about himself in all our I AM studies.

Like God, Jesus IS and when we discover him, and submit to him as Lord our lives find meaning and the restlessness in our souls finds its peace. All those other things that we have tried and used to fill those longings we have, never work, but give me Jesus and my soul find its rest because "He Is the Light, the True Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Way the Truth and the Life, the Bread, the Alpha and the Omega, the Resurrection," he is everything. He Is, He Was and Always Will Be. He is our Saviour, our hope and our treasure and he did not come into the world in order to feed our hungry stomachs and answer all our prayers. Jesus came to be the bread that feeds our souls. Only Jesus can fill the emptiness inside and quieten the growling hunger pangs of our soul. Only Jesus can give us life.

God gives bread to the hungry

Jesus is speaking in Capernaum and twice he makes reference to Moses in our reading, once in vs 30-32 and again in vs49 when mention is made about the manna that God provided in the wilderness to physically feed the Israelites. He did so in order to feed their physical hunger so they would know that he was their provider, but it was also a picture of what was to come when God would send them bread that would quench their spiritual hunger. Had we read the whole of Ch 6 the parallels between Jesus and Moses would have become clearer.

Moses led a people out of Egypt, huge crowds of people followed Jesus everywhere he went. The people believed that Moses fed them daily with manna that fell from heaven. Jesus had just fed 5000 men and their families with only 2 fish and 5 small barley loaves of bread. Moses held out his staff towards the Red Sea and God parted the water, Jesus effortlessly walks on the water in the midst of a storm showing his power over nature. Jesus identifies himself as one like Moses and some people made the connection. In v 14 they said “Surely he is the Prophet we have been expecting.” They called him the Prophet and not a prophet. For many He was the One they had been waiting for and they would follow him as long as he did what they wanted and overthrow Rome, they wanted a puppet king but Jesus is no man’s puppet and he will not be bargained with.

Fake Bread

There is a strain of thought in many churches in the west that Jesus came to make us happy, healthy and wealthy. The Prosperity Gospel is a controversial religious belief among some Protestant Christians who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans, if humans have faith in God, he will deliver security and prosperity. This leads to the danger that we too can become like the Israelites looking for a puppet king who will do our bidding and give us what we ask for but what’s so deceitful and disturbing about the prosperity gospel is it promises that our lives will be completely different from his life and avoid what he went through. Jesus had no possessions, he was rejected, hated, abandoned by his friends and murdered by his own people but the prosperity gospel would have us believe that we are entitled to be healthy and wealthy, and that people will love us. Well we are not all going be healthy or wealthy and we are not all going be popular and loved by everyone, and if that is what we hope for as a follower of Christ then we are setting ourselves up for failure. Jesus came into the world not to give bread, but to be bread.

The Bread who changes lives

The Israelites wanted a King that would rally the people, fight for them and free them from the tyranny of Roman rule but that was not Jesus’ mission. Likewise he did not come into the world to help us to achieve all our ambitions and grant us the desires we already had before we were born again. He came to profoundly change our desires and to be our main desire. To be the bread that is sufficient, because whatever situation we find ourselves in, Jesus is enough. Its not that he doesn’t care about our health and wellbeing, he does. He showed us many times his care for people, his hatred of disease, sickness, and death. He never said that issues of political freedom or economic justice were unimportant and he was never indifferent to the plight of the poor and the oppressed but he was not, and is not, a political messiah. It’s simply that meeting all our physical desires is not his main concern. He wants to change those desires at their core, so that he becomes our desire over everything, so that we may love and follow him, worship him and be satisfied in him.

The Israelites didn’t get it as we don’t at times either. Just the previous day they had witnessed a miracle that saw thousands of people being fed with 5 small loaves and 2 fishes and they got fixated on the miracle and didn’t see the Person who delivered the miracle. They wanted more and so they sought him out and when they caught up with him Jesus said “Truly, truly I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves” (v 26).

Bread the world offers

He told them not to work and chase after food that perishes, the kind of food that feeds our stomachs and passions. That’s just ordinary food and anyone can provide it, it goes bad and perishes, instead he tells them to spend time and energy seeking “the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you.” In other words don’t go chasing after what the world has to offer, get your priorities right. Forget about your desires to be the best and to have the best, forget about climbing the social ladder. Don’t compare what you have with what your neighbour has, don’t think about the praise of men, they will always let you down. Just don’t be satisfied with what this world offers, because Jesus offers you so much more.

All the stuff that consumes our thoughts and drives our ambitions seems really important to us but can stand in the way of seeing the real treasure in front of us. Whatever it is that consumes all your thoughts and time, that leaves you aching for more because none of it satisfies that restlessness in you, - STOP! It will lead you nowhere. Consider Jesus. Turn to Jesus. Ask Jesus into your life. See the one who, with a simple word and a prayer, can feed five thousand people with a little basket full of food and realise that he is who you need. The world and all its stuff looks good but without Jesus that basket of food goes bad very quickly.

Jesus is disappointed and angry at the people because they were seeking him for the use he could be to them. They failed to see beyond his use and didn't see him as the prize, so he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. It was his miracles and his usefulness as a king that they wanted, but he didn't want that kind of follower. Some of us may also seek Jesus and ask, "What can he offer me?" We all use Jesus at times, we all want something from him and so often we fail to ask what we can offer him. This crowd were never going to understand and quickly decided that he wasn't who they wanted. They wanted to be physically fed, and led by a strong charismatic leader, they even asked him to tell them how they could do the same kind of works that he did and his simple answer did not satisfy their own need to earn God's favour, and to affirm their worth to God. He told them, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Choose your bread

It was too simple. If he wasn't going to offer them another free lunch then perhaps a set of rules to follow would have satisfied them, some way to contribute and to earn favour but he didn't because eternal life cannot be earned, it's a free gift and received when we enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. They asked him, "what must we do?" and he replied "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." They shrugged that off and persisted by demanding another sign because if he wanted them to believe in him then he needed to prove it. v 30 "So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" Jesus had just fed thousands of people with 2 fish and 5 loaves and the very next day, they are asking him for a sign! The miracle of feeding the 5,000 had been enough to get their interest and row across the lake to find Jesus, but that was yesterday's miracle, it was yesterday's news and not enough to last until the next morning, they wanted more.

Does that hit any nerves with us? Do we too at times suffer from an insatiable appetite for spiritual excitement but at the same time lack a sense of responsibility towards Jesus? How many of us can say that we have never attended church or gone to a meeting expecting to be fed, even entertained, but having prepared nothing to offer ourselves? We crave spiritual excitement, new experiences and the odd miracle now and then would be good. Jesus didn't want the kind of follower that only got excited about what he could do back then, - he doesn't wants them now. He wants a genuine relationship with every one of us but he won't be bargained with. He doesn't enter that relationship on our terms but on his. He won't do something we ask in order that we believe in Him, he's done everything already. The legalists among the crowd wanted a set of rules they could follow or things they could do before they believed in him, the materialists wanted the miracles more than they wanted Jesus. Jesus however is looking for faith, he wants us to stop relying on our own resources and trust in him. He wants us to want him for who he is instead of what he can do. He stands as the Bread of Life and freely offers himself to you, but it is not a free lunch. This bread cost Jesus his life.

The response of the crowd tells us a lot about the difference between what people want and what people need and we see that so often the very thing people need the most is the last thing they are looking for. Look at the sad response of the crowd, vs 41-42 "At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'" Many walked away dissatisfied, Jesus wasn't who they were looking for to fill their needs. They wanted a strong leader who would perform miracles to order and to impress. Jesus, the Bread of Life didn't resonate with them.

They were hungry materialists and materialism will never meet our deepest need. They were so excited by the miracle they had witnessed that one would never be enough and they would always have been hungry looking for the next one, forever seeking another experience to confirm the last one. The pursuit of material things only creates a downward spiral of acquisitiveness that can never be satisfied.

Refusal to eat the Bread is very costly

They rejected Jesus and in rejecting Him rejected eternal life. They judged by human standards and by external values. They rejected Jesus claims about himself because they only saw the carpenter's son they had seen grow up in Nazareth and couldn't understand that he could possibly be someone special from God. They listened to what he said, they saw what he did but they learned and understood nothing. How sad and how dangerous. To listen and to see but to learn nothing and to go away unchanged and unsaved. We can all listen to what Jesus said and know facts about him, we can think about him and understand how he saves us, but its not the same as believing in him, as giving our lives over to him and receiving him as our Lord and Saviour. Its not the same as knowing that without him we have no future in this life or the next. Only Jesus has seen the Father and only Jesus can give true illumination which brings us knowledge of the Father. Only Jesus can give everlasting life to those who believe in him.

You can keep all the world - just give me Jesus

We love eating food, reading about it and watching other people prepare and cook it on the TV. There are diets to suit everyone and we go from one food fad to the next. Today we are turning to vegetarianism and veganism and are mindful to feed our good gut bacteria with everything fermented from Kimchi, Kombucha to Kefir. We spend a lot of time thinking about what to feed our stomachs with. But what about our souls? Do we spend as much time feeding on the Bread of Life as we do on peanut butter sandwiches? I confess to being tempted by the allure of the world and what it offers. I confess to getting my priorities wrong many times and making Jesus wait while I'm busy with other things going on in my life and only seeking him when I need him and it pains me as much as it may hurt him to confess this, but I can only say that my greatest joy, my deepest contentment and what keeps me calm and free from fear in the middle of the night is knowing Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord and ultimately, you can have all the world and everything in it, but give me Jesus every time.

As we enter the season of Lent we are reminded of Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness challenging him to "turn stones into bread," Matt 4.3. Jesus refused saying that it is not only physical bread that we need but spiritual food to fill the emptiness deep within us. Jesus said that we "cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Matt 4.4. A timely word needed to be heard by Christians living in affluent western societies everywhere dominated by consumer culture. 6 v35 "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." Thank you Jesus.

Song by Fernando Ortega - Give me Jesus.

Emmanuel Church Text for 2020

*"The Lord Your God is with you. He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with
His love. He will rejoice over you with singing."*

Zephaniah 3:17



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. We all know the tell tale signs of physical hunger but how do you know when you are spiritually hungry? How much time and effort do you put into making sure your spiritual hunger is met?

2. Where have you looked in times past, (or even in the present), for satisfaction but not found it?

3. Read John 6:25-27. Based on what we read in these verses, why did the crowds come to Jesus? Do you tend to come to Him only when you need something? What does this say about how we view Jesus?

4. Describe what it may look like when we approach Jesus to get something from him and then describe what it looks like to approach Jesus to get him only.

5. Do you, or have you ever, bargained with God in the same way the people tried to, by asking Jesus to give them a sign in order for them to believe in him? (or,- “if you do this Lord, I promise to do that.”)

6. Have you taken time to seek out Jesus today? Are you daily aware of your need for him and what are some of the things that may hinder this awareness?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

Emmanuel Church, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9LD

P 01277 632120 **E** emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org

T @EmmanuelCM12 **W** emmanuel-church.info **FB** [EmmanuelChurchBillericay](https://www.facebook.com/EmmanuelChurchBillericay)

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