

SMALL GROUP • GOSPEL OF JOHN

Week 6 Preparation Guide

The Bread of Life

John 6:25–40 | Christian Standard Bible | For Thursday

BIG IDEA*Only Jesus truly satisfies.*

Study overview

The day before this conversation, Jesus fed a crowd of about five thousand men from five barley loaves and two fish. Now the same crowd has crossed the lake to find him. They want more bread. Jesus wants to give them more than bread: himself. Come ready to notice what you are hungry for, what you reach for when you feel empty, and what it means to come to Jesus again each day.

This passage is not a scolding for being hungry. Jesus fed real stomachs on the hillside, and he taught his disciples to pray for daily bread. The question he presses is deeper: Are we seeking the Giver, or only the next thing he can give us?

The three scheduled key points

We often seek temporary satisfaction. The crowd chases a second meal. We chase our own versions of it, and the hunger returns.

Jesus offers eternal life. The food that lasts is not a product Jesus hands over and walks away from. He says the bread is himself.

Faith means depending on Him daily. Coming and believing are an ongoing relationship, not a single transaction, much as manna was gathered one day at a time.

Prayer before study

PRAY

Father, you know what I am hungry for, even when I don't. As I read, show me your Son. Expose the places where I settle for what cannot last, and draw me to Jesus, the bread from heaven. Teach me to depend on you today. Amen.

Use this guide in several short sittings. Keep John 6 open beside you, and leave room for questions as well as answers.

1. A crowd that came back hungry

John 6:1–24 • What happened the day before

Read the whole chapter’s opening before you begin. John notes that the Passover was near (6:4), the festival remembering God’s rescue of Israel from Egypt, which was followed by manna in the wilderness. Jesus feeds the multitude, and the people conclude he must be “the Prophet who is to come into the world” (6:14). They want to make him king by force, so he withdraws (6:15). That night his disciples cross the lake, and Jesus comes to them walking on the water (6:16–21).

The next morning the crowd realizes Jesus is gone, takes boats to Capernaum, and goes looking for him (6:22–24). Their effort is real. What they are looking for is the question.

John 6:25–26 • Looking for the wrong thing

JESUS ANSWERS THEIR QUESTION WITH A DEEPER ONE

Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.”

John 6:26 (CSB)

They ask when he arrived. Jesus answers why they came. A sign, in John’s Gospel, points beyond itself to who Jesus is (John 20:30–31). The crowd saw a miracle but missed what it pointed to; they remembered being full.

Be careful not to look down on them. Wanting a full stomach is not sin, and many in that crowd were likely poor. The issue is not that they were hungry; it is that they treated Jesus as a supply line rather than the one the supply was pointing to. Most of us do the same thing in quieter ways.

John 6:27 • Food that perishes and food that lasts

JESUS REDIRECTS THEIR EFFORT

Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him.”

John 6:27 (CSB)

“Food that perishes” is not only bread. It is anything that satisfies for a while and then runs out: approval, entertainment, success, comfort, a scroll through the feed. Jesus does not say these things are evil. He says they cannot carry the weight of eternal life. Notice also that the lasting food is something the Son of Man will give. Even the work Jesus calls for ends in receiving a gift.

Reflect: If I am honest, what am I most often “looking for” when I come to Jesus?

2. The work God asks for

John 6:28–29 • “What can we do?”

The crowd hears “work” and asks for a task list. This is a natural human instinct: tell us what to do, and we will earn it. Jesus’ answer turns the question inside out.

THE WORK OF GOD

Jesus replied, “This is the work of God—that you believe in the one he has sent.”

John 6:29 (CSB)

The work God asks for is to believe in the one he has sent. Faith is not a better performance; it is trust placed in a person. That does not make obedience unimportant. Throughout John, believing Jesus reshapes how people live. But the starting point is receiving, not achieving.

John 6:30–31 • Asking for another sign

Remarkably, the people who ate the multiplied bread the day before now ask for a sign. They quote the manna story: God gave Israel bread from heaven in the wilderness (Exodus 16:4; Psalm 78:24). Their implication seems to be, “Moses gave our ancestors bread for forty years. What will you do?” Yesterday’s meal is not enough to settle their trust.

That is a pattern worth recognizing. Satisfaction based on what God most recently did for us tends to fade quickly. We can find ourselves needing a new answered prayer, a new good feeling, or a new breakthrough to keep believing.

John 6:32–34 • The true bread from heaven

JESUS CORRECTS AND REDIRECTS

For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

John 6:33 (CSB)

Jesus makes two corrections. The manna came from God, not Moses. And the manna was not the final gift; it pointed ahead to “the true bread from heaven,” which comes down and gives life to the whole world. Deuteronomy 8:3 had already said the manna was meant to teach Israel that people do not live on bread alone but on every word from the mouth of the Lord.

A FAMILIAR REQUEST

Then they said, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

John 6:34 (CSB)

Compare this request with the Samaritan woman in John 4:15: “Sir, give me this water.” In both scenes people ask for the gift while still thinking of it as a thing. In both, Jesus answers by pointing to himself.

Reflect: Where am I trying to earn something from God that he is offering as a gift?

3. “I am the bread of life”

John 6:35 • Coming and believing

THE FIRST “I AM” SAYING IN JOHN

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.”

John 6:35 (CSB)

This is the first of John’s seven “I am” sayings paired with an image. Jesus does not say he gives bread; he says he is the bread. Eternal life is not a commodity separate from him. It is life with him.

“Comes to me” and “believes in me” are parallel: coming is believing. Many interpreters note that John’s wording describes continuing action, someone who keeps coming and keeps trusting. That matches the schedule’s key point: faith means depending on Him daily, just as Israel gathered manna each morning (Exodus 16:4).

What “never hungry” does and does not mean: Jesus is speaking of the deepest hunger of the soul, the need to be reconciled to God and to have life that death cannot end. He is not promising that Christians never feel empty, discouraged, or spiritually dry. The disciples in this same chapter were afraid in the storm (6:19). The promise is that this hunger is finally met in him, not in anything else.

John 6:36–40 • The Father’s will and Jesus’ promise

Jesus names the sad reality: they have seen him and still do not believe (6:36). Then he describes the Father’s will in words full of assurance.

A PROMISE TO EVERYONE WHO COMES

Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.

John 6:37 (CSB)

Notice who carries the weight: the Father gives, Jesus receives, Jesus will never cast out, Jesus will lose none, and Jesus will raise them up on the last day (6:37–40). Your security does not depend on how strong your grip on Jesus feels on a given day. And the hope is bodily: resurrection life, not escape from the body.

THE FATHER’S WILL

For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:40 (CSB)

Where Christians differ: Verses 37–40 (and 44 just after) are central to the debate about God’s sovereignty and human choice. Many Reformed Christians read “everyone the Father gives me will come” as God’s effective choosing that brings people to faith. Many Arminian and Wesleyan Christians emphasize “everyone who sees the Son and believes” and understand God’s drawing as real but resistible. Faithful Christians hold both views. All agree on what the group can stand on together: anyone who comes to Jesus will never be cast out, salvation rests on God’s faithfulness, and the invitation to believe is real.

Reflect: Which phrase in verses 37–40 do I most need to believe this week?

4. Prepare your own answers for Thursday

Prepare an honest answer rather than an impressive one. You may share a small part of your story or keep sensitive details private. Listen to others before offering advice.

Question 1 • What do you tend to rely on besides God?

Think about what you reach for first when you feel tired, anxious, bored, lonely, or behind. For some it is work and productivity. For others it is a phone, food, money, control, being needed, or the approval of a particular person. Many of these are good gifts. The question is whether they have quietly become the thing you lean your full weight on.

Ask yourself: When this thing is taken away for a day, how do I feel? What do I feel I cannot do without? Where do I go before I pray?

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

“When I feel ____, I usually reach for _____. It helps for a while, but _____. I would like to learn to bring that need to Jesus instead.”

My answer to question 1

Question 2 • Why is temporary satisfaction so appealing?

Temporary satisfaction is fast, visible, and requires little of us. It meets the feeling right now. Coming to Jesus can feel slower: prayer often doesn’t feel like an instant fix, and Scripture asks us to change. The crowd in John 6 wanted bread they could see more than a person they had to trust.

Isaiah 55:2 asks the same question centuries earlier: “Why do you spend silver on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy?” Consider what you have spent this week, in time, attention, and energy, on what did not satisfy, and why it was appealing in the moment.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

“Temporary satisfaction appeals to me because _____. What it costs me over time is _____. In this passage Jesus offers _____. ”

My answer to question 2

5. Feeding your soul

Question 3 • What does it look like to feed your soul instead of just your schedule?

A full schedule can feel like a full life while the soul stays hungry. Feeding your soul is not adding one more performance to the calendar. It is making room to come to Jesus: reading his words slowly, praying honestly, worshiping with his people, resting, and obeying what he says.

Be concrete and realistic. Shift workers, parents of young children, caregivers, and people in hard seasons will not all look the same. Faithfulness may be five minutes of Scripture in a parked car, praying through John 6:35 while you walk, or turning off the phone at the dinner table. The goal is daily dependence, not an impressive routine.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

“My schedule is full of _____. My soul is fed when _____. One place I could make room this week is _____.”

My answer to question 3

An additional deeper group question

DISCUSS TOGETHER

The crowd followed Jesus for what he could give them. If Jesus never changed a single circumstance in your life this year, would he still be enough? What would help us believe that?

Answer gently. This is not a test to see who is most spiritual. Honest hesitation is a good place for prayer and for the group to encourage one another with verses 37–40.

Practical application for this week

Notice your reach. Each time this week you reach for your phone or another quick comfort, pause for one breath and ask, “What am I hungry for right now?” Then pray one sentence to Jesus about it. You do not need to fix anything in that moment; you are practicing coming to him.

If social media is not your main temptation, apply the challenge to whatever is: streaming, news, shopping, work email, or busyness. Fifteen minutes is not a way to earn God’s favor (John 6:29). It is a way to clear the table so you can receive what he is already offering.

6. Between now and Thursday

Use these four short readings in order, about 10–15 minutes each. If Thursday is close, combine the first two sittings and finish with the final reading before your group meets.

First sitting • See the sign

Read John 6:1–24 in the CSB. Notice what Jesus does, what the crowd concludes, and why he withdraws. Write one observation about Jesus and one thing you notice about the crowd.

Second sitting • Hear the conversation

Read John 6:25–40 without stopping. Then reread verses 25–34. Mark every question the crowd asks and how Jesus answers. Prepare your answer to “What do you tend to rely on besides God?”

Third sitting • Read the background

Read Exodus 16:1–21 and Deuteronomy 8:1–3. Notice why God gave manna one day at a time. Then reread John 6:35–40 and prepare your answers to the second and third questions. Optional: read Isaiah 55:1–3.

Before Thursday’s group • Come ready

Reread John 6:25–40 and pray Matthew 6:11, “Give us today our daily bread,” asking for both physical provision and for Jesus himself. Bring one insight about Jesus, one question, and one honest answer you are comfortable sharing.

SCHEDULED CHALLENGE

Replace fifteen minutes of social media with Scripture and prayer each day.

What I will set aside: _____ When and where: _____

What I will read first (suggestion: John 6:35–40, one verse a day): _____

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the bread of life. Forgive me for the times I have come to you only for what you can give, and for the hours I have spent on what does not satisfy. Thank you that you will never cast out anyone who comes to you. Teach me to come again today, and tomorrow, and the day after that. Feed me with your word, hold me fast, and raise me up on the last day. Amen.

One insight or question to bring on Thursday

Sources: Small Group Schedule.txt, Week 6; CSB text of John 6 and cross-references (Exodus 16:4; Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 78:24; Isaiah 55:1–2; Matthew 6:11; John 4:15; John 20:30–31). Schedule wording is preserved; explanations and prompts are study commentary. Scripture quotations marked CSB are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.