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I AM the Bread

Scripture: Text: John 6:41, 48, 51

The Big Idea: Jesus alone satisfies the deepest hunger in our souls. The echo in the Old Testament is Exodus 16:11–32.

Practical Application: Reflect on areas where you seek fulfillment outside of Christ. Practice turning to Jesus first for comfort, guidance, and satisfaction. State this affirmation daily: Jesus is my bread, and He will sustain me!

Quote: Food is something we all need moment by moment to sustain us. We cannot go long without a drink because liquid is vital for our bodies. Jesus is teaching us that we need to depend on Him utterly, moment by moment, in order to survive.

—Dr. Andrew M. Fountain

Remember the following truth and repeat it often:

- The Old Testament reveals someone is coming.
- The New Testament reveals someone has come.
- In the book of Revelation, someone is coming again!

What Do You Crave?

Have you ever noticed when you eat your favorite food, you are hungry again in a little while? While I crave Doritos and Hershey's chocolate bars, I am left feeling empty and unsatisfied in a few hours. The bad news is that even though these foods taste delicious, my craving for them doesn't stop. When is enough ever enough when chocolate is involved? While these foods are easy to grab and they taste great, they don't provide the nourishment the body truly needs. Despite eating so much, the person ends up feeling sluggish, unsatisfied, and still hungry because they haven't taken in anything that truly sustains.

I think sometimes we just crave the wrong things. For example, many people have tried everything from alcohol and drug use to buying things they can't afford to fill the void in their lives. Some become workaholics, while others focus solely on sports and activities to satisfy the need in their lives that seems empty. We have "soul holes" that constantly cry out to be filled. The truth is we're still trying to satisfy our cravings with all the wrong things. We have hunger pains that nothing in this world can fill.

Someone wrote, "With all our ingesting and consumption, our hunger is still many, and our fulfillments are few."

How does this quote remind us that we are rarely satisfied?

Describe a food you crave? Does your craving for it always return? Explain.

What cravings do people have other than food? Do these cravings satisfy? Why or why not?

How can the craving for wrong things be harmful to us?

Bread and Its History

Bread has a history that dates back to ancient times. It is considered one of the oldest and one of the few foods that has remained important throughout history. Bread has been eaten by every culture, race, and religion. I must tell you that bread is my favorite food. The smell of bread sends me into euphoria, and I am one of those people who loves a good sandwich. I could be happy anytime, eating a sandwich on delicious bread. I love pumpernickel and the seven-grain types of bread. I love Italian bread, potato bread, and just plain old white loaf bread! As a child I ate mayonnaise and ketchup sandwiches just because I loved bread. I can hear you say, “That sounds awful!” But if you love bread, just about anything with it tastes good!

Unfortunately, I can no longer eat bread, at least not any that contains wheat. I am allergenic to wheat and am now in my own special class: gluten-free. For years my stomach ached and swelled like an expectant mother, and I didn’t realize that bread was my problem. My problem is not only bread, but any type of pasta or food that has wheat in it. That discovery was devastating because I loved bread so much! Just explaining this to you makes my mouth water!

We can go down any grocery store aisle and see countless types of breads. I try to avoid the bread aisle for obvious reasons.

One interesting fact I learned about bread is that the twist ties mean something. The next time you go down the bread aisle, notice the different colors of twist ties on the loaves of bread. Their colors represent different days of the week, and they help the person stocking the shelves to know if a loaf needs to be removed.

Jesus as the Bread of Life never expires, and He never gets old. His “twist tie” is always the same color: **RED!**

Red, you say? Yes, because long ago His words were translated and written in **Red Letters!**

In medieval times, breads in Western Europe were named after classes of people: knight’s loaf, squire’s loaf, court’s loaf, pope’s loaf, common loaf, and table loaf. The different types of bread represented

classes. But Jesus, our Bread, is for all people: rich, poor, disabled, healthy, young, old, black, white, and every nationality in between.

What is the importance of bread throughout history? How does physical bread help us relate a spiritual meaning?

Discuss bread as the foundation of the food pyramid, just as Jesus is the foundation of life.

Bread has also been known as the universal sign of peace. In the old days when arguments were settled or problems were solved, breaking bread with someone was a sign that everyone was at peace with one another.

Today, Jesus is the only one that can bring peace: peace of mind, emotional peace, and spiritual peace. He is our Shalom.

Jesus Sustains

Let's take a closer look at John 6:35.

I am the bread of life. Jesus boldly declares His identity as the source of ultimate sustenance. He likens Himself to the bread that nourishes and sustains our physical bodies. In doing so, He draws a parallel between the physical and the spiritual, emphasizing that He alone can satisfy our deepest spiritual hunger.

Why do you think Jesus addressed physical needs before spiritual needs? (See John 6:1–14.)

No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. By inviting people to come to Him, Jesus extends a personal invitation to seek Him. He promises that those who come to Him will find fulfillment and nourishment for their souls. It's an invitation to experience a profound relationship with Him, where spiritual hunger finds its end.

Why do you think Jesus wants us to understand Him as the Bread of Life? What is He relating to us in this metaphor?

Discuss how someone may be alive physically but dead spiritually, like dear Reshma. (See story just before this chapter begins.)

No one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again. Jesus emphasizes the transformative power of believing in Him. It isn't merely an intellectual assent but a living active trust in His divinity. It's through this belief that our spiritual thirst is quenched and our souls find eternal satisfaction.

Could it be that we are like the Israelites in the wilderness and the Jews in Jesus' day, when we don't understand that He is enough? Discuss.

Jesus as the Bread

One fact I have noticed about Jesus is that He often starts with material things in order to guide us to think about spiritual things. In the book of John, He talked about physical birth in John 3 in order to explain *spiritual birth* to Nicodemus.

With the woman at the well in chapter 4, He began talking to her about water and ended up talking to her about *spiritual water*, and worship (John 4:1–10, 13–14).

In chapter 6, He speaks of physical hunger and moves to areas of spiritual satisfaction.

1. **I am the bread that came down from heaven** (John 6:41).
2. **I am the bread of life** (John 6:48).
3. **I am the living bread that comes down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever, and the bread that I give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world** (John 6:51).

- ✿ Jesus says, I am the bread of life, and I am the answer to your spiritual hunger.
- ✿ As our living bread, Jesus gives us spiritual life.
- ✿ As our bread, He satisfies the deepest hunger of our heart. Temporary things can distract us, but only Jesus fulfills what the soul was created for—a relationship with God.
- ✿ Jesus, the bread of life, represents to us a daily dependence on Him.
- ✿ As physical bread is needed to satisfy our hunger pains, Jesus can meet our spiritual needs through:

Prayer and worship to our Father
Scripture from the Holy Spirit
Communion of Jesus' death
Fellowship with brothers and sisters

Jesus Is Essential for Spiritual Life

It is interesting that before Jesus makes His claim as the Bread of Life, He has just fed thousands of people with five barley loaves and two small fish.

In first-century Judea, meat was a side dish and bread was the major part of the meal. (That is possibly why there were five loaves of bread and only two small fish.) When Jesus describes Himself as bread, He is saying that He is the most important and essential part of life.

Everyone had access to bread. Poorer people used barley to make bread while the wealthier used wheat, but most everyone had the means to make or buy bread. By using this metaphor, Jesus is conveying that He is available to everyone. Bread was the means of fellowship. In Jesus' day, culturally, when you broke bread with someone, you were friends for life.

Bread satisfies and fills our physical hunger. But the bread Jesus offers us is so much more. Jesus describes Himself as spiritual bread. He says if you eat My bread, you will never be hungry. He wants to fill

our deepest longings to belong. He wants us to know that no matter what happens in life, we can be filled completely by Him. Those who partake of Him will never know spiritual hunger again.

1. What did Jesus quote to the enemy in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4)?

2. Why is this important for us spiritually?

3. Is Jesus conveying that we need something other than physical bread to sustain us? Explain.

4. How does His word fill us up?

5. How can “coming to Him” and telling Him about every hurting, disappointed, and rejected part of our souls help us to trust in Him completely? He already knows it anyway, so why not come to Him and believe that our physical and spiritual hunger can be quenched?

So often we long to fill the emptiness of lost relationships, abandonment, unfaithfulness, and betrayal. As mentioned earlier, we all have “soul holes” waiting to be filled. And just as the Jews in our text, all they wanted was more.

***Until Jesus Is Enough,
No Person, Place, or Thing Will Ever Be.***

What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat (John 6:30–31 NKJ).

We see that the ones who witnessed Jesus performing a great miracle by feeding thousands simply weren’t satisfied.

Let's think about this from a spiritual standpoint: Jesus had just fed over five thousand people with five barley loaves, more like little wafers, and two tiny dried-up fish, and they have the audacity to ask Him, "What sign will You perform? What work will you do?"

Do you see that physical bread just isn't enough? We have the tendency as human beings to always want more, don't we? Jesus even had twelve baskets of left-overs, and it still wasn't enough for them!

Jesus explains that He is the one to fill the emptiness in our hearts. Nothing else can satisfy, fill, or stop our hunger for true life except Him (John 6:35–51).

Jesus later clarifies that Moses was not the one who gave the manna, but the Father did (John 6:58).

Then Jesus refers to an echo in Exodus 16:1–8, 15–20 when the Jews in the wilderness gathered too much manna. After being warned by God not to do so, the manna gathered worms and had a terrible smell because His people lacked trust in God's provision.

- ✿ He is the bread who gives life to the world (John 6:33).
- ✿ Those who believe in Him will have everlasting life and He will raise them up in the last day (John 6:40).
- ✿ Those who believe in Him have everlasting life (John 6:47).

Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. . . .
I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world (John 6:49, 51).

Notice from the words of Jesus what He gives to us. Make a list of those gifts, and observe that what He offers is more than physical bread.

The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "**Most assuredly**

I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:52–55 NKJ).

You must grasp that eating human flesh and drinking blood was detestable to the Jews, and it’s detestable to us as well.

Under the old law they were forbidden to do such a thing. Yet Jesus plainly tells them, If you eat My flesh and drink My blood you will have eternal life.

Jesus was revealing the spiritual benefits that eating His flesh and drinking His blood would bring at His death. I can only imagine how completely and utterly confused and dumbfounded those Jews were that day.

Again, Jesus was trying to help them comprehend an entirely different way to think. He wanted them, and us today, to get the fact that only He can fill the emptiness we have in our hearts. Just as they struggled with separating the spiritual and physical, we still struggle today.

Can you imagine the outrage in the Jewish minds that day when Jesus offered Himself as flesh and blood? Discuss in depth John 6:52–55, taking into account the physical flesh and blood and the spiritual meaning.

Communion: One Bread and One Body

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread (1 Cor. 10:16–17 NKJ).

Read 1 Cor. 11:23–29 and answer the following questions.

1. Paul connects Jesus to the Passover. Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, broke bread and gave it to His disciples. What did that bread represent?

2. When we partake of that bread, what are we commanded to remember?

3. As often as we eat that bread and drink the cup, what are we doing?

4. Why are we told to examine ourselves when we take the bread? Are we ever perfect when we partake?

Pray and confess your sins before you partake of the Lord's supper. After you confess, ask His help to overcome those sins. He will help you!

When we partake of His body (the bread) and blood (the cup) today, this is a picture of receiving His presence into our lives. Just as those in Jesus' culture understood, breaking bread with someone signified a friendship for life.

Every first day of the week (Acts 20:7), we sit down to eat with Him. As we do, we show our belief in Him and we establish in our hearts that we believe His word and that He is the sustainer of our life! We also remember, the great sacrifice of His blood at the cross for our sins.

When I am partaking of His body and blood, I always think to myself that I am raising a flag of declaration. I am declaring my allegiance to the Savior of my soul, to the one who took my sin so that I could be delivered from sin. He is our Exodus plan!

Remember, we have an enemy that is present at the table just as Judas was an enemy at the table with Jesus (Ps. 23:5; John 13:26–27). I love declaring to the enemy where my allegiance lies!

A Different Way to Think about the Bread

How much time do you spend feasting on the living bread, friends? His bread satisfies; His bread fills us up; His bread is "living."

Have you ever been to an Olive Garden Restaurant? Servers come out at the beginning with these bread sticks, lathered in butter and garlic, and you start off with one bread stick. (Not me, mind you; I have a gluten allergy.) Then you go for another and another.

Then they bring out the salad with a mountain of cheese on top and you start to consume salad along with bread sticks! Before you ever get to the chicken alfredo or the lasagna, it's kind of like you don't even want it anymore. Why? Because when you eat the bread, it fills you up, and you can't even look at another plate of food. You're so satisfied by the bread that you don't have the same appetite as you did before.

Now think spiritually with me: What did Jesus say in John 6, metaphorically speaking? He reveals, "I'm your bread," When you eat His bread, He fills you so much that when you see an opportunity for sin, or for pride, or for anger, you no longer confuse the temptation with a need. You no longer go after things in this world that won't satisfy you because that's what His bread can do. He says, "I am the bread; believe in Me so you can be full."

When you are satisfied by His bread, you're so secure in His love, you don't want anything else. He sustains you as the "Bread"!

Explain this example and take it to heart.

"Run to the satisfying Savior; He is heaven's bread and He will satisfy you!"

Assignment

Identify the areas in your life where you seek fulfillment, other than allowing Jesus to be enough. He is your sustainer. Accept His provision for your life.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus as our living bread! You are our wonderful provider, sustainer, and the one on whom we depend, as our Bread. You are our waking breath and our daily bread. We depend on You for the victories ahead of us and we thank You for the victories behind us. Lord, we depend on You for eternal life, and one day we will be raised with Christ to live forever. Please draw us close and help us to realize You are more than enough.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

