

# *Spiritual Essentials*



[John 6:25-35 \(NIV\)](#)

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

**Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”**

**Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”**

**So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”**

**Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

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

**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.**

Special Music: Bread of Life – ForeverBeSure

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_bZIFJ95Qs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_bZIFJ95Qs)

**We are working our way through a series of messages based on the essentials of a spiritual life. We discussed that there are five basic elements to our physical well-being on this planet and that missing any one of these elements could lead to our untimely demise. These needs are:**

**Air**

**Water**

**Food**

**Shelter**

**And Rest**

**Each one of these physical needs correlates to a spiritual need as well. The first week we discussed the Breath of God and how we need for the Holy Spirit to breathe into us on a regular basis to give vitality and guidance to our existence. Last week we discussed Living Water and that the attributes of Living Water are Abundant, Satisfying, Refreshing and Free.**

**This week we will be talking about The Bread of Life and how God provides us with the necessary correlation between the physical bread that we eat to nourish our physical bodies and the Bread of Life that we need to lead a spiritual life.**

**Bread is the most common food product and in most parts of the world, it is served at every meal in some way; whether it is rolls, loaves, slices, cakes, muffins or flat bread. Almost every culture on the planet has some semblance of bread**

built into their diet. Prisoners have been known to subsist for years on a diet of bread and water alone.

And yet, in both Luke 4:4 and Mathew 4:4, when Jesus is in the wilderness and Satan has tempted him to turn the stones to bread, Jesus replies, “Man shall not live on bread alone.” As common as bread is in our diet, we must have other nourishment as well in order to thrive, both spiritually and physically. In the Matthew passage Jesus continues on saying, “**but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,**” meaning that one can be full from bread and still lacking if we don’t listen and pay attention to what God is saying to us. The trouble is, if we are in need of food or if we find ourselves overly full, it seems to affect our hearing. The man who is starving is unlikely to hear the words being spoken to him. It is difficult to embrace the words that God loves us and wants to give us abundant life when our belly is screaming and our mind is racing to find our next meal. If our food needs have been over-met and our bellies full then it is likely that we are too complacent and relaxed to hear the words that God is speaking to us. Why should we care about abundant life if our stomachs are already full? Either way, our thoughts are focused on our worldly needs and not on our spiritual needs. Missionaries learned long ago that it was imperative to meet the physical needs of people in order to get them to listen to the message they were trying to deliver.

Just prior to today’s passage of scripture, Jesus had faced the same dilemma.

The day before, a huge crowd had gathered on the hillside, but there was nothing for them to eat. Jesus had compassion on the crowd and asked his disciples to find what food was there among the people. The disciples came up with five loaves of barley bread and two fish. With this meager amount of food, Jesus proceeded to feed five thousand men plus all the women and children that were gathered there. Not only that, the people ate until they were completely satisfied and there was even food left over. Jesus had met their physical needs, but He also knew that it would create another issue which leads us to our passage of scripture today. But the story has a pause that bears mentioning.

During the night, the disciples cross the lake in a boat, but Jesus goes to pray alone on the hillside. It is here in the middle of our story that Jesus walks on water and the disciples call out to Him and He gets in the boat. In Matthew, this incident occurs in chapter 14 and includes the event of Peter walking on the water towards Jesus, but John doesn't mention the Peter event in his description of what's happening. The boat then proceeds on across the Lake.

It is easy to get distracted by Jesus and Peter walking on the water and we find ourselves losing continuity of the story we are trying to focus on. It is important when we read the Bible to make sure that we keep things in context and not allow ourselves to get distracted by other events. Otherwise, we lose focus on the message. Not that Jesus and Peter walking on the water is insignificant, it just means that that is a message for another day and to dwell on it will leave us squirrel chasing.

Back to our story. The disciples are crossing the Lake. Jesus is praying on the hillside and then walks out on the water to the boat and they all get to the other side of the lake.

In the meantime, the people have realized that Jesus and His disciples are gone and go in search of Him.

When they found Him the next day on the other side of the lake, they ask a totally irrelevant question. **“Rabbi, when did you get here?”** Jesus’ answer doesn’t even acknowledge their question: **“Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.”** As much as He doesn’t want it to be, the crowd had quickly stopped seeing Him as their teacher, but now He is also seen as their meal ticket. He knew that this would happen when He fed the five thousand. The need in their stomach seems to have outweighed their need for spiritual growth. They chose to focus on the fact that their physical needs were met and totally ignore the miracle that allowed them to fill their bellies. Jesus continues to point out their flawed thinking. **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”** There is a popular cliché that speaks to this today. **“Eat to live, not live to eat.”** When we eat to live we eat to provide nourishment and balance for our bodies, our minds and our souls. When we live to eat, the focus of our being is to consume. Eating strokes the pleasure centers of our brain and eventually takes over our lives. Eating becomes our focus leaving little time to feed our souls or to commune with God. In other words, Jesus is saying

here “Don’t live to eat, but do eat to meet your physical needs so that you can what God is speaking to you, which in turn feeds your eternal soul.” Don’t lose your focus on your goal of being a disciple for Christ by focusing on your physical needs.

This concept seems to make sense to the people asking the question and shows how Jesus can refocus our thoughts from the irrelevant to the relevant. Suddenly, the people aren’t focused on the food because they ask **“What must we do to do the works God requires?”** In other words, what does God want from us?

And Jesus responds **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.”**

In simple terms, our job is to believe and by that belief we understand that God loves and will care for us. This is a message that Jesus speaks to on multiple occasions. Consider Luke 12:22-26

**Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life, or single cubit to your height? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”**

So when the crowd hears Jesus say, **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent,”** they must feel a little intimidated, that the message is way to

simple. Being the Godly Jews that they are, they are going to question this. Remember, they are still living under the “Old Covenant” which said a person must work their way into a relationship with God by obeying the law. They lived under the law as described in Exodus 21:23-25 **“But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”** This is their point of reference. It is an extremely difficult matter to change a personal theology from “I have a relationship with God because I am a good person” to “I have a relationship with God because I believe in the one God has sent to redeem me.”

And so, the crowd challenges Him - **So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** Oh, the patience of Jesus. Would that I had such patience. Just the day before, Jesus had fed over five thousand men, women and children with five barley loaves and two fishes; fed them until they wanted no more! And still they wanted more proof. They are still focused on the food and not on where it came from.

**Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.”**

Jesus reminds them that it was not about Moses. It wasn’t even about the children of Israel or being in the wilderness. It was all about God caring for his people so much that He sends bread from heaven to meet their needs. We see



Jesus leading them to an understanding of the bigger picture. **“For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

The crowd seems to understand this concept. They are suddenly very aware that the discussion is not about filling their bellies but about filling their souls.

Remember when we were talking about the woman at the well last week when she came to an understanding of Living Water and says in John 4:15, **“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”**

? This crowd of doubters shows that they now understand by saying

**“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”** You see, it’s not about the bread.

It’s about the gift of the bread. It’s about God loving and caring for us. It is about God providing nourishment for His Children. It’s about looking to heaven instead of looking at the dinner table.

Jesus sees the light bulb go off in their minds and presses the point home by saying, **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”**

We, as human beings are so focused on the here and now that we lose sight of the fact that eternity is only a heartbeat away. Allowing God to take care of us in the present is a pretty simple thing for Him to do when you consider that our lives are but a blink of the eye. We are too often like the people that missionaries approach. We want to have our physical needs met before we open our ears to the message that God is trying to speak into our lives. We struggle to disassociate our physical well-being from our spiritual well-being. If we are hungry or in pain, we have a tendency to close ourselves off to God when in

truth, it is in those times we should embrace the Bread of Life and allow it to speak into our souls.

The creator of the universe sent us the Bread of Life, Jesus, to heal our hearts and nourish souls; to bring us back into a right relationship to Him; to help us to refocus on what is important; to show us that it is possible not only to live but to thrive under His guidance and care.

How much more difficult was it to live under the Old Covenant? To follow all of the old laws? All God wants under the New Covenant is that we believe and by doing so, we become new creatures. We stop focusing on ourselves and our earthly needs and start reaching out to others to show them that there is a better way to live. God has sent the Bread of Life into this world to redeem us and show us that “Old things are passed away. Behold, all things become new.” As Paul says in 1 Corinthians: 5:8 - **Therefore, let us keep the Festival, not with the old *bread* leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.**

Embrace the Bread of Life. Drink the Living Water. Let God breathe new life into you each and every day. This will instill in you a servant attitude that can speak into the lives of those around you.

Amen

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