

The Power to Meet Needs  
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John Chapter 6

Some want the Christian life to be about Bible study, fellowship, encouraging music, but they don't really want to get their hands dirty with the problems of people. Others think the church should be about helping the poor and sick, promoting "social justice," but let's not talk about unpleasant topics like hell. Jesus taught us it's about ALL of this.

On the heels of LOVE LOUD weekend the timing is perfect to look at John Chapter 6. In this chapter, Jesus used His power to satisfy PHYSICAL NEEDS, to reveal His ULTIMATE GIFT for all people: ETERNAL LIFE.

As we move into chapter six of John's Gospel, chronologically, a lot has happened that we read about in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. As time has passed the crowds that follow Jesus have exploded into BIG numbers. Maybe 20,000 including women and children. He teaches -- He heals -- and they keep coming. So many that it's difficult to get quality time with the twelve, time to rest, time alone with His Father. By the end of this chapter that crowd will begin to dwindle.

- **Verse 2: What was drawing the big crowd to Jesus?** It was also Passover. That clogged the roads around Jerusalem like a Georgia-Florida football game!
- Jesus and his disciples climbed a hill to be alone. "Look at that crowd!"

5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

- **Verse 5: How do you think Philip FELT when Jesus asked him this question?**
- Do you ever feel like saying, "Lord, you KNOW what you're gonna do in this situation. Could you just TELL ME?"
- **What does verse 6 teach us about how God develops us as his children?**
- **As much as we all hated taking tests, why are tests still used in education?**
- **If God just gave us the answers in life, what would we learn?**
- **Do you know why I ask questions every Sunday? What am I trying to get you to do?**

- Imagine a parent saying: *“Kid, you’re just not getting this walking thing. We’ll have to carry you!”*

God knows we develop our SPIRITUAL WALK the same way we learned to walk as a toddler. We try, we fall, He picks up, and we keep holding His hand through it all. He gives us TESTS in life so we will GROW in trusting Him.

- **How did Philip respond in verse 7?**

Beth Moore writes of the disciples in this passage:

*While they had seen Christ cast out demons and heal the sick, it had not yet occurred to them He could feed the masses. They still had much to learn about Christ’s complete jurisdiction. He can meet our spiritual needs, our emotional needs, and our physical needs. He is both deeply spiritual and entirely practical. Christ was teaching them to see Him, His power, and His authority in every area of life. Moore, B. (2007). Jesus: 90 days with the one and only. Nashville: B&H.*

When we’re doing what God has called us to do, we need to have FAITH that He will work out His plan in His way. Still, we have to do OUR PART.

- Verse 8: While Philip is doing the math, at least Andrew finds some kind of food!
- **What can we learn from the example of Andrew and the little boy with the lunch?**
- “But, God...I don’t have what it takes to do this! All I have is five loaves and two fish.”
- **Why is it HEALTHY to see God take our pitiful contribution and multiply it?**

When we’re doing what God has called us to do, all He asks is that we bring Him what we have and let Him use it.

After the crowd was full, they were so blown away by what He had done they wanted to take Him by force and make him king. So Jesus slipped away by himself and sent His disciples in a boat across ahead of him. In the midst of the storm He walks on the water. Then on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the crowd shows up again. No doubt, looking for another FREE meal. Jesus fed their stomachs yesterday; but now He teaches about their SPIRITUAL HUNGER.

John 6:26–31 (ESV)

26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”

- Verse 26: Jesus rebukes the crowd. “You’re just following me for what I can do for you.” They didn’t want Jesus, they wanted free food and free medical attention. And, they would walk for miles and stand in line for it!
- Remember what we’ve been saying: People aren’t looking for Jesus, they’re just looking for satisfaction. Praise God, Jesus is looking for THEM.
- Verse 27: Don’t “work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.” Take it from someone who has staged a lot of radio contests, people will go to a lot of trouble for free stuff. If we announced that the first 100 people in the 9:30 service today got FREE Super Bowl tickets, what would it be like?
- Verse 28: The crowd said: “Work?” “Did he say we can do some kind of work to get eternal life?” **Verse 29: What does Jesus want from us?**
- **Let’s talk about that word, BELIEVE.**
- **Let’s start with the “lowest” or most “basic” meaning.**
- **What does it mean to believe something or someone?**
- **If I tell my spouse or my kids, “I believe in you!” How is that a deeper belief?**
- **What about a soldier who says he or she “believes in America” who comes home from war in a casket?**

Looking at the Greek word BELIEVE in verse 29, {4409 (pisteuō)} (Dictionary of Biblical Languages)

- The basic meaning is “to think to be true, to believe, implying trust.”
  - **How does that apply to BELIEVING in Jesus?**
  - The next level is “trust, faith, believe to the extent of complete trust”
  - **How does THAT apply to BELIEVING in Jesus?**
  - The highest level of meaning to “entrust, put something into the care of another”
  - **How does THAT apply to BELIEVING in Jesus?**
- Eternal life STARTS at level one of BELIEF in Jesus: I BELIEVE Jesus is God’s Son; I BELIEVE He came to earth in flesh; died on a cross to pay for my sins; rose from the dead to conquer death for me; is alive today; and is coming back to earth again.
  - We need to make sure people understand that there’s more.
  - Believing in Christ means I trust Him COMPLETELY in every part of my life.
  - It means I strive to OBEY what He tells me in God’s word, day by day.
  - It means I completely RELY on Him to show me how to LIVE today and to give me ETERNAL life FOREVER.
- Jesus told the crowd to go BEYOND physical food to something higher.
  - **Look back at verses 30 and 31 --- What is the crowd still obsessed with?**
  - So Jesus USED their focus on FREE FOOD to make the point again...verse 47:

John 6:47–51 (ESV)

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

- We have to have food to live. No question. The food the crowd wanted provides physical life TODAY. Jesus was offering Himself as THE BREAD OF LIFE.
- Ever see a kid in mid-tantrum who thinks, "I'll show Mom and Dad...I won't eat!"
- They sit, arms folded, frown on their face. "I don't need to eat!"
- Another example. How about the kid that would rather play than eat.
- What happens if we don't MAKE them eat? They're hungry but don't want to admit it.
- God puts a hunger in our souls. Yet, so many wander around the supermarket of life saying, "I'm hungry for something...I just don't know what!"
- Jesus says, "I am the bread of life" that will satisfy your hungry soul.
- Yet, how many STARVING SOULS sit an arms length away from eternal life and refuse to eat?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- How do you and I LIVE OUT this lesson this week?
- No one disagrees with the church helping those in need. As individuals we each are called to do what we can to help the hurting and the needy.
- However, if we're providing physical help without pointing people to eternal life, we're not the church...we're a social relief agency.
- Provide the help, YES! Along with the "food that spoils," make sure we offer them "THE BREAD OF LIFE."

As we've shared before, it's been said:

*"Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread."*