

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Bread of Life

John 6:22-59

Introduction

Jesus’s first “I Am” statement follows immediately on the heels of his miracle of feeding the five thousand by the Sea of Galilee. One of the main reasons the crowd tracked Jesus down in Capernaum was because he had given them a free meal (6:26 and 6:30–31). If following Jesus meant free food, they were all in! How about you? Why do you follow Jesus?

Read John 6:22-59

- 1: The exchange between Jesus and the Jewish crowd reveals that people were not seeking Jesus for the right reasons. What does Jesus say is the *real reason* the people were seeking him out? (6:26)**

- 2: How about today? What might be some poor reasons people pursue or follow Jesus?**

- 3: What do you think Jesus is getting at when he challenges his followers to labor for food that endures to eternal life? (v. 27)**

- 4: When Jesus says “I am the bread of life,” (vv. 35, 48), what do you think he is saying about himself?**

- 5: God’s provision of “manna” in the wilderness (Ex. 16) comes up a number of times in this passage. What is the connection between the manna and Jesus? (Deut. 8:2–3; John 6:48-51)**

- 6: What other “breads” do we look to in life? That is, what do you consume to make you feel better? What things or activities can seem more “life-giving” to you than Jesus?**

- 7: How do we eat this bread of life? (Compare 6:28–29, 35, 40, and 51.)**

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8: What does Jesus say will happen to those who come to him? (v. 35) Does this mean we will never experience physical hunger or thirst again?

What, then, do you think Jesus means? (See 6:40, 50–51, 54–58.)

9: How can we eat the bread of life on a daily basis?

Closing Thoughts

In John 6, Jesus challenges us over our very reasons for following him. Do we believe in Jesus just for the stuff he gives us? Are we following Jesus because we think that, if we do, he will give us a happy marriage? Or, a comfortable life? Or, a positive spiritual experience? Are we only following Jesus for the *blessings* he can give, or are we following Jesus because he *himself* is our greatest joy and satisfaction?

If we are honest with ourselves, we use many “bread substitutes” to sustain our way through life. Jesus isn’t as satisfying as we would like him to be. He seems disconnected from our daily routines. It’s easier to rely on peer approval, personal accomplishments, a healthy savings account, or a pint of ice cream to “give us life.” However, when we rely on these things for encouragement, comfort, identity, or worth, what we are really engaging in is what the Bible calls “idolatry.”

Tim Keller writes in *Counterfeit Gods*, “An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, ‘If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure. ... When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an ‘idol,’ something you are actually worshiping” (xviii).

I think all of us are idolaters at some level. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that he comes to us and says, “I’m right here. Drop your idols. Take those gross ‘bread substitutes’ out of your mouths and feed on me. Believe in me.” Every day we have the chance to feed on Christ by believing in him all over again. We believe by praying to him, by reading his word, by trusting him, by following where he leads us, and doing whatever he gives us to do. We feed on Christ by remembering that he died on the cross for our sins, even for our idolatry. We feed on Christ by faith when we take communion with the church. We share the bread with others when we share the gospel.

When we do these things, we find that eternal life is not just something in the future. Eternal life is a reality that we experience in the here and now. Eternity is here. It is within you. Resurrection is something that has already begun. For “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come,” (2 Cor. 5:17).