

The Bread of Life Discourse—Placing Faith in Jesus (John 6:22-29)

People sometimes follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. We tend to seek Jesus for what we can get out of the relationship, rather than because Jesus in and of Himself is worth following. The day after He fed the five thousand, and having gone away in the night, Jesus arrived back in Capernaum. When word of Jesus' whereabouts reached the crowd, the people pursued Him once again. This encounter led to Jesus' "Bread of Life Discourse," an extended conversation about the nature of discipleship. To follow Jesus is to be intimately committed to Him. Such commitment begins with belief, belief that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Faith is the first step in our eternal relationship with Jesus Christ. Because we sometimes follow Jesus for the wrong reasons, we need from time to time to reevaluate our commitment to Him.

Check your motives— why are you interested in following Jesus? (6:22-24)

This encounter between Jesus and a number of His would be followers took place in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59). There, Jesus challenged the people who were following Him for selfish reasons.

The day after Jesus fed the five thousand the people couldn't find Him (6:22).

After feeding the five thousand, Jesus sent His disciples away by boat, dismissed the crowd, and evaporated into the surrounding landscape (Matthew 14:22-23). Later, Jesus walked on the water to meet up with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. The next morning they returned to shore and made their way to Capernaum. The crowd that had been fed the day before was eager to see Jesus again. The people realized that Jesus hadn't gotten into the boat with the disciples, and that there had only been one boat. Jesus had stayed back. The people must have figured that it would be relatively easy to find Jesus again that day, but He was nowhere to be found.

More people came from Tiberias looking for Jesus (6:23).

The city of Tiberias, located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, was close enough to Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand that word about this miracle would have reached the people of that city very quickly. Boats from Tiberias now arrived with still more people looking for Jesus. John 6:23 notes that Jesus had "given thanks" for the bread that the people had eaten the day before. The people recognized that Jesus possessed power. They must have been curious, eager to witness another miracle. They also enjoyed the bread!

The people left the area and went to Capernaum to look for Jesus (6:24).

Realizing that neither Jesus nor His disciples were still in the vicinity, the people clambered into the boats that had just arrived from Tiberias and went to Capernaum, Jesus' adopted home town. They were highly motivated to see Jesus. Their motives for seeking Jesus, however, were certainly mixed at best. We do well to check our motives for following Jesus.

**Check your priorities—
what value do you place on eternal life? (6:25-27)**

Jesus never hesitated to confront people about the issues of their hearts. He wants us to set the right priorities in life, to value eternal life.

When the people found Jesus, they asked when He had arrived at this new location (6:25).

Jesus had arrived at Capernaum ("on the other side of the lake"), where the people found Him later that day. The people, respectfully addressing Jesus as their Rabbi or teacher, asked when He arrived there. They were no doubt curious about how Jesus had slipped by them.

Jesus warned the people not to seek physical bread but to pursue eternal life (6:26-27).

Jesus knows our hearts. He immediately challenged the people who had followed Him after the feeding of the five thousand. He emphasized the veracity of His statement, saying "truly, truly," and then challenged the people to evaluate their priorities. They had, Jesus pointed out, sought Him not because of the signs that pointed to His deity but because they ate bread and were physically satisfied. These people were more interested in their stomachs than their hearts. They were concerned about their physical needs instead of their spiritual needs. Jesus then warned the people not to work for food that perishes, or spoils. Instead, they were to work for the food that lasts, or abides. That food, Jesus said, is eternal life. Furthermore, eternal life is linked with Jesus Himself (John 6:54). Jesus promised that He, the "Son of Man" (a messianic title), could give them this eternal life. He could do so because God the Father had "sealed" Him, marked His Son as the sole source of eternal life.

Jesus had told the Samaritan woman at the well that her thirst was a spiritual thirst (John 4:10). He now wanted the people who were seeking Him to realize that their hunger was really a spiritual hunger. Eternal life must take precedence over the physical worries of life. We must check our priorities and follow Jesus because He alone can satisfy our deepest hunger.

**Check your beliefs—
what role does faith play in your spiritual experience? (6:28-29)**

Since eternal life is the priority, we must have a clear understanding of how to receive this gift of life. Jesus pointed the people to the essential nature of faith.

The people asked Jesus what work God required of them (6:28).

Because Jesus said to work for eternal food, the people sought clarification. What works must they do in order to know that they were doing the works of God? In other words, what must they do to earn eternal life?

Jesus told the people that the work of God is to believe in the one whom God sent (6:29).

Jesus explained that the work of God isn't a human work. We can't earn eternal life. The work of God is a divine work. God alone can grant eternal life. The work of God for us is simply to believe in the one the Father sent—Jesus Christ. Eternal life hinges on a faith relationship with Jesus. The only way we can satisfy our deepest hunger, our spiritual hunger, is to put our faith in Jesus. Through faith in Jesus Christ we receive eternal life. Faith is the first step in our eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.