



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When Jesus fed the five thousand, he provided an *abundance* of food—more food than the people had ever seen. The leftovers filled twelve baskets! Perhaps for the first time, these common folks Jesus fed ate until they could eat no more (John 6:11–12). It's no wonder, then, that the next morning the people followed the prompting of their growling stomachs and went searching for their next bountiful meal from this Miracle Worker. After all, where else could they find so much food?

Let's join the crowd on their hunt for Jesus as they track Him to the synagogue at Capernaum. At this place of religious learning, Jesus fashioned the object lesson of feeding the multitude into an unforgettable sermon that many commentators call the Bread of Life Discourse.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You'll need a map of the region around the Sea of Galilee to follow the movements of the crowd searching for Jesus. *The Swindoll Study Bible* contains a set of helpful maps, including “*The Ministry of Jesus*.” On this map, find the northeast section of the Sea of Galilee and locate the general area around Bethsaida where Jesus likely fed the five thousand. Then locate Capernaum, where the crowd found Jesus, and Tiberius, which John also mentioned.

Now, read John 6:22–25, tracing on the map the movements of the people as you read. Consult page 147 of Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on John*, for further explanation of Jesus' route and a picture of the fourth-century synagogue that sits where Jesus delivered His discourse. For an online resource, find the discussion of these verses in “Constable's Notes” at lumina.bible.org. Write your findings below.

Quotable

It's a distressing thought that these people stood in the very presence of God in the flesh, heard Him give the offer of salvation, and they didn't accept it.

— Charles R. Swindoll



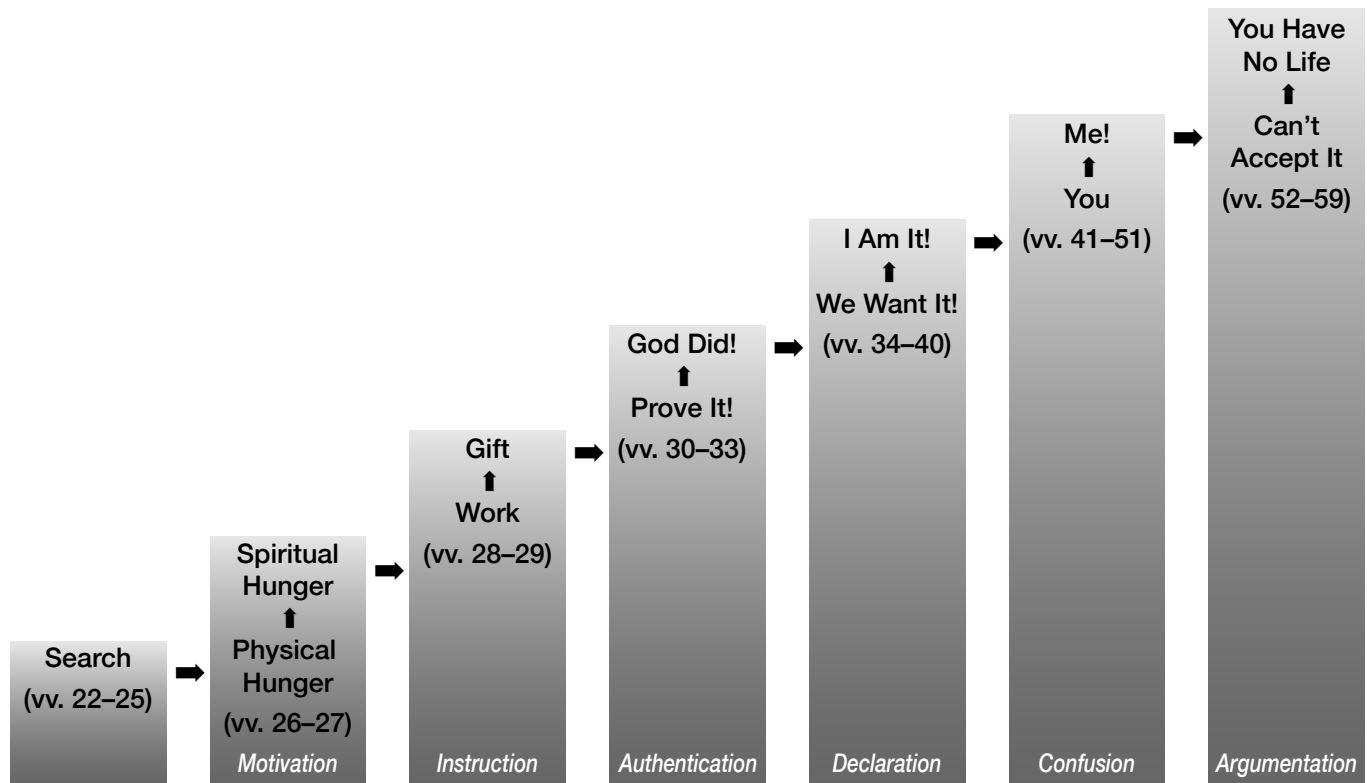
John 6:22–71

The Bread of Life Discourse consists of a dialogue between Jesus and the people. Read John 6:25–59, beginning with the people’s question: “Rabbi, when did you get here?” (John 6:25) and concluding with John’s summary: “He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum” (6:59). As you read, notice the following pattern.

- Jesus replied . . . (6:26)* → *They replied . . . (6:28)*
- Jesus told them . . . (6:29)* → *They answered . . . (6:30)*
- Jesus said . . . (6:32)* → *They said . . . (6:34)*
- Jesus replied . . . (6:35)* → *Then the people began to murmur . . . (6:41)*
- But Jesus replied . . . (6:43)* → *Then the people began arguing . . . (6:52)*

The following chart illustrates the progression of intensity in the dialogue.

Charting the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6



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Observation: Preeminent Issues

Let's follow Chuck's six-point outline of Jesus' sermon, which includes six *preeminent issues* noted on the chart: motivation, instruction, authentication, declaration, confusion, and argumentation. Then we'll examine the *personal impact* on the people, the disciples, Judas . . . and us.



Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical first step to understanding a passage of Scripture. Features to look for include contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words.

First, Jesus addressed the people's *motivation*. What contrast do you notice in John 6:27? Read the verse in the *New American Standard Bible* to see the contrast more clearly. Write down this significant contrast, which Jesus pointed out to redirect their motives from earthly to heavenly.

Instead of bread, what did Jesus desire them to seek from Him (Matthew 6:31–33; John 6:27)?

Search the word *life* in your *online Bible text*, and record the number of times this key word is repeated. What might be the reason Jesus repeated this word so many times?



Instruction. When Jesus talked about “eternal life” (John 6:27), the people assumed eternal life required “works” (6:28). What instruction did Jesus give the people about *how* to gain eternal life? To find the answer, compare John 3:16 with John 6:29.

Authentication. Bread for one meal was not enough to satisfy the people’s selfish appetites; they wanted a *daily* ration—like the manna their forebears gathered every morning except on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:13–31). Only then would they believe in Jesus. How did Jesus correct their misunderstanding of Scripture (God, not Moses, gave food “from heaven” [Exodus 16:4]) and draw their focus back to Himself (John 6:33)?

Declaration. Jesus tried to shift the subject from *manna* to the *Messiah*, but the food-obsessed people refused to connect the dots. How did Jesus declare His identity in plain terms in verse 35? And what assurance did He give future believers, like us today (6:36–40)?

Confusion. Ironically, the Jews who demanded manna murmured like their Israelite forebears. What was the crowd’s excuse for not believing in Jesus (6:41–42)?



Like an ocean swell building in strength and then breaking onshore in a mighty roar, Jesus' discourse came to a climax in verses 47–51. What did Jesus tell the people, and, from the depths of His compassion, what did He urge the people to do?

Argumentation. Jesus' invitation washed over the crowd, but the people's rock-hard hearts did not budge. Instead, the people argued. What did they argue about, and how did Jesus answer their objection?

Jesus' answer created an either-or response. Either the people would follow Him in faith or walk away in disbelief. What would you do?

Before examining the *personal impact* of Jesus' discourse, let's pause for a moment and explore the meaning of "eating" Jesus' flesh and "drinking" His blood.



Interpretation and Correlation: Exploring the Meaning

Eating is a metaphor for faith that illustrates the main idea of Jesus' sermon: "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). Just as eating bread *sustains* physical life, believing in Jesus *secures* eternal life. Write down a few points of comparison between eating as a physical act and believing as an act of the will.



Drinking is also a metaphor for faith. Jesus said, “But anyone who eats my flesh and *drinks my blood* has eternal life” (John 6:54, emphasis added). What does blood represent? Blood *recalls* the blood-smeared doorposts during the first Passover when God’s judgment passed over the Israelites the night before they fled Egypt (Exodus 12:21–23), and it *foreshadows* the cross where Christ bore God’s judgment for sin. Drinking Christ’s blood is a metaphor for believing in Jesus as the atonement for sin.

Months later, on the night of Passover before His crucifixion, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper using these same metaphors of faith. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 along with *Constable’s Notes* on the four major interpretations of the Lord’s Supper. Which view represents your church tradition? Does Jesus’ teaching in John 6 enhance your appreciation of the Lord’s Supper? What new insight can you incorporate into your spiritual practice as you receive the Lord’s Supper?



Application: Personal Impact

Now, let’s consider the personal impact of Jesus’ discourse.

Open Defection

The superficial disciples recoiled when the points of Jesus’ message pricked their thin skin. What was their response (John 6:60–66)?



Firm Determination

Turning to His twelve disciples, Jesus asked, “Are you also going to leave?” (John 6:67). What was Simon Peter’s response (6:68–69)?

Subtle Deception

Judas, the furtive wolf among the sheep, represented the third type of response. Why do you think Jesus called him “a devil” (John 6:70)?

No one who hears the words of Jesus remains the same. How about you? How have Jesus’ words impacted you? Take a little time as you close this study to craft a prayer to the Lord telling Him your response to His words of life.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You sent Your Son to be the Bread of Life for my starving soul. I accept Your provision, confessing my emptiness without Jesus’ presence in my life. I affirm my belief in Him, receiving Him as my food and drink and delighting in His offer of life everlasting! Amen.



FOLLOWING CHRIST . . . THE MAN OF GOD

Bread Delivered from Heaven

John 6:22–71

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



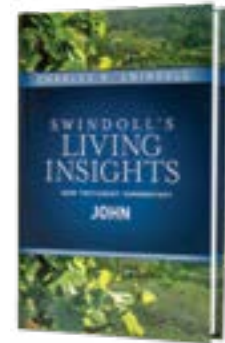
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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