SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Six, Verses 1–71

The Bread of Life — loaves on a hillside, a walk across the storm, and a sermon that emptied the synagogue

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Jesus feeds five thousand from a boy's lunch, walks to His disciples across a storm, and then tells the crowd that came back for more bread that He Himself is the bread of life — a sermon so hard that many disciples walk away, and Peter answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 6:1–71

loaves · storm · bread · drawn · to whom?

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from a boy's lunch to Peter's confession

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." — John 6:68

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 6:1–71

The Bread of Life — Five thousand fed, a crowd that wanted bread, and the Bread who came down from heaven

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 6 in 5 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 6:35

"Jesus said to them, '△ I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me ☆ will not hunger, and he who believes in Me ☆ will never thirst.'"

† Before the Passage

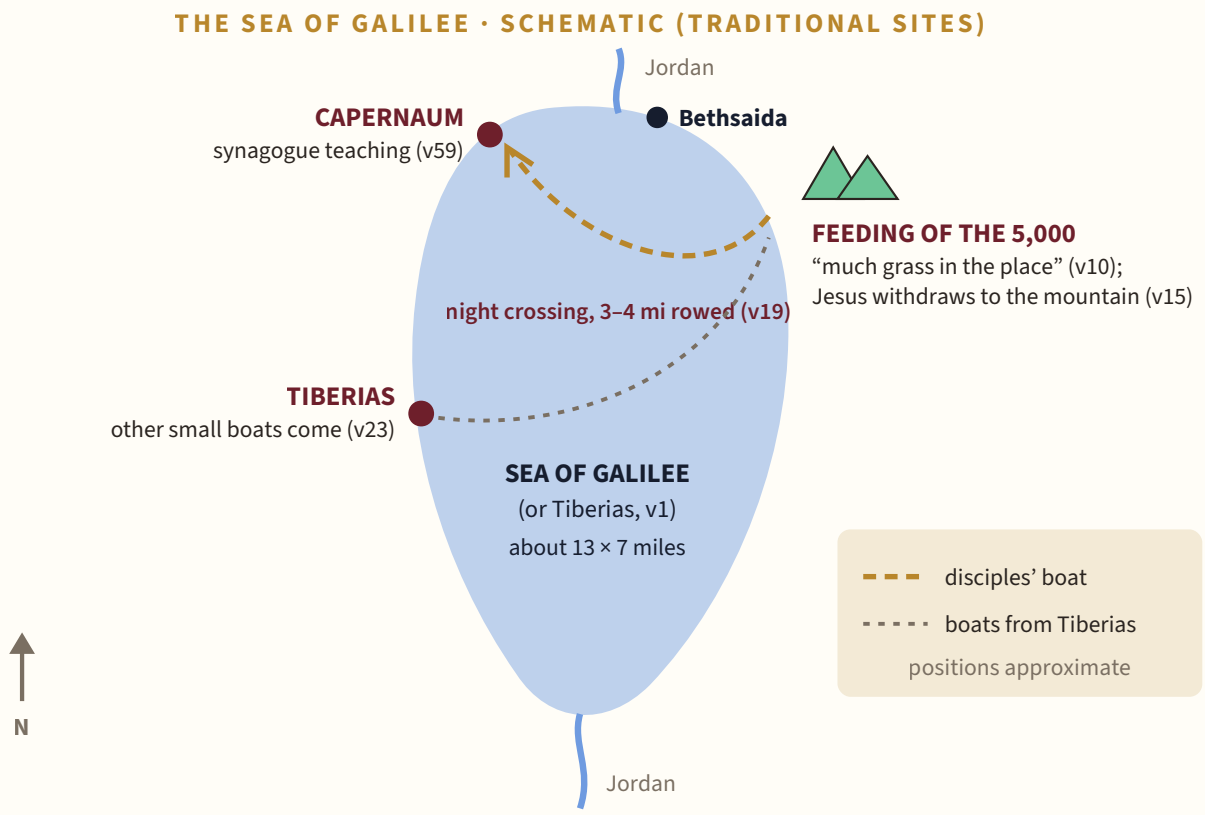
John 5 left Jesus in Jerusalem under a death threat; chapter 6 opens "after these things" back in Galilee, on the far side of the lake. John notes that "the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near" (v. 4) — the second of the three Passovers he records (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), and a year before the cross. The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle, besides the resurrection, told in all four Gospels; Sproul and Henry both stress how widely it was attested.

The Passover setting explains the whole chapter. At Passover Israel remembered the exodus, and the exodus meant manna: "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you" (Exodus 16:4). A crowd fed in the wilderness, a prophet who gave bread, a sea crossed — every Jewish listener would think of Moses, and the crowd says so (vv. 14, 31). Elisha too had fed a hundred men with barley loaves and had some left over (2 Kings 4:42–44). Jesus is the Prophet like Moses — and more: not the giver of the bread but the Bread.

The geography moves around the Sea of Galilee — also called Tiberias, after the city Herod Antipas built on its western shore (v. 1). The feeding takes place on a grassy hillside on the far side (Luke 9:10 places it near Bethsaida); the disciples row back across toward Capernaum by night, "three or four miles" (literally 25 or 30 stadia), and the teaching that follows is given "in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum" (v. 59), Jesus' home base on the northwest shore.

This is the first of John's seven "I am" sayings with a predicate: "I am the bread of life" (vv. 35, 48; compare 51). The chapter is also the great watershed of Jesus' Galilean ministry. It begins with a crowd of five thousand men wanting to make Him king and ends with many disciples walking away and twelve left — one of them "a devil." Along the way it raises the questions Christians still argue over: how the Father "draws," and what it means to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Our four teachers do not all answer them the same way.

FIGURE · AROUND THE LAKE IN JOHN 6



Follow the dashed lines: the feeding on the far shore, the disciples' night crossing toward Capernaum, and the crowd's boats from Tiberias the next day.

I
MOVEMENT

JOHN 6:1–15

Five Loaves in His Hands

A test for Philip, a boy's lunch, five thousand filled — and a crowd that wants a king

[1] *After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).* [2] *A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.* [3] *Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.* [4] *Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.* [5] *Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"* [6] *This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.* [7] *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."* [8] *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,* [9] *"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"* [10] *Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.* [11] *Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.* [12] *When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost."* [13] *So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.* [14] *Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."* [15] *So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

JOHN 6:1–15

"His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left over.'""

2 KINGS 4:43

σημεῖον

SĒMEION · "SIGN" · G4592

John never calls Jesus' miracles "wonders" or "powers"; he calls them signs — acts that point beyond themselves. The word comes four times in this chapter: the crowd followed because of the signs (v. 2), saw "the sign which He had performed" and called Him "the Prophet" (v. 14), sought Him "not because you saw signs" (v. 26), and then demanded another sign (v. 30). They saw the miracle and missed what it signified. The feeding points to verse 35: the One who gave the bread is the Bread.

κλάσματα … δώδεκα κοφίνους

KLASMATA … DŌDEKA KOPHINOUS · "FRAGMENTS … TWELVE BASKETS" · G2801, G2894

Klasma is a broken piece, from *klaō*, to break — the word for breaking bread. Only John records Jesus' order, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost" (v. 12); the verb *apolētai*, "be lost, perish," returns in verse 39: "of all that He has given Me I lose nothing." The *kophinos* was a small wicker basket for carrying food, the word every Gospel uses for this feeding. One basket for each of the Twelve who had doubted.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees a Lord in complete command: "Jesus was in no panic or hurry. He had a huge catering job to fulfill." Philip had seen many miracles yet only counted the cost of bread; Andrew brought a boy's modest lunch, and Jesus showed what He can do with little — "Little is much in His hands." The multiplying happened in Jesus' hands, and the disciples carried it to the people: "He could have created bread and fish in the pocket or bag of every person, but He didn't." Twelve baskets were gathered so nothing was wasted, and when the crowd wanted a political king, Jesus withdrew to the mountain to pray.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (September 2002) notes this is the one miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus tests Philip and "Philip flunks the test"; Andrew finds a boy whose barley loaves — the poor man's bread — were "small cakes, almost like a Twinkie made out of barley." He mocks the nineteenth-century critics who made the true wonder that people shared their lunches, or a staged trick — "That was the most prodigious magical act in the history of the world if that is actually what happened." The crowd wanted a political king: "They were looking for the kingdom of man, and He came to bring the kingdom of God." "This is our King, who gives us all that we need and enough left over to fill a multitude of baskets."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's late sermon "The Lad's Loaves in the Lord's Hands" (No. 2216, August 1891) begins with the gap between five thousand and five barley loaves — and London's hunger. God's providence put an unnamed boy there: "Christ never is in need but He has somebody at hand to supply that need." Once given up, the loaves were Christ's, blessed, multiplied and handed out: "When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles!" So he urges every believer to give what little he has and keep giving — "Christ's additions mean subtraction—and Christ's subtractions mean additions." "If you serve God, you will never run dry!"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes that the miracle is fixed in time and place so that it could be checked, and that Christ's care reached the poor: "The souls of the poor are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as those of the rich." Andrew did not hoard the boy's lunch — "Well, Andrew was willing that the people should have this, as far as it would go." Christ's feeding is generous, "Those whom Christ feeds with the bread of life he does not stint," and the leftovers carry a lesson: "We must always take care that we make no waste of any of God's good creatures."

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 6:16-21

"It Is I"

Rowing in the dark, a strong wind — and Jesus walking on the sea

> 16 *Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,* 17 *and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.* 18 *The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.* 19 *Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they*

> *saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.* [20] *But He said to them, "△ It is I; do not be afraid."* [21] *So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*
>
> JOHN 6:16–21

> *"He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven."*
>
> PSALM 107:29–30

> *"God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'""*
>
> EXODUS 3:14

Ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε

EGŌ EIMI · MĒ PHOBEISTHE · "IT IS I; DO NOT BE AFRAID" · G1473, G1510

Literally "I am; stop being afraid." In ordinary speech *egō eimi* means "It's me," and that is how most translations render it. But on the lips of One walking on the waves it carries more: the Septuagint's name for God at the bush is *egō eimi ho ōn*, "I am the One who is" (Exodus 3:14), and in the Old Testament it is God who "walks on the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8). Sproul hears the divine name here. The command is present tense: stop fearing. Fourteen verses later the same two words open "I am the bread of life."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the disciples were in the storm because they had obeyed: obedience does not guarantee an easy crossing. They rowed for hours against the wind while Jesus watched from the mountain — "Jesus wants us to work hard; but He never wants us to work in futility." Their fear at the sight of Him shows that "The disciples were not ready for any kind of supernatural help." His word "It is I; do not be afraid" was enough, and the boat was at once at the shore. Even then He did not force Himself aboard: "Even walking on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus waited to be welcomed by His disciples."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (October 2002) begins at verse 15 because he would not skip the walking on the water. He hears the disciples' night as our lives: "Your life is a time of pulling on the oars against resistance, trying to get somewhere." Jesus treading the sea recalls Genesis 1 and John 1 — "The Christ of the New Testament is the God of creation." In "It is I" he hears *egō eimi*, the divine name, and notes that scholars often leave this verse off the list of "I am" sayings: "I am who I am is here." The boat reaching land at once is a picture of Christ bringing His people through their trials: "He gets us through the darkness."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his exposition Spurgeon reads the night crossing as a picture of hard times, troubles arriving all at once: "Misfortunes never come alone. An absent Saviour, a roaring sea, and a bellowing wind." Christ walking on the sea is even more glorious in the storm than in calm, and when He comes He can bring His people through any difficulty in an instant — the boat was "immediately" at the land.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry first notes Jesus' refusal of the crowd's misguided zeal to crown Him. Then the storm: "Clouds and darkness sometimes surround the children of the light, and of the day." The disciples' terror at His approach shows that "Our real distresses are often much increased by our imaginary ones, the creatures of our own fancy." But His word is comfort — "When trouble is nigh Christ is nigh" — and they reached land at once: "Many a doubting soul is fetched to heaven by a pleasing surprise, or ever it is aware."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 6:22-40

I Am the Bread of Life

Bread that perishes, the work of God, and the will of the Father to lose nothing

22 *The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there,*
except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away
alone. 23 *There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord*
had given thanks. 24 *So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into*
the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 *When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they*
said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" 26 *Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you*
seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 *"Do not work for the*
food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on
Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 *Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the*
works of God?" 29 *Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He*
has sent." 30 *So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so 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 OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who*
has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.
33 *"For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."* 34 *Then they said*
to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me*
will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 *"But I said to you that you have seen Me,*
and yet do not believe. 37 *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will*
certainly not cast out. 38 *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who*
sent Me. 39 *"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up*
on the last day. 40 *"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him*
will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

JOHN 6:22-40

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.""

EXODUS 16:4

FIGURE · THE MANNA AND THE TRUE BREAD

JOHN 6:27–58	THE MANNA	THE TRUE BREAD
GIVEN BY	"it is not Moses who has given you" v32	"My Father who gives you" v32
COMES FROM	"bread out of heaven" — the sky v31; Exod 16:4	"comes down out of heaven" vv33, 38
GIVEN TO	Israel in the wilderness v31	"gives life to the world" vv33, 51
LASTS	a day's portion, then spoiled Exod 16:4, 20	"endures to eternal life" v27
THE END	"they ate … and they died" vv49, 58	"he who eats … will live forever" vv50–51, 58
WHAT IT IS	food for the body v31	"I am the bread of life" — a Person vv35, 48

"This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died" (v58)

Read across each row: Jesus answers the crowd's appeal to Moses' manna point by point — the true bread has a better Giver, a wider reach, a longer life and a different end.

ἐσφράγισεν

ESPHRAGISEN · "HAS SET HIS SEAL" · G4972

Sphragizō, to mark with a seal — for ownership, security, or to certify that something is genuine. The Father has put His stamp on the Son of Man (v. 27), authenticating Him and His gift. John uses the verb earlier of the believer who "has set his seal to this, that God is true" (3:33), and Paul uses it of the Spirit sealing believers (Ephesians 1:13). The crowd asks for a sign (v. 30); the Father has already signed.

οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω

OU MĒ EKBALŌ EXŌ · "I WILL CERTAINLY NOT CAST OUT" · G1544

Ou mē with the subjunctive is the strongest negative in Greek — "never, by no means." *Ekballō* is to throw out, drive out; *exō*, "outside," adds force. The KJV's "in no wise" and the NASB's "certainly not" both try to catch it; Trapp (quoted by Guzik) put it as "I will not not, cast out out." Verse 37 holds both halves of the chapter's teaching in one breath: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me" — and "the one who comes to Me" is never turned away. The bread itself is *artos* (G740), ordinary loaf bread, used seventeen times in the chapter.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik says the crowd that found Jesus at Capernaum wanted more bread and a miracle king, and Jesus redirected them to food that does not perish. Their question "What shall we do?" gets a surprising answer: "Jesus first and foremost commanded them (and us) not to do, but to trust." Faith is not a substitute for obedience but its foundation. Coming to Jesus as the bread of life is simply trusting Him; Guzik quotes Spurgeon, "Coming is a very simple action indeed." And the one who comes has assurance: those the Father gives will come, Jesus will by no means cast them out, and He will lose none of them.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Bread from Heaven" contrasts labor for food that spoils with the food the Son of Man gives, sealed by the Father: "Seek that which is eternal. Invest in that which doesn't perish." In "Bread of Life" (October 2002) he calls verse 37 the key verse on election: the Father gives people to the Son as gifts, so their coming is certain — "The only reason, in the final analysis, that you are a Christian is that the Father wants to honor the Son." None given will be lost: "It is the perseverance of the saints with a vengeance." "If you have it, you never lose it; and if you lose it, you never had it."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "High Doctrine and Broad Doctrine" takes verse 37 in its two halves. The high doctrine: the Father's gift guarantees that some will come — "They come to Christ not because of any good in them, but because of the Father's gift." The broad doctrine: the invitation has no limit but coming — "The King's highway is for all." "There never was a soul who wanted to come but Jesus wanted him to come a hundred times as much." And the halves meet in the hearer: "If I come to Christ, it is most clear that the Father gave me to Christ." In his exposition: "Seeing is not believing, but believing often is seeing."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes the crowd's diligence in tracking Jesus around the lake — "Those that would find Christ must diligently observe all his motions" — and that "Christ will be found of those that seek him, first or last," though He exposes the motive of loaves. On verse 29 he writes, "The work of faith is the work of God." The Father's will is that none given to the Son be lost, and that every believer be raised: "Christ's undertaking will never be accomplished till the resurrection."

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 6:41-59

Drawn by the Father, Fed by the Son

Grumbling in the synagogue, the Father's drawing, and flesh given for the life of the world

41 *Therefore the Jews were* ↻ *grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the* ↻ *bread that came down out of*
heaven." 42 *They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does*
He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" 43 *Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not* ↻ *grumble among*
yourselves. 44 *"*△ *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on*
the ◷ *last day.* 45 *"It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has*
heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 *"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is*
from God; He has seen the Father. 47 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who 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 which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." 52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." 59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

JOHN 6:41–59

"All your sons will be taught of the LORD; And the well-being of your sons will be great."

ISAIAH 54:13

ἑλκύσῃ

HELKYSĒ · "DRAWS" · G1670

Helkō means to pull or haul. Of its eight New Testament uses, some are physical force — Peter "drew" his sword (18:10), the disciples hauled the net (21:6, 11), Paul and Silas were "dragged" to the authorities (Acts 16:19; 21:30) — and one is Christ lifted up: "will draw all men to Myself" (12:32). Readers divide on how strong the word is here. Sproul presses the sense of compelling; Guzik (with Clarke) and Henry speak of an inward drawing that wins the will rather than forcing it; Spurgeon holds both — no one comes without it, and no one comes against his will. Verse 45 explains the drawing as teaching: "they shall all be taught of God" (Isaiah 54:13).

τρώγων

TRŌGŌN · "HE WHO EATS" · G5176

Through verse 53 John uses the ordinary verb for eat (*phagein*). From verse 54 he switches to *trōgō*, originally "to chew, munch," four times in vv. 54–58 (elsewhere only Matthew 24:38 and John 13:18). Some see the change as heightening the realism; others note that in John's day it had become a common word for eating. Verse 56 says what the eating brings: "abides in Me, and I in him" — union. Verse 47 has already said the same thing without metaphor: "he who believes has eternal life." The Jews' "grumbling" (*gongyzō*, G1111; vv. 41, 43, 61) is the Septuagint word for Israel murmuring against the manna.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains God's drawing as His initiative that brings people to Jesus — "In truth, He calls and we come." He cites Clarke, "Drawing, or alluring, not dragging is here to be understood," and notes Alford's rejection of reading the verse as irresistible grace. The bread Jesus gives is His flesh, offered for the world in His sacrificial death, and the crowd's literal objection was willful. On the Lord's Supper he quotes F.F. Bruce: "Our Lord in this discourse is not indeed speaking directly of the Lord's Supper," though the Supper expresses the same truth. Eating and drinking picture receiving Jesus and His sacrifice by faith.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul calls verse 44 a statement of universal inability: "It is not that no one can come to Jesus unless the preacher persuades him" — no one can come unless the Father draws. Citing Kittel, he argues the verb means to compel rather than merely to woo, pointing to Paul and Silas dragged into the marketplace, and he sets this against the Arminian view that we choose first and God responds — a view many evangelicals hold. In "Hard Sayings" (November 2002) he reads verses 53–58 as union with Christ: "Jesus is talking about a spiritual eating and a spiritual drinking." He grants that many scholars see the Eucharist here and holds his view without dogmatic certainty.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Human Inability" (March 1858) calls coming to Christ "just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation" and locates the inability not in the body or the mind but in the will: "Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful." The Father's drawing is the Spirit's inward work that turns the will, so that a man comes freely — "Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him." In his exposition he takes the flesh and blood as feeding on Christ's atoning death, not the Supper, not yet given: "Do not any of you interpret this teaching of Christ as the Jews did, after a carnal fashion."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry describes the drawing as grace that enlightens the mind and bends the will without violence to its freedom: "It is such a drawing as works not only a compliance, but a cheerful compliance, a complacency." Verse 45 shows the method: "all the church's children, all that are genuine, are taught of God; he hath undertaken their education." On verse 53 he is plain: "It is a spiritual eating and drinking that is here spoken of, not a sacramental," and he rejects transubstantiation. To eat is to believe, and the result is "an inseparable union, like that between the body and digested food."

V
MOVEMENT

JOHN 6:60-71

To Whom Shall We Go?

A difficult statement, a great withdrawal, Peter's confession — and a devil among the twelve

60 *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "⚠ This is a difficult statement; who can listen to*
it?" 61 *But Jesus, conscious that His disciples ⟳ grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?*
62 *"What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?*
63 *"△ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are*
life. 64 *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did*
not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 *And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you,*
that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 *As a result of this many of His*
disciples ⚠ withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 *So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want*
to go away also, do you?" 68 *Simon Peter answered Him, "☆ Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of*

> *eternal life*. 69 *"We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."* 70 *Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"* 71 *Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.*
>
> JOHN 6:60–71

FIGURE · THE SHRINKING CROWD



Each band is smaller than the one before: the chapter that begins with five thousand fed ends with twelve — and even there, a betrayer.

Σκληρός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος οὗτος

SKLĒROS ESTIN HO LOGOS HOUTOS · "THIS IS A DIFFICULT STATEMENT" · G4642

Sklēros is hard, harsh, rough — the "hard man" of the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:24), the "goads" Saul kicked against (Acts 26:14). It does not mean hard to understand but hard to swallow. Verse 61 asks, "Does this cause you to stumble?" — *skandalizei*, the trap-stick that springs. The disciples understood well enough; they would not accept it. Verse 66's "withdrew" is literally "went back to the things behind" (*apēlthon eis ta opisō*).

ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ … διάβολος

HO HAGIOS TOU THEOU … DIABOLOS · "THE HOLY ONE OF GOD … A DEVIL" · G40, G1228

The oldest manuscripts and the SBLGNT read Peter's confession as "the Holy One of God" (NASB); the KJV's "that Christ, the Son of the living God" follows later manuscripts that echo Matthew 16:16. In the Gospels the title is first spoken by a demon (Mark 1:24). Two verses later Jesus turns the word around: "one of you is a *diabolos*" — slanderer, adversary, devil. John uses it only three times: here, of the father of lies (8:44), and of the devil who put betrayal into Judas' heart (13:2).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the disciples' complaint was "that which is hard to accept, not to what is hard to understand." Jesus refused to soften the message even as many walked away, and He turned to the twelve — "Jesus searched the motives of all that follow Him, including the twelve." Peter, speaking for them, saw Jesus as Lord and Messiah and as "the preferred alternative, despite the difficulties." Yet Judas was chosen and still a betrayer, and Guzik quotes Boice: "There are Judases among the apparent followers of the Lord in our day."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Hard Sayings" Sproul warns that it was disciples, not only the crowd, who walked out, and urges his hearers not to follow them. He distinguishes offense taken from offense given: Jesus spoke perfectly and still offended. "The flesh profits nothing" means fallen nature cannot produce spiritual life — "The flesh cannot produce spiritual reality." "Church attendance will not do it." The Spirit gives life through the Word: "It is the power of the Word." He tells of reading Scripture to a dying man — "That is how I want to die: listening to the Word of God, because the Word is life."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "A Home Question and a Right Answer" (February 1882), preached before the Lord's Supper, notes that the defection came over hard doctrine — no one comes unless the Father draws — and that "apostasy is very contagious." Jesus asks the twelve because He wants willing followers: "Christians are not dragged after Christ"; "Grace has no slaves." Peter's answer has three parts — there is no one else, Christ alone has the words of eternal life, and He is the Holy One of God. Then the challenge: "Have you backbone enough in you to be faithful if all others were faithless?" "Better far that we die than that we deny our Lord."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the mass departure as a warning: "It is often so; when some backslide many backslide with them; the disease is infectious." The words that are spirit and life must be taken spiritually — "The literal sense of a parable does us no good." Peter's answer is the wisdom of a man who has weighed the alternatives: "It were folly to go from thee, unless we knew where to better ourselves; no, Lord, we like our choice too well to change." Of Judas: "Judas not only had a devil, but he was a devil," and of every false professor, "The star that falls never was a star."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From manna in the wilderness to the Lamb who feeds His people — where John 6 reaches back and forward

> *"He rained down manna upon them to eat And gave them food from heaven."*
>
> PSALM 78:24

> *"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance."*
>
> ISAIAH 55:2

> *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 11:26

> *"and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."*
>
> JOHN 10:28

> *"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;"*
>
> REVELATION 7:16

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that many Christians connect John 6 with the Lord's Supper; with Bruce and Morris he holds that Jesus is speaking first of faith, which the Supper later pictures.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sets the manna beside Christ: the fathers ate and died, but the one who feeds on Christ by faith has "that in him which is eternal life begun; he has the earnest and foretaste of it."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the scenes and their motives; Sproul presses the doctrine — the divine name, election, inability; Spurgeon preaches the invitation and the call to loyalty; Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel. All four deny that verses 53–58 teach transubstantiation, but they differ on how the Father "draws" (Sproul: compels; Guzik: allures; Spurgeon and Henry: an inward drawing the will consents to). Many Arminian, Catholic and Lutheran readers would answer both questions differently.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The loaves	No panic, no hurry; little is much in His hands; the disciples distribute.	Philip flunks the test; no lunch-sharing; the kingdom of God, not of man.	Christ always has someone at hand; His subtractions mean additions.	The poor are precious to Christ; He does not stint; waste nothing.
II · The storm	Obedience can row into wind; Jesus waited to be welcomed.	Pulling on the oars; egō eimi — the God of creation is here.	An absent Saviour, a roaring sea — and Christ through it at once.	When trouble is nigh Christ is nigh; imagined fears add to real ones.
III · The bread	Not to do, but to trust; coming is simple; never cast out.	Given to the Son; perseverance with a vengeance — never lost.	High doctrine and broad doctrine: the gift and the open highway.	The work of faith is God's work; not done till the resurrection.
IV · Drawn and fed	Alluring, not dragging; eating is faith in His sacrifice.	Compelled, not wooed; spiritual eating — held without dogmatism.	Inability of will; no one goes to heaven kicking against the hand.	Cheerful compliance; spiritual, not sacramental; union like digested food.
V · To whom?	Hard to accept, not to understand; Judases still among us.	Offense taken, not given; the flesh cannot produce spiritual life.	Apostasy is contagious; grace has no slaves; have backbone.	We like our choice too well to change; the falling star never was one.

JOHN 6:1–71 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The miracle was a sign, and they missed it.** "Sign" appears four times (vv. 2, 14, 26, 30). The crowd ate the bread and wanted more bread; Jesus says they sought Him "not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves." THE TEXT
- **Little is much in His hands.** A boy's five barley loaves — the poor man's bread — fed five thousand men, with twelve baskets left. Spurgeon: "When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles!" GUZIK
- **He walked across the storm with God's name.** "It is I" is *egō eimi*, "I am." Sproul: "The Christ of the New Testament is the God of creation." The first "I am" of the chapter comes in the dark, before the bread. THE GREEK
- **The work God wants is faith.** "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (v. 29). Guzik: Jesus first commanded "not to do, but to trust." THE TEXT
- **Moses gave bread; the Father gives the Bread.** The manna came for a day and spoiled; the fathers ate and died (v. 49). The true bread came down from heaven, gives life to the world, and is a Person (vv. 33, 35). THE TEXT
- **Verse 37 has two halves, and both are true.** "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me" — and "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Spurgeon: "If I come to Christ, it is most clear that the Father gave me to Christ." SPURGEON

- **"Drawn" — the teachers differ.** Sproul hears "compel"; Guzik, with Clarke, "alluring, not dragging"; Henry, "a cheerful compliance." All agree no one comes unless the Father draws (v. 44). THE GREEK
- **Eating is believing.** Verse 47 ("he who believes has eternal life") and verse 54 ("he who eats … has eternal life") promise the same thing. Henry: "a spiritual eating and drinking … not a sacramental." HENRY
- **Hard to accept, not hard to understand.** *Sklēros* (v. 60) is harsh, not obscure. Guzik: "This refers to that which is hard to accept, not to what is hard to understand." GUZIK
- **There is nowhere else to go.** Peter did not say he understood everything; he said there was no one else with words of eternal life (v. 68). Henry: "we like our choice too well to change." HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **Jesus asked Philip a question He already knew the answer to, "to test him." What need in my life looks as impossible as feeding five thousand — and am I counting my money or looking to Him?**

Sproul: "Philip flunks the test." Little is much in His hands.

6:5-9

2 **What "five loaves" — time, talent, story, money — am I holding back because it seems too small to matter?**

Spurgeon: "Christ's additions mean subtraction—and Christ's subtractions mean additions."

6:9-13; 2 Kgs 4:43

3 **Where am I rowing hard in the dark right now, and what would it mean to hear Him say, "It is I; do not be afraid"?**

Obedience doesn't guarantee calm water, but He comes across the storm.

6:16-21; Ps 107:29-30

4 **Do I follow Jesus for what He gives or for who He is? What "loaves" keep bringing me back?**

"You seek Me … because you ate of the loaves and were filled."

6:26-27

5 **Jesus says He will "certainly not cast out" anyone who comes. What do I think would make Him turn me away — and what does verse 37 say about that?**

Ou mē — the strongest "never" in Greek.

6:37-40; John 10:28

6 **When a teaching of Jesus is hard to accept, what do I do — walk away quietly, or say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"**

Hard to accept, not hard to understand.

6:60-69

John 6 begins with five thousand fed and ends with twelve men and a question. Jesus would not be the bread king the crowd wanted; He gave Himself instead — His flesh for the life of the world. When the hard sayings come and others walk away, Peter's answer is still the only one that works: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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