

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Bread of Life John 6:41-51 Part 4

I am sure many of you have heard of the church growth movement. The man who is widely held responsible for this movement is a man named Donald McGavran. In 1957 he established the "Institute of Church Growth" in Eugene, Oregon. In 1965, he was asked by Fuller Theological Seminary to establish the School of World Mission.

McGavran advocated a return to classical missions with its stress on evangelism and church planting. He believed "a chief and irreplaceable purpose of mission is church growth." He said "service is good, but it must never be substituted for finding the lost and organizing them into communities of faith." And I am sure that most of you here this weekend would agree with what he said.

In fact, we are very hopeful that as our new building is constructed on the northeast corner of 35th Street West and Avenue J, it will provide us the opportunity to become far more aggressive in helping more people to establish a personal relationship with Christ.

But there was another emphasis that McGavran advocated that I believe has in time become problematic for many churches. And what was this particular emphasis? McGavran believed in using the social and behavioral sciences to identify the factors that facilitate or impede church growth and design your ministry accordingly.

Though this emphasis in and of itself is not bad, it unfortunately has resulted in many churches being marketed at the expense of doctrine. Rather than churches being committed to teaching the whole counsel of the Word of God, they have chosen rather to share only those teachings that are appealing to as many people as possible

Why would they do this? They have chosen to do this because they have seen that the teaching of doctrine, especially difficult doctrines, is an impediment to "church growth." This approach might allow for churches to attract greater numbers of people into their "worship services," but we also must understand that this approach fails to take into account the example of Christ who did not make it easy for people to stick around in respect to the things that He taught. I believe we will see this very clearly demonstrated in our study this weekend.

This brings us back to our study of **John 6**. This chapter began with two very familiar miracles. The first miracle was the "feeding of the 5,000" in **John 6:1-15**. And the second miracle was "Christ walking on water" in **John 6:16-21**. The Apostle John used the "feeding of the 5,000" and "Christ walking on water" as a transition into the "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6:22-71.

Because of the length of this discourse, we have broken it into several different parts. The first part of the "Bread of Life" discourse began with a challenge in John 6:22-27. And what specifically was that challenge? Let me read for you **John 6:27. "Do not work for the food which perishes [all those things in the here and now], but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal."**

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Of course those who respond to this challenge will invariably have their lives dramatically impacted. Certainly we see this in the words of the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 3:7-9**. Listen to his words. **"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, (9) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."**

Obviously, Paul had given up a great deal in respect to the things of this world in order to pursue the food that endures to eternal life. But is the pursuit of this food, the food that is available only through Christ, really worth it in light of the dramatic changes that take place in the lives of those responding to Christ's challenge?

This question leads us into the second part of the "Bread of Life" discourse. The second part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consists of a promise in John 6:28-40. And what is that promise? Let me read for you **John 6:35**. **"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"** Is responding to Christ's challenge to work for the food endures to eternal life worth it? Absolutely! Why? Because in responding to this challenge, we will come to Christ, the Bread of Life, and we will feast at His banqueting table; and the deepest longing of our soul will be satisfied through Him. This is Christ's promise.

Of course, not everyone who encounters Christ, whether that is through general revelation or through special revelation, will necessarily respond to the challenge and therefore enter into the benefits of Christ's promise. Certainly this was true of this Jewish multitude.

Christ had revealed Himself to them as the "Bread of Life" in the feeding of the 5,000, but even though Christ had revealed Himself to them they chose not to believe. Jesus makes this very clear in **John 6:36**. **"But I said to you [speaking to the Jewish multitude], that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe."**

Who will get the blame in the final judgment for those who choose not to believe? Those who choose not to believe will get the blame. And who will get the credit in the final judgment for those who choose to believe? God will get the credit. Why? God will get the credit because only those who have been given to Christ by God will come to Him. Let me once again read for you **John 6:37**. **"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."** And of course, this infers that all that the Father has not given will not come to Christ.

Christ, after giving this multitude a challenge, followed this up with a promise. And where did the Jews stand in light of this promise according to Christ? They were on the outside looking in. They were unbelievers. And their unwavering unbelief leads us to the next part of the bread of life discourse.

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The first part of the "Bread of Life" discourse was the challenge in John 6:22-27. The second part of the "Bread of Life" discourse was the promise in John 6:28-40. And the third part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consists of various responses and there will be four.

The first response could be entitled "We know where you come from" in John 6:41-51. Let me read for you **John 6:41-51.** **"The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.'** (42) **And 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 any man 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 shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.'**" These verses contain the first response to Christ's challenge and to His promise.

My hope as we now consider this response is that we clearly see that God has a plan for building His church, but his plan for building the church cannot be at the expense of doctrinal teaching. I know that the world has no appetite for doctrine, but this should not, under the guise of church growth, be a reason to abandon our commitment to teach the whole counsel of the Word of God.

Let us now look at **John 6:41.** **"The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him."** John tells us that the Jewish multitude was grumbling. Their grumbling indicates discontent. They were not happy. And who were they not happy with? They were not happy with Jesus.

Why? Let us go on and read the rest of the verse. **"The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him because He said, 'I am the bread of that came down out of heaven.'**" Jesus had been instructing them, but they were not happy with what He was teaching them. They were not happy with His doctrine. What had Christ told them that they did not like?

Was it that He had said that He was the "bread." No, this was not the problem. The problem was that He had said that He was the bread **"that came down out of heaven."** How do we know that this was the problem? All we have to do is to read the next verse. **"And 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?"'**"

Is this response by the Jews surprising? No! Why would it not be surprising? Christ had revealed Himself as the "Bread of Life" in the feeding of the 5,000, but even though He had revealed Himself to these Jews in such a powerful way, they did not believe. The Jews' questioning of Christ's heavenly origin was consistent with their rejection of Him as the "Bread of Life" in the "feeding of the 5,000."

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They therefore when confronted by Christ with His heavenly origin quite understandably responded, **"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.'"**

Even though this was the response of the Jewish multitude this certainly was not the response of every Jew. Let me ask you this question. Did Christ's disciples, those who had assisted Him in the feeding of the 5,000, know Christ's earthly mother and father and the answer would have to be, "yes." But even though Christ's disciples knew His mother and father they had a totally different response to His teaching concerning His heavenly origin. You don't find them grumbling. You don't find them questioning Christ's statement. Why?

Let us go on to read **John 6:43-44**. **"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.'"** Why is it that such a large multitude of Jews were unable to see Jesus as the "Bread of Life" in the feeding of the 5,000 and subsequently rejected His teaching concerning His heavenly origin in contrast to Christ's disciples? The answer is quite simple. The Lord had not drawn them to Christ.

Now notice the similarity between **John 6:44** and **John 6:37**. Let us again go back and read what Jesus told this Jewish multitude in **John 6:37**. **"All that the Father gives me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."** These are very similar thoughts but with one slight variation. In John 6:37, the impossibility of someone coming to Christ apart from the Father drawing him was inferred, but here in John 6:44 it is clearly stated.

Why is it that one person will believe and another person with the same opportunity will not? The Father has drawn the person who believes. And the Father has not drawn the person who does not believe.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think that Christ is choosing His words in order to get as many people to follow Him as possible regardless of what they might believe about Him or want from Him? And the answer would have to be no! In fact, I would say in light of His earlier comments about His heavenly origin and now His renewed emphasis on God's election of certain individuals for salvation, I would suspect the only people that will actually hang in there with Him as He continues this "Bread of Life" discourse are those who had been given Him according to **John 6:37**, or in other words those who had been drawn to Him according to **John 6:44**.

Will any of those who have been given to Him or have been drawn to Him by the Father somehow get away from Him? What is the answer? No! Let us read the last part of **John 6:44**. **"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."**

Is the doctrine of election, or in other words God's choice of certain individuals for salvation such as we see here in **John 6:44** supported in Old Testament scriptures? And the answer is yes! Let us go on and consider the words of Christ in **John 6:45**. **"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'**

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Then Jesus goes on to say, "**Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.**" Is the doctrine of election, or in other words God's choice of certain individuals for salvation supported in the Old Testament scriptures? Yes. Jesus quoting Isaiah 54:13 supports His teaching that no one will come to Him unless the Father draws them, or in other words *teaches* them.

And how do people know when God the Father is teaching them? People will know when God the Father is teaching them when they are willing to *embrace* Christ and the words of Christ.

Let us read **John 6:46. "Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."** What is this verse telling us? John 6:46 is telling us that if we are going to be taught by the Father, we must be taught by Him through the Son who enjoys a much different relationship with the Father than we do.

And what is the Father trying to teach us through the Son? The Father is trying to teach us all those things that Christ shared with the Jewish multitude in John 6:27-40, which He now *repeats* for us John 6:47-50. So what are those things?

Let us read **John 6:47. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."** Jesus, in this verse, is repeating what He told them in **John 6:40**. What else is the Father speaking through the Son? Let us read **John 6:48. "I am the bread of Life."** Jesus, in this verse, is repeating what He told them in **John 6:35**. What else is the Father speaking through the Son? Let us read **John 6:49-50. "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."** Jesus, in these verses, in essence is repeating what He told them in **John 6:31-33**.

We have now come full circle. He is once again repeating the very truth that had led this Jewish multitude to grumble against them.

Let me once again ask you this question. "Do you think that Christ is choosing His words in order to get as many people to follow Him as possible regardless of what they might believe about Him or want from Him? And the answer would have to be no! He is continuing to hammer away on themes that He knows are difficult for them to accept.

Do you think in light of their growing displeasure with the Him and the things that He is saying that He will lighten up on them in an attempt to keep them around? And the answer is no!

Let us go on to read **John 6:51. "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."** The first two sentences of this verse forcefully recapitulate **John 6:48-50**.

However, there is something new added in the third sentence of **John 6:51**. Let me read this verse for you. "**And the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.**" When Christ told the Jewish multitude that the bread that He shall give for the life of the world is His *flesh*, it further provoked the Jewish multitude (John 6:52). Let me read for you **John 6:52. "The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?'"**

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CONCLUSION

Next week we will consider what Christ meant by the phrase, "**and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.**" But for right now, I just want us to focus on the obvious.

Once again Christ, in the "Bread of Life" discourse, is focusing on doctrine. He is once again sharing with this Jewish multitude a truth that they did not particularly have an appetite to hear. But Christ stayed the course.

There are pastors today who are trying to get more people into their churches by removing certain obstacles to church "growth." Unfortunately, one the obstacles they have identified as an obstacle to church "growth" is doctrinal preaching. I believe they have lost their way. They are not following in the footsteps of Jesus. They are not following the example He has set for us in **John 6**.

If the church is going to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, there must be an unwavering commitment to the proclamation of Bible *doctrine* no matter what. If we do this, we will invariably find our auditoriums filled not with people that we have drawn to ourselves but rather with people that the Father has drawn to His Son.