

# John 6:25-35

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Date: 07 January 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Well, Happy New Year again. We've just come through a time of year of excess, haven't we? of eating and of drinking. People fill their faces on Christmas Day and they kind of work it off in the month of January, don't they?

But even with all of the consumption over the Christmas period, it seems to me that people generally are still very hungry.

People are hungry for something that food and drink cannot satisfy. And if that's true, what is it that we are missing?

What is the superfood that is going to make us satisfied, that is going to make us fulfilled people? My wife Emma, she's going to give birth in about three weeks, we hope, to our second child.

And my hope, kind of baby permitting, is to look at this chapter, John chapter 6 with you over the next three weeks. It is a chapter where Jesus discusses all about how we eat and how we get real, lasting nourishment.

[ 1 : 17 ] It is a chapter where Jesus explains to us how we should be filled. Christians call it the bread of life discourse. And it focuses on the central verse in verse 35 if you look to the bottom of your sheets.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. You hear of people winning, don't you, a year's supply of shopping at a supermarket.

But what about a lifetime's supply of shopping at a supermarket? What about an eternity's supply? Imagine that. It's quite a claim to make. Jesus says he is able to give you eternal fullness.

Eternal satisfaction. No more hunger, no more thirst. Ever. It's quite a claim. But how do we do this? How do we get this food that Jesus is claiming to be able to give us?

To do that, to get the satisfaction, Jesus explains to us in this section of John that we need to go on a special diet. This is your diet for January, he says, and for the whole year, and actually for the rest of your life.

[ 2 : 38 ] These are Jesus' dietary requirements for you, his five a day for you, for this eternal fullness and satisfaction from him. We've got to get with the diet that he gives us.

Firstly, by eating food that lasts. We need to seek food that lasts. Just look at verse 27. Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

I'm no expert in foods, but they say that carbs, carbohydrates, last longer than sugar in keeping you full, don't they? So if you have a Mars bar for breakfast, you'll want something by nine o'clock, won't you?

But if you have whole grain porridge oats, you might not get hungry until lunch. Some foods last longer than others, don't they? And you can see the contrast that he's making here.

He says, don't spend your time eating foods that will not keep you full. Don't spend your time looking at eating foods that will last a little while, just for a bit.

[ 3 : 56 ] But look for a type of food that will fill you up, that endures not just to lunch, but to eternal life. In this diet, Jesus says we need to think long-term food.

Jesus offers us carbs, if you like, not sugars. But the problem of the people Jesus speaks to here, is the problem that we have, is that we are gripped by short-termism.

We've sort of jumped into John 6 a bit cold, haven't we? Let me give you a bit of context. If you look to the beginning of chapter 6, Jesus famously and miraculously feeds 5,000 people, that famous story, with a few bits of fish and bread.

And the crowds that come to Jesus are satisfied. They have their fill. There were even 12 baskets of leftovers left behind.

And so the crowds follow Jesus around the Sea of Galilee, and eventually they track him down here, on the other side of the sea. And you can understand that, can't you?

[ 5 : 07 ] Food was much more scarce for them than it is for us now. It wasn't easy in their agricultural society, to just nip down the shops and get a thick sliced loaf.

And so they find the source of this food that they've just had from him. But Jesus is quite negative about them, isn't he? In verse 26, he says, You're seeking me not because you saw the sign, but because you had your fill of the loaves.

He's saying, you guys are thinking about the wrong food groups. And you are not going to enjoy the kind of food that I can give you, unless you see that filling your tummy today is less important than filling your soul for tomorrow and filling it forever.

They see the amazing sign of who Jesus is as the promised saviour to deal with their sin. And yet all they see really, and all they feel, were their full tummies.

They were really enthusiastic, weren't they? Jesus had their full attention. They worked hard to try and follow him around. And looking at them, we think these guys look like really keen Christians.

[ 6 : 28 ] But actually all they saw were the loaves. A precious and valuable gift in that day and in that moment. But all they wanted was an answer to their short-term problems.

Their physical stomachs growled for Jesus, but spiritually they had no appetite for him. They were thinking about the short-term provisions that he might give them.

They weren't thinking about anything that would last into eternity with him. Maybe they thought, if we could just kind of follow Jesus around all the time, he could just repeat the feeding of the 5,000 every day.

Wouldn't that be great? But even people who have plenty of food will die eventually. Many are interested in Jesus, aren't they, for the gifts that he might give in this life.

And he does give us many good things. I'm afraid it is what certain branches of Christianity base their preaching around, on material blessing. But that is sugar Christianity.

[ 7 : 33 ] It's not long-lasting carb Christianity. And we want to bury the future, don't we, in the pleasures of today. We are so gripped by short-termism.

But Jesus says, you've got to think long-term. You've got to think about the future. Not just the future when you leave work and when you retire.

Not even the future of when you die. But way in the distant future. The very distant future of eternity. And the food that Jesus offers, he says, endures on even into that endless time.

It gives life like a loaf of bread does for a few days, but forever into eternity. And so he says, get with this diet. Seek the food that lasts.

Seek lasting food. Secondly, he said, eat food that is not only long-lasting, but that is substantial. Seek the food that is substantial.

[ 8 : 40 ] Growing up, there was a phrase that my mum used to use when we were kids. And I think it might be a northern thing, because I've never heard anyone else use it. Maybe it was just her. If food was a bit insubstantial, it was a bit of a waste of time, she would say it's a bit waff.

It's a bit waff. You know those puff pastry cakes you get? They're all air, aren't they? And for a northerner, food like that is just a waste of time.

The kind of rule is, if it isn't heavy enough to have its own gravitational force field, it isn't worth eating. It's just a bit waff. It's just not heavy enough. It's not weighty enough.

It's not substantial enough to satisfy you. And in this passage, it is clear that Jesus is talking about a food that is of an altogether different kind of substantiality.

The crowds want him to fill their tummies, don't they? But not only do certain foods not last long enough, they are not substantial enough for a human being.

[ 9 : 46 ] Verse 27, he says, don't labour for the food that perishes. He's talking about something else there, as well as longevity.

He's talking about the substance of the food. He's talking about a food that is different from the food that they seek. Because the food that he gives comes from a different place.

And it has different ingredients. And a different substantiality. He says of himself in verse 33, the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

I am the bread of life, he says. Jesus gives food from heaven as he is sent from heaven to human beings.

And it's a different kind of food from ordinary food that we eat on earth. He serves spiritual food as the main course. To bring us eternal satisfaction, rather than physical food.

[10:56] But if you think about what is most substantial, that is completely upside down to how we normally think. We normally think, don't we, that the physical things of the world are the substantial things.

And the spiritual things of our lives are the kind of light, floaty froth on the top of our lives. We think satisfaction comes in mainly the physical realm.

And that is because just the air we breathe as a culture is fundamentally materialistic. I'm not just talking about our obsession with buying stuff.

But it's the fundamental belief that what we touch, and what we see, and what we feel, is seen as the most substantial thing there is.

That there is nothing more real than the material. And so our spiritual life is just not as important as our physical life.

[12:08] Your body, people would say, is more important than your soul. And our physical health is more important than our spiritual health. But really, the Bible doesn't see it that way at all.

The Bible doesn't say that the body is not important. That is a mistake that other people have fallen into as well. But rather that Jesus teaches here that the spiritual is the substance that gives the physical its value.

If you've kind of lost me at this point, let me try and simplify it. What Jesus is saying here is even the best and most substantial foods that we can get in this world, if they aren't the food that Jesus gives from heaven, honestly, they are just waft.

Those foods are just light. They're like puff pastry. They are perishable. And those foods will eventually rot.

And if that is all we eat in our lives, we will rot along with those foods. John opens his gospel, and he speaks of Jesus before he comes in the incarnation.

[13:22] And he says, chapter 1, verse 4, In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

He's saying something amazing there about the second person of the Trinity, the son of the word, Jesus. He is saying that universally, Jesus is the food that all people need.

Whether you recognize that or not, all life, physical life, depends on him. I am the bread for every woman and man and child of every living thing.

Because Jesus is the bread from heaven. And so his food is no sugary puff pastry treat, but a spiritually substantial, weighty, carby, eternal food from heaven.

It is a food that is so weighty that when you have it in you, it will last you even beyond the grave and into eternity. Seek the food that lasts.

[14:39] Seek the substantial food, the spiritual food that Jesus gives. And thirdly, he says, get with the diet and labor for this food by faith. Labor for this food by faith.

It's true, isn't it, that throughout the ages, the biggest and greatest challenge of the human race is finding food. God said to Adam, in Genesis 3, by the sweat of your face, you will eat bread.

And there is grace there, isn't there, in the curse. There will be bread. God is going to provide bread. But it's going to be really, really hard.

Food has always meant one thing for us, work. Bread is back-breaking. And as Jesus describes the diet that they need, Jesus uses words like labor.

Labor. In verse 27, doesn't he? Don't labor for this food, but another food. Verse 29, this is the work of God in order that you get this food.

[15:56] And so we think, don't we, here we go again. Like any diet, there is no pain, no gain. And it's another hard and brutal and harsh regime of spiritual nitpicking, of counting the calories of prayers and of good deeds and of Sundays in church and so on.

You are what you eat and all of that. And imagine then, the crowds, they are hungry, they've travelled across the Sea of Galilee to get some more bread. And it's as if, maybe Jesus, we think, at first glance, is like some sort of divine version of Mr. Motivator.

But he shocks us, doesn't he? Because the diet, the work, how do you get this food, the work God wants you to do to labor for this food is there in verse 29.

He says, this is the work that you believe. That you believe in the one he has sent. Jesus echoes that a couple of verses later.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me, whoever believes in me, will never thirst, he will never hunger. The work, the labor of this food, it is not a work of striving and of jumping on the scales of spiritual performance every month.

[ 17 : 17 ] But it's a work of trust and a work of faith in Jesus to give you life. The work is being open to, isn't it, what God gives and what God does in Jesus.

It is seeing with the eyes of faith that he doesn't merely give this bread from heaven, but Jesus is the bread from heaven. That he doesn't merely give life, but he is the life.

It's seeing and receiving him by faith. It is to kind of roll up your sleeves, to get out in the fields, to get in the dirt and to humble yourself.

That is the work you need to do. And that might feel pretty uncomfortable for many of us at times. But really, it's like no other work that you'll ever be asked to do.

It's actually a work that we do to let him do the work, isn't it, of feeding us. It is letting Jesus be the breadwinner of our lives.

[ 18 : 25 ] To work, to be fed by him, to look to him, to feed us. And for some of us, that is a really hard thing to do, isn't it? We want to be the main man or the main woman in our lives.

But we must work to let him feed us and stop pretending we can be the breadwinners of our lives. Let me go from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Do you remember the cartoon Scooby-Doo? Maybe you do. The dog Scooby-Doo. Scooby is obsessed with food, isn't he?

You watch Scooby as he downs a giant oversized baguette and swallows it in one mouthful. And he would look, wouldn't he, and he was obsessed with food.

He would look at inanimate objects and his imagination would run wild. It's like the kind of mind of a dog, I suppose. So he'd look at a lampshade and it would transform into a sort of juicy drumstick or something.

[ 19 : 27 ] He'd look at anything and imagine it as food. He'd lick his lips and in a cartoon style his eyes would sort of pop out and he'd imagine all sorts of food all around him.

I want to say that Christians are like that with Jesus. They're like Scooby. Christians look at Jesus and when everyone else sees just a man who could be all sorts of things to them what Christians see in Jesus is food.

They see Jesus as unctuous, nourishing, wholesome bread. Christians look at Jesus and they lick their lips seeing that he's not just a man he's not even just a very very good man but he is food from heaven and our eyes pop out and we desire Jesus not in a carnal flesh way but in a spiritual way by faith and we receive him and we are satisfied forever.

and that is what God calls you to do today this work that he calls you to do this is the work of God it is simply to have an appetite for him and to believe in the one that God has sent to you to feed you and to look to the long term to look to the substantial by faith and to open your mouth and to take him into your life and if you do that the Lord Jesus promises here doesn't he he promises you that you will never be hungry again and you will never be thirsty so join me this January in this diet join me this year and for the rest of your life in feasting on Jesus and being filled by him let us pray