

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 8-26-18

To Adult Teachers:

August 26 we will study John 6:22-35; 48-58. Discussion questions are:

1. When are you most likely to say, "Man this is living."?
2. How have you personally experienced this truth: "Jesus is the energy source for living the life that God expects from you?"
3. What does "eternal" life mean?
4. When Jesus says in vs. 27 to not labor for the food that spoils, what food is he talking about?
5. When we speak of Christianity being a personal religion does that mean:
 - a. You have your views and I have mine.
 - b. It is based on a person not on a concept.
6. If Christianity is personal because it is based on a person, what are the implications of that?
 - You can talk to a person.
 - You can study the life of a person.
 - You can be friends with a person.
 - You can trust a person.
 - You can learn from a person.
7. How would one know if his relationship with God is personal?
8. When Jesus speaks about the importance of believing in vs. 29 what is it they are in danger of not believing?
9. In vs. 53-58 there are several present tense verbs about feeding on Christ. How do you do that?

Sermon: The Bread of Life

"I am the bread of life." Why did Jesus say that? Why did he use the metaphor of bread to describe himself? Think of what he says as a sandwich. Vs. 22-35 is one slice of bread and vs. 48-58 is the other slice. In between the 2 bread metaphors is the meat which is, guess what, grace! This morning let's just look at the bread and next week we will look at the meat.

The older you get the more meaningful eternal life becomes to you. At some point in the aging process you become aware that trying to stay alive is a bit like trying to hold water in your hands, it inevitably slips away from your grasp. What Jesus has to say here about eternal life is yet another insight into this subject, which either is, or one day will be, of great interest to you. This time, with the metaphor of bread, he whets our appetites for eternal life. The metaphor of bread suggests that the message here about eternal life will have something to do with digestion. He is saying, "I am offering you a life that is to be taken inside you and made part of you. It nourishes you from the inside out." How does a car digest gas? If the gas just lies in the tank nothing happens. But if the gas circulates and ignites then energy is released and the car is powered. Jesus says, "This is how the Christian life is energized." So when Jesus says, "I am the bread of heaven.", he is saying, "I am the energy source for living the life that God expects from you."

Let's ask 3 questions about the bread of heaven:

What is the bread of heaven?
Where does this bread come from?
How do we get this bread?

WHAT IS THE BREAD OF HEAVEN?

There are 2 Greek words for life: bios and zoe. Bios is the word for biological, physical life. Zoe is the word for quality of life. A few years ago on a cold November day I was by myself, standing waist deep in Blue River. It was snowing and getting dark. There was some risk of not being able to get my pickup out if it continued snowing. I was catching fish on almost every cast and I found myself thinking, "Man, this is living." Obviously I didn't mean, "I used to be dead and now I am alive." I meant, "In my opinion this is a high quality of life." Jesus is talking about quality of life as opposed to just existence. You have your own definition of life that is exhilarating and filled with joy. For some of you it is flying an airplane. For others it is listening to a great symphony. For some it is looking at magnificent art. For others it is finding a great garage sale. For some it is noodling a large catfish out of a hole in a river. For people like me it's the aesthetics of a clear stream on a cold winter day. Admittedly some of us have much lower standards of quality living than others. Those of you with rather cultured definitions of quality living may feel some disdain for those who are more easily satisfied. But the quality of living Jesus offers is a level of living unimagined before Jesus offered it. It is a quality of life that some of the most cultured people in the world have never experienced.

Nowhere when the Bible speaks of eternal life does it simply mean life that goes on forever. There is a huge difference in existence and living. Eternal existence without quality life is the definition of hell. There are only 2 places to live when this life is over: a place of eternal existence and a place of eternal life. The bread of heaven is quality life, the best of all lives possible.

Jesus points out our options. Option number one is in vs. 27, "*Do not labor for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life....*" So what is real living for you? For a child it's all the candy he or she can eat and never having to leave Disney World. We chuckle at a child's small dreams for quality living. How do you think God sees your dreams for quality living? Do you not think he sees us as not having much vision? Isn't that why Jesus was always trying to raise our vision of what real living is? We think real living is having enough money to hire all our work done for us and Jesus said real living is having a servant's heart and washing feet. Jesus' warning to us about our little visions of life is, "It will spoil."

The Bible is constantly talking about visions of real living that spoil. For instance in Ephesians 5:18 the Bible speaks about a false vision of real living that still plagues us today. It says, "Do not be drunk with wine wherein is exhaustion." What is he saying? He is saying, "Here is one illustration of how people think they have found meaningful life and they have not." The illustration he uses is alcohol and people who use it to try to add meaning to their lives. When you drink to get courage, to loosen up, to lose your self-consciousness, to be able to talk to

people, we call that a drinking problem. What Ephesians 5 is saying is you are trying to find in alcohol what only Jesus can give you. The next time you go to some public event and there is lots of alcohol being consumed, or the next time you go to a party and everyone is drinking, would you do yourself a favor and look past the alcohol? Look past the false laughter and listen to the lostness as a room full of people with beer cans or champagne glasses in their hands are shouting, "I just want to find eternal life and I thought maybe it was in this bottle but it is not! Please help me find eternal life, real quality life. I am dying for it." Listen, boldness, joy, value, meaning in life can be found only in Jesus. You can't find it in alcohol, or garage sales, or fishing in beautiful streams, or listening to great music, or looking at great art. Eternal quality life is available only in Jesus. Remember the last phrase in *Ephesians 5:18... "wherein is exhaustion."* Whatever your drug of choice is, it will exhaust you. If it is money, if it is your intelligence, if it is your hobby, if it is your popularity, in the end it will exhaust you.

Any pharmacology book will tell you alcohol is a depressant. How does it give you boldness or joy? How does it make you an interesting conversationalist? It gives it to you by depressing your mind's ability to see reality. You are running around at a party with a lampshade on your head being obnoxious and making people wish you would hurry up and pass out and you think you are cool and humorous. Alcohol depresses reality and you imagine you are things that you are not. I have a good friend who is a recovering alcoholic and he described to me what it was like as a teenager when he got drunk. He said, "I would drink one beer and instantly I was handsome, witty, a good dancer and not afraid of girls." Now if you had been with him on one of those occasions do you think you would have looked at him and said, "Wow! I never realized how handsome one beer could make a person. And the sudden wit this guy has, it's just amazing. And look at the graceful dance moves he makes in his drunken stupor."? Of course not. The drunk is the only person in the room who thinks he is cool because alcohol has depressed his view of reality.

Every false view of quality living depresses your view of reality. Everything you turn to in order to escape reality will distort your view of real quality living. Ephesians 5 says people who turn to the Spirit of God to find quality living are stimulated to such an extent it motivates them to sing to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They don't sing the meaningless songs of drunkenness but they sing and make music in their hearts to the Lord. They find themselves always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is eternal life! Man that's living! The Holy Spirit isn't a depressant. He is a stimulant!

The Holy Spirit doesn't say, "Here is something you can escape into. Here is your work. Here is your lover. Here is your bottle. Hide in here." The Holy Spirit says, "Don't escape – think! Worship! Talk about it. Sing about it. Live it." Jesus said, "Do not labor for food that spoils but labor for the food that endures to eternal life!"

So the bread of heaven is a quality of life.

WHERE DOES THIS BREAD COME FROM?

In vs. 33 Jesus says, "...the bread of God is he who come down from heaven..." Most religion from the Western world is left brained. It is intellectual, contemplative. The Greeks said life,

truth and beauty is in the realm of ideals and the way you find life is to escape the world through contemplation. The people who really find life are the philosophers. Eastern religions have always been right brained. They say, "Life isn't about ideals. Life is a force and you tap into it. It's a mystical experience that you really can't explain." Christianity is neither. Christianity doesn't come from the West or the East. It comes from above. If Christianity were intellectual why would Jesus say little children are the role models for it? Children can't be philosophers and they can't be mystics. But a child can meet a person. A child can love a friend. A child can submit to a king. Jesus says that real life isn't a grand ideal and it isn't a mystical force, it is a person. "...the bread of God is **he** who come down from heaven...." Christianity is a person. You can talk to a person. You can study the life of a person. You can be friends with a person. You can trust a person. You can learn from a person. We have a God who laughs and cries. We have a God who suffers and rejoices. We have a God who has a personality and so our relationship with him must be personal!

Is your relationship with God personal? Did you know you can have a relationship with God that is not personal? You can have a business relationship with God. He gives you his son. You give him some time and money. He accuses you when you break the rules. You do your penance and try to do better. He offers Heaven if you live better than most folks. You accept the offer and constantly compare yourself to others. The bad news is, that kind of religion isn't Christianity and it won't get you to heaven when you die. Christianity is a love relationship with a person.

Try having a marriage that is a business relationship. "I will take out the trash if you will cook supper. I will make some money if you will give birth to a child. I will wash the car if you will iron my shirt. I will stay home with the kids on Monday while you go have fun if you will do the same for me on Tuesday." Does that sound like a quality marriage to you? That's not a marriage. That's a business. Marriages like that are miserable and Christians who try to have that kind of relationship with God are equally miserable. The reason some of you get all disillusioned with God when tragedy strikes is because you think he is guilty of breach of contract. You've been real good for a long time and God let this bad thing happen. That kind of thinking is indicative of a business relationship with God rather than a personal relationship with God.

If you want to know how personal Christianity really is, listen to the last thing Jesus says about the bread. It's in vs. 51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Now we are talking about the cross and the Lord's Supper which is a memorial to Jesus' death on the cross. That's personal!

If you come to Jesus today and say, "Lord, I'm hurting. Make me feel good." That's no good. If you come to him and say, "Lord, I'm sad. Make me happy." That's no good. But if you say, "Lord, I'm a rebel. It should have been me on that cross. I see that you were broken in my place and I give myself to you in gratitude.", then and only then, can he become the bread of heaven for you. Then and only then can he give meaning to your life.

Jesus is the bread of life, quality life and that life comes straight from heaven itself.

HOW DO WE RECEIVE THIS BREAD?

Listen to vs. 28-29, “Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’” So when are you going to do that? When are you going to start believing that Jesus is the only source of quality life, eternal life? When are you going to quit pursuing everything the world pursues in search of happiness and start just trusting in Jesus?

Listen to the end of this discourse and notice all the present tense verbs, “Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you *eat* the flesh of the Son of Man and *drink* his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever *eats* my flesh and *drinks* my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever *eats* my flesh and *drinks* my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who *feeds* on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who *feeds* on this bread will live forever.” (John 6:53-58) To be a Christian means to be continually in the process of feeding on Christ. You feed on Christ by praying, reading the Bible, and obeying the directions God gives you.

Something is your meat and drink because you think, “That’s living.” Is it Jesus or is it something that will spoil?