

1 - "I AM the Bread of Life" // John 6 // "I Am" series #1¹

Announcements

As most of you knew, Summit had planned a 300+ person trip to Israel this coming June, but due to the tragic events happening in Israel, we postponed that trip until, hopefully, next summer. That said, I know a lot of you were excited about the possibility of traveling with some of your fellow members on a "Christian heritage" discipleship kind of tour. Well, the group we are working with, Signature Tours, came back and said they were able to open up a chance this July--July 1--11--to go to my second favorite Christian heritage place: old Germany for the Reformation Tour. I have done this tour, and it is unbelievable. We'll be with an experienced German tour guide, and I'll be doing short devotionals at the places we visit to weave together the significance of the Reformation gospel. And, for you history nerds, there's lots of WW2 stuff along the way. Bottom line, I would love for you to join me. I know it's last minute, and because it's last minute, we have to act quickly. There are a limited number of spots available--this is much smaller than the last trip--and those spots may go fast. You can find out everything you need to know about the trip and reserve your spot from the link on the homepage of our website, summitchurch.com. I hope to see many of you there!

¹ Works consulted: Tim Keller, "I am the Bread, December 13, 1998, Redeemer Presbyterian; Joby Martin, "Do you believe even when doubts creep in?", May 7, 2023, The Church of Eleven22; Ryan Ingram, "The Bread

VIDEO:

"I AM. Two words that spoke volumes. Two words that echoed the strains of Old Testament narratives, angering Jesus' opponents but breathing life into his disciples. Seven bold, remarkable statements in the Gospel of John begin with these exact words, giving us profound insight into Jesus' identity—and showing us how to truly find ours. Our cries of "I am empty" are met with "I am the bread of life." Our pleas of "I am lost" are countered with "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Two simple words addressing every one of our fears, doubts, and pain: I AM."

Introduction

Good to see everybody. I've had a disturbing amount of you ask me if I'd been fired and the church is just trying to put me away, quietly since I haven't preached in the last 4 weeks. No, we just had a series that Bryan, Curtis and the CP's were gonna lead... Let me assure you: if you guys ever fire me, I'm gonna leave loud. But, it's good to be back.

Alright... Raise your hands if you've ever had GrubHub or UberEats show up at your house and drop off food that you haven't ordered? It's kind of awesome, isn't it? I mean, you can't send it back-- it's already out; but you didn't pay for it. So, it's just a free meal, on somebody else--you can nibble on it, throw it away, whatever you want.

of Life", Undated mp3 series from Living on the Edge website; Louie Giglio, "Little Me, Big God, Huge Life," sermon preached on Exodus 3; Tyler Staton, "I am the Bread of Life", January 8, 2023, Bridgetown Church.

True story: This happened one night to a man named Kevin Stonehouse. GrubHub rang his doorbell and dropped off some tenders and cheese fries. At first, he was pleased, thinking “God loves me!” But that was followed by 3 more orders within the next 10 minutes, all addressed to him. And they kept coming. He couldn’t figure out WHAT was going on, until he remembered that earlier he’d seen his son Mason, 6-years-old, walking around the house with his phone. Apparently Mason had gotten onto the GrubHub app and just started ordering whatever looked good to him. After the 5th order showed up, Kevin went looking for Mason and found him hiding under the bed. He said, “Son, what have you done?” To which Mason said, “I was hungry.” Kevin started to explain why this was not OK when the doorbell rang again and his son said, “Oh, that must be my pizza!” He’d put in a \$439 pizza order. True story. All told, his son had ordered \$1500 worth of food. So, Kevin and his wife packed out their freezers and made emergency calls to the neighbors to come and take food--and then immediately put new passcodes on their phones.²

Hunger can drive you to all kinds of bad decisions. (Hunger is one of the worst feelings a human can experience. When you’re hungry, one of the first things that happens is your mood changes--how many of you have a spouse or a roommate that is UNBEARABLE to be around when they’re HANGRY? After a few days without food, you lose your ability to concentrate. Eventually you have trouble sleeping, which is the worst, and then of course your muscles start breaking down and your immune system is compromised, and eventually your body just stops working.)

The same thing is true spiritually, and today we’re going to see how Jesus satisfies the deep, spiritual hunger we all have. If I could be so bold: The core of many of your spiritual problems is spiritual hunger. If we were to trace some of your worst choices, some of your bad habits, your addictions, even some of your emotional problems like anxiety or OCD--if we were to trace them back to their source, for a lot of them, you’re going to find a deep and unsatisfied spiritual hunger.

John 6, if you have your Bible--open it up, whether that Bible is in your lap or on an app (thank you pastor Rich at the DDC for that line)--**this is the first of a 7 part series through Jesus’ 7 “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John.** John structures his Gospel around seven times Jesus labels himself with an “I AM” claim, and the first of those occurs in **John 6:35**, when Jesus says, **“I AM the bread of life.”**

A little background here: **“I AM”** was the name God identified himself by when he first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. In that encounter, God told Moses that he was to lead Israel out of captivity, and Moses had responded by saying, “And who should I tell Israel is coming to deliver them? What is your name?”

Names in those days were a big deal--someone’s name identified where they came from, what kind of person they were, and what kind of resources they brought with them. So Moses was, in essence, asking, “How can we be sure you’ll be able to help us?” **God’s answer to Moses was simply, “I AM who I AM. Tell them I AM sent you.” It was an odd thing to say.** You see, in Hebrew, just like in English, you’d normally follow “I AM” with some kind of adjective--“I am...

² <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2023/february/hungry-six-year-old-phones-in-exorbitant-takeout-order.html>

strong. I am victorious.” But God left it at just “I AM.” Meaning, “I’m not like you, Moses; I don’t come from anywhere; I don’t have a beginning or an ending; I depend on no one; I am fully self-sufficient. Whatever you need in this journey, whatever you lack in yourself--I AM.” “I AM” in Hebrew I AM = “Yahweh” (or if you use the Latin transliteration of it, **Jehovah**).

And so, from that point onward, whenever Israel had a need, God would invoke the name “I AM” and then attach to it WHATEVER attribute met Israel’s need in that moment. When Israel was hungry and afraid, they called God “**Jehovah Jireh**,” meaning “I AM your provider.” In Exodus 14, when the Israelites were sick because they’d drunk from a poisoned well, God called himself “**Jehovah Rapha**,” meaning, “I AM your healer.” When they were afraid, he called himself **Jehovah Shammah**, I AM the God ever-present with you.

And that brings us to the Gospel of John. In John, Jesus takes the name I AM and *applies* it to the 7 greatest areas of human brokenness. Make no mistake about it--in using this name, Jesus is claiming to be God, and even further, he’s claiming to be the God that we crave; the God who is the missing piece in our lives. Well, as I said, the first of those “I AM” claims occurs here in John 6 when Jesus says, **vs 35, “I AM the bread of life...”**

There’s no more primal feeling of need than hunger, and no more universal satisfaction to hunger than bread. *A relationship with God through Jesus is to our souls what bread is to our bodies.*

To get our minds around what is going on in this chapter, we’re going to talk about: **A Sign, A Sandwich, A Satisfaction, and a Supper.** (You

say, “A lot of food themes today.” Yep. I get the feeling that local restaurants are gonna be packed with Summit people when this is over... Make sure to tip well. And don’t you dare put down a Summit Easter inviter card without a tip of at least 20%. Preferably 25.)

OK, first, let’s talk about...

1. A Sign



Jesus made this audacious claim right after performing one of his most famous miracles, the feeding of the 5000. In fact, the miracle was the setup for the claim. So let’s walk through it together:

[4] Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. (This is an important detail we’ll come back to. And) **[5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?”** **[6] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.**

The first thing Jesus does is test them. He wants to prove something to them; he wants them to see how utterly unable they ARE, in themselves, to meet this need in front of them. Philip responds, vs 7, “200 denarii is not enough to buy food for these people.” “200 denarii” was about 8 months wages, so Philip was, in essence saying, “This assignment is beyond us. By the time we raised enough money to buy all these people food, they’ll all be dead.” Then another of the disciples speaks up, vs 8, and says, “I found a little boy here whose momma packed him a lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fish (otherwise known as a Hebrew Happy Meal), and he says he’s willing to share it with us--but what is one piddly little Happy Meal among thousands of people?” So, having sufficiently made his point, Jesus says “Give these 5 loaves and 2 fish to me,” and then he prays over them, and then the disciples start to distribute them. This had to be a gutsy thing for the disciples to do, btw--to take 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish and start to feed a crowd of thousands. But as they do, the bread and fish start multiplying. They can’t give it away fast enough. And after everybody has eaten all they can eat, they take up what’s left, and there are 12 baskets-full of leftovers.

[14] When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet (not a prophet, but THE prophet) who is to come into the world!”

What had they seen? What had they recognized? OK, follow me--Everybody then knew this story: During the Exodus, when God delivered Israel from Egypt, as they were passing through the wilderness, they had found themselves in a place without food. So, every morning a week except for the Sabbath, God covered the

ground with a little bread-like substance--the best I can describe it would be little Ritz Crackers glazed in honey. It was delicious. Every morning. And the children of Israel didn’t know what to call it, so they called it “Manna,” **which in Hebrew literally meant, “What is it?”** And this is what they ate every day as they passed through the wilderness. You say, “That sounds like a pretty boring diet.” Well, like I said, supposedly it was delicious, and I’m sure they got creative with it--they made manna wafers, manna pudding, manna-cotti, manana bread. You name it.

You’re like, “Manna’ts a lot of puns.” I’ll stop.

So here we are now in John 6 (a couple of thousand years later), and Israel is again under the thumb of an oppressor--this time the Romans--and they are waiting for ANOTHER deliverer similar to Moses who can deliver them from the Romans like Moses delivered them from the Egyptians. And here is Jesus, now, showing the same kind of miraculous power with bread that Moses showed in the wilderness! And to top it all off, Jesus does this during *the Passover* (remember that detail I pointed out at the beginning of vs 4--this happened at the time of the Passover? The Passover was the feast that the Jews celebrated to mark the date they were freed from slavery.)

So, here they have a new prophet providing a new manna and instituting a new Passover meal. And at the end, there are 12 baskets left over, which clearly represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Everybody knew exactly what those 12 baskets were pointing to: So, they concluded, this was THE Prophet, THE deliverer, they had been waiting for! Hence, their statement, [14] When the people saw the

sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (Not just “a” prophet, but *THE* prophet! This is Deliverer we’ve been waiting on! This is the Messiah. This is the one the whole OT pointed to! But, vs [15]: Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

They understood the sign, but they also completely misunderstood it, too. They thought the point was Jesus’ ability to put bread in their stomachs and overthrow Rome. But that wasn’t the point. At least not yet. His point was, vs. 35, “*I AM the bread of life.*” He says to them, “You’ve got a deeper problem than Roman oppression; a deeper problem than an empty stomach, and that is “your soul is starving,” and just being delivered from your oppressors won’t fix that. And just getting food in your belly won’t fix that. What you most need, what you crave, is a relationship with me. I AM the bread of life. I’m not going to give you the bread of life; I AM the bread of true life.

My guess this morning is that many of you may come in here thinking of something YOU need from Jesus. A job. Help with your marriage. Help with your kids. Maybe you want kids. To get pregnant. New friends. A miracle in your health. And Jesus is not insensitive to those—as we see in this story, he cares about your empty stomach. He fed these people. But what you most need is not the miracle itself; you need the Maker of those miracles. You think, “Oh if only Jesus would give me this or give me that or do this for me...” But there’s nothing in creation that can satisfy you. What you crave is *the Creator*. He is the bread of life.

So, the Jews understood the sign, but they also misunderstood it. Which brings us to... the Sandwich.

2. A Sandwich



So how does Jesus teach them the real meaning of what he’s saying? Well, you’d expect the heading over the next verses to be, “Jesus explains to the crowd the true meaning of the miracle.” But instead, look at the heading in your Bible over vs 16. It says: “**Jesus walks on water.**” Instead of teaching them the meaning, he does a seemingly random miracle.

He sends the disciples on ahead of him across the sea to a place called Capernaum, and as they are going across the sea of Galilee, they get into a storm which scares them out of their minds, and then in the middle of that storm, in the middle of the night, he calmly come walking out across the water like it’s no big deal. He climbs into the boat with them, and two things happen: 1. The storm calms, and vs [21], “...immediately the boat was at the land to which they were

going.” This, to me, is probably the coolest part of the miracle. The moment he steps into the boat, “shazzam,” the storm ceases and they arrive on the other shore. The whole point of this ordeal had been to show them that he has power over whatever storms that threaten them.

But now they are in Capernaum. (Vs. 16 tells us that’s where Jesus had sent them. See it?) Capernaum was the part of Palestine where a lot of Gentiles lived--it’s where the ancient Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon were. And Jesus does a couple of important things there. John doesn’t record this next part of the story, but Matthew does in Matthew 14 and 15.

Matthew says the first thing Jesus does when he arrives in Capernaum after feeding the 5000 is he heals a Canaanite woman’s daughter. (Canaanite means Gentile.) To the Jews, she’s one of the impure people. An enemy of God. And when Jesus heals her daughter, no one can believe it. The disciples are like, “What are you doing, healing a Gentile?” At one point in the story, Jesus even calls her a dog, which I’ve always thought was one of the most un-PC things Jesus ever said. Not the sort of thing that ends up in the highlight reel of *The Chosen*, amirite? But in saying that, Jesus wasn’t making a racial slur; he was giving an accurate assessment of her spiritual condition. She WAS separated from God. She was spiritually impure. But Jesus says, “I’ll heal anybody with faith!”

³ Side note: Some scholars who want to poke holes in the Bible look at that and say, “Ha! Gotcha! These were clearly legends that Matthew put

And then, get this: IMMEDIATELY after that healing, Matthew says Jesus REPEATS the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, except this time it’s with only 4000 people. It’s a nearly identical scene: Jesus is teaching the masses in a remote valley; it’s late in the day; he has only a few loaves and some fish for food.³ And Jesus multiplies the loaves and fish so that there’s baskets full of leftovers. But this second time, it’s with only 4000 people, a lot of whom are Gentiles. And this time, they only take up 7 baskets of leftovers (instead of 12). Which makes you ask, “Why only 7 baskets full left over this time? Are Jesus’ superpowers wearing off? Are his batteries running low?” No, that’s not what’s happening. During the first miracle of the manna, the book of Deuteronomy in the OT says that Israel was surrounded by 7 Canaanite nations. These 7 baskets are for them. The 7 baskets mean that Jesus is the bread of life for Gentiles, too.

So what we have here is a miracle sandwich. On either side of the sandwich, the pieces of bread, so to speak, are Jesus feeding a large multitude. One consists of Jews; the other of Gentiles. And in between these two nearly identical miracles are two other miracles, the meat of the sandwich, so to speak: 1. Jesus walking on water and 2. healing a Gentile woman’s daughter.

Do you see what’s being taught? Follow me here: **First, Jesus’ point is not his ability to put physical bread in our stomachs or overthrow Rome.** The point is that WHATEVER need we face--whatever storm we’re in; wherever it seems like the waves of life might overtake us; whether that’s a storm in our marriage or a storm with our kids or it’s

together.” As if nobody for 2,000 years noticed that these two stories were right near each other. No, Matthew wrote them both down because they both actually happened.

a storm of addiction we can't shake--Jesus can step into our sinking boat and bring us peace. What we most need is not some kind of physical bread in our stomachs, what we need is him. He says, "I AM the bread of life!" Again, maybe you came in this morning looking for a miracle. We can pray together for it. But I'm telling you, what you most need, what you've always craved, is a relationship with Jesus, the great I AM, the Maker of all miracles.

The second this sandwich is teaching us is that Jesus came for everybody who would receive him. He didn't just come just for the pure or the churched or the morally upright. He came for those separated from God and the church, for those across the sea from him. Whosoever has faith--even people like this poor Canaanite woman, a spiritual "dog," if you will--they can have Jesus if they want him. He came for as many as would receive him.

Listen, you may think this morning that you're miles away from the profile of a Christian, miles away from Jesus. And maybe that's because you're several-times-divorced. Or maybe it's because you had an abortion or an affair. Or maybe it's because you're a failed father. Or maybe it's because you've been convicted of a crime; or maybe you haven't been caught yet, but you know you're guilty of a crime. Maybe you've got a secret nobody knows about; one you feel so ashamed of that you hide from everybody, and the bottom line is that you feel miles and miles away from Jesus this morning. **I've got good news:** Jesus has just shown up in your Capernaum with the same miraculous power to multiply bread in your life. He's the bread of life for you. He's come to your Capernaum looking for you. He had to cross an ocean of God's wrath to get to you. But he's here. All you have to do, like this woman, is to receive him.

Which brings us back to John 6... and

3. A Satisfaction

Now, In vs [35] Jesus actually gives the explanation: **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."**

I AM the bread of life. Not, "I'll give you the bread of life," or "I'll give you a way to live that will feel like the bread of life," but "**I AM** the bread of life." Christianity is not a lifestyle or a new way to live; it's a relationship with a person, plain and simple.

BTW, think with me for a moment about the ABSOLUTE audacity of that statement. I'M THE ONE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. It's popular in some academic circles to write off Jesus as a provocative moral teacher, a moral revolutionary, a great prophet. But think about the sheer audacity of what Jesus is saying. "I AM (the name of God); I AM the bread of life." I'm what you crave, what you've always craved.

Listen: In **verses 34-40, Jesus says "I, me or my" 17 times. I'm the bread of life.** "Unless you feast on me," he says, "you'll starve eternally. My broken body is going to be like bread to you. Feast on me, and you will live." **Historically, there's never been anyone this egocentric who had more than a tiny group of lunatics around them.** To quote **C.S. Lewis here**, if Jesus wasn't actually God, one of two things has to be true: either he's the worst liar that ever emerged from the pit of hell, cruelly convincing people to worship and trust

him; or else he's a lunatic on the level of the man who says he's a poached egg.

In John 6, Jesus put himself at the center of history. He put himself at the center of the Bible. He put himself at the center of your existential crisis. He either is who he says he is or he isn't.

And if he is who he says he is, satisfaction for our deepest soul yearnings are in him. Do you ever wonder what that really means? A lot of times Christians say things like, "Be satisfied with Jesus," or "find happiness in Jesus." But what does that actually mean? It can sound like a lot of spiritual-ly mumbo jumbo. Does it mean you are just serenely religious all the time, always humming God-songs and thinking pious thoughts?

No. Here's what it means: It means that you have the absolute assurance that you belong to him and he belongs to you. You know that because of his promises in the gospel that you have received for yourself.

And that knowledge, that relationship with him, is so valuable to you that when you're successful in something, you find yourself rejoicing more in possessing him than you do the win. And when you fail at something, you console yourself that knowing him is more important than the victory anyway. (You can certainly be disappointed when something doesn't work out like you want, but in failure--when the boyfriend breaks up with you, you don't get into the school, you fail to make the team, you lose the job, your soul is never truly devastated because you have him, and he is more

valuable than anything else life could give, and more secure to you than anything death could take away.

Being satisfied with Jesus means the promise of his loving, guiding hand is like food to you when you find yourself in a barren wilderness. When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil because Thou art with me. It means that when you're worried, you have peace knowing that he is for you and has promised to hear your prayers and rescue you and to work all things in your life together for good--that not one strand of your life is out of place.

It means that when you are in pain, you have this abiding joy that even as your body falls apart, you still belong to him, and nothing can ever separate you from his love! Not height nor depth nor principality or power or anything in all creation. And it means when you look into the future, you're not afraid, because even though you don't know what the future holds, you know who holds it and that he holds you. The blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, said it this way: "*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foreTASTE of glory divine!*" His constant presence, his unfailing promise, is the bread that satisfies the hungry soul. "*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine!*"

Which brings me finally to...

4. A Supper

[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 you. And as he said these things, [52] The Jews then disputed among

themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Even some of Jesus’ disciples stumbled at this: [60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”

Jesus said something here that confused even his disciples. But with all this background, I think you are in a place to understand what he meant. Remember, at the very beginning of this story, John explained that Jesus did this miracle on the eve of Passover. ***Jesus is presenting himself as the new Passover.*** He is saying, ‘In some mysterious way--that Passover meal, where the lamb was killed and his blood was sprinkled over your doorposts and you ate unleavened bread; that, AND the Manna that appeared on the ground every morning--that all pointed to me. My blood is the real Passover blood, and my body is the real Manna that is broken to feed and sustain you.’

Did you know that you can’t just eat raw wheat? It’ll make you sick. For wheat to become bread, it has to go through a rather elaborate--and quite violent--process: first, the grains are cut, then beaten, winnowed, ground down into flour, processed and then baked, and only then will it RISE into what we call bread. What does it mean for Jesus to be the bread of life? On the cross, Jesus was beaten, ground down and put through immense violence. And only then did he rise as our bread of life.

And so, on the eve of his crucifixion, at *another* Passover meal, Jesus again repeated what he’d said here in John 6, “You must eat my flesh

and drink my blood.” In saying that, he was setting the stage for what was about to happen. On the cross he would become the bread of our forgiveness, so that we would never have to feel the starvation pangs of condemnation again. On the cross, he became cleansing for our sin, so that we could be free of sin’s stain and shame, so that even though our sins were like scarlet, he could make them white as snow. On the cross, he would reconcile God to me so that I could feast on the bread of knowing that I’m never alone, not in any circumstance for any reason. On the cross, he would give me the power of new life, the power to start over; the power to build a life of beauty even when my sin had reduced it to a pile of ashes.

But to give me that kind of bread, he had to be crushed. He had to be ground down. Only then could he be raised to new life so that he could say to any and all of us, “If anyone hungers, let him come to me and eat. He that feasts upon me will never hunger, and he that believes on me will never thirst. I am the bread of life.”

(VAMP)

Researchers say the three phrases that bring the most joy to humans are, in this order:

1. I love you
2. I forgive you
3. Dinner’s ready⁴

⁴ “Mark Rutland whimsically recalls a survey in which Americans were asked what words they would most like to hear. He predicted the first choice: ‘I love you.’ Number two was ‘I forgive you.’ The third choice took him by surprise:

‘Supper’s ready.’ It dawned on Rutland that these three statements provide a neat summary of the gospel story. We are loved by God, forgiven by God, and invited to the banquet table. In the midst of a planet marked by

Isn't it awesome that in the gospel, Jesus says all 3 to us.

I had the most remarkable experience last week. I was asked to be on a TV talk show--it's on TBN, one of those large Christian networks, and I'd flown out to Dallas to do the interview. Well, I was in the waiting area, and I sat down at the table with the guy who was going to go on the show right after me. We had an hour or so before the show started, and so I asked him what his story was. He said, "I've just written a book called *Seven Lies that Will Ruin Your Life*" that ruined mine.

He told me, "Before I came to Christ I was a performer in the adult film industry." (And yes, that means exactly what you think it means). It turns out he'd done quite well in it--in 2013 he'd actually won 'performer of the year' in that entire multi-billion dollar industry. He said, "I was very successful, but I was miserable."

He said my journey to Christ began in 2015 when a girl I'd known for years, who was from right here in the Raleigh area, said to me, "Joshua, the gospel is that you aren't defined by the worst thing we've ever done, nor are we defined by the best thing we've ever done. We're defined by Jesus' love for us. Nothing less and nothing more."

He said, "Just her using my real name got my attention. You see, no one called me by my real name anymore. In my industry, you have an

brokenness — violence, natural disasters, ruptured relationships — the Gospel is truly good news. Like an iPod listener dancing in a subway station full of glum commuters, a Christian hears a different sound, of joy and

acting name, a porn name." He then said, "And I don't know exactly how to explain it, but the combination of her calling my name and speaking the gospel over me--I heard the voice of my Maker speak in my soul. You see," he said, "I got into the porn industry not through one dramatic act, but through one small bad decision at a time. My brokenness led me to further brokenness. He said, "My mom had me when she was 15 and my dad left her and started another family on the other side of town. He ended up being well off, but my mom and me lived in poverty. And I had to go to school with his other kids, and I'd see them every day, and they lived comfortably while my mom and I struggled to survive." He said, "I felt worthless, unloved, and that's when I started to hear these voices in my heart, voices that told me that I was nothing more than the bad things that I'd done. That no one would ever truly love me. That I'd never be a good father. Or a good man. That I'd never make anyone proud. And so I turned to the porn industry to try and satisfy a hunger deep in my heart. And for a while it was intoxicating. But that day when that girl said my name and spoke the gospel over me, my Maker unlocked the chains that had shackled my heart. After a few months, I came to Christ, and I was discipled by some very godly men, and now I go around the country speaking at men's conferences and in student ministries warning them about the true, predatory nature of the porn industry and testifying to the power of the gospel."

I sat there dumbfounded. I don't know how to explain this if you've never felt it, but I knew I was the presence of the I AM. God was just there in the room with us. And then he said to me, "So what's your

laughter on the other side of pain and death." Philip Yancey, *Vanishing Grace* copyright Zondervan 2014.

story?” I said, “Not that.” And I said, “I sure am glad I am before you on this show and not after you.” He had a copy of his book there and I asked him if it was basically his story, and he said something I thought was absolutely profound. He said, “Not really... I mean, I use my story some, obviously, but I don’t want to glorify my story. What I did was a symptom of a hungry heart, a heart that every man I’ve ever known possesses. Most people will not express their hungry heart the way I did, or to the extent I did, but all of them have the same hungry heart I did, and so my book is more about the bread of life offered to all of us than the particulars of my specific story.”

“If anyone hungers, let him come to Jesus and eat. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Which brings us to the table... the Supper. Take out this little cup with bread built in. (Fun fact: these are exactly what Jesus used when he did this at the Last Supper. The disciples spent the greater part of the Upper Room discourse trying to figure out how to separate the bread from the cup.) Hold this in your hand, but don’t open it yet, I’ll get you to do that in a moment.

On the night Jesus died, he repeated what he’d said here in John 6. This is my body, broken for you. Eat my body and drink my blood.” He didn’t mean that as we eat it, it transforms into his literal body and blood. Some Christians try to say that, but this was obviously a metaphor. Jesus used all kinds of metaphors in the Gospel of John—I am the vine, I am the door, and the disciples understood them as such. Think about it: when Jesus held out the bread and cup to his

disciples at the Last Supper, they didn’t think they were literally eating his flesh; they didn’t think that as they ate the bread and drank from the cup that parts of his body were disappearing off of him and into them. Jesus wasn’t like “Oww, Peter, don’t chew so hard.” No, this bread is a representation of the body of Jesus, and you and me eating it is a metaphor of us feasting on Jesus.

To feast on him now, all you need are two things:

- **Hunger.** You have to know how much you need him. Remember, just before Jesus did the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, he asked the disciples, “Can’t you feed them?” He wanted them to feel the despair of inability. Maybe he’s been testing you the same way. Every effective 12-step program in existence starts with recognizing that you’re powerless.⁵ They do that because it’s only when you acknowledge that you CAN’T do it that you’re eligible for help from above. So, if God is convicting you you’re a bad husband or a bad wife or a bad parent or an inconsistent friend or a prisoner of your addictions, it’s because he wants to set you free. Are you ready to forsake your own power and feast on him?
- **The second thing you need is a willingness to come to him, completely, as Lord and Savior.** This is not one meal you add in among many. To feast upon him means to recognize and acknowledge that he’s the God your soul is created for.
- **Listen, only Christians are supposed to partake in this.** Jesus said this was a special moment of communion between him and his followers, and if you partake of the bread and cup when you’re

⁵ For instance, the original, Alcoholics Anonymous, puts it this way: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become

unmanageable.” https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/p-10_howitworks.pdf

not his follower, it's like you are mocking him, and that's a rather serious blasphemy.

- So, I would humbly ask you, if you are not a fully surrendered follower of Jesus, not to partake of the bread and cup today. I don't mean if you struggle with sin you shouldn't take it, because we all do that, and that's why we need this grace-feast. What I mean is if you know you're not Jesus' follower, then refrain from taking the bread and cup. But please, listen, don't think I'm being judgmental or exclusive in saying that. You see, what I can offer to you right now is more important to you than this physical bread and cup--and that is the body and blood they represent. 2000 years ago, his body was crushed for you and his blood was spilt for you, to give you forgiveness of sin and eternal life, if you'll simply receive it. Maybe you could do that right now.

Bow heads (Lead in sinner's prayer)

Lead in Communion