

FURTHER STUDY GUIDE

THE TABLE OF BREAD: CHRIST OUR SUSTENANCE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Inside the Holy Place of the tabernacle stood the Table of the Bread of the Presence. Unlike the bronze altar, which stood outside in the courtyard, this table was located near the presence of God. Twelve loaves of bread were placed on it continually, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The bread was regularly replaced and eaten by the priests.

The bread reminded Israel that God was not merely their deliverer from Egypt—He was their ongoing provider and sustainer. Israel depended upon God for daily bread, daily provision, and daily fellowship with Him.

The New Testament takes this imagery much further. Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life.” He is not simply someone who gives us what we need; He is Himself the provision we need. In Christ, the symbolism of the tabernacle finds its fulfillment: God's presence, God's provision, and God's sustaining grace are ultimately found in Christ.

The imagery also moves from presence to life to participation. Christ gives Himself for us, and He calls us to continually partake of Him through faith and fellowship.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

What is something you find yourself craving when you are tired, stressed, or having a difficult day—and why do you think you crave it?

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE BREAD OF PRESENCE

Read Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5–9

The Hebrew expression often translated “bread of the Presence” carries the idea of bread set before God. Twelve loaves were arranged on the table as a continual memorial before the Lord, representing Israel's twelve tribes.

This bread pictured more than physical provision. It reminded Israel that they lived continually before the face of God and depended upon Him for their sustenance.

The priests ate the bread after it was replaced, showing that God's provision was not merely symbolic—it was something His people actually received and enjoyed.

1. What does the Bread of the Presence teach us about God's desire to have His people continually before Him?

2. Why do you think God chose bread—a basic necessity of life—to represent His provision and presence?

3. What are some ways we can become so focused on God's gifts that we forget that God Himself is what we ultimately need?

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Read John 6:25-33, 48-51

Jesus takes the imagery of bread and applies it directly to Himself:

“I am the bread of life.”

The crowd had witnessed Jesus feeding thousands, but Jesus redirected their attention from physical bread to spiritual hunger. The manna their ancestors received in the wilderness sustained physical life temporarily, but Jesus offers something greater: life that endures forever.

Jesus doesn't merely say that He *gives* the bread of life. He says that He *is* the Bread of Life.

To come to Jesus and believe in Him is to find the answer to the deepest hunger of the human soul. The language of eating and drinking in John 6 emphasizes receiving Christ and depending upon Him by faith.

4. What kinds of “hunger” do people try to satisfy apart from Christ?

5. What is significant about Jesus saying, “I am the bread of life,” rather than simply saying, “I give you the bread of life”?

6. What does it practically look like to depend upon Jesus as your daily sustenance rather than trying to satisfy yourself through other things?

THE BREAD OF PARTICIPATION

Read 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; John 6:53–56

The biblical picture moves beyond simply receiving from Christ to participating in Christ.

Paul describes the bread of Communion as a participation—or sharing—in the body of Christ. The one bread also points toward the unity of believers: “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

John 6 similarly uses strong language about eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood. Whatever one's precise interpretation of the sacramental dimensions of John 6, the central truth is unmistakable: Jesus does not merely want to be admired from a distance. He calls us into relationship, dependence, fellowship, and participation in His life.

The Table therefore points both upward to Christ and outward toward His people. We receive from Him, and because we receive from the same Christ, we belong to one another.

7. According to 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, how does participation in Christ connect us as His body?

8. What is the difference between knowing *about* Jesus and actually participating in His life through faith, obedience, fellowship, and communion?

9. How should receiving Christ as our sustenance change the way we live with and serve other believers?

PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL

What Are You Hungry For?

Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” — John 6:35

Every day we experience hunger. We eat, become satisfied, and eventually become hungry again. Physical hunger reminds us of a deeper reality: we were created with needs that only God can ultimately satisfy.

We often attempt to satisfy our deepest hunger with success, possessions, relationships, entertainment, approval, comfort, or control. These things may provide temporary satisfaction, but they cannot sustain the soul.

Jesus doesn't merely offer us something that can satisfy us. Jesus offers Himself.

Take a few moments to reflect:

- What am I most hungry for right now?
- Where am I looking for satisfaction apart from Christ?
- What would it look like for me to depend upon Jesus more intentionally this week?
- How can I “feed” on Christ daily through His Word, prayer, worship, obedience, and fellowship with His people?

QUESTIONS | REFLECTIONS | OBSERVATIONS
