

The Gospel of John, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: I Am the Bread of Life

John 6:25–71

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

John 6:25–71 contains the first and foundational “I am” saying, “I am the bread of life,” and it is one of the most doctrinally demanding chapters in the Gospel. The teacher should be prepared to handle it with real care on two fronts. First, Jesus’ words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (vv. 53–58) must be understood as figurative of feeding on Christ by faith, not as literal transubstantiation. Jesus Himself interprets it: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (v. 63). Second, His words about the Father giving and drawing people (vv. 37, 44) must be understood in the light of verse 45, the Father draws people through the gospel as they are “taught by God” and “learn,” not by the Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace. The heaviest doctrinal block belongs at Question 7, with significant doctrinal weight also at Questions 5 and 9.

At the same time, this chapter is profoundly searching. It exposes the difference between following Jesus for His benefits and following Him for Himself, and it confronts us with the reality that disciples can and do turn back. Peter’s confession models persevering faith that clings to Christ even when His words are hard. The teacher should let the chapter both clarify the central truths and press the question of whether the students are truly feeding on Christ and following Him to the end.

So aim at both the doctrine and the heart. Send students home clear about what it means to feed on Christ by faith and how the Father draws, and send them home examining whether they follow the Bread of Life Himself or only the loaves He gives. The disciple we are forming feeds on Christ and stays.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jesus said, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27). What is the difference between these two kinds of food, and how do we end up spending our lives working for the wrong one?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus opens by exposing the crowd’s motives, then issues a command: “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27). He distinguishes two kinds of food and two kinds of labor.

Define the two foods. The food that perishes is everything that meets only temporary, earthly needs, bread, comfort, success, security. It is not evil, but it cannot last or satisfy the soul. The food that endures to eternal life is Christ Himself and the life He gives. One feeds the body for a day; the other feeds the soul forever.

Show how we end up working for the wrong food. Most of our energy, planning, and worry is poured into the perishing, the next paycheck, the next achievement, the next comfort, while the soul goes unfed. Jesus does not forbid honest work for daily bread; He warns against making the perishing our true labor and the eternal an afterthought.

Apply it. Help students examine where the bulk of their striving goes. The call is to reorder our labor so that we seek first the food that endures, coming to Christ and feeding on Him, while trusting the Father for daily bread. Ask each student where they are over-investing in the perishing and under-investing in the eternal.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The contrast between food that perishes and food that endures to eternal life (John 6:27).
- Christ Himself as the food that satisfies the soul forever.
- The misdirection of pouring our labor into the temporary.
- Reordering our striving to seek first the eternal (Matthew 6:33).

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between the two kinds of food Jesus names?
- Where does the bulk of your striving and worry actually go?
- How could you reorder your labor toward the food that endures?

Question 2

Student Question:

The crowd asked, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" and Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (vv. 28-29). Where are you tempted to relate to God mainly through your own works rather than through trusting Him, and what would change if you rested in Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The crowd asks a works question: "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus reframes it: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (vv. 28-29). The fundamental "work" God requires is faith in His Son.

Be precise here, since this verse is sometimes misused. Jesus is not saying that belief is a meritorious work that earns salvation, nor is He pitting faith against the obedience faith produces. He is redirecting people who think the relationship with God is mainly about racking

up religious deeds. The foundation of everything is trusting the One God sent. From that living faith flows all genuine obedience.

Help students see the heart issue. Many relate to God as a ledger of performances, trying to do enough to be accepted. Jesus locates the center elsewhere: believe in the One He sent. This does not eliminate obedience (the rest of the Gospel calls for an obedient faith), but it puts trust in Christ at the foundation rather than self-justifying effort.

Apply it pastorally. Ask students where they are relating to God mainly through performance, trying to earn His favor by doing more. Invite them to rest the weight on Christ instead, trusting Him, and to let obedience flow from that trust rather than from anxious striving to be good enough.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith in Christ as the foundational “work of God” (John 6:29).
- Trust in Christ as the root from which obedience flows.
- The danger of relating to God through performance and ledger-keeping.
- Faith not as a merit that earns, but as the foundation of the relationship.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you relate to God mainly through your own works?
- What would change if you rested the weight on Christ instead?
- How does genuine obedience flow from trusting Him?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35). What is Jesus claiming about Himself, and how does this first of the great “I am” sayings reveal His identity?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35). This is the first of the great “I am” sayings in John, and it is loaded with meaning. The form “I am” echoes the divine name, and the predicate, “the bread of life,” makes a stunning claim.

Unfold the claim. Jesus is saying that He Himself is what the soul most deeply needs, as essential to spiritual life as bread is to physical life. He does not merely give bread; He is the bread. The hungers and thirsts of the human heart find their satisfaction in Him, and in Him alone.

Connect it to the manna. The crowd had pointed to the manna their ancestors ate in the wilderness (v. 31). Jesus says that manna sustained physical life for a time, but He is the true bread from heaven that gives eternal life (vv. 32–33, 49–51). The Old Testament provision was a shadow; Christ is the substance.

Apply it to the soul's hunger. Every person carries hungers that food, success, and pleasure cannot fill. Jesus claims to be the only food that finally satisfies. Help students hear this not as abstract theology but as an invitation: come to Him, believe in Him, and find the deep hunger of the soul met in the Bread of Life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “I am the bread of life” as the first great “I am” saying, echoing the divine name (John 6:35).
- Christ Himself, not merely His gifts, as the soul's true food.
- Jesus as the true bread from heaven fulfilling the manna (John 6:32–33).
- The satisfaction of the soul's hunger found in Christ alone.

Discussion Prompts

- What is Jesus claiming about Himself as the bread of life?
- How does this “I am” saying reveal His identity?
- How is Christ different from the manna the crowd remembered?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jesus promises that whoever comes to Him “shall not hunger” and “shall never thirst” (v. 35). What deep hungers and thirsts of your own heart is Jesus inviting you to bring to Him rather than to the world?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the promise, “whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35). Jesus speaks to the deep hungers and thirsts of the soul, longings for meaning, love, security, significance, peace.

Help students name their real hungers honestly. Beneath our surface wants lie deeper longings that we constantly try to satisfy, often with things that cannot fill them. We hunger to be loved and seek it in approval; we thirst for significance and chase it in achievement; we long for peace and grasp at control or distraction.

Point them to Christ as the satisfaction of these hungers. The promise is not that Christians stop feeling hunger and thirst, but that Christ truly meets the soul's deepest needs when we come to Him and keep coming. The satisfaction is real, though it grows over a lifetime of feeding on Him.

Apply it concretely. Ask each student to name one deep hunger they have been trying to satisfy elsewhere and to consider what it would mean to bring that hunger to Christ instead, through His word, prayer, worship, and trust. The invitation of the Bread of Life is to come and be fed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the satisfaction of the soul's deepest hungers and thirsts.
- The difference between surface wants and deep longings.
- Bringing our hungers to Christ rather than to the world.
- Satisfaction in Christ as real and growing over a lifetime.

Discussion Prompts

- What deep hungers are you trying to satisfy apart from Christ?
- What would it look like to bring those hungers to Him?
- How does the Bread of Life invite you to come and be fed?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (v. 37), and "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (v. 44). How does the rest of the passage, especially "they will all be taught by God" (v. 45), show us how the Father draws people, and how does this differ from the idea that God arbitrarily chooses some and refuses others?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries significant doctrinal weight and must be handled with care. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me" (v. 37) and "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (v. 44). Read in isolation, these can be misused to support the Calvinistic ideas of unconditional election and irresistible grace, that God arbitrarily selects some individuals to save and irresistibly drags them in while passing over the rest. The very next verse rules that out.

Point students to verse 45, which Jesus gives as His own explanation of the drawing: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." The Father draws people by teaching them, through His word and the gospel, and those who hear and learn come. The drawing is real and necessary (no one comes apart from it), but it works through the gospel call, which goes out to all and which people genuinely hear, learn from, and respond to.

Contrast this clearly with the Calvinistic scheme. Jesus does not describe an arbitrary, irresistible, individual selection. He describes the Father drawing through revelation and

teaching, a drawing that summons a real response of hearing and learning. The gospel call is universal and genuine; people are truly able to respond or refuse, as the grumbling crowd in this very chapter refuses. God draws by the gospel, and the same chapter shows people resisting that drawing.

Hold the truths together for the students. Salvation is entirely of God's gracious initiative, no one comes unless the Father draws, and we cannot boast. Yet that grace is not coercive or arbitrary; it comes through the gospel, addressed to all, and calls for a real response. This both humbles us (we owe our coming to the Father's drawing) and assures us (the drawing is offered to all who will hear and learn). Help students rest in grace without slipping into the error that God secretly refuses to draw most people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Father drawing people through the gospel as they are "taught by God" and learn (John 6:44-45; Isaiah 54:13).
- Salvation as God's gracious initiative, which humbles human pride.
- A clear rejection of unconditional election and irresistible grace.
- The universal, genuine gospel call that people can hear and answer or refuse.
- The same chapter showing people resisting the Father's drawing.

Discussion Prompts

- How does verse 45 explain the way the Father draws people?
- How does this differ from the idea that God arbitrarily chooses some and refuses others?
- How do we hold together God's initiative and the genuine call to all?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jesus promises that the one who comes to Him He "will never cast out" (v. 37). How does this promise speak to your fear of being rejected or not truly welcome, and how do you receive it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up one of the most comforting promises in Scripture: "whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (v. 37). To everyone who comes, Jesus gives an unqualified welcome.

Help students feel the weight of "never." Many people live with a deep fear of rejection, a sense that if others, or God, truly knew them, they would be turned away. Jesus says that the one who comes to Him will never be cast out. There is no exception, no fine print, no "unless."

Apply it to the fear of not being truly welcome. Some hold back from Christ because they feel too unworthy, too sinful, too late, too damaged. This promise meets that fear head-on. The

issue is not whether we are worthy enough to be received; it is simply whether we will come. All who come are welcomed.

Keep it balanced and warm. This promise assures everyone who comes of Christ's welcome; it is not a denial that we must continue with Him (the chapter itself shows some turning back). But for the one who comes and stays, the welcome is certain and unbreakable. Ask each student how the fear of rejection operates in their life and invite them to receive Jesus' "never cast out" personally.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unqualified welcome of Christ to all who come (John 6:37).
- The assurance of "never cast out" against the fear of rejection.
- Coming to Christ as the only requirement to be received.
- Welcome certain for the one who comes and continues with Him.

Discussion Prompts

- How does "I will never cast out" speak to your fear of rejection?
- What makes you feel you might not be truly welcome?
- How do you receive this promise for yourself today?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jesus said, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (v. 53), and then explained, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all" (v. 63). What did Jesus mean by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and why should we understand this as feeding on Him by faith rather than in a literal, physical sense?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and the teacher must handle it with clarity. Jesus says, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (v. 53). The crowd takes it crudely and literally: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v. 52). The right interpretation is given by Jesus Himself.

Point first to Jesus' own explanation in verse 63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." Jesus explicitly says that a fleshly, literal understanding is not the point; His words are to be received spiritually. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is figurative language for taking Him into ourselves by faith, depending on His sacrificed body and shed blood for life, making Him our very sustenance.

Show how the whole discourse supports the figurative reading. Throughout the chapter, Jesus parallels "eating" with "coming" and "believing": "whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and

whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35); “whoever believes has eternal life” (v. 47). To eat the bread of life is to believe in Christ and feed on Him. The eating is the language of faith.

Address the doctrine of transubstantiation directly and kindly. Some teach that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper literally become the physical body and blood of Christ, and read this passage as proof. But Jesus is not here instituting the Supper (that comes later), and He plainly says the flesh “is no help at all” and His words are “spirit and life.” We deny that any literal eating of Christ’s physical flesh is in view. We feed on Christ by faith.

Then connect it rightly to the Lord’s Supper without confusing the two. When we gather on the first day of the week to eat the bread and drink the cup, we remember and proclaim the body and blood of Christ given for us (1 Corinthians 11:23–26), and by faith we commune with Him. The Supper is a precious memorial and communion, but the life it points to is the life we receive by feeding on Christ in faith, exactly what John 6 describes. Help students leave clear: we feed on Christ by believing in Him and resting wholly on His sacrifice.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood as figurative of feeding on Him by faith (John 6:35, 47, 63).
- Jesus’ own interpretation: the flesh is no help; His words are spirit and life (John 6:63).
- A clear rejection of transubstantiation and any literal eating of Christ’s physical body.
- The parallel of “eating” with “coming” and “believing” throughout the discourse.
- The Lord’s Supper as a memorial and communion, distinct from this discourse yet consistent with feeding on Christ by faith (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Discussion Prompts

- How does Jesus Himself interpret eating His flesh and drinking His blood?
- Why should we understand this figuratively rather than literally?
- What does it mean, practically, to feed on Christ by faith?

Question 8

Student Question:

When many turned back, Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” (v. 67). What might tempt you to turn back from following Jesus, and what helps you keep following when His words are hard?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the sobering moment when “many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him” (v. 66), and Jesus asks the Twelve, “Do you want to go

away as well?" (v. 67). The hard sayings of Jesus sift the crowd, and the question comes to every follower.

Help students name what tempts them to turn back. For some it is a teaching of Jesus that is hard to accept or obey. For others it is suffering, disappointment, the cost of discipleship, or the slow erosion of drift. The crowd left because Jesus would not be the bread-king they wanted; we can leave when He will not be the Christ we wanted either.

Take the danger seriously. This passage, like others in John, shows that people who were called disciples can fall away. Following Jesus is not always easy, and not everyone who starts continues. This is a sober reminder that perseverance matters and that we must keep coming to Christ, not presume on a past decision.

Then point to what helps us stay, which the next question develops. For now, ask each student to honestly name what most tempts them to turn back, and to bring it into the open. Naming the temptation is the first step to resisting it. The Christ who asks "will you also go away?" also holds out the words of eternal life to those who stay.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reality that disciples can and do turn back (John 6:66).
- Hard sayings of Jesus as a sifting of true and false discipleship.
- The necessity of perseverance rather than presuming on a past decision.
- Honesty about the temptations that pull us away from Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What most tempts you to turn back from following Jesus?
- How do the hard sayings of Jesus reveal what is in our hearts?
- What is one temptation to turn back that you need to name and resist?

Question 9

Student Question:

This chapter presses the hardest question of discipleship. Many disciples grumbled, "This is a hard saying" and "turned back and no longer walked with him" (vv. 60, 66), while Peter confessed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (v. 68). What does this passage teach about the nature of true, persevering faith, the danger of a faith that follows only for benefits, and the reality that disciples can fall away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries major doctrinal weight, gathering the chapter's climax. Two responses to the hard sayings of Jesus stand side by side: many disciples "turned back and no longer walked with him" (v. 66), while Peter confessed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of

eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (vv. 68–69). The contrast defines true and false discipleship.

Draw out the nature of true, persevering faith from Peter’s confession. Peter does not claim to understand everything; the saying was hard for him too. But he clings to Christ because there is nowhere else to go and no one else with the words of eternal life. True faith is not the absence of struggle; it is the refusal to leave Christ even when His words are hard. It perseveres.

Expose the faith that follows only for benefits. The departing disciples illustrate a faith attracted by loaves and miracles but unwilling to follow when Jesus demands more than He gives. This is the sign-faith and bread-faith the chapter has been exposing all along. It does not last, because it was never anchored in Christ Himself.

Address the reality that disciples can fall away, since this passage teaches it plainly. People who were genuinely walking with Jesus turned back and “no longer walked with him.” Scripture consistently warns that believers must continue in faith and can fall away if they do not (Hebrews 3:12–14; John 15:6). This is not “once saved, always saved”; it is a sober call to persevere. The good news is that Christ holds out the words of eternal life, and those who keep coming to Him, like Peter, are kept. Help students resolve, with Peter, that there is nowhere else worth going.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- True, persevering faith that clings to Christ even when His words are hard (John 6:68–69).
- The faith that follows only for benefits, which does not last.
- The reality that disciples can fall away and the call to persevere (Hebrews 3:12–14).
- A rejection of presumption that endurance does not matter.
- Christ’s words of eternal life as the anchor for those who stay.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Peter’s confession teach about the nature of true faith?
- How is a faith that follows only for benefits different?
- What does this passage teach about the need to persevere?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over this chapter, from “I am the bread of life” to Peter’s confession. What is one specific way Jesus is forming you to feed on Him by faith and to keep following Him, even when His words are hard?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers the chapter into two acts of formation: feeding on Christ by faith, and continuing to follow Him when His words are hard. Both are the marks of a disciple shaped by this chapter.

Help students see that feeding on Christ is a daily practice, not a one-time event. We feed on Him by coming to Him in His word, by trusting His sacrifice, by depending on Him for the soul's life. Just as the body needs daily bread, the soul needs daily feeding on Christ. Ask students what regular feeding on Christ looks like in their lives.

Then connect feeding to staying. Those who feed on Christ are sustained to keep following. The disciples who fell away were not feeding on the Bread of Life; they were chasing the loaves. Continuing faith is nourished faith. The way to persevere is to keep coming to Christ and feeding on Him.

Press for specifics. Ask each student to name one concrete way they will feed on Christ this week and one way they will keep following when His words are hard. Close with Peter's confession as the heart's resolve: when following is hard and others turn back, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Let students leave anchored in Christ Himself.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Feeding on Christ by faith as a daily practice.
- Continuing faith as nourished faith.
- Perseverance sustained by coming to Christ, not by chasing His gifts.
- Peter's confession as the resolve of a persevering disciple.

Discussion Prompts

- What does feeding on Christ by faith look like in your daily life?
- How does feeding on Him help you keep following when His words are hard?
- What is one way you will feed on Christ and stay close this week?