
THE FAMILY TABLE

Part 3 - Come and Eat

The Family Table, representative of the church, is a table where people come to get fed. Gathered around the table are three types of chairs. One chair represents the mature believer. Another chair represents those whose faith is new, and the final chair represents those who are exploring Christianity.

Bread from Heaven

There are two incidents in the Bible where God has sent bread from heaven.

The first was in the Old Testament - Exodus 16:1-36

God's people left Egypt and were on the run from their former oppressors. God performed miracle after miracle to allow them to escape. After some time, they began to grumble at the conditions of desert living and wished for their old life as slaves. In nothing less than another miracle, God provided food from heaven - manna. They ate of this for the next 40 years in the desert.

"When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was." Exodus 16:15

The second reference of bread from heaven is in the New Testament - John 6:25-59

"I am the bread of life." John 6:35

Twenty-four hours earlier a large crowd of 5,000 had been miraculously fed by Jesus with five small loaves and two fishes. Jesus knows they aren't thinking about spiritual matters but another demonstration that would fill their physical hunger. Jesus knew they were amazed at the miracle that filled their physical hunger. Yet, Jesus turned the conversation to their deeper spiritual hunger.

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. John 6:27

"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." John 6:29

The work Jesus is referring to has nothing to do with earning our salvation – that can't be done (Ephesians 2:8-9). The work is to believe, to have faith and trust that God has done the work for us. To believe means to do with Jesus what we do with bread. Jesus is saying that, like bread and like digestion, we take it, and it becomes a part of us. We must do that with Him, the bread of life.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes a lot of "I am" statements.

- + "I am the light of the world." Truth that illuminates our path
- + "I am the gate." He didn't say, "I am just 'a' gate" He said, "I am 'the' gate."
- + "I am the way and the truth and the life." That means he's the meaning and the message we all need.
- + "I am the vine." Branches can't be branches unless they are connected to a vine. Life in God is because we are connected and bear fruit in Jesus.
- + "I am the bread of life". He is the source of life that will satisfy, not physical hunger, but true soulish hunger forever and ever."

Jesus clearly teaches that relationship with God comes through Him. He is the means in which we come to the Father, the truth is in Him, He is the source of life.

Connecting the Old and the New

Jesus teaches in John chapter 6 that He is the new manna, an eternal manna that once eaten provides life for eternity (John 6:30-35)

Moses - God raining manna down from heaven and Jesus being the bread of life. The foreshadowing of the lamb and the blood on the doorpost and

Jesus is the fulfilment of all of that. We're in spiritual bondage just like God's people in Egypt and Jesus is our deliverer. If we feed on the bread of life, we can be set free and made whole from this stranglehold of sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God. He shed His blood on the cross for your sins and mine—something that's totally outside of us. He gave His body as a living sacrifice so we could be free.

Manna came down from heaven in darkness. Jesus entered this world that was darkened by sin. He entered this world as a light, as the gate, as the way, the truth, and the life—as the source – the bread of life (John 6:44).

The Aroma of Fresh Bread

Do you know why you're here? The aroma from the bread of life. That's why you're here. If you're here, investigating Christianity, you're here because of the aroma. It has led you here. It has drawn you here. That aroma might express itself like:

- + A sense of community, these people are caring and loving
- + Or it might be you experience peace when you're here
- + Or that message makes sense to me and stirs something deep in me
- + Or you were prayed for and experienced the power of God at work

We can't afford just to smell the bread of life; we need to eat of the bread of life. When we surrender our desires, our plans, our strength, our everything to Jesus, that's how we take the bread of life.

Come and Eat

In John 6:51, Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." We are what we eat? That's true physically and also spiritually. "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

We receive Him within, just like we receive food and drink. Jesus goes on to say this very thing (John 6:53-56). Jesus talks figuratively about a foreshadowing of His death, burial, and resurrection

Maybe you are investigating the claims of Christ and are yet to make a decision to eat of the bread of life. Perhaps you realise there's a gnawing awareness that there's a hunger down deep that's never been satisfied. You need the bread of real life.

*God, I need to eat of the bread of life. I have been trying to do things my own way and have realised that I'm still hungry. I realise that I have sinned against you, and I need your forgiveness. Please forgive me. Jesus, I give you my dreams, my ambitions, my mind, my body, my relationships. Everything, Jesus I give to you. You're the source of life that will satisfy my hunger. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may live for you.
In Jesus name I pray. Amen*

The Table is Set – The Bread is Served

The primary two-fold purpose of the church is to build believers and serve those yet to decide to follow Christ. God's called us to gather around His table, to feed on the bread of life. It's God's great desire that we all come into a loving and intimate relationship with Him through Jesus, that one day we would all gather around the table in heaven at the wedding supper of the Lamb. Our church should be a place where no one stands alone—where nobody hides – where nobody drifts – a place where everyone can find a seat at the Table.

When we have crossed the line and made a decision for Christ, there comes a time when we all need to push back from the table after being fed and get involved in serving others.