

The Gospel of John John 6

Memory Verse: *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35 ESV).

Background Helps:

John 6 is the longest chapter in the Gospel of John (71 verses)—a challenge to teach in one lesson—but the whole chapter is a unit with the theme of Jesus as the bread of life. Here we have an example of a sign, the feeding of the 5000, followed by Jesus’ discourse on that sign, explaining his identity as the bread of life. The two miracles in this chapter—the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on the water—are the only miracles in John’s Gospel that are also found in the Synoptic Gospels. (For Jesus walking on the water, see Matt. 14:22-33 and Mark 6:45-51.) In fact, the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle of Christ that is included in all four Gospels (see Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; and Luke 9:10-17).

Lesson Helps:

If there is any lesson in which it would seem appropriate to bring refreshments to class, it would be this one on John 6! Bring both food and drink. Be careful not to trivialize the teaching through this use of refreshments, but the object lesson of eating and drinking fits very well with our memory verse (John 6:35) and the passage as a whole.

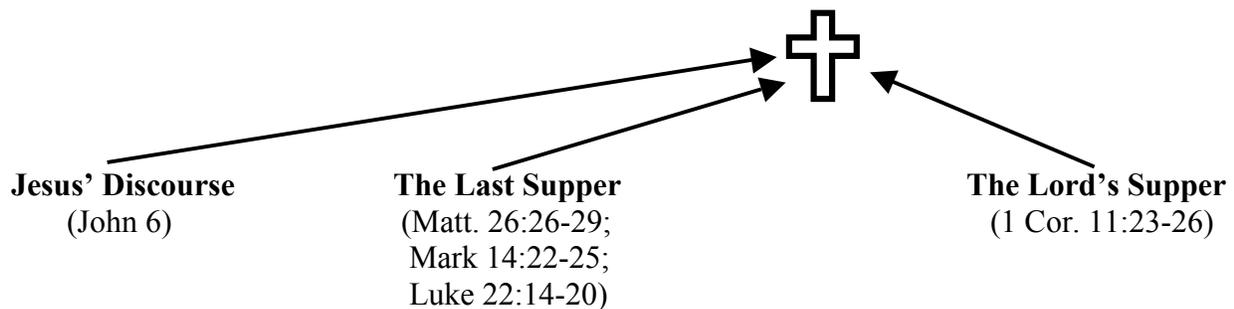
A possible lesson aim: My students will learn about Jesus’ miracle of feeding the 5000 and his discourse on the bread of life, so that that they will come to him and believe in him. Once again we are suggesting an evangelistic aim, in keeping with the purpose of John’s Gospel (John 20:30-31).

A possible lesson plan:

1. Hook: Your refreshments!
2. Book:
 - a. Tell the story of the feeding of the 5000 while the class has the refreshments.
 - b. Select key verses from Jesus’ teaching in John 6:22-71 to show how Jesus is the bread of life, for example, verses 27-29, 33-35, 41-42, 47-58.
 - c. Review the memory verse.
3. Look: Explain to your class how eating and drinking are equivalent to coming to and believing in Christ. (See additional note below.)
4. Took: Invite class members, in prayer, to actually come to Jesus and believe in him for eternal life.

Additional note: Verses 52-58 might cause a problem to some. Does Jesus mean we are literally to eat his flesh and drink his blood (as some churches teach)? No, Christ is speaking in metaphors to graphically explain what it means to come to him and believe in him. His reference to his flesh and blood points us to his death on the cross through which we receive eternal life.

Compare the following expressions: coming to Christ and believing in him in John 6:35 corresponds to feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood in 6:56. Even more explicitly, looking to the Son and believing in him in John 6:40 corresponds to feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood in 6:54. These designated responses to Christ (looking to and believing in Christ in v. 40 and feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood in v. 54) produce the same results: the person will “have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Eating his flesh and drinking his blood are powerful figures of speech for coming to (or looking on) and believing in the Son, who was crucified for our sins. These metaphors show that believing in Christ is something more than mere intellectual assent to truths about Jesus. Believing in him means personally receiving Jesus and the benefits of his death as our *spiritual* nourishment and as the basis for our hope of eternal life and future resurrection. The following diagram might also be of help:



The discourse in John 6, the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels, and the institution of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 all point to the same reality: the atoning death of our Lord and the necessity of our believing in his atonement. Thus the similarities between all these passages.

Home Assignment:

📖 Read: John 7

📖 Memorize: John 7:43