

John Chapter 6

GOD'S SPECIALTY: IMPOSSIBILITIES

Read John 6:1-21

Impossibilities. Everyone can list a few. You can't make a crab walk straight. You can't get blood out of a turnip.

Yet Jesus knit His apostolic purse out of frayed threads of local fishermen and tax gatherers; He got wine out of ordinary tap water; and He made a man, thirty-eight years lame, to walk. Impossible? The word wasn't even in Christ's vocabulary.

How about your vocabulary? Do words like can't...won't work...impossible leap from your lips? Has a pessimistic outlook imprinted these words in your mind? What's your list of impossibilities? Your marriage, your job, your finances, your children, your health, your future?

Many times the issue of impossibility depends on our perspective. For example, to a child, many things seem impossible, like baking or driving. But from an adult vantage point, these things are not only possible but can be handled with relative ease. Let's try to understand the impossible by looking at it from two different viewpoints, the human and the divine.

- Why did such a great crowd of people follow Jesus to this place (verse 2)

- What was the test that Jesus was using on Philip? How might the wedding at Cana (2:1-11) be a factor in this test?

- From their responses, what grades would you give Philip and Andrew?(vv7-9) What is the significance of the fact that there was more left over after the feeding than there was food to start with?

Looking for Loaves in All the Wrong Places

Philip sees the impossible circumstances surrounding them and looks at the budget. Andrew sees the same circumstances and checks the pantry. But neither of them thinks to look to the Lord. Seems strange, doesn't it? Particularly after they have seen Him change water into wine.

But then, don't we respond in much the same way? We've seen Jesus work miracles in our lives. We've seen Him change the old water of our lives into new wine. We've seen Him give new legs of faith to our lame spiritual bodies. Yet when faced with impossible circumstances, how soon we forget the power of our God. The next time you're faced with the impossible, look first to Jesus, the bread of life, who can do "exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think."

Andrew: A humble submission of effort

The Gospel record sets Andrew in sharp counterpoint to Philip. Andrew says: *"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"* (John 6:9).

- From the miracle Jesus performed, what did the crowd conclude about Him? (v. 14)
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- Did their understanding lead to appropriate action? (v. 15) Why or why not?
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- The gospel calls this event a "sign" (v. 14). How many signs did the apostle John record before this one, and what were they?
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- When Jesus left the crowd behind, "He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone" (v. 15). Why do you think He didn't take His disciples with Him? What could He have been doing?
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THE WATER WALK

Describe what happened after it became dark and Jesus still hadn't returned to His disciples (vv. 16–21).

Faith Alive

When you go through stormy times, like most people, you probably get scared. You may also handle your fears by drawing on your own resources. Although that's normal, too, it's not the best way to go. This biblical account suggests a better way. What is it? How can you apply it the next time you feel afraid?

THE LIVING BREAD Read John 6:25-59

From John 6:22 to the end of the chapter, Jesus reveals a great deal about who He is, His mission, and what people can receive from Him. One of His revelations—"a hard saying"—leads to a significant drop in the numbers of His followers. He conveys these truths to a large crowd made up of four distinct groups.

- Why are the crowds still searching for Jesus (vv. 24-26)?
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- How does Jesus' response to their question show the difference between his interests and theirs? What does the crowd ask Jesus to do in order that they can believe him? What is their real interest? How does Jesus use their interest in food to illustrate what he wants them to understand?
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- What are the similarities and differences between manna and the "bread of life" (v35)?
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- What claims does Jesus make in verses 35-40?
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- What do these claims emphasize about his being the bread of life?
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- What part is played by God and by the people in the process of coming to know Jesus (vv.44-45)
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From the passage as a whole, what does Jesus mean by “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood” (compare v40 with v54)? How does the image of eating and drinking clarify what he means by believing in him?

I. The food which perishes

- A. What food is this ...? Discuss. Consider Ecc. 1:17; 2:1-2, 3-11
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II. The food which endures

- A. What food is this ... ? Consider Mt 4:4; 1 Peter 1:22-25; John 6:31-35
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TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? Read John 6:67-69

- What teaching do Jesus' followers find so unacceptable? (6: 54-56)
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- How has their attitude changed since verses 14-15?
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- Many of His disciples left Him - cf. John 6:66 -- Prompting Jesus to ask the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" - John 6:67
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This question is one that we do well to ask today

For the answers to our true purpose and mission in life, to find the words of eternal life, "To Whom Shall We Go?" There are many places we could turn to, indeed many do turn to, but they are not the right ones. Give examples.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Andrew is aware of the realism of the situation: his offering is pathetically small – but he makes the offering anyway. How inspiring is Jesus' response to Andrew: he takes the tiny provision that Andrew has found and uses it as the very basis of the miraculous provision! What an excellent metaphor this forms for the gifts that we have to bring before our Father! At all times all that we have to offer is as five loaves and two small fish to feed a multitude. But notice how Andrew's offering is neither mocked nor even dismissed by the Lord for its inadequacy. Rather it is taken by Jesus and used as the basis for the miracle of provision from the hand of God. It is not that God *required* such an offering from which to work, but it is manifestly apparent that God *desires* us to make such offerings in His service, and the miracles He provides (as on this occasion) often utilise those things that we bring to Him, to encourage us in being fruitful towards Him (John 15:2).

I. TO WHOM WE COULD GO

A. THE OPINIONS OF THE MAJORITY...?

1. Many people look to whatever the majority believes
 - a. E.g., what their peers think
 - b. E.g., whatever the latest polls indicate
2. But consider the words of Jesus, in describing the end of the majority - Mt 7:13-14
3. If you followed the majority...
 - a. In Noah's day, you would have perished in the flood
 - b. In Joshua's day, you would have perished in the wilderness

B. THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF HUMAN WISDOM...?

1. Many feel that human wisdom can lead them to truth and life
 - a. Especially that pronounced by educated professors
 - b. Or that pronounced by "pop" psychologists on talk shows
2. But God's thoughts and ways are not always our own - cf. Isa 55:8-9. In fact, God has chosen to save man in a manner specifically designed to confound those who depend solely upon human wisdom- cf. 1 Co 1:18-29

C. THE DICTATES OF OUR CONSCIENCE...?

1. "Let your conscience be your guide" is the motto of many
2. But our conscience cannot always be reliable
 - a. Paul had served God with a good conscience throughout his life - Acts 23:1 - even at a time when he was persecuting Christians! - cf. Ac 26:9-11
3. Our conscience is like a clock, which works properly only if set properly

D. THE DIRECTION OF OUR FEELINGS...?

1. This is often where many people turn
 - a. Who go by whatever "feels right" and
 - b. Who place stock in things "better felt than told"
 2. Yet the Bible declares the danger of trusting in "feelings"
 - a. "There is a way which seems right...but its end is the way of death." - Pro 14:12
 - b. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..." - Pro 28:26
- [None of these should be the ultimate source to where we turn if we are looking for the words of eternal life. As confessed by Peter, there is only One...]

II. TO WHOM WE SHOULD GO

A. JESUS CHRIST, SON OF THE LIVING GOD...!

1. As Peter confessed in our text - John 6:68-69
2. He is the one who provides "food which endures to everlasting life" - John 6:27,35,40
3. He is the way, the truth and the life - John 14:6
4. Upon this One has God "set His seal" - John 6:27
 - a. I.e., confirmed Him to be the source of eternal life
 - b. Through the miracles, and ultimately His resurrection – John 5:36; Ro 1:4