

## Jesus said 'I am the Bread of Life'. John 6 v25-61

<sup>25</sup> When the people found Jesus on the other side of the lake, they said to him, "Teacher, when did you get here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: you are looking for me because you ate the bread and had all you wanted, not because you understood my miracles. <sup>27</sup> **Do not work for food that spoils**; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life. This is the food which the Son of Man will give you, because God, the Father, has put his mark of approval on him." <sup>28</sup> So they asked him, "What can we do in order to do what God wants us to do?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "What God wants you to do is to believe in the one he sent."

<sup>30</sup> They replied, "**What miracle will you perform** so that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" <sup>31</sup> **Our ancestors ate manna in the desert**, just as the scripture says, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> "I am telling you the truth," Jesus said. "What Moses gave you was not<sup>[c]</sup> the bread from heaven; **it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven.**" <sup>33</sup> For the bread that God gives is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> "Sir," they asked him, "give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> **"I am the bread of life,"** Jesus told them. "Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> Now, I told you that you have seen me but will not believe. <sup>37</sup> Everyone whom my Father gives me will come to me. I will never turn away anyone who comes to me, <sup>38</sup> because I have come down from heaven to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And it is the will of him who sent me that I should not lose any of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For what my Father wants is that all who see the Son and believe in him should have eternal life. And I will raise them to life on the last day."

<sup>41</sup> The people started grumbling about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> So they said, "This man is Jesus son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How, then, does he now say he came down from heaven?" <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> People cannot come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me; and I will raise them to life on the last day. <sup>45</sup> The prophets wrote, 'Everyone will be taught by God.' Anyone who hears the Father and learns from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> This does not mean that anyone has seen the Father; he who is from God is the only one who has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> I am telling you the truth: he who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. <sup>50</sup> But the bread that comes down from heaven is of such a kind that whoever eats it will not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live."

<sup>52</sup> This started an angry argument among them. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am telling you the truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is the real food; my blood is the real drink. <sup>56</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them. <sup>57</sup> The living Father sent me, and because of him I live also. In the same way whoever eats me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> **This, then, is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread that your ancestors ate, but then later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever.**"

<sup>59</sup> Jesus said this as he taught in the synagogue in Capernaum. <sup>60</sup> Many of his followers heard this and said, "This teaching is too hard. Who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup> Without being told, Jesus knew that they were grumbling about this, so he said to them, "Does this make you want to give up? **(John 6v25-61)**

**Exodus 16v11-20** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> "I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. So tell them, 'Tonight you will eat meat. And in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know you can trust the LORD, your God.'" <sup>13</sup> That evening, flocks of quail came and filled the camp, and in the morning dew lay on the ground all around it. <sup>14</sup> After the dew was gone, something like thin flakes of frost was on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, "What is that?" because they did not know what it was. So Moses told them, "This is the food the LORD is giving you to eat. <sup>16</sup> The LORD says, 'Each of you should gather what you need, a basket<sup>[e]</sup> of manna for everyone in your family.'" <sup>17</sup> So that is what the Israelites did. Some people gathered a large amount, some people gathered a little. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured what they had gathered, there was no shortage and there was none left over. Everyone gathered just what they needed.

<sup>19</sup> Moses told them, "Don't save that food to eat the next day." <sup>20</sup> But some of the people did not obey Moses. They saved their food for the next day. But worms got into the food and it began to stink. Moses was angry with the people who did this

**Deut 8v3** He made you go hungry, and then he gave you manna to eat, food that you and your ancestors had never eaten before. He did this to teach you that you must not depend on bread alone to sustain you, but on everything that the LORD says.

### The physical and spiritual

Jesus said I am the Bread of Life.

When Jesus taught he often used physical examples that people could easily relate to, and then use this physical example to explain a spiritual truth. How else could you do it? When he was with the Samaritan woman drawing water at the well, he described himself as the 'life-giving water'. After he was reunited with some of the 5000+ who had been fed from just 5 pitta bread and two sardines, he told them he was the 'bread of life'.

Jesus is regarded as the second person of the Trinity. In other words God has these 3 natures, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and Jesus is the second one. John's Gospel starts by painting a beautiful picture of this 2<sup>nd</sup> person in the Godhead, as being the creator of all things physical and spiritual. We are told that all eternity he has been directly in the presence of his Father God, except for about 33 years when he had to be emptied of his divinity, and be born as a baby human on earth. Then as we see Jesus mature in age, he becomes more aware of who he really is, and we see him continually seeking the presence of his Father, reconnecting with him in prayer, and being filled regularly by the Holy Ghost to do his Father's will.

As I was reading Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, which we are looking at today. It got me thinking that if he had always existed in some form or another, then what was Jesus doing during the Old Testament times, such as when Moses was on earth?

Well, I heard this one story. Moses and Jesus and another were playing golf one day. The first hole was a Par 3 but the green was the other side of a small lake from the fairway. Moses took the wrong club and it landed short, rolling directly towards the lake. Quickly Moses raised his club, the water parted and it rolled right through and onto the green. Next, Jesus hit a longer shot and it hit the water, but he called out an instruction and the ball bounced off the surface and onto the green. Jesus then ignores the footbridge and casually walks across the surface of the water to his golf ball. The third golfer, also hit his ball straight into the lake and it sunk. It looked like a lost ball and he would need to lose a stroke, but then after a couple of minutes a toad jumped up onto a lily pad with the golf ball in its mouth. Then an eagle swept down and flew off with the toad in its talons. The toad croaked and released the golf ball, which fell back to earth directly onto the green where it bounced twice and went straight into the hole. Moses turned to Jesus and said, I **hate** playing golf with your Father.

That's clearly not biblical because golf wasn't invented until about 1500 AD whereas Moses was about 1500 BC. However there are some intriguing links in this chapter of John's gospel linking Jesus with Moses.

### **The New Moses**

Moses had charge of well over a million Israelites who he had led out of Egypt but then because of their disobedience to God, they had to wander the desert for 40 years. They became very hungry, and started moaning at Moses that they were better off in Egypt. Moses talks to God and when the Israelites got up from bed they then find morning dew all around the camp. Nothing unusual there perhaps, but when it evaporates off under the morning sun, it leaves behind a strange, delicate, thin and flaky substance. They were instructed to gather it up, about 2 litres per family, and then they could boil it or make bread from it. It had a taste like biscuits made with honey. What is it? The people asked, so they called it Mannah (which sounded like the Hebrew for what is it?). It was miracle bread from God to feed them and keep them going. Amazing stuff, but then the people got very thirsty and complained again. Moses prayed once more, and this time was directed to strike a rock with his staff, and water gushed from it, enough for the all the 12 tribes to drink from. So God then provides this miracle food provision for them every day.

The Israelites were only allowed though to gather enough bread for one day, unless it was the day before the Sabbath. If they kept it longer, it would smell rotten, and be full of worms. I think even the worms were a miracle, because they were out in the desert, where you don't get worms who need moist soil or moist sand. God is teaching his people to be dependent upon him every day.

So in Exodus there is this image of Moses teaching from a Mountain and then seeing God miraculously provide his people with food in the desolate place. Jesus does the same, he goes up a hill to a remote place, where a crowd of 5000 thousand men, plus woman & children, find him. The population of Nazareth was only 200 tops, so he is now building up this big regional following. Then Jesus miraculously provides enough food for them all to eat from a boys picnic hamper.

You see the crowds want to follow a leader who can do miracles, provide free food, and political deliverance from their oppressors, just like Moses did. It meets their physical needs and ambitions. So after Jesus does the miracle of feeding the 5000, and the crowd connect him in their minds and ambitions with Moses, they turn into an excited mob. They want to seize Jesus and make him King by force, on the spot. Jesus did do the miracle and provided the food but was not looking to overthrow the Romans like the people wanted. There was a much more evil kingdom that he had in his sights to defeat. That of Satan's.

So Jesus manages to escape the crowd and then dismisses his disciples, telling them to get back in the boat and go without him back across lake Galilee. He then does what he loves, and what he needs, and that is to spend the night in prayer, in the presence of his Father.

### **The new Joshua**

Jesus spends all night downloading the spirit and though he has not slept is re-energised by the time that he eventually hears his Fathers voice, telling him to take a walk on the lake. The disciples have been caught in the large waves of a sudden storm, and are exhausted after spending all night fighting to stay afloat, and not being able to get to shore. Jesus steps out onto the turbulent lake, and finds out that he can walk on it, then he treks about 4 miles through rough waters to the boat where he scares the life out of his disciples, who think they are seeing a ghost. It is another amazing miracle which then had the people comparing Jesus to Joshua.

Why because following the death of Moses, Joshua was responsible for leading the Hebrew people into their promised land. The final journey onto the promised land looked impossible though because they had to get across the mighty river Jordan. Joshua sent the priests ahead of him who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant. When they reached the water's edge and stepped into it the river upstream stopped flowing and piled up back a way, so that the river emptied in front of them and the priests went to the middle of the river bed, and waited whilst all the million plus people of the 12 tribes passed by onto the other side. Once the priests stepped across too, then the Jordan flooded back into place and carried on flowing as it always had done. God's chosen nation could now go on and conquer the strategic oasis town of Jericho and finally start taking up their place in the 'Promised Land'.

Jesus walking across the water would be paralleled to Joshua crossing over the river Jordan, which actually flows in and out of Lake Galilee. Also the name Yeshua, which we translate as Jesus, was simply a more modern shortened version of Yehoshua which is the Latin for the Hebrew version of the name Joshua. It means Yahweh is Salvation, or God is your Help. So Jesus and Joshua is essentially the same name. Could this be the new Joshua, who crosses the mighty waters, who leads the Jewish nation into a new era of prosperity with their own land and their own rule?

### **The hidden miracle**

Then there was a third miracle, but if you blink you miss it. They still had about 10 miles to go on the lake to get to Capernaum where they were going. However when they pulled Jesus into the boat, they found that the boat had immediately appeared on the shore at Capernaum (v21). The

boat had covered the 10 miles in an instant. This, whilst perplexing for the disciples, must have come as a huge relief as they would have been exhausted by their full and exciting day followed by a night battling the elements. It is a curious happening, but John includes this miracle for a purpose.

### **What the miracles point to**

Jesus never did miracles to show how clever he was, or to get publicity. Many were filled with compassion for an individual, but they were all signs to who he really was.

These three miracles all point to Jesus as being Lord of all things. He could do creation miracles as with the multiplication of bread. He could show mastery over the elements, by walking on the water in a storm. He could control time and space by transporting a boat to the shore, 10 miles in an instant. None of these are more difficult than any other to Jesus, when he is acting for his Father, empowered by the Spirit.

Together the miracles are clear signs to Jesus being divine. John is building up the claims, arguments and evidence in his gospel of Jesus having the Lordship over everything. He is the one to put your faith in, to trust your life with.

### **The crowd reappears**

Jesus is soon off the boat in Capernaum where he has his home base. Some of the crowd that were fed follow Jesus into the synagogue. The three miracles, are the run-up to this teaching and dialogue that he has with the crowd in the synagogue. So lets look at these verses in John 6.

V25-26: When the people found Jesus on the other side of the lake, they said to him, "Teacher, when did you get here?". Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: you are looking for me because you ate the bread and had all you wanted, not because you understood my miracles

The people clearly want more, and they want to know what to do to keep in with God. But Jesus accuses them of seeing the miracles but not seeing the signs. He doesn't just want them to be fed, and be amazed or see him as only another Moses, or only Joshua, but to work out that he is Lord of all.

V27: **Do not work for food that spoils; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life. This is the food which the Son of Man will give you, because God, the Father, has put his mark of approval on him.**"

In their culture people offered worked using the fair-value exchange system. A carpenter might mend a door, and get paid in figs and grapes. Jesus tells them not to work for food that perishes. You wouldn't want to just be paid with goods that will perish. A weeks salary in just cakes is going to be no good for you. You couldn't save anything or put anything aside. Instead Jesus says, work for food that lasts for ever. This is the food I give you, because I have my Father Gods approval.

V28-29: **So they asked him, "What can we do in order to do what God wants us to do?"<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "What God wants you to do is to believe in the one he sent."**

So they are asking how do we as good Jews together, keep faithful to our God of Israel. Jesus is responding by telling them, you keep the covenant relationship with God by believing in the one that is truly representative of God, i.e. himself, and follow his teaching, and not that of the Pharisees or temple rulers who did not truly represent Gods heart and purposes.

**V30-31: They replied, “What miracle will you perform so that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, just as the scripture says, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”**

Their pious question for being faithful God now evaporates into their true purpose of wanting more miracles as a sign of who Jesus is. They even use Moses as a challenge to Jesus, as if they are saying, Moses fed our ancestors for 40 years, you just managed one meal so far, what else are you going to for us, to make us believe you. Jesus is in the third year of his ministry, countless people have been miraculously healed, he’s raised the dead, turned water into wine, stilled the storm, walked on water. What more proof do they need. It is their attitude to Jesus which shows him that they are seeing the miracles but not reading the signs. They are not applying the spiritual truths to the physical miracles. It must have been so frustrating for them, and he starts by correcting them about Moses.

**V32: “I am telling you the truth,” Jesus said. “What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven.**

Jesus sets the record straight. It was not Moses that gave the people bread it was his Father in heaven that provided it.

**<sup>33</sup> For the bread that God gives is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

Those with Moses ate the Manna, had their physical needs met, but they are all dead now, it had no eternal properties. There is another bread though that does last, a bread of life, and if you have that bread you will live forever.

**<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they asked him, “give us this bread always.”**

The crowd want this bread, because if it lasts forever, they haven’t got to keep making their own bread. Give it to us then, and we can have it every day. They still haven’t understood, so Jesus makes it clear to them.

**<sup>35</sup> “I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty.**

I AM, said Jesus. Pious Jews were always shocked when he started like that, because that was God’s name for himself ‘ I AM who I AM’, and to claim to be God was the sin of blasphemy for which you could be stoned. Its why they wanted to kill him. Jesus says ‘I am the bread of life’. It’s me. I am the bread from heaven. I am the manna. I am the one that brings life to the world. You want signs, and I have given you them, but you didn’t understand them because you don’t really want to follow me, you don’t want to follow the truth, you just want a free lunch!

You are looking for miracles, you are looking for a political leader, a new king, some-one that will overthrow the Romans, and think that will satisfy you. But it is Me, Jesus, that can satisfy the ultimate hunger and thirst of human existence. Only I can truly satisfy you.

## **The Samaritan Woman**

It was a shocking claim, to hear Jesus say that he had come down from heaven, and was the Bread of Life. These guys were from the same region as Jesus, some of them knew his carpenter Father, Joseph, and they moaned about it.

John's gospel also has a parallel story to this, when he meets a woman from the tribe of Samaritans whom the Jews detested. She was drawing water from a well in Samaria when Jesus was passing through the region. He spoke to her and asked her for water, which was shocking because she was a woman and a Samaritan. Self-respecting Jewish males would avoid any interaction. She tried to challenge him over a common religious dispute between the Jews and Samaritans, but he saw into her life and told her off all the men she'd been with and how she wasn't even married to her current chap.

Jesus said to her these words..

**Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John 4v13-14)**

She was amazed with the words of Jesus and went off to tell everyone. That passage then goes on to tell us that they believed the woman's testimony, and many more in Samaria believed in Jesus because of His word. Miracles were not enough for some of the Jewish Israelites, who had seen the signs of Jesus, the great miracles, and still did not believe. They wanted more – "look Moses did this, so what are you going to do now". Yet the 'Word of God' was enough for the Samaritan Israelites for them to believe in Jesus.

### **Was Jesus with Moses?**

John's Gospel starts by saying that Jesus is the Word, the ultimate reasoning behind everything, and he is the source of all creation and life (i.e. the Bread). So let's ask that question, if as John tells us that Jesus did exist in some form right from the beginning of time, then what was the second person of the Trinity doing at the time of Moses.

If he is the source of all life, then surely in some way, in some form he was there providing the Manna each morning to stop their hunger, and in some way he was there at the rock, providing the water to stop the thirst of over a million Israelites. If that's true, then it wasn't Moses doing the miracle, it was Jesus.

One detail in Exodus struck me as I contemplated this. God said to Moses that the people must make him a sacred tent so that his presence could live amongst them. This was the Tabernacle, like a tented temple they carried around place to place with them. Pretty much everything in it was either pure gold, or made from acacia wood and then plated in gold. There were just two natural substances mentioned in the tabernacle. Olive oil for the lamps, to ensure there is Light. Then bread. It is called the 'Bread of the Presence' and had to be on the table at all times in the tent.

I got thinking about this bread, the 'bread of the presence'. Could Jesus in some way in his spiritual form be in or with the bread? It's sat there in all the golden splendour continually in the presence of God. Where else would Jesus want to be than with his Father in his presence? In his earthly form as Jesus grew up, he learnt more and more about who he really was, and the thing he desired most throughout his ministry was to be in his Father's presence.

V51 Jesus said ' I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live for ever. The bread that I give him is my flesh.

V55 My flesh is the real food, my blood is the real drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them.

Remember the teaching method is to take physical examples and use them to open up spiritual truths. Many of the followers of Jesus found this teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood too hard, they turned back and wouldn't go with him anymore (John 6v66). I think the difficulty they had was in applying the spiritual truth to the physical example.

It is why the communion meal is so powerful, as we physically take the bread and wine, we reflect on his body broken for us, and his blood shed for us. As we do this we are changed spiritually. We confess our wrongs, and we devour his words of salvation, and we drink in his forgiveness. We take into our body the spiritual truths that the physical elements represent.

The catholic tradition of transubstantiation is that as one takes the bread and wine at their Eucharist or Communion, then the elements in a mysterious way disappear in you and are replaced by the actual flesh and blood of Jesus, so you are physically eating and drinking Jesus. Another Christian doctrine developed alongside this is called Consubstantiation which holds that during the Communion the body and blood of Christ are present *alongside* the substance of the bread and wine, which remain and don't disappear. These are different interpretations of the same words that Jesus spoke, and have caused centuries of division.

However if we see in communion the *physical* elements being signs that point to the *spiritual* truths, as would be the norm in the teaching of Jesus, then it is easier to grasp. So as we take in the physical elements of bread and wine, we also take it in the spiritual elements from heaven too. One of our early Christian fathers, the second century Greek cleric, Irenaeus of Lyons, upheld this and said that the bread and the wine consisted of two elements, earthly and heavenly, in other words the physical and the spiritual. So as we take in bread and wine and focus on Jesus, then we take into our bodies the spiritual benefits of everything Jesus has done for us on the cross, and everything he wants to do for us day by day. This includes his mercy, his grace, his forgiveness, our salvation, his love, his peace, his provision etc.

### **Feeding every day**

Communion is one thing with its confession and forgiveness, but we need to eat both physically and spiritually every day. So how much food do we need.

I was watching a programme about a jungle tribe, who are cut off from the modern world. They are still hunter gatherers like we all were once. A young lady was interviewed and asked what she looks for when choosing a husband. She said there were only two things you need in a man, first is he must be a good hunter and not lazy, so that he catches enough food. The second is that he must not be selfish, so that he shares the food out with his family. And that was it. What he looked like was of no consequence to the woman. The norm for them was for each couple to have five children, and although the woman did gather some fruits and roots to eat, most of the calories they needed to survive would come from the hunt. If he was disciplined in developing his hunting skills, and putting into practice, but also loving and caring, then he would be a desirable husband.

England's National Health Service spends around £16 billion a year on the direct medical costs of diabetes and conditions related to being overweight or obese. That doesn't include social security benefits paid to those that can't work. It's £2 billion more money than our country spends on its police and fire service combined. Many of us are at least a bit overweight. I had to lose 2 stones myself to get back to a reasonable weight, and I still have plenty on the tummy. Physically we are very well fed, yet spiritually many of us are starving ourselves.

God was teaching the Israelites that he would provide for them every day, and to rely on him for their physical sustenance. But again it is a physical example to represent a spiritual truth. The

benefits of food and drink last a short time, but Jesus can satisfy us for eternity. Food and drink is not enough, we need Jesus. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy when he says.. **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt 4v4).** We need to feed everyday on God, we need Jesus in our lives and to be taking in his Word and his presence. This is how we eat the bread of life.

Communion is a small part of that, but we need a daily discipline to help us to become more like Jesus and experience more of his power in his life. As Christian it is so simple, and yet so difficult in a world of so many options and distractions.

You may have several different bible translations in your house, and a number of aids to scripture reading either in book form or digitally. But how much spiritual food do you eat each day? What is your diet like? Perhaps, Daily Notes for 5 minutes a day, a sermon once a week if you're listening, perhaps some extra Bible reading amounting to an hour a week. Am I close? How does that then compare to the time you spend watching TV, reading a newspaper, on Youtube, twitter, facebook or other social media, much of which gives lots of negative messages to us which oppose what is in the Bible. If you put them either side of set scales which wins out. What are you feeding your mind with most. Is your Spirit mal-nourished and crying out for some bread of life.

Plants can be fed by osmosis and photosynthesis. Water gets sucked into the roots through a semi-permeable membrane without them doing anything, and sunlight hits the leaves and energises them. It is not the same for us spiritually. We can't stand there with our arms out and say I really need your word in my life, please put it in there, now. We don't live in the film the Matrix, where you can download learning from a computer into your brain which then programmes your brain neurons with that information, so in seconds you can learn to be a kung-fu expert, or pilot a helicopter.

In its simplest form, eating the bread of life, is reading the bible and praying. It is not one or the other it is both. Faith comes not from reading my bible, it comes from hearing his voice **when** I read it, which comes as I pray and I listen for his promptings in my mind. The Pharisees and other religious people of his day knew their scriptures, some had memorised every word, but they were masters over the Word, they weren't mastered by the Word. They had it in their head but not in their heart, because they hadn't listen to the voice of God, they wouldn't listen to his Son.

Our bible knowledge needs to be rooted in, and spring from our relationship with God. It is not enough to be biblically literate, we need to be biblically obedient too. When I feast upon the living bread that is the word of God, and drink the reality of Jesus, and act on it, then my faith grows. I become a better disciple, I become more like him, and his power flows in and through me more, so others see the difference that Jesus makes in my life. We need to read the bible, and ask Jesus to speak to us through it. There is no short cut. But what a wonderful thing is to do, if you can make it a positive habit, or in posh terms 'a spiritual discipline'. There is so much in there for us, and our souls thirsts for it so much, that we cannot over eat. You won't get obese from the Word of God if you're taking it in, understanding it, and working it out in your life. You don't get fatter, you just get closer, to Jesus.

The bible is very clear on its own value to us. Here is what the Bible says about the Bible. These are some of the verses extracted and put together from the Message translation:-

**Dear friend, listen well to my words; tune your ears to my voice. Keep my message in plain view at all times. Concentrate! Learn it by heart! Those who discover these words**

live, really live; body and soul, they're bursting with health (Proverbs 4v20-22 ). It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth. (Mt 4v4) Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defence, laying us open to listen and obey. (Heb 4v12). Jesus said, 'My sheep recognize my voice. I know them, and they follow me'. (Jn 10v27). Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. *Act* on what you hear! (James 1:22). Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for *us*. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize *us*, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. (Rom 15v4). Jesus said 'If you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon' (Jn 15v7). Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us (2 Tim3v16-17). Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you will get where you are going; then you will succeed. (Josh 1v9).

Wow! So powerful.

We need first recognise that Jesus is and always was the 'Lord of all'. The miracles that he did back then, and the miracles that he still does through his modern day followers are testament to that. You may not see miracles in the same way that those who followed Jesus did, or though you may, but a lot of them saw the miracles and did not believe anyway. But you do always have the Bible, you have Jesus's word, just like the friends of the Samaritan woman did, and it was enough for them to believe in Jesus.

Johns Gospel makes it clear that Jesus is 'Lord of all', so as he is, then he should be Lord in our lives too, not just the bits we choose to hand over, but Lord of all. To be able to do that we need to feed on Him. We need to feed on his Word, we need the help of the Spirit.

Don't let your soul and your mind be be mal-nourished of spiritual food. If he is our weekly bread then we become weak, spiritually. Jesus needs to be our daily bread. Just like the Israelites needed to depend on God daily for their bread, we need time with Him every day, time in his Word, time in his presence. We don't want to just a possess a faith, but we want to have a faith that possesses us. We need a passion for the Word of God. We don't want to be known as a bible-basher but as a bible-devourer.

Jesus said 'I am the bread of life'. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them. How much of this 'bread ' is on your daily menu. Don't go hungry. Redress the scales. You can only start from where you are, but do start to give a bit more time to God and his Word. Build the time up gradually, let it become a healthy habit and a healthy discipline. The more time you spend with Him and soaking up His word, the more time you will want to spend with Him. He loves you , he cares for you, he wants to spend time with you. Feast upon the word of God, and drink the reality of Jesus into your life, then live it out and see your faith grow, and see what great things can do in and through you.

Amen.