

Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 8, John 6:1-71, Podcast Audio Overview

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All right, welcome back to the Deep Dive. We're diving into John 6 this time. Oh, John 6. Yeah, a chapter- well, I mean, you know, it's just jam-packed with miracles, really challenging things that Jesus says.

Right. And, you know, even like hints about what's going to be happening later on in his ministry. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And so our guide for this Deep Dive is an academic lecture by Dr. David Turner, and he really gets into it. He's a leading scholar on the Gospel of John, and I think you're going to find it fascinating. Yeah, he does a good job.

It is an interesting chapter because it is kind of a turning point, like in the Gospel. You know, we've just seen Jesus having these big debates back in Jerusalem, and now he's back in Galilee, and things are about to get even more interesting. Yeah, for sure.

Oh, yeah, you can really feel the tension building. Right. Yeah.

But before we get into all of that, maybe we should set the scene a little bit, you know, just kind of paint a picture for our listeners. Dr. Turner mentions all these different places. So where exactly are we? Right.

So we're in the region around the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes it's called Kinneret. Okay.

And we're specifically on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, up in the mountains near Capernaum and Tiberias. Ah, okay. So these aren't just names on a page.

I mean, these were like real bustling places. Right, yeah. With real significance back then.

It's like, it's amazing to think that, you know, people can visit these places today. Like, I was reading that the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes, that's in Topka, right? Yeah. Can you imagine being there, seeing those Byzantine mosaics and, you know, just feeling connected to the story? Yeah, I think that's a really great point, because, you know, connecting these ancient locations to our modern world- I mean, that really helps us, you know, grasp the historical reality of these events.

It's not just some abstract story, right? No, no. I mean, this happened. It happened in a real place, with real people.

To real people in a real place, yeah. Yeah. Okay, so we've got the setting.

So what unfolds? What happens in John 6? Well, Dr. Turner frames it as kind of like two key miracles, followed by three conversations that become increasingly focused as we go. Okay. So first up, we have the feeding of the 5,000.

Right, yeah. And you know what's fascinating about this miracle? It's the only miracle that appears in all four Gospels. Oh, really? Yeah, it is.

But it's interesting, too, how each Gospel tells it just a little bit differently, you know? How? Like, for example, Matthew mentions that, you know, the disciples were doubting whether they had enough food, while Mark really focuses on Jesus's compassion for the hungry crowd. Interesting. So different feels to each account.

Exactly. That's really neat. Okay, and so what's the second miracle? The second miracle is Jesus walking on water.

Oh. Now, it's not quite as central, I think, to the overall message as the feeding of the 5,000. Okay.

But it's still, like, a very powerful image. Oh, yeah, absolutely. And just, like, an amazing feat.

Yeah, yeah. Okay, so we got these two huge miracles. So what about the conversations you mentioned? You know, why does Dr. Turner focus on them? Well, what's really cool about them is how they kind of start broad.

Yeah. And then they just become, you know, more and more narrow in their focus. It's almost like a ripple effect.

So initially, you have, you know, this huge crowd who've just witnessed this miracle. And then the focus shifts to Jesus's disciples, who, even though they've just seen the miracle, they're kind of struggling to really grasp the deeper meaning of what Jesus is teaching. Okay.

And then finally, we zero in on just the 12 apostles. Okay. And that's where you start to sense, you know, like, some tension, maybe even disagreement brewing, almost like a foreshadowing of events that are going to come later.

Ooh, foreshadowing. I like it when, you know, authors do that. You know, just a little hint about what's coming next.

I mean, I'm a little confused, though. You said the disciples were struggling with Jesus's teachings, even though they saw the miracles firsthand. I mean, wouldn't that be proof enough for them? Yeah, that's where the paradox comes in.

You see, Dr. Turner, he really highlights this point. Okay. That even though, you know, they saw the miracle, like, with their own eyes, they didn't truly see it.

Oh, okay. Like, they were so focused on the physical act, you know, of Jesus multiplying the loaves and fishes. Right, yeah.

Their bellies are full, but they completely miss the deeper meaning behind it. Wow. They miss the sign that's pointing to Jesus's true identity.

So they were focused on what he did, not who he was. Exactly. Right.

And this misunderstanding leads to a really crucial moment in the chapter. You know, you have these crowds; they're all caught up in the excitement of the miracle. Yeah.

They want to make Jesus king. Right, right. He even, you know, Dr. Turner, he mentions the specific verse, John 6.14. But I've always found that part kind of ironic.

It seems like someone with Jesus's power, like, could hardly be forced into anything. Right. You know, clearly he had, like, something else in mind.

Absolutely. And you have to remember, like, this was a time when different groups had different expectations about what the Messiah would be like, you know? Okay. Some people, they were looking for a political liberator.

Yeah. You know, someone to overthrow Roman rule. Others, they were looking for a spiritual guide, someone to lead them closer to God.

And Jesus's actions here, I mean, they show that he wasn't interested in conforming to either one of those expectations. So if he wasn't going to be a political or spiritual leader, then, I mean, what was he trying to tell them? You know, what was the real message behind the miracle? This is what brings us to, like, the heart of the chapter: the bread of life discourse. So Jesus, he uses the feeding miracle as kind of a springboard to talk about a different kind of nourishment, spiritual nourishment.

Okay. He's not just offering food. He is the source of eternal life.

He's the bread of life. And that's where he introduces that, like, really challenging imagery, right? Yes. The idea of eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

I mean, for a Jewish audience, you know, steeped in the Old Testament's prohibitions against consuming blood, this must have been so difficult to hear. Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

And, you know, it's important to understand that he's not talking about literal cannibalism. Right. It's a powerful metaphor.

Right. A way of emphasizing the deep, intimate relationship that we need to have with Jesus. Right.

He's speaking about a spiritual reality, a connection that nourishes our souls in a way that physical food never could. So it's like he's saying, you know, you're worried about physical hunger. Right.

But I'm offering you something so much more satisfying, something that's going to sustain you forever. It's a great way to put it. And this is where Dr. Turner brings in another layer of, like, complexity to the discussion.

He introduces this concept of divine sovereignty. Oh. Which, for those who might not be familiar, is the idea that God ultimately controls everything.

Oh, wow. Even our choices. OK.

So we're really getting into some deep theological waters here. Yeah. But I'm curious, how does this idea of divine sovereignty connect to, you know, this idea of eating Jesus's flesh and blood? I mean, those seem like pretty different concepts to me.

Well, so Dr. Turner quotes a key verse here, John 6.37. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. OK. Now, this verse, when we consider it alongside the imagery of consuming Christ, you know, it raises some really important questions about the balance between, you know, God's choice and our own free will to choose him.

Yeah, that's a tough one. It is. How do we reconcile those two ideas? Like, it makes you wonder what those disciples were thinking as they were listening to all of this.

Did they even understand what he was saying? It's definitely a, like, complex theological issue. I mean, and it's one that people have been debating for centuries. And, you know, I think what John 6 is trying to convey here is that there's a certain mystery to faith.

Yeah. You know, there are things that we may just never fully grasp, but we can trust that God is working in ways that we may not always understand. It's almost like those people that we were talking about earlier who saw the miracle but didn't truly see it.

Yeah. You know, like they're missing something. Exactly.

They're missing a deeper understanding. And that deeper understanding, it requires recognizing Jesus as the true bread of life. Right.

The one who can truly satisfy our deepest longings. OK, so how does this, how does this all connect back to the Old Testament? Yeah. Dr. Turner, he mentions the story of Moses and the man in the wilderness.

Yeah. Is there a link there? Oh, there definitely is. You picked up on that.

So there's this parallel between the two. You see, in Exodus 16, God provided physical food- that manna- to the Israelites who were wandering in the wilderness. Yeah.

And now in John 6, he's offering true sustenance through Jesus. Right. It's like a continuation of God's faithfulness.

Right. But it's on a whole new level. Yeah, yeah.

And isn't that where that concept of I am statements comes in? I mean, those are, those are pretty significant in John's gospel, right? You are so right. They are very significant. Dr. Turner, he points out that there are like two types of I am statements in John.

OK. There are statements with predicates, like I am the bread of life. Right.

And then there are absolute statements, like just I am, which we'll explore, you know, more later on in the gospel. But, you know, these statements, especially those absolute I am statements. Yeah.

They, they reveal something so profound about, about Jesus's divine identity and his authority. I mean, they hearken back to God's self-revelation to Moses in the Old Testament. Wow.

That's, that's really interesting. Yeah. OK, so, so are we saying that John 6 is all about the Eucharist? Ah.

You know, I mean, I know the feeding miracle has some similarities to the Last Supper accounts in the other gospels. Right. That's where things get a little bit, a little bit controversial.

So there, there's definitely a connection. OK. The way, the way Jesus takes the bread, he gives thanks, he breaks it, and then he, he distributes it.

Right. It echoes those accounts of the Last Supper in the other gospels. But, you know, John's gospel doesn't actually describe the institution of the Eucharist.

Right, right. It's, it's like a piece of the puzzle is missing. Exactly.

You're exactly right. Yeah. And, and this absence, it has, you know, fueled debate for centuries.

Really? Yeah. So is John suggesting that the feeding miracle prefigures communion? Yeah. Or is he pointing to something else entirely? I imagine the different, different Christian denominations have like different views on this.

They do. You know? They do. Dr. Turner, he, he mentioned some ranging from purely symbolic interpretations to those that, that emphasize Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.

Absolutely. And it's, it's a really nuanced and complex topic. And honestly, John 6, it just doesn't provide a definitive answer.

Okay. So if it's not, if it's not just about the Eucharist, then what, what is the core message of, of this chapter? Like, what is Jesus trying to teach with this, you know, what Dr. Turner calls this difficult teaching? Yeah. Well, Dr. Turner, he quotes a really insightful point from John Calvin.

He said that Jesus spoke about food because that's what the people were fixated on. I mean, it was their immediate concern, their most basic need, you know? So he, he met them where they were, using a concept they could understand to reveal a much deeper truth. He was speaking their language.

He was. Using what they knew to point them to something far greater. Exactly.

I mean, it's brilliant. That is brilliant. Yeah.

Okay. So, so at its core, this chapter, it's, it's about more than just a miraculous meal. Right.

It's about this essential life-giving relationship. It is. That we need with Jesus.

Yeah. It's like, just as we depend on food for physical life, we need him for spiritual sustenance. That's such a powerful image.

Yeah, it really is. It's like we, we've unpacked this whole incredible feast of ideas just from this one chapter. I know, right? It's amazing.

But you know, honestly, what, what really gets me is that so many of those people, the ones who, who saw Jesus perform these incredible miracles. Right. They still walked away.

I mean, it makes me wonder if I, if I would have done the same. Yeah. You know, if I was there, would I have been able to grasp the true meaning of his words? That is a really profound question.

It is. And it's one that I think each of us needs to ask ourselves. Yeah.

But you know what? Before we delve deeper into that question. Yeah. Let's, let's take a quick break.

We'll be right back with more insights from John Six. All right. Sounds good.

So, you know, it's interesting how Dr. Turner points out that this whole discussion of eating Jesus's flesh and blood, it's actually a metaphor for faith. He compares several passages in John Six. Okay.

And he finds that believing in Jesus leads to the same results as, you know, quote unquote, eating him. So, so it's not about physically consuming him, but spiritually embracing him through faith. Exactly.

Yeah. It's like, instead of chewing, you're choosing to believe. Oh, I like that.

That's good. And I think, you know, that's why this teaching was so hard for people to grasp; they were stuck on that literal level, you know, unable to see beyond just the physical act of eating. So they were so focused on the image of cannibalism that they just completely missed the point.

Exactly. Yeah. Dr. Turner uses this great analogy from John Calvin to explain this.

You know, Calvin said that Jesus spoke about food. Yeah. Because that's what the people were focused on.

Right. You know, they were like cattle running to their fodder, concerned only with, you know, filling their bellies. It's like their, their spiritual taste buds were, were underdeveloped.

Yeah. You know, they, they couldn't, they couldn't savor the, the deeper meaning behind, behind Jesus's words. That's a great way to put it.

And you know, this really highlights the importance of context and understanding Scripture. I mean, we need to consider the audience, the historical setting, and the overall message that Jesus is trying to communicate. It's like, it's like trying to understand a joke from a different culture.

Yeah. You know, you might, you might get the words, but without that cultural context, you're going to miss the humor. Absolutely.

And, and speaking of cultural context, Dr. Turner reminds us of the importance of meals throughout the Bible. He points out how, you know, food often symbolizes God's faithfulness and provision. Yeah.

Yeah. You know, that makes me think about like all the significant meals in the Bible. Yeah.

From the Garden of Eden to the manna in the wilderness to the Passover meal. I mean, food has, food has always played a central role in, in God's relationship with his people. Absolutely.

And, and in John six, Jesus is presenting himself as, as the ultimate expression of that provision. He's, he's not just offering a temporary fix for, for physical hunger. Right.

He's offering himself as the source of eternal life. Wow. A nourishment that, that goes beyond anything we can experience in the physical world.

So, so he's saying, I'm not just bread for a day; I'm, I'm the bread of life. That's a powerful image. Yeah, it is.

And it raises the question, you know, how are we feeding on Jesus today? Yeah. Like, how are we cultivating that intimate relationship with him? The one that nourishes our spiritual lives. You know, sometimes I think about how much time and energy I spend, you know, thinking about food and planning meals.

Right. And I wonder if I'm putting the same effort into nourishing my soul. It's a good question.

Yeah. It's a, it's a good reminder to, to check my priorities. I think that's a struggle for a lot of us, you know.

It's so easy to get caught up in the, the demands of daily life and, and neglect our spiritual wellbeing. Right. But, but coming back to John six and this imagery of, of feeding on Jesus, you know, it, it really forces us to confront that question.

Right. It's, it's a challenge to make sure I'm, I'm actually taking the time to, to read scripture, to pray, to connect with other believers. Yeah.

To really savor and digest those spiritual truths. Absolutely. And this brings us back to the debate about the Eucharist.

Right. You know, Dr. Turner points out the similarities between the feeding miracle and the Last Supper accounts and the other gospels. Yeah.

But as we discussed before, John's gospel doesn't include a traditional institution of the Eucharist. Right. It's, it's almost like John is inviting us to think about the Eucharist in a new light.

Right. To see it as more than just a ritual. Yeah.

You know, maybe it's a profound mystery that points to our ongoing dependence on Jesus for nourishment and life. I think that's a beautiful way to look at it. Yeah.

And it highlights the importance of approaching scripture with humility. Yeah. Recognizing that there are mysteries that we may never fully comprehend.

I mean, even the disciples struggled with this, and they were right there with Jesus. Yeah, they were. So if they didn't get it all figured out, then maybe, you know, maybe we shouldn't expect to either.

Exactly. Yeah. It's a process, a journey of discovery.

And as we continue our journey through John's gospel, you know, we're, we're going to encounter even more, more challenging teachings. Yeah. And profound truths that will stretch our faith and deepen our relationship with Jesus.

It's like we're on this, this amazing culinary adventure, you know, just tasting all these different flavors of faith and learning to appreciate the, the richness and complexity of, of God's word. That's a wonderful analogy. It really is.

It really captures that sense of excitement and discovery that comes with studying Scripture. And, you know, just like with food, I mean, some passages might be like more immediately appealing than others, but if we're willing to savor them, to really chew on them, we'll find that they all offer something, something unique and valuable. I love that.

Yeah. So, so what other flavors await us in this chapter? What's, what's the next course on our John 6 menu? Well, I think what, what makes this chapter so powerful is that it gets, it gets really personal. So after this lengthy discourse about the bread of life and after many of his followers decide to walk away because, you know, they just can't stomach his teachings, Jesus turns to the 12, and he asks this very pointed question.

Oh, this is where he asks, are you going to leave too? Yes. Right. Oh, what a, what a tense moment.

I could just imagine how the disciples must have felt. Exactly. Here they are.

They've witnessed these miracles. They've listened to these profound teachings, and now they're being challenged to make a decision. Are they going to stick with Jesus even when his words are difficult to understand? Or are they going to join the ranks of those who have turned away? Yeah.

It's like he's, he's drawing a line in the sand. You know, it's like, are you with me or against me? Right. That, that must've been so intense for them.

It was, it really was a pivotal moment. Yeah. And you know, this is where Peter, always the outspoken one, he, he steps up with this amazing declaration of faith.

He says, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Oh man, that line always gives me chills. Right.

It just, it's such a powerful affirmation of who Jesus is and what he offers. He is. You know, it's like, like Peter, he gets it.

Yeah. He sees, he sees beyond those difficult teachings, and he recognizes the truth that only Jesus can satisfy their deepest needs. Absolutely.

It's, it's a beautiful moment of, of clarity amidst all the confusion and doubt. Yeah. But you know, what strikes me is that even after this, this powerful affirmation, the chapter doesn't end on a totally triumphant note.

Oh. You know, Dr. Turner points out that there's this kind of cryptic reference to Judas at the very end. Oh yeah.

I remember that. It just kind of hangs there like this, this ominous foreshadowing. Right.

Yeah. Of, of what's to come. Exactly.

It's this stark reminder that even within the circle of Jesus's closest followers. There was one who ultimately rejected him. Yeah.

You know, and it makes you wonder if Judas ever truly understood who Jesus was. Right. Yeah.

Did he, did he just miss the point entirely? That's such a good question. It is. And, and it's a challenge for us as well.

Right. Are we, are we truly listening to Jesus's words, even when they're, they're hard to swallow, or are we going to, to walk away as so many others did? Yeah, I think, I think that's the real question that Dr. Turner leaves us with. Okay.

You know, it's, it's not enough to just, you know, intellectually assent to, to Jesus's teachings. We're called to a deeper level of engagement. So, what does it look like to feed on Jesus in our daily lives? How do we cultivate that, that intimate relationship with him that nourishes us and sustains us through, through the challenges that we face? It's like we need to develop a taste for the things of God.

Yeah. You know, to learn to savor his word and to find nourishment in his presence. Yes.

If, if we're only ever focused on, on satisfying our, our immediate desires, we, we might miss out on, on the true feast that he's offering. Exactly. It's about recognizing that true fulfillment, true satisfaction, is found in Christ alone.

It's about surrendering our own agendas and desires. Yeah. And allowing him to nourish us, to transform us, to make us more like him.

That's such a powerful message. It is. And it's one that resonates so deeply with me.

Yeah. You know, this deep dive into John 6, it's been amazing. It has.

It's, it's really challenged me to think about my own relationship with Jesus. Yeah. And, and how I'm feeding on him.

Right. What about you? What are you taking away from this chapter? Well, for me, what, what really stands out is the importance of staying connected to, to the source of life. Okay.

You know, just like we need to eat physical food to survive. Yeah. We need to constantly be feeding on Jesus, his words, his presence, his love.

Right. To truly thrive spiritually. Right.

You know, it's, it's not a one-time thing. It's, it's an ongoing process. Yeah.

Of drawing nourishment from him. It's like a, a constant invitation to come to the table. Yes.

You know, to, to pull up a chair and, and feast on the abundance of his, his grace and mercy. It is. And the amazing thing is there's, there's always room for more.

That's, that's a beautiful way to put it. Yeah. And, and as we wrap up this deep dive into John 6, you know, I hope, I hope you'll join me in reflecting on these questions.

What does it mean for you to feed on Jesus? Yeah. How are you cultivating that, that life-giving relationship with him in your, your daily life? And remember, you know, even though some of these teachings might be challenging. Right.

Don't walk away. Yeah. Keep wrestling with the text, keep seeking deeper understanding.

And keep coming back to the table. Yeah. There's, there's so much richness and nourishment waiting for you.

There is. In the word of God. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive.

And we'll see you next time for another fascinating exploration of Scripture.