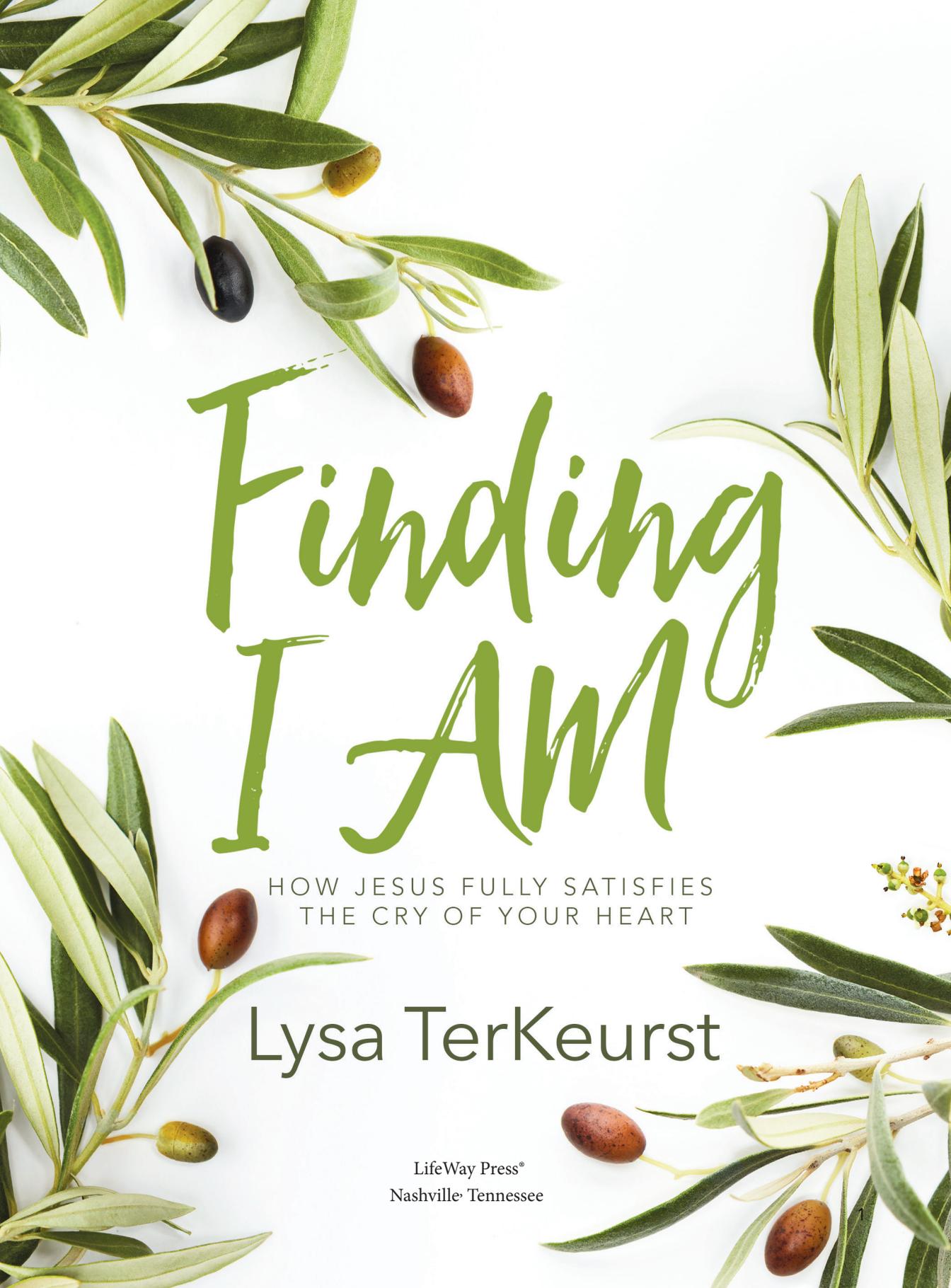


# Finding I AM

HOW JESUS FULLY SATISFIES  
THE CRY OF YOUR HEART

Lysa TerKeurst

The cover features several olive branches with green leaves and olives in various stages of ripeness (green, yellow, and dark purple) scattered around the text. The background is plain white.

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THE CRY OF YOUR HEART

Lysa TerKeurst

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## MEET THE AUTHOR

Lysa TerKeurst is passionate about God's Word. She has studied extensively in the Holy Land and loves to make connections between the Old and New Testaments. Her deepest desire is to help others experience Jesus by unpacking Scripture in new and fresh ways everyone can understand!

Lysa is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and the #1 New York Times best-selling author of *Uninvited*, *The Best Yes*, and 20 other books. But to those who know her best she's just a simple girl who speaks about hope in the midst of her own struggles. Lysa lives with her family in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Connect with her at [www.LysaTerKeurst.com](http://www.LysaTerKeurst.com) or on social media @LysaTerKeurst.



## INTRODUCTION

What is that relationship, that insecurity, that hurt, that desire, that prayer you've brought to God countless times? It's what makes you trust God the most, and in the not-so-spiritually-certain moments, it's what makes you most suspicious of Him. If God is good, why isn't He being good to you in answering this cry of your heart?

I've been there.

There is a desperate cry within my heart that I've longed with every fiber of my being to see come to pass. Minutes have turned into days and weeks and years of learning to make some sort of spiritual peace. On my good days I stand assured, "It's just not God's timing yet."

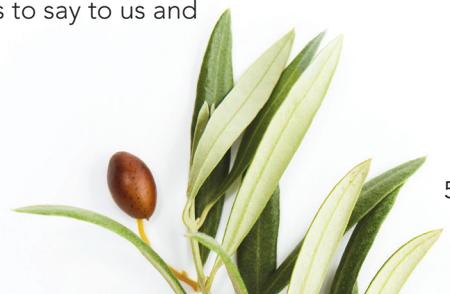
But on my less stellar days I crumble, afraid and hurt, "God, why? You know how much this ache in my heart steals a piece of too many of my smiles. Quite honestly, I'm tired of wondering if you're withholding because I'm not good enough, capable enough, spiritual enough, trusting enough, or mature enough. I guess I'm really tired of hoping."

This study is deeply personal to me. It's not a kumbaya, let's get together and just talk about the Bible enough to feel good about ourselves. This study is a lifeline, a way to get oxygen into the places of our hearts that have been starving to breathe and fully live.

And I'm so glad you are here to study with me. To search God's Word and seek Him as the source of our satisfaction.

In this study we are going to dive into the seven I AM statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. We are going to go to places in the Holy Land where Jesus may have been when He uttered the words. I want the Word of God to come alive to you in this study—to reach the recesses of your heart because I truly believe that God's Word to us is life.

So, lean in with me, and let's see what Jesus wants to say to us and how He wants to satisfy our hearts.





## ABOUT THIS STUDY

I fell in love with the Holy Land on my first trip to Israel a few years ago. In just two years, I've been there seven times studying and preparing to bring what I've learned to you. The Bible has come alive to me in a new way and one of my hopes in this study is that this will happen for you as well. This study was actually birthed out of one of my trips to Israel when the small group I was with specifically studied the Gospel of John. We heard our guide teach some of these I AM statements, and I left that trip knowing that I had to dive into this topic more fully.

In the study we will spend time on each of the I AM statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. A few things you will want to know:

- The first video session is an introduction to the series.
- Then each week in your personal study time you will study one, or sometimes two, I AM statement.
- And then in the video following your week of study, I'll unpack the I AM statement(s) you just studied that week.



This was an intentional format because I want you to study the I AM statement for yourself, dig into Scripture on your own about each one, before I give you my thoughts on the subject.

You will have four days of personal study each week with an optional fifth day. That optional fifth day is just that, optional—don't feel like you have to do it. It's only if you want to take the study to the next level.

During the study we will be looking at many passages in the Gospel of John, but we won't be studying the whole book. What the optional fifth day of personal study will do is walk you through the entire Gospel of John a few chapters at a time. You may have already read some of the passages in that week of study, but in doing it this way you will read every word in the Gospel and be able to see the I AM statements in a fresh way because of it.

My prayer for you in this study is that you will discover that Jesus is the key to any kind of satisfaction you are looking for. He alone will fill the empty places in your heart, and I hope you find Him anew in this study. I'm so grateful to be taking this journey with you.



*Jesus is  
the key to  
any kind of  
satisfaction  
you are  
looking for.*





I AM THE *Bread* OF LIFE.

I AM THE *Light* OF THE WORLD.

I AM THE *Sheep Gate*.

I AM THE *good Shepherd*.

I AM THE *Resurrection* AND THE *Life*.

I AM THE *Way* AND  
THE *Truth* AND THE *Life*.

I AM THE *True Vine*.

#FINDINGIAM





# group guide

## VIDEO GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After watching the video, discuss the following questions in your group.

1. God desires to be all you *need* and all you *want*. Describe the difference between the two from your own perspective.
2. Can you relate to the "sweet sorrow" I discussed in the video?  
Share any part of your story that you feel comfortable sharing that may be helpful to others.
3. How does the statement that life isn't meant to fully satisfy us, only Jesus can, speak to you today?
4. What are a few things you are hoping and praying for God to show you as you start this study?

Bread



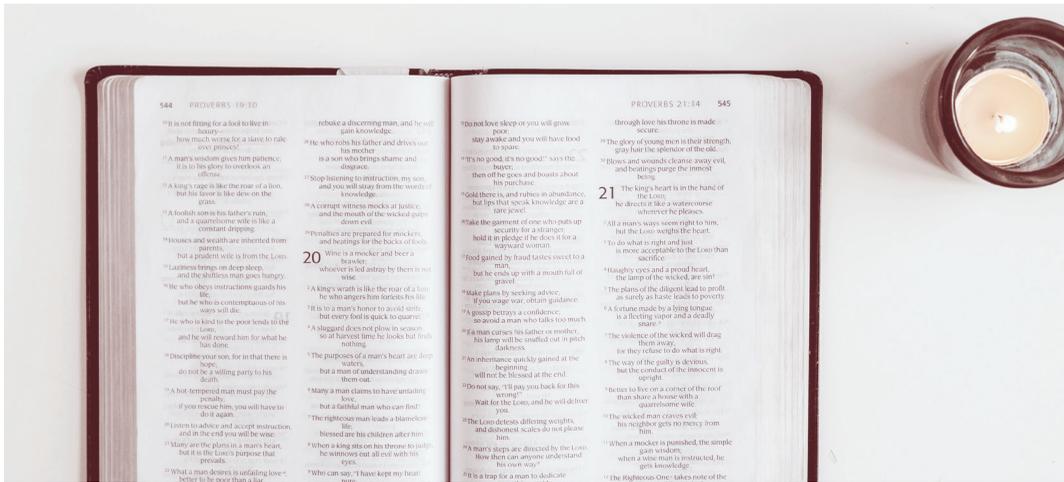
WEEK 1

# I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

JOHN 6:35

#FINDINGIAM





**DAY 1**

**BIOS & ZOE LIFE**

For years I've wanted to be like the spiritual giants who approach prayer and fasting with glee in their voices and a glide in their steps. They smile through the passing up of food with an apparent ease that's always eluded me. Yes, I wanted to be like them, but I was apparently too weak.

So, each time I heard about an invitation to fast from food I sidestepped the opportunity with my list of excuses:

*I struggle with low blood sugar.*

*I get real grumpy when I get real hungry.*

*If I have an emotional breakdown while pursuing a spiritual breakthrough, it sort of defeats the purpose, you know?*

*I think fasting works for some people but not for me.*

All I could think about was the struggle of my stomach. But then this past January something changed. I was feeling spiritually starved. Suddenly, all I could think about was the struggle of my heart.

There was a desperation like I'd never known as I confronted the source of my ache. I reached a place where I could not hear from God. I felt disconnected from believing God's promises were true for me personally. I was desperate to have relief from this unbelief.

I could sense His presence. I could connect with His truth. What I longed for the most, His voice of assurance and instruction, was stunningly silent.

That thing I mentioned in the introduction—the source of my holy wrestling, my silent suffering, the reason my pillow was sometimes wet with tears, the pain—was at an all time high. And then suddenly and almost cruelly, God seemed eerily silent.

I lay in bed one night racked with an imploding feeling.

One sleepless night turned into 2, 3, 7, 10. Starvation of the soul doesn't give permission slips for sleep to help you escape its grip.

I cried at unusual times. I withdrew from depth in my conversations with others. I lied about having a sore throat, a sour stomach, a bug of some sort—anything to excuse me from having to be present.

When you are absent in heart but present in reality, you know the slightest bump or jostle by anyone would shatter your ability to hold it together. You'd be nothing but dust that even a wisp of wind could and would blow away without any sympathy at all. As everything about you goes flying, you'd suddenly and horrifically realize you're helpless to gather the particles that were once "you" back into something of any sort of substance.

And then on night 11, finally, I slept. Physically, I felt better the next day. But spiritually I was so utterly exhausted and spent that I knew something had to break through. That's when another fasting invitation came.

Out of nothing but sheer desperation I said yes: "Yes, God, I will fast from food that gives me physical comfort so I can find something new with You. I don't want comfort. I want connection. I must hear from You. It's not even an option to go one more day without feeding my soul with Your whisper."

I didn't do a complete fast. But it was more than I'd ever been willing to try before. I was desperate. It's amazing the powerful influence desperation can have on a person for good or bad. Desperation can lead to degradation.

Desperate people can find themselves doing desperately degrading things to ease their source of pain. But desperation for God is different. True desperation for God will lead to revelation.

And after only a few days the revelation I got stunned me.

Apart from Him  
there is no true  
satisfaction.

God was *allowing* this source of pain in my life.

He wasn't causing it. He didn't take pleasure in it. He didn't like the hurt it was causing me. But He absolutely was allowing it. And the only whisper from God that kept rushing through my heart was that I had to learn to fully trust Him and Him alone.

Without full trust in Him, it is impossible to be fully satisfied by Him. And apart from Him, there is no fullness. Apart from Him there is no true satisfaction.

The instant fix I had been begging Him to give me would only benefit me in physical and emotional realms. It would have given me a temporary fix and a brief stint of relief, but it would never develop in me a permanent source of life from which to draw upon time and again.

God was after so much more for me. He was after my soul. That deeper place where God wants to ease the hunger of our souls can only be accessed when we are stripped of the cheaper, temporary sources of nourishment.

In John 6:35, we find God personalizing His original "I AM" statement from Exodus 3 through His Son's declaration.

### TAKE A MOMENT AND READ JOHN 6:35.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

**JOHN 6:35**

Remember, God's "I AM" statement from Exodus was so completely full that it needed no qualifier. It was the promise that His presence was everything we ever needed. It was all peace, all provision, all perfection, and all protection. That was His promise given. But our human hearts were designed by God not just for His completion but also for His companionship. We needed His promise and His presence to be personalized.

Jesus and His seven I AM statements from John personalize God's promises.

Make no mistake, God is I AM. He is absolutely all we need, but He delights in us not only needing Him but also wanting Him.

So, He gives us something we've craved physically on a daily basis since the beginning of time—bread. But He isn't just any bread. He's the Bread of life.

There are two words for *life* in the Bible. One is *bios*, used 10 times in the Bible, which means "breath in your lungs or physical life." The other is *zoe*, which means "possessed with vitality looking to the fullness of life." It's used 135 times in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Let's look up one verse for each of these words to get an idea of how they are used. Look up the following verses and write some ways the word is used according to the passage.

*Bios*: Luke 21:4

*Zoe*: 1 John 5:12

Why do you think *zoe* is used 125 times more than *bios*?

Jesus doesn't want us to just live with breath in our lungs walking around as a shell of existence. He wants us to have a rare vitality, experiencing the fullness of soul someone should experience when Jesus Himself does everyday life with us.

**Do you believe this? Do you believe Jesus wants this for you? Why or why not?**

I believe it for me. I believe it for you. Because before the beginning of time, God has waited for you to read these words and come to this realization. That thing you've been so desperate to see come to pass? That unanswered prayer? That unrelenting ache? The cries you're so afraid are unheard? The unyielding addiction? That unsung recognition? Your unraveling hope?

Those answers and the easing of that ache aren't the source of finally becoming fully satisfied. They aren't. And you believing this lie is a scheme of Satan to keep you in an unsatisfied place.

Trust me, even if that problem was solved, the enemy has another waiting in the wings that will be just as distracting and devastating to you as this one. We live in a broken world where escaping brokenness isn't possible. Our souls were made for the perfection of the garden; therefore, they can't ever be satisfied by the imperfect grit and grind of this sin-soaked world.

I have a theory about why I've anguished and suffered so desperately through this message. Because Satan wants to steal these words, kill my desire to deliver them, and destroy the miracles this teaching will produce in my life and in yours. The enemy of our soul strategizes day and night to get us to settle for bios life so we will never taste the hell-shattering fullness of zoe.

It's been his plan since the beginning.

We see it when the Bread of life was tempted by the enemy in the desert.

**TAKE A MOMENT AND READ MATTHEW 4:1-4.**

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and the Scriptures make sure to note that "he was hungry" (v. 2). So, the enemy tempts Jesus to satisfy His bios need—eat

some physical bread—so that He would starve His zoe need—the deep satisfaction of fasting for deeper connection with God.

**In what way has the enemy been tempting you to satisfy physical and emotional needs and kept you from pursuing that *zoe* life we've been reading about?**

We need both *bios* life and *zoe* life. It's not one or the other—it's a "both and" deal. But we must remember it can't just be *bios* life. We were also made for *zoe*. As a matter of fact, I think God uses our hunger for *bios* bread to give us a picture of *zoe* bread. Think about the way physical hunger works. Hunger isn't a bad thing. Hunger produces a need for provision.

**Physical hunger produces a need for what kind of provision?**

**Doesn't it make sense that God would also allow us to experience spiritual hunger as well? What does the term *spiritual hunger* mean to you?**

Just like we read in Matthew 4 where the tempter came to twist the truth with Jesus, he will want to twist the truth of God's provision for us. God is the source of life through His provision. The enemy is the source of lies through his perversion.

What we consume will consume us. It's our choice whether we are consuming God's life or the enemy's lies.

—  
God is the source  
of life through His  
provision.  
—

Write out Matthew 6:33 here:

The word seek in the original Greek is the word *zeteo* which means "to crave."<sup>2</sup>

What are you truly craving today?

A declaration is "a positive, explicit, or formal statement."<sup>3</sup> Write out your personal declaration of what you need to shift or give up in order to crave the Bread of life like never before.



## DAY 2

### FEEDING THE 5,000

Before Jesus utters His first official I AM statement, He performs a miracle—the feeding of the 5,000. This is the fourth miracle of Jesus in the Book of John, but the first I AM statement. Before we can truly understand the I AM statement, we need to look at the miracle.

John 6 is where we will camp out this week. Even if you are unfamiliar with Jesus and the Gospels, you have probably heard of the feeding of the 5,000. After all, it is the only miracle that we read about in all four Gospels. For that reason alone we should sit up and take note.

### PLEASE READ JOHN 6:1-9.

Why were the crowds following Jesus? (v. 2)

Imagine hearing about a man like that in your life today. What would be the request you would make of Him?

Look specifically at verse 4. In what time of year did this occur?

Passover was a springtime festival that celebrated the deliverance of the Hebrew people (Israelites) from Egypt where they were held in bondage as slaves. Take a moment and consider the feeding of the 5,000 within the context of this festival. Passover celebrates God as a deliverer. During the Israelites' wandering in the desert God provided manna from heaven. Don't miss this important point. This was one of the biggest times of celebration on the Jewish calendar. In fact, it was the highlight of their spiritual history. And not only did they celebrate and look back to thank God for what He had done, they also, perhaps just as importantly, looked forward to when God would send another prophet like Moses to bring deliverance to them.

Little did they know that the very Prophet they were waiting for was in their midst. Do you think they wondered if it was Him? Do you think they had hope stirring within them that maybe this would be the One who would rescue them and deliver them once and for all? Or do you think the many years of waiting with no result had hardened their hearts so much that they didn't really believe anymore? Were they just celebrating to celebrate or did it have purpose?

**What promise from God are you waiting to be fulfilled? Or what have you asked God for time after time with no tangible results?**

Maybe you'd like to start this study with a simple prayer for God to open your heart and soften it. I'd like to challenge you with something I challenged myself with as I worked through this material. Pray every day of this study for God to open and soften your heart to hear from Him. Ask Him to help you to trust Him. Keep hoping, keep praying, and keep watching for His hand. Just because you don't clearly see God's work at this moment does not mean He is not working.

### **WITH THAT IN MIND, LET'S LOOK BACK AT JOHN 6:5-9.**

Poor Philip. He is trying so hard. And then Andrew gave his own shot at a plan. Neither were even close to a good solution. They were hopeless. Feeding these people was, to them, an impossible situation.

**Why do you think Jesus asked Philip where they should buy the bread for the people if He already knew the answer?**

How have you seen God show up in a seemingly impossible situation in your life or in the life of someone you know?

## READ THE REST OF THE STORY IN JOHN 6:10-15.

Look closely at verse 11. All Jesus does here is give thanks. He simply says the blessing. The blessing that He might have said, according to Jewish tradition could have been:

“Blessed be thou, Yahweh our God, king of the world who causes bread to come forth from earth.”<sup>4</sup>

Maybe this doesn't speak to you like it does to me, but I love how a blessing opens up this miracle. Thanking God for what He has done. For who He is. Thankfulness opened the door to what God had in store for this group of 5,000.

*Maybe you feel too heartbroken to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too hurt to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too fearful to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too disappointed to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too mad to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too depressed to be thankful.*  
*Maybe you feel too hopeless to be thankful.*

**Fill in the blank for yourself:**

I feel too \_\_\_\_\_ to be thankful.



*Hillside near Capernaum*

The solution to your problem or issue may be thankfulness. It's at least worth a try, don't you think?

Jesus provided food to the people on this hillside after He thanked God. They ate and enjoyed what was likely much-needed nourishment. They had full stomachs and now their ears were open and ready to hear from Jesus. And I'm certainly glad they were ready to listen because Jesus was going to challenge their thinking with what He was about to say.

Before we close out this day of study, though, I want us to look at a few things about the feeding of the 5,000 from the perspective of Mark's Gospel. Let me start by telling you a story.

I'm not sure when it happened. I can't pinpoint a moment or a skewed thought or a wrong perspective that started it. But I'm now well aware that somewhere along the journey of my long wrestling through my unanswered prayer, my heart started to harden.

*The hushing of  
humility will  
be the rushing  
in of pride.*

Like I said, I can't tell you when it happened, but I can tell you the first clue to realizing it's happening to you: It's when you hush humility.

The hushing of humility will be the rushing in of pride. There's nothing that crystallizes and encrusts the soft places of a heart more than the subtle first notions that you disagree with truth.

You start to think you deserve a little more than truth will allow.

You begin to believe you know a little better than the truth that bumps up against your desire.

You excuse away the promptings that your justifications to skew truth aren't so justified.

From that platform an elevated sense of self grows.

The disciples found themselves in just this predicament.

They'd been out doing public ministry with great success. And then they stumble upon the feeding of the 5,000. They had served Jesus in the big ways of preaching,

teaching, healing, and casting out demons, but would they still serve Jesus in the quiet places that weren't so glamorous? In other words, was their service still about serving God, or was it about serving their egos?

## LET'S READ MARK'S VERSION OF THE STORY. READ MARK 6:30-42.

Write down what the disciples are telling Jesus.

What was Jesus' immediate reaction to what they were telling Him? Did He praise their efforts? Did He encourage them to do more? Or did He look into their souls and see a different kind of need?

In verse 36 we find that the disciples relied on their own human logic to solve the problem. What did they suggest?

What does this tell us about their understanding of who Jesus is?

## NOW TAKE A LOOK AT MARK 6:49-52.

What was the most tragic thing a hardened heart caused them to miss?

How does this speak to you personally?

Don't miss the timing that right after this event as John tells it is when Jesus reveals Himself as the Bread of life—the source of zoe fullness in John 6:35. Astoundingly intentional if you ask me!



### DAY 3

## BREAD

You might be a little disappointed in what I'm about to tell you. I realize I left you with a cliffhanger yesterday. We are going to wait and cover the answer to the cliffhanger, though, on Day 4. I know, I know. But trust me, it will be worth the wait. We have to study the word *bread* first because it is fascinating and it helps us appreciate what Jesus says in John 6.

Can you bear with me one more day, then? I really hope so.

Remember, Jesus didn't just pull these I AM statements out of the air for no particular reason nor because they just happened to pop in His head. No, they were quite deliberate. And they all point back to the Old Testament. Today we are going to spend some time looking back at other places in Scripture that speak of bread and see what God might teach us.

### BREAD AS A CONSEQUENCE

You can't get three chapters into Genesis before we see the first mention of the word *bread*. At this point God has created the world, and Adam and Eve, and has given them the only rule they had to obey—don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I'm guessing you remember what happens. The serpent enters. Satan stirs doubt ("Did God really say?" Gen. 3:1). They listen to him. And they break the rule.

I love what the theologian Sinclair Ferguson says about this instance in our spiritual history: “The lie was an assault on both God’s generosity and his integrity. Neither his character nor his words were to be trusted. This, in fact, is the lie that sinners have believed ever since—the lie of the not-to-be-trusted-because-he-does-not-love-me-false-Father.”<sup>5</sup> When you really get to the bottom of why Adam and Eve listened to the serpent you find they (like us at times) didn’t believe what God said to be true and didn’t believe God had the best in mind for them.

Sin entered. And the consequences of this cataclysmic choice came to light. Let’s pick up there.

### **READ GENESIS 3:8-24. LOOK FOR THE WORD *BREAD* (SOME TRANSLATIONS MAY SAY *FOOD*).**

**Note how bread (or food) was a part of sin’s consequence.**

Reading this account made me think: *How did they get food before this?* We don’t know for sure, but probably they gathered food from trees. In Genesis 2:15, we see that God placed man in the garden to work it and watch over it, but somehow after the fall, the ground was cursed. With sin entering, they now must work for their bread in a different way—“by the sweat of your brow” (v. 19). Not easy work. Hard work. Work that has no end.

### **BREAD AS A PROVISION**

When bread was introduced as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin in Genesis 3, they soon realized it was something they would have to work for. Grain would first have to be gathered, sifted, cleaned, and ground to make flour. It was only after these laborious steps that the flour would be mixed with water and kneaded to form cakes that could then be baked to make bread. While the process involved multiple steps, it was still a process that God ordained to provide the people with food.

The story of the Israelites gives us a better glimpse into God’s gracious provision of bread. Bread was a staple in the Israelites’ diet. They came to depend on it.

After 400 years of slavery, 10 plagues, and a journey across the Red Sea, the Israelites found themselves free from the Egyptians. But their travels also left them unable to collect new grain, and the grain they had brought with them from Egypt soon ran out. In Exodus 16, we see their reaction to this predicament.

When they found themselves without the grain to make bread, they panicked. They panicked because they did not remember the promise. They did not remember how God had provided for them all along. So instead of crying out to God to provide and sustain, they grumbled and accused Moses and Aaron of bringing them out from under Egyptian slavery only to leave them to die of starvation in the wilderness.

Yet amidst the grumbling and panicked pleas of the Israelites, God heard and graciously provided. A special bread known as *manna* would rain down from heaven each day.

**Why do you think God chose to provide for the Israelites in this specific way?**

I love that the Lord provided for His people in this way. Think about it. There is no rationale or even natural explanation for something like manna. I can't help but think that if bread appeared from the ground the Israelites would have been tempted to rationalize and even devalue the provision of God. I think they may have had the tendency to explain it away rather than see the mercy and provision of God. You see, God could have fed them any way He saw fit, but by choosing to rain the manna down from heaven, He was reminding the people that He alone was their Provider. He was shifting their focus from the ground (their own efforts to provide) to the heavens (God's ability to provide). He was lifting their eyes to Him.

**Do you have a similar story? Has there been a time in your life where God clearly provided for you in a way that only He could? Explain.**

Whether you have a big story with which to remember God's providing for you or it's a more simple example, He is faithful. Just the fact that we are sitting here today breathing and able to be together is rich evidence of God's faithfulness. This helps me lift my eyes when my heart aches over my not-yet-answered prayer. Looking at His faithfulness to provide helps me see if He did it before, He will do it again. Or maybe His delayed answer is actually His best provision for me right now.

**How does that resonate with you?**

Let's look at a time when the Israelites celebrated God providing in the past, which gave them hope that He could provide again.

### THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The Book of Leviticus outlines many of the Israelite laws and holy days—the laws and celebrations that would *set them apart* from the rest of the world at that time. These laws and celebrations also *set them up* to remember God's actions in their lives.

### READ THE VERSES BELOW AND FILL IN THE NAME OF THE FESTIVAL IN THE COLUMN ON THE LEFT.<sup>6</sup>

NAME	DATE	REFERENCE	SIGNIFICANCE
	Mar/Apr: 14-21	Ex. 12:2-20; Lev. 23:5	Commemorates God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt.
	Mar/Apr: 15-21	Lev. 23:6-8	Commemorates God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Includes a Day of Firstfruits for the barley harvest.
	May/June: 6 (seven weeks after Passover)	Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21	Commemorates the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. Includes a Day of Firstfruits for the wheat harvest.
	Sept/Oct: 1	Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6	Day of the blowing of the trumpets to signal the beginning of the civil new year.
	Sept/Oct: 10	Ex. 30:10; Lev. 23:26-33	On this day the high priest makes atonement for the nation's sin. Also a day of fasting.
	Sept/Oct: 15-21	Lev. 23:33-43; Num. 29:12-39; Deut. 16:13	Commemorates the forty years of wilderness wandering.
	Nov/Dec: 25-30; and Tebeth, Dec/Jan: 1-2	John 10:22	Commemorates the purification of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C.
	Feb/Mar: 14	Esther 9:26	Commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people in the days of Esther.



*Unleavened bread*

If you want to read more about the rest of the holy celebrations go right ahead and do that by just finishing out Leviticus 23.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread (which is celebrated during the month of Passover) was on the fifteenth day of the first month and was a reminder to the Israelites how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. You might remember that they made unleavened bread and left with haste once God delivered them (Ex. 12:17-20). The Festival of Unleavened Bread offered a yearly opportunity to remember and celebrate the deliverance of God's people. It was also a time to sacrifice firstfruits to the Lord,

including a grain offering. This gift was a sacrifice and a reminder that everything the Israelites had was from the Lord.

When Jesus entered the scene, Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were no longer two distinct festivals but rather were celebrated together. By that time, it was the greatest Jewish national holiday the Israelites celebrated.<sup>7</sup>

In the Old Testament every firstborn, human or animal, belonged to God (Ex. 13:2), so the "firstfruits," or initial yield of every crop, were set aside as an offering. And the offering was also an indicator of the harvest that one would reap. Likewise, Jesus was the offering on our behalf. Because He rose from the grave during this well-known Jewish festival, we have a clear, beautiful picture of Jesus being the grain/bread offering in our stead.

## THE HOUSE OF BREAD

We've only just scratched the surface of the fascinating references to the word *bread* in the Bible, but this will be our last exercise on the subject today. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The word *Bethlehem* means "house of bread." Don't lose the significance here: **The house of bread was where the Bread of life was born.** God knew Jesus would be the Bread of life, and He chose for Him to be born in the city bearing that same name.

Bread as a consequence to sin in Genesis becomes our salvation in a city so many thousands of years later. Jesus was certainly deliberate as He named these I AM statements in the Book of John. Each one is important, significant, and rich for our lives today. In our time tomorrow we will study the first time Jesus opens His mouth and declares, "I AM."



#### DAY 4

### THE BREAD OF LIFE WALKS ON WATER

Unrealistic expectations often lead to our greatest frustrations. I wonder sometimes if part of my wrestling through the desperate cry of my heart is that I want life to satisfy me. I have an unrealistic expectation that life should tie up in a tidy bow, like the nursery rhyme that says,

*Row, row, row your boat*

*Gently down the stream*

*Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily*

*Life is but a dream.*

This nursery rhyme and children's song was first printed in 1852. I'm sure you know it well, either from memories in your childhood, or maybe you sing it with children in your life now. Like many nursery rhymes, though, I never really stop to think about the lyrics. It has become so ingrained in our culture that I just sing it without thinking.

Have you ever rowed a boat? I don't think *gently* is a word that I would use to describe it. Instead I think of words like: *tiresome, hard work, difficult*. And then that last lyric—"life is but a dream." It sounds nice, but it's just not true.

Life is not always smooth. The stream is not always easy to row. You know this. Jesus did, too. And while we are out on the waters of life, Jesus shows up—not in a boat, but walking.

Remember that before Jesus said any of His I AM statements He first performed five miracles. We discussed the fourth miracle on Day 2. Today we get to talk about the fifth miracle and then finally look at Jesus' first I AM statement. If you'll recall we saw earlier this week that John 6:1-15 ends with Jesus escaping from the crowd that wanted to make Him king. He went away to be alone.

### **LET'S PICK UP AT THAT POINT AND READ JOHN 6:16-21.**

Many of the disciples were fishermen, so they would have had lots of experience navigating from one side of the sea to another. But before they could reach the other side, a massive storm rolled in. Rough winds caused the sea to rise and the boat to be rocked. Despite the disciples' initial willingness, worry began to set in. I imagine many began to wonder why Jesus would leave them alone during such a scary time. But before their fears could grow any further, Jesus came to their aid by walking on the water and getting into the boat. He became the answer to their need. Maybe I would be less frustrated if I understood that Jesus is my satisfaction—not a more tidy life.

As Jesus stepped into the boat, another miraculous thing happened.

#### **What was it (see v. 21)?**

When we're going through a storm, we often try to face it ourselves. We pull out the tools we have in our tool belt and start fighting the battle. Frustration, exhaustion, and exasperation set in. Finally, we ask Jesus to help us. He has everything we need to win this battle and overcome this struggle. We can trust Him. So I wonder why we so often make Him a last resort rather than our first response?

#### **What storms have you tried to face on your own? What battles have you tried to fight without turning to Jesus?**

What are your go-to “tools” that you pull out when you get into this kind of situation?

Speaking of this passage of Scripture, author Michael Card said, “Chapter 6 is the hinge on which the story of John’s Gospel turns. It marks a radical shift in Jesus’ ministry: from His greatest moment of acceptance and popularity to one of the darkest instances of offense and rejection.”<sup>8</sup>

This section of Scripture marks a huge turning point in Jesus’ ministry. After walking with the people and performing miracles, He is finally about to start telling people about Himself. And their response was much like many today. Either they embraced Him or they rejected Him.

**PLEASE READ JOHN 6:22-42.**

Why did Jesus say the crowds were following Him (see v. 26)?

There is a  
difference in  
coming to Jesus  
for bread and  
because He is  
Bread.

Do you think people would try to fill their spiritual hunger if all their physical needs were continually met? Why or why not?

Since you are walking with me through this study, I have a feeling that you are following after Jesus. But this passage makes me stop and question, *Why am I following Jesus? Is it so that I can get something from Him? Am I like the crowds who simply want their bellies filled? Or am I coming to Him because He is Bread to me?* There is a difference in coming to Jesus for bread and because He is Bread.

The crowd asks Jesus what they can do to perform the works of God. What a bold question! And Jesus answered right back with a bold response— “The work of God is this: to

believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29). Believing is the work. And that can be hard sometimes because we can’t measure belief. We can’t check belief off a to-do list. Belief can’t be seen and praised by those around us. Belief is in our hearts. Only God truly sees what we believe.

**How can you guard against the seemingly never ending to-do list of what you think you should do as a “good Christian”? How can you remind yourself that believing in Jesus is all you need?**

The crowd then brings up the manna in the wilderness. Begging Jesus to give them a sign so they can believe. They even gave Him a helpful hint—why not do what Moses did and provide manna from heaven?

Oh, the manna. The bread from heaven that came down every morning to feed the Israelites when they were in the wilderness. Day after day it came. God was teaching the Israelites that He was the ultimate Provider. As they wandered through the wilderness, they had to rely on God every day in order to live, for He only provided enough manna for each day.

But the manna of the Old Testament was just a shadow of the Bread that was to come.

In the Gospel of John we see that Jesus did more than the manna ever could. Jesus was the true living Bread that came down from heaven. He said, “Whoever comes to me will never go hungry” (John 6:35).

We see the difference between Jesus and manna in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Twelve baskets were left over. Jesus is not only the Provider, He is the Bread of life who never runs out and gives you exceedingly, abundantly more than you can imagine. All you have to do is believe.

**DAY 5**

**OPTIONAL**

For those of you who are able to take this study a little deeper, I invite you to read the Gospel of John. I think you will really enjoy reading through the entire Gospel account to get a fuller picture of the I AM statements. (Please note: We won't be discussing your Day 5 reflections in the group study as it is an optional activity.)

For today's portion please read John 1–4. Then, use this page to record any thoughts, prayers, or things you want to remember from the reading.

**Good questions to ask as you read are:**

**What does this passage teach me about God?**

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**What does this passage teach me about myself?**

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# WHAT IS THE *deep cry* OF YOUR HEART?

That ache in your soul that keeps you up at night? The prayer you keep repeating? Jesus not only cares about this deep, spiritual wrestling, but He also wants to step in and see you through it.

Join Lysa TerKeurst on the streets of Israel to explore the seven I AM statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. Through this interactive, in-depth study, you will learn to:

- Trade feelings of emptiness and depletion for a more personal fulfillment from knowing who Jesus is.
- Stop living like a slave to your circumstances by training your heart to embrace the life-giving freedom God wants for you.
- Gain a better understanding of how Jesus' words 2,000 years ago are so very applicable to the answers we are searching for today.

**ALSO AVAILABLE** *Finding I AM* Leader Kit includes a Bible study book and two DVDs with six teaching sessions.

**DIGITAL RESOURCES** E-book, video sessions, and promotional material available at [www.lifeway.com/findingIAM](http://www.lifeway.com/findingIAM)



**Lysa TerKeurst** is president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Uninvited* and *The Best Yes*. She writes from her sticky farm table and lives with her family in North Carolina. Connect with her at [www.LysaTerKeurst.com](http://www.LysaTerKeurst.com).

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