

## FREEDOM IN DEPENDENCE, NOT INDEPENDENCE

When Jesus declared to the crowds surrounding Him, *"I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst"* (John 6:25), He was teaching a powerful lesson; an eternal life answer. Every person in this world needs what only God **gives** to them: Himself. Jesus is the Bread of Life that God **gives** to His creation for eternal life. We can't do without the Lord Jesus.

And yet, this kind of dependence upon anything or anyone has become a vile thought, particularly in America, but also across the world. The fastest growing religions are movements like the "nones" (those who identify themselves as free from dependence upon God or any religion), Wicca (the individual can summon the spirit world to do their personal bidding) and secular humanism (the individual person is central to one's desired future, i.e. - the Me movement). These movements can seem like a tsunami over preaching Christ Crucified. BUT there is one confession the Christian can make that bears a witness that turns the heads of this self-serving world. Read the entire article to discover what this confession is and how to make it within your mission field. Hint: It has something to do with desired freedom only in dependence upon God.



Did you know that neon signs can be hazardous to your health? There is one neon sign that is hazardous to mine. It is the one that flashes "hot" in bright red on the window of Krispy Kreme. If you have ever eaten some really great, hot, Krispy Kreme doughnuts oozing with that glaze that is so wonderful for your cardiovascular system, you know there are always two problems in that box of doughnuts: **one** is never enough and no matter how many you eat, eventually you want more.

This truth has become even more hazardous since Krispy Kreme gives a free donut every day for 2021 to vaccinated people. Talk about a double-edged sword - something soooo delicious and yet so hazardous to one's health. For so very many people, life is just like that. There's a never-ending quest for fulfillment - and yet, we live our lives as unsatisfied customers.

There is the story of an elderly gentleman who goes to a restaurant every day for lunch. He always orders the soup du jour. One day the manager asks him how he liked his meal. The man replies, "It was good, but you could give a little more bread. Two slices of bread is not enough." So the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him four slices of bread. "How was your meal, sir?" the manager asks. "It was good, but you could give a little more bread," comes the reply. So the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him eight slices of bread. "How was your meal today, sir?" the manager asks. "Good, but you could give a little more bread," comes the reply. So... the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him a whole loaf of bread, 22 slices with his soup. "How was your meal, sir?" the manager asks,

when he comes to pay. “It was good, but you could give just a little more bread,” comes the reply once again. The manager is now obsessed with seeing this customer satisfied with his meal, so he goes to the bakery, and orders a six-foot-long loaf of bread. When the man comes in as usual the next day, the waitress and the manager cut the loaf in half, butter the entire length of each half, and lay it out along the counter, right next to his bowl of soup. The man sits down, and devours his bowl of soup, and both halves of the six-foot-long loaf of bread. The manager now thinks he will get the answer he is looking for, and when the elderly gentleman comes up to pay for his meal, the manager asks in the usual way: “How was your meal TODAY, sir?” The man replies: “It was good as usual, but I see you’re back to serving only two slices of bread!”

### **Jesus is patient with a grumbling world.**

Jesus had just fed 5,000 men plus women and children. After this event, Jesus goes into His teaching but there is an issue. His miracle has generated controversy. Quite impressed with what they have seen, a group of scribes approach Jesus and say, in effect – if You are the Messiah, then prove it. They pointed out that when the Hebrews were in the wilderness, Moses was able to bring bread from heaven. There had been a strong rabbinic belief that when the Messiah came He, too, would bring manna from heaven. This had been the superman act of Moses and surely, they reasoned, the Messiah could surpass that. In other words, the Jews were challenging Jesus to substantiate His claim of Messiahship by raining bread from heaven. Some might immediately say, well, wasn’t the feeding of the 5,000 a miracle in their eyes? Yes and no. They were impressed - no doubt about that – but Jesus’ critics argue that He merely fed 5,000 whereas Moses had fed a nation. “Jesus,” they said, “You have fed these people for one day but Moses did it for 40 years. What You have done is multiply a few earthly loaves of bread and fish but Moses made it appear from out of nowhere.” The Messiah, it was thought at the time, would outperform the signs of Moses.

Sinful people, like every one of us, are grumblers. It is so easy to point out where things could be better and how we could certainly do a better job if only we were in charge. The “armchair quarterback” in ALL of us likes to sit back and play the expert, play the critic, telling everyone who will listen how perfect things could have been. The children of Israel grumbled to the point of desiring to be dead or in slavery rather than free and hungry. The scribes were not impressed with Jesus’ miracle, but wanted more. Hunger was not the sin of the Israelites. Wanting proof was not the sin of the scribes. Their sin - even as it is our sin - is the sin of believing that God’s promises are not true, refusing to take God at His Word and looking to ourselves for comfort and provision. We deserve nothing but God’s present and eternal punishment. But we reject God’s Word and grumble against God, grumble against others feeling we deserve something better. And thinking that God is withholding something from us, we feel the need to do it ourselves. We’re not content with all God’s benefits.

### **Christians (Witnesses) have a confession that answers the world’s grumbling.**

God hears the grumbling of His world seeking independence from everything including Him and answers it as though it were a prayer. God hears the world's grumbling. He hears your personal cry. So hear His voice. Jesus proclaims, "I am the Bread of Life. I am the One sent from God. I am the One sent to **give** the free gift of eternal life. Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst." That's not just a statement; that's a promise! Enjoy the things of this world, yes. But when you get them and still find there's something missing, that there's a hunger and thirst that all the things of this world are unable to satisfy or quench - **and every person in this world will** - you will find the sign you are looking for in Christ alone. He comes to give Himself to you. The sign He gave you was the sign of Jonah. He was swallowed up by death - your death and mine - but He conquered sin, death and the grave - yours and mine - and because He has **so will you**; so will all who are joined to Him by believing in Him.

You have been patient waiting for it. What is the confession that the unsatisfied world around us, our mission field, will turn their head and take notice? It's the confession of the people in response to hearing about the only bread that satisfies: **LORD, GIVE US THIS BREAD ALWAYS**. Give us this bread in any and every circumstance! By the grace of God, we Christians, we faithful witnesses, have been given the faith to answer: What alone satisfies? It is the Bread from Heaven - our Lord Himself - and only He will satisfy hunger and thirst - today and for eternity. In the end we agree with Martin Luther's last written words, "We are all beggars. This is true," as well as 20th century Methodist minister and missionary D.T. Niles who, expanding on Luther, said: "A Christian witness is not like a rich man who has a lot of bread which he hands out to the poor beggars who have nothing. He is rather like one beggar who tells another beggar where he has found bread." And that Bread, Jesus, is who we share with a hungry world.

### **Our witness about Jesus is to a world where bread is optional.**

For much of the world, bread is optional. As a diabetic, I am forced to tell the server at Olive Garden and Red Lobster: Forget the bread (to which my family quickly responds...No, no, no, keep the bread sticks and rolls coming). We can get our bread as white bread, whole wheat bread, multi-grain bread, cornbread, flatbread, cinnamon bread, rye bread, buckwheat bread, Italian bread, yeast bread, unleavened bread, sourdough bread, gluten-free bread. We can get our bread as a biscuit, a roll, a waffle, a bagel, a bun and the list goes on seemingly forever. But in Palestine, bread was not looked upon as an add-on to a meal. **Bread was the essential staple**. You might have nothing else to eat, but as long as you had bread, you would survive. Bread was seen as that which provides life itself. Jesus was saying to the crowd and is saying to us and the world around us, "I am THE One who provides life abundant and everlasting. I am not an option, if you really want life. I am essential. I am necessary. Depend on Me alone!"

With His words, Jesus seeks to turn the appetites of the world to Himself. That the entire world would feed on Him as the Bread of Life. That the world would *“labor not for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which He will give to you.”* That, Jesus says, is the reason why the manna was given in the desert. Was it given as food to nourish their bodies? Of course. But not only that. It was also given to draw the world to faith in the God who would provide bread that satisfies each and every day. Jesus gives the bread that satisfies so that we can enjoy the freedom in dependence that satisfies the body and soul.

Your English District Evangelization Team is praying that every member of every congregation will enjoy the true freedom that comes only in complete dependence upon Jesus as the Bread of Life. Bread is everywhere. What a great discussion starter with the world around us. If you're serving a picnic meal for a gathering at your home, consider putting a variety of bread out prior to prayer for the feast. During lunch at work, point to bread and bear witness - Jesus is my answer for the bread that satisfies. Corny? Not when you consider the hunger of a broken world - and YOU have that which satisfies: Jesus, the Bread of Life. Jesus is NOT optional. Remember, you are witnessing to a world of “nones” and secular humanists who truly believe that Life is Independence from everything and everyone. The Evangelization Team will continue to “feed” you with encouragement to bear witness to the world around you. Can anything be easier to share than bread that is everywhere? Reach out to our email [evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org](mailto:evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org) for resources that will equip and empower you to boldly confess Jesus, the Bread of Life, to a hungry world: **Lord, give us this bread always.** God's blessings always as you boldly confess your Savior. We look forward to hearing from you.

In Christ Alone,  
Pastor John Diener  
Galatians 2:20