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We left the story in John 6 where the crowd was amazed at the miracle where Jesus fed somewhere between 7-10,000 people with just 2 dainty fish and 5 barley loaves. The crowd was so impressed by this miracle that they planned to take Jesus by force and crown Him king. Knowing what they were going to do, Jesus left the crowd and went into the hills alone. *Mark 6:45* tells us that before He went to the hills Jesus instructed His disciples to get back into the boat and head out across the lake. Let's pick up the story from this point.

### ***John 6:16-25***

Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles across from North to South and 7.5 miles from East to West and is estimated to be between 140 and 200 feet deep and lies about 700 feet below sea level. It is the lowest fresh water lake in the world and the second lowest behind the Dead Sea, which is a saltwater lake. It is surrounded by Hills and because of the low valley in which it is situated the wind pours through and the sea is prone to sudden and violent storms that often are life-threatening and puts even the most experienced seaman at serious risk. In addition, the kind of boat

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that the disciples took across the sea was not large at all and would have been tossed to and fro in the storm.

We are not really sure what part of the lake they had launched from but Matthew tells us that when Jesus came walking by they were far away from land, the waves were frightening, and they were in trouble. John tells us that they had rowed about 3-4 miles, so they must have been out in the center of the lake somewhere.

John does not give us a lot of details about this event except for the fact that the storm was bad, they had been fighting the waves for a long time and had not really gotten that far, and when they saw Jesus walking toward the boat they freaked out. Matthew tells us that they screamed in terror. Imagine, if you were out in the middle of the lake already scared for your life battling waves that threatened to turn over your little boat and then you look and you see someone walking up to you—I say that would qualify for a good scream.

But we have to ask ourselves, why did John choose to include this story and yet give us so few details? He left out that little part where Peter got out of the boat and actually walked on water. I believe John was drawing from this story so we could understand the true condition of the disciples' hearts—but He leaves it for us to discern. Mark, however, just full-on puts it out there, points the finger and says they still did not believe.

### ***Mark 6:50-52***

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage! I am here!" Then he climbed into the boat, and the wind stopped. They were totally amazed, for they still didn't understand the significance of the miracle of the loaves. Their hearts were too hard to take it in.

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It is fascinating the way supernatural works of God, miracles, and healings do not, in and of themselves, produce faith in the heart of man. I have talked to so many people who have said that they would believe if they could just see a miracle. But the entire historical record shows us that it does not matter, it is never enough; people always want something more. The issue is rarely the evidence—God has always given us plenty of evidence of His existence and involvement in the lives of people, it is the darkness within the heart of man that ultimately does not want to yield and surrender to the authority of God. It's as if man wants to be his own God; I guess Satan has tricked all of mankind with the same lie that he succumbed to when he errantly thought he could be like God.

The creation of wine out of water, miraculous healings, the feeding of thousands with just 2 fish and 5 barley loaves, and now Jesus comes to the disciples walking on the water. Again, the issue is not the evidence but the hardness of the human heart. John uses this story as part of the set up for the ensuing dialogue between Jesus and all those who ate of the fishes and loaves; a dialogue where Jesus draws a hard line of distinction between what we say we believe and what we are willing to live.

When I was reading this story I was thinking that it does not seem too fair to the disciples. Ok, sure, they just saw Jesus perform a real live miracle and they had eaten the bread and the fish and were satisfied. But now Jesus was not with them. He was up in the hills somewhere and He had sent them across this lake knowing that there was going to be a frightful storm, knowing that they would be in total darkness, knowing that anyone would be afraid.

However, even though Jesus sent them into a very dangerous situation that seemed to put their lives in jeopardy, it was practically all an illusion; they were

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never really in danger! Sure they were in a storm, sure it was harry, but they were chosen by God, they belonged to God, and were safe. Nothing could happen to them unless He allowed it. Besides, Jesus planned all along to come to them in the midst of this storm (which is why He sent them alone in the first place).

This is a powerful truth. By His hand, God will send us into a storm knowing that it will wreak havoc in our lives. But it is not because He is standing at the shore, pushing us off into the sea, crossing His fingers hoping that we will make it to the other side safely. Rather, He knows what is going to happen and it is all very purposeful. He knows exactly what it is that He is trying to prove out in our lives.

We may be slow learners but over time we should begin to understand His pattern and realize that in the midst of the storm He will always come to us and if we receive Him, we will experience His power to bring us through the worst kinds of difficulties. This truth is life changing. Regardless of what we see, feel, or can reason through with our own brains, we are always in His care.

Believe me, I know by experience that it is easy to preach this truth, but it is much harder to live it. But God is relentless. He wants us to learn to rest in His sovereign control over our lives. He wants us to live by faith and not by sight. Thus, He will keep placing us in storms until the intangible truth of the Word of God becomes our tangible reality—until we learn that He is God, that He is absolutely sovereign over the details of our lives, and until we believe that everything He allows in our lives is an expression of His love for us. When the intangible becomes as tangible to us as the food we eat and the air we breathe, then we will know that we are standing and abiding in true Biblical faith.

Learning to live this way seems so scary; in fact, sometimes it seems that every cell in our body is convulsing over the things that God has asked us to believe and the ways He has asked us to live. Some of you know exactly what I mean. Just the

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thought of trusting Him in some of those core areas of our being where we have been hurt and damaged, such that we are able to love others free from all the dysfunction in our souls, is harrowing. But it is when we deny ourselves, our way of thinking, our self-protection, our self-provision, and our self obsession, that we start to experience Jesus as Lord. Remember, nothing is arbitrary for a believer. Nothing is random and nothing is capricious. It all flows from His love for us and His desire to transform us into the image of His Son.

So you see, when we believe this intangible truth we can understand that the disciples were never really in trouble. Jesus was always going to meet them in their troubles and rescue them. Jesus was simply giving them another opportunity to hear, see, and believe that He is God. In the same way, we are never really in trouble. Sure the storm can get ugly and scary, and seriously impact our physical circumstances and our relationships, but if we really believe that He is Lord of our life, then we will not totally freak when things in our life start to unravel. Instead, we will trust that He is our Lord and learn to expect Him to come to us in the midst of the turmoil and lead us in His will, whatever that maybe. This is true supernatural living. Paul describes it this way:

***Philippians 4:10-13***

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

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Paul learned that the quality of His life did not depend on His physical circumstances. He was living for an entirely different purpose. He was living to do the will of God and He knew that God would empower Him to do all that He had asked. Thus, Paul could rest and find contentment in His soul knowing that Jesus was in absolute control of the details of His life. Sometimes that resulted in blessing and prosperity and sometimes in intense physical suffering, but regardless he learned to be satisfied by the one who was the bread of life.

### ***John 6:22-28***

The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

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Ok, so much for the set up, now it gets intense. It's funny that it says Jesus answered because He really did not answer them, He just took the opportunity to start to dig in and turn the conversation to what He really wanted to talk about—their unbelief and incessant focus on themselves. He is basically saying that they do not give a rip about the will of God for their lives; they were only interested in what God could do for them or what they could get from Him. So He tells them to seek first the kingdom of God, for that is all that really matters in this life. The only food that truly satisfies is the bread of life which is Jesus Himself. He is the only one who can give it and He gives it willingly.

Then Jesus tells them that God has placed His seal on the Son. The idea is that the Father's signet ring has been impressed on Jesus so that everyone knows that the message He brings is directly from the Father. This takes us back to *John 5:36* where He said: "But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. They have been assigned to me by the Father, and they testify that the Father has sent me." In other words, what they saw on the other side of the Lake should have convinced them that God was in their midst and they should have been on their knees bowing to the only One who could save them and not just seeking what they could get from Him.

But like the disciples, instead of understanding the miraculous sign of the fishes and loaves, i.e., the absolute spiritual poverty of man and the abundant mercy and grace which flows from the Son who is the source of eternal life, they miss it all together. It seems they do not even really pay attention to what Jesus says and they are absolutely non-responsive. Instead, they move on with their own agenda and their favorite topic (the "Me"). What about "me." I guess a little payback is to be expected; Jesus brushed by their question so now they just ignore what He has to say.

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When people have an agenda, often there is no moving them, no matter what you say. Even Believers are often so fixated on the “me” that they simply will not let the Word of God have its rightful place of authority in their lives. Sure they hear it and even say they believe it; but so few are willing to bet their life on it and live as if it is true.

Jesus tells them that they need to seek Him and they just ignore Him altogether and move to the quintessential “me” question of the ages, what must we “do” to please God. What does He require of us so we can do it? This is the essence of religion—all religions. It does not matter which part of the world you go to, everyone is on a pursuit of what they can “do” to earn favor and merit with their god believing that if they live the right way they will somehow secure some kind of favor in this life and the life to come. Their goal may be worthy, but they simply do not understand. Actually they refuse to understand. The evidence is overwhelming but for some reason they think they have it within themselves to do something that would be considered worthy in the eyes of God.

These people have ears but they do not hear and eyes but they do not see. Jesus has been talking to them about their need to be in absolute humble dependence upon Him for every part of their life knowing that they are destitute and unable to do anything on their own to “please” God. He has communicated that all that comes from sea of mankind will perish and be consumed, which is why every man, woman, and child, needs to rely 100% on the supernatural provision of the grace and mercy of God for both this life and the life to come. Again, this was the message of the fishes and loaves. Only the Bread of Life can perfectly provide and make us complete and satisfied. Yet, they are not convinced. It’s as if they take what Jesus said under advisement but quickly set it aside believing that they have



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good in them, they are able, and if they just got the right list they could please God and do His works.

Isn't that even what we tend to do within the religion Christianity? Again, I am going to draw a distinction between Jesus being our Savior and Jesus being our Lord? We are convinced we are sinners and believe we cannot save ourselves, so we ask Jesus to come into our hearts, to forgive our sins, and to make us new in order that we might receive salvation and the guarantee of eternal life that He freely gives. But for some reason when it comes to our day-to-day living and the practical aspects of surviving the storms of this life, we live as if the Word of God is to be taken under advisement and is more illustrative than authoritative.

In *Galatians 5:25* we are told that "If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." Yet, like the disciples in the storm, Christians are often fearful of the waves and just cling to the boat in desperation believing that the harder they grip the safer they will be. Some try to control and manage every detail of their lives, some are just going for a ride and are being driven wherever the wind blows, and then some people are in this sort of no man's land where they cry out to God when they are desperate but otherwise they rarely seek the will of the Lord for the parts of the life that they feel they are adequately equipped to manage.

The way Christians choose to live is one of the biggest tragedies in the religion of Christianity. I believe that the enemy has been very successful in getting us to succumb to the lie that we are able. Notice that I said "succumb" and not believe. I don't think we really believe that we are able, for *Romans 8:4-14* and *Galatians 5:17* tell us that the Spirit within us is constantly warring against the lies. However, I think we have chosen to silence the voice of the Spirit and succumb to the voice of our old sinful nature, which tells us that we need to stay in control of our own

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lives, because of the deep, deep, fear we have that this intangible God is not really actively managing the day-to-day details of our lives. We think: “after all, how could He be in control when so many horrible and painful things have happened to me. Besides where are His promises? Where is the blessing? Where is the power? Where is the comfort? Where is the protection? Where is the provision? Where is His presence?” Why am I not getting these things?

Again, we have not let the Word of God be authoritative in our lives. We do not understand or believe that His goal in our life is not our material blessing (if He adds that, great—take it!), but His desire is to prove our faith and transform us into the image of His Son so that He can work His will in heaven down here on earth, in and through our lives. We are to be His instruments, His vessels for bringing the grace and mercy of God to both our brothers and sisters in the Lord and to those who do not even know God. Our lives in Christ are simply not about the “me” but it is about Him and what He wants. He redeemed us; we are His to do with as He wills. This is the truth we seem to continually fight because we don’t like it. We want to feel we have some control over the outcomes of our life and we don’t want to believe that this loving God could take us through hard times.

Given this dichotomy and incessant battle in our soul, given the fact that this whole faith thing is too scary, given the fact that there are no fixed guarantees for the desires of the “me,” and given our natural comfort with the voice of our old sinful nature, we have to compensate so we do not “feel” as if we are living in constant disobedience to God. After all, we love Him. Hence, the religion of Christianity is able to thrive and flourish. Instead of betting our lives on the truth of the Word of God, we live as if we can appease God by the things that the religion of Christianity has told us to do: Go to church, go to Sunday School, Bible studies, have quiet times, serve in church, support mission, witness to others, fight sin so

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we don't embarrass ourselves or the church, tithe and support the work of the ministry, and the list goes on and on. We become convinced that if we are disciplined and "do" these things really well that we are going to be ok with God. It is our penance, so to speak, the way we quiet the demands of the Spirit of God within us that is crying out for us to stop the religious pretense and choose to live by faith.

When we live this way, in any part of our life, we do not understand the meaning of the fishes and loaves. If our religious tasks are simply nothing more than a way to buy us some sort of favor with God, so we can tap ourselves, and each other, on the shoulder comforting each other, relieving our guilt, and trying to convince ourselves that we are doing good; we are simply living in a delusion and not according to the truth. We are living according to the direction and authority of our old sinful nature, who is an enemy of God and will always be an enemy of God.

***John 6:29***

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

This answer is one of the most shocking revelations of all time and it is what differentiates Biblical Christianity from all the religions in this world, even the religion of Christianity. There is nothing we are to "do" to please God other than to believe in Jesus. That is it! However, this notion of "believing" is intense. Remember, ***James 4:19*** tells us that even the demons believe and shudder; and we know the demons are not in a pleasing relationship with God. So this notion of

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“belief” is far more than just an intellectual an emotional ascension to the truth, it is far more than a creed, or a statement of beliefs to which one adheres and practices.

The Greek word translated into English as “believe” is the word “*pisteuo*” which means to have faith in. Thus, the work of God is to have faith in Jesus. And, according to *Hebrews 11:1*, this means that we are to be absolutely convinced—fully convicted—that the intangible truths in the Word of God are not only real but are so reliable that we have to bet our lives on them. This also means that we do not live or make decisions according to the physical realities of this world: all that we can see, touch, feel, and reason with our own capabilities. We make decisions based on seeking and knowing the will of God for our lives. The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. This is true Biblical belief and the only way to please God, for “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (*Hebrews 11:6*).

Therefore, the answer to the question, what must we do to please God is: be willing to believe that your basket is empty, that Jesus is your sovereign God in control of all the details of your life, that He is your Bread of Life, that through a supernatural miracle of God He can fill your basket with Himself so that He can live in and through you every single day of your life. This is not only the pathway to salvation it is the pathway to experiencing the Lordship if Christ.

### ***John 6:30-31***

They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed

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through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Ok, who is a little bit frustrated with these people? They are incredulous. They are so dull. They are so stubborn. Their unbelief seems to be without end. Sadly, they are exactly like you and me—no matter how much we learn we still insist on God giving us some other sign that He is going to take care of us before we surrender to His rule. They saw Jesus take 5 barley loaves and 2 dainty portions of fish and feed a massive crowd of people and yet they still ask for a miraculous sign. If you remember, this is also what the religious leaders also asked for despite acknowledging that He had performed many miraculous healings all around Jerusalem. What are they looking for? Has He not proved Himself already? Jesus said that His teachings and His miracles were the mark of God's signet ring—undeniable and a testimony for all; yet, they want more and more.

The Rabbis used to teach that when the Prophet came He would once again bring down manna from heaven. So I guess they were looking for this "one" sign, this "one" sure indication that He was the One. This is ridiculous. He has continually performed supernatural acts and yet they have, for some reason, determined that there is only one test that will satisfy their doubt.

### ***John 6:32-33***

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

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Now the problem becomes obvious. They were stuck in their incredulous unbelief because of their wrong belief. They had misinterpreted and misapplied the scriptures. First of all, it was not Moses who brought the manna, it was God. *Exodus 16:4* and *Psalms 78:23-24* makes this abundantly clear. Therefore, to believe that the One who would come would produce manna from heaven is just a product of their imaginations. This notion, which became their litmus test, does not come anywhere from scripture. It is nowhere in their Old Testament. It's kind of like all that prosperity teaching that tells us that if we really had faith we would be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous—we could speak it into existence. Again, this is a notion of peoples' imagination which does not derive from the Word of God.

Wrong belief always results in unbelief. The enemy's attempt to get believers to misinterpret and misapply the Word of God never ends. He knows that this is a tried and true method for controlling believers and sidetracking any legitimate work that the Spirit is trying to do. History is replete with story after story of how God did this amazing work and in a short time the Word of God was perverted, twisted, or misapplied and the work of the Spirit simply stopped and men went about trying, to no avail, to replicate the results. It is the sad reality of our spiritual legacy.

This was Satan's methodology when he tempted Eve and it is the same tool that he used when he tried to tempt to Jesus. With Eve he twisted and omitted parts of scripture, and because she did not know the Word she succumbed to the temptation. With Jesus, however, he quoted the Word of God accurately, but he took the scriptures out of context tempting Jesus to misapply the Word. This is why it is so important that we understand the full counsel of the Word of God and that we learn how to accurately handle the Word of God—from beginning to end. Paul instructed Timothy in this manner, and in so doing us.

***2 Timothy 2:15-16***

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Never doubt the power of the misapplied Word of God, in the hands of the devil, to lead many to a place where they simply refuse to believe the truth resulting in spiritual blindness and deafness. Ears to hear and eyes to see, but yet neither is happening.

***Isaiah 42:18-20***

Listen, you who are deaf! Look and see, you blind! Who is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messenger? Who is as blind as my chosen people, the servant of the Lord? You see and recognize what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear with your ears, but you don't really listen."

This sad condition is the result of wrong belief and unbelief. Jesus is the true bread of heaven; this means He is our supernatural sustenance for all that we need in this life. The Father sent us exactly what, in His wisdom, He knows that we truly need. Jesus is the one who comes down from heaven; Jesus fills; Jesus satisfies; and Jesus is enough. But we must believe and then choose to live according to this truth.

As we close, I want to make you aware of another cool little message embedded in this passage which reinforces what I just said. Jesus mentions that He came from

heaven or from God 7-times in this dialogue. Verse 32 and 33 are the first two times it is mentioned, and we will see it 5 more times before we finish this discussion in Chapter 6 in verses 38, 41, 46, 51, 58. Both the statement itself and the number of times it is repeated are claims of the deity of Christ. John has previously told us in *Chapter 1:18* that no one has seen God except for His Son who is Himself God.

Therefore, Jesus just keeps saying over and over that since He came from God He must be God and that is why they must believe in Him. In addition, the fact that it is mentioned a total of 7-times is just to put the exclamation mark on this whole statement. Remember, the number 7 is the hall-mark of the Holy Spirit's work and denotes perfect completion. Yes, Jesus can and will perfectly complete us if we let Him. It does not matter how broken we are, how rough the waves have been in our life, how desolate or isolated the land is where we find ourselves, Jesus is the perfect provision from the Father for all that we need in this life and in the life to come. It is time to live what we say we believe.

Let's Pray