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**SUMMARY**

We're inviting our Life Groups Leaders to play an integral role in our Year in the Bible by aligning their weekly gatherings with our church-wide reading plan. This alignment will not only increase engagement with the plan, but—more importantly—deepen biblical literacy across our church. To support our leaders in this effort, we've created weekly Leader Guides that include discussion questions, commentary insights, and practical teaching tips. Whether your group is Community, Discussion, or Traditional in format, these guides are designed to serve as a helpful and flexible resource.

**Format of the Year in the Bible Leader Guides**

Our Leader Guides will be sent to Life Group Leaders in monthly packets by the twentieth of the preceding month. Each weekly guide contains five sections, outlined below. Leaders are welcome to walk their group through the guide step by step or to pick and choose the sections that will be most helpful for their group, as we trust that our leaders know their groups best. We've also provided recommendations later on based on group type to serve as a helpful starting point.

**1. Create Interest**

We'll kick off each guide with a thoughtful opening question designed to help your group engage and generate interest in the Scripture passage being covered. We've found that beginning with simple, personal questions—ones everyone can answer—helps build participation, comfort, and momentum for deeper discussion.

**2. Study the Bible**

The core of the Leader Guide is the weekly Scripture reading, broken into smaller sections with discussion questions and a few simple activities. Community Group leaders may choose to dive deeply into one section, while Discussion Group leaders may be able to cover the entire passage. Traditional Life Group leaders can use this section to help structure their teaching time.

**3. Connect to Christ (Apply God's Word)**

Every story in the Bible points to Jesus Christ, and as leaders, it is our responsibility to help our members discover how. We also have the opportunity to show how each passage of Scripture applies to our lives today. Because of its importance, we're asking every group to integrate this section in some way each week.

**4. Pray Together**

Prayer draws our hearts to God and to one another, so regardless of group type, size, age, or stage, we're asking that every group set aside time each week to pray together.

**5. Commentary**

For those who want to learn more, this will take excerpted and slightly adapted material from *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the three distinct and valuable types of Life Groups at Central, we wanted to offer recommendations for how each might get the most out of the Leader Guide. We trust you to discern what your group needs and are here to support you along the way.

### Community Groups

#### Time Allotment

- *10 mins – The Bible:* Provide an overview of a passage and how it Connects to Christ.
- *40 mins – People:* Engage through your normal weekly rhythms.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Lift up concerns and praises shared during the group.

#### Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which passage of Scripture is most relevant to your group and its Connect to Christ, creating a concise overview of any needed context.
- Adapt or add to your weekly community questions to incorporate the Connect to Christ section.

### Discussion Groups

#### Time Allotment

- *10 mins – People:* Open conversation or discussion over a question, high/low, etc.
- *40 mins – The Bible:* Discuss the passage and its Connect to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Invite members to share personal requests and praises.

#### Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Decide which sections or activities may be skipped due to time constraints and create an overview for those portions.
- Use strategic questions to lead your group into the Connect to Christ section.

### Traditional Groups

#### Time Allotment

- *20 mins – People:* Weekly catch-up and social interactions.
- *30 mins – The Bible:* Teach the passage, revealing its Connection to Christ.
- *10 mins – Prayer:* Provide space for those who want to share requests and pray.

#### Preparation Tips

- Pray, asking the Spirit to guide you as you prepare and read the Leader Guide.
- Consider following the same passage breakdown as the guide, and incorporate questions either rhetorically or literally, depending on the needs of your group.
- In your application, show how we might trust in God's grace—not our works—for salvation and sanctification revealing the Connection to Christ.

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**OUR FORGIVING GOD: Psalm 51:1-17**

**The Point:** God welcomes genuine repentance and renews those who come to him for mercy.

**The Purpose:** Practice responding to sin with honest confession and trusting God for the cleansing and renewal only he can give.

**Christ Connection:** Psalm 51 anticipates the cleansing and restoration that come fully through Jesus, whose sacrifice secures forgiveness and new hearts for repentant sinners.

**CREATE INTEREST**

**Question: Why do we often hide sin rather than to confess it honestly?**

People may mention pride, fear of consequences, embarrassment, self protection, or not wanting to look weak. Many people experience the temptation to minimize sin or explain it away. Confession feels costly because it exposes pride and weakness.

**Transition to the Study**

Psalm 51 is one of the clearest prayers of repentance in Scripture. David writes after his sin has been exposed, and instead of excusing himself, he confesses deeply and asks God to do what he cannot do for himself. The psalm shows that real repentance is more than regret or damage control. It is an honest confession before God, confidence in his mercy, and a desire for inward renewal. As your group studies this passage, help them see both the seriousness of sin, the need to repent and the greater mercy of God, who cleanses, restores, and renews those who come to him with broken hearts.

**STUDY THE BIBLE****Psalm 51:1-6**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read Psalm 51:1-6.

**Discussion: What does David ask God to do in these opening verses?**

David asks for mercy, blotting out, washing, and cleansing because he knows his sin is real and cannot be removed by excuses. He appeals to God's faithful love, not his own merit. True repentance begins by turning to God's character.

**What makes honest confession difficult in everyday life?**

Shame, pride, fear of consequences, and self justification often keep people from confession. David shows that freedom begins when sin is named truthfully. Hidden sin grows heavier in the dark.

### **Why does David say his sin is ultimately against God?**

Sin harms others, but at its deepest level it is rebellion against God's holy rule and character. David recognizes the vertical reality behind every moral failure. Repentance is serious because God is holy.

*Teaching Tip: Create a grace filled tone*

*Repentance passages require tenderness. Keep the atmosphere serious but hopeful so conviction leads people toward God rather than toward despair. Resist the urge to move too quickly toward resolution.*

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### **Psalm 51:7-12**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read Psalm 51:7-12.

#### **Discussion: What kinds of renewal does David ask for here?**

He asks for cleansing, joy, a clean heart, a steadfast spirit, God's presence, and a willing spirit. David wants more than relief from consequences. He longs for inward restoration.

#### **Where do you long for God to restore joy or steadiness in your life?**

Members may mention spiritual dryness, guilt, broken habits, or emotional exhaustion. The psalm invites them to bring that need honestly to God, wherever sin has dulled joy, weakened obedience, or damaged fellowship with God. Renewal begins with dependence on God's creating power.

#### **What is the difference between moral improvement and the renewal David wants?**

Moral improvement tries to manage behavior, but David asks God to create what only he can give. He wants a new heart and renewed spirit. Repentance seeks transformation, not image repair.

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### **Psalm 51:13-17**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read aloud Psalm 51:13-17.

#### **Discussion: What does David say God desires in a repentant person?**

God desires truth, brokenness, and a contrite heart rather than mere outward ritual. God is after sincere repentance, not performance.

### **How can repentance become a regular spiritual practice rather than an emergency response?**

Believers can confess sin quickly, stay close to Scripture, invite accountability, and remember the gospel daily. Ongoing repentance is part of ongoing discipleship.

### **Why does restored mercy lead David toward teaching and praise?**

Grace received becomes grace testified to. Forgiven people are moved to worship and to help others return to God. Repentance does not end in silence. It leads to witness.

### **CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)**

#### **Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?**

This passage points to Jesus because he provides the cleansing, forgiveness, and new heart David longs for. What David asks God to do, Christ secures through his sacrifice, so repentant sinners can be washed, restored, and brought near by grace.

**Connect to Christ: Psalm 51 teaches that repentance is not about managing appearances but about coming honestly before God for mercy, cleansing, and renewal, and it reminds believers that brokenness before him is not the end of hope but the place where restoration begins. David's prayer awakens a need no sinner can meet alone, asking for mercy, a clean heart, restored joy, and inward renewal that find their fullest answer in Jesus Christ. Through his saving work, Jesus truly cleanses sin, brings forgiveness and reconciliation, and gives the deep renewal David longs for rather than merely covering guilt on the surface. In this way, Psalm 51 prepares the heart to see the beauty of the gospel, where God remains just and merciful and where cleansing is fully accomplished through the Savior.**

#### **Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:**

**Spend** time praying through Psalm 51 slowly, turning David's words into your own confession and asking God for a clean heart.

**Confess** one specific sin without excuse before God, and where needed, take one honest step toward confession or restitution with another person.

**Thank** Jesus each day this week for the mercy that cleanses sin and ask him to restore joy where guilt or shame has taken root.

### **PRAYER TIME**

Ask group members to share prayer needs. Close by thanking God for his mercy toward repentant sinners and for the cleansing, renewal, and restored joy he gives through Christ.

## COMMENTARY

**The New American Commentary**, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor  
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

### Background

Psalms 51 is one of the most well-known penitential psalms in the Bible, attributed to King David.

Its background is rooted in a deeply personal and moral crisis. According to the superscription of the psalm, David composed it after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged the death of her husband, Uriah, to cover it up. Nathan's rebuke, recorded in 2 Samuel 12, led David to a profound realization of his guilt and need for divine mercy.

Psalms 51 expresses David's heartfelt repentance, his plea for forgiveness, and his desire for spiritual renewal. It reflects themes of confession, cleansing, and restoration, making it a powerful model of contrition and humility.

Over time, this psalm has become a central text in Jewish and Christian liturgies, especially during times of reflection and repentance such as Yom Kippur and Lent.

### Verse by Verse

**51:1** David begins with a plea grounded in God's covenantal character. "Faithful love" is חֶסֶד (*ḥesed*), a term rich in covenantal loyalty and lovingkindness. David appeals not to his own merit but to God's nature. "Blot out" (מָחַהּ, *mēḥeh*) is a legal term, suggesting the erasure of a record of guilt, as one might wipe ink from a scroll.

**51:2** The verbs "wash" (כָּבַשׁ, *kābas*) and "cleanse" (טָהַר, *ṭāhēr*) are ritual terms. *Kābas* refers to laundering garments, while *ṭāhēr* is used in Levitical contexts for ceremonial purification. David recognizes that sin defiles both morally and ritually, and he seeks complete cleansing—both inward and outward.

**51:3** David uses the word פֶּשַׁע (*peša'*) for "rebellion," indicating willfulness in wrongdoing. "Sin" (חַטָּאת, *ḥaṭṭā't*) refers to missing the mark. The phrase "always before me" suggests ongoing conviction and the inescapable awareness of guilt. This verse reflects the doctrine of total depravity—the idea that sin affects the whole person and cannot be ignored or rationalized.

**51:4** Though David sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, he acknowledges that all sin is ultimately theological—an offense against God. The repetition “you, you only” (לְךָ לְבַדְּךָ, *leḵā leḇaddeḵā*) emphasizes divine primacy. The phrase “evil in your sight” underscores God’s role as the ultimate moral judge.

**51:5** This verse supports the doctrine of original sin. David is not blaming his mother but acknowledging that sin is inherent from conception. The Hebrew structure emphasizes the depth of human fallenness—sin is not just an act but a condition.

**51:6** God desires אֱמֶת (*’emet*)—truth or faithfulness—in the “inner self” (תְּהִלָּתוֹ, *tuḥōt*), referring to the conscience, suggesting the hidden, innermost place of thought and will. David recognizes that true repentance involves inner transformation, not just external conformity.

**51:7** David uses ritual purification language here. Hyssop was used in ceremonial cleansing (cf. Leviticus 14:4, Numbers 19:18), especially in the cleansing of lepers and those defiled by death. David sees himself as spiritually defiled and in need of priestly cleansing. “Wash” (קָבַץ, *kābas*) again evokes laundering, and “whiter than snow” emphasizes the completeness of divine forgiveness.

**51:8** David longs for the restoration of joy that sin has stolen. The phrase “bones you have crushed” is metaphorical, expressing deep inner anguish and conviction. It reflects the disciplinary hand of God (cf. Hebrews 12:6). The restoration of joy is not superficial but rooted in reconciliation with God.

**51:9** “Turn your face” is a plea for divine forgetfulness—a reversal of the typical judgment motif where God sets His face against sin. “Blot out” (מָחָה, *mēḥeh*) is repeated from verse 1, reinforcing the legal imagery of erasing a record of guilt. “Guilt” (אִשָּׁה, *’āwōn*) refers to guilt-laden, perverse wrongdoing.

**51:10** “Create” (בָּרָא, *bārā’*) is a verb used exclusively of God in the Old Testament, indicating divine creative power (cf. Genesis 1:1). David is not asking for moral improvement but for a new heart—a total spiritual renewal. “Clean” (טָהוֹר, *ṭāhōr*) is ceremonial and moral purity. “Steadfast spirit” (רוּחַ נָכוֹן, *rûaḥ nāḵōn*) means a consistent, faithful disposition.

**51:11** David fears divine abandonment, possibly recalling Saul’s loss of the Spirit (1 Samuel 16:14). “Holy Spirit” here refers to the empowering presence of God, not the indwelling of the New Covenant (cf. Ezekiel 36:26–27). This verse reflects the Old Testament economy, where the Spirit’s presence was often task-specific and could be withdrawn.

**51:12** David seeks the restoration of joy, not just relief from guilt. “Salvation” (יְשׁוּעָה, yēša‘) refers to deliverance, both spiritual and physical. “Willing spirit” (רוּחַ נְדִיבָה, rūaḥ nədīḇāh) implies a generous, eager heart—one that delights in obedience. This is a prayer for sustained sanctification.

**51:13** David anticipates that forgiveness will lead to missional transformation. The verb “teach” (לִמַּד, limmad) implies instruction with moral authority. “the rebellious” (פְּשָׁעִים, pōšə‘îm) are willful rebels, and David desires to guide them back to God’s “ways” (דֶּרֶךְ, derek), a term often used for God’s covenantal path. This verse reflects the fruit of repentance—a restored sinner becomes a witness to others.

**51:14** “Bloodshed” (מִדְּמָיִם, middāmîm) refers to the guilt of shedding innocent blood—likely a reference to Uriah’s death. David appeals to God as Savior (יְלֹהֵי תְשׁוּעָה, ’ēlōhê tēšû‘ātî), emphasizing divine rescue. The result of deliverance is doxological—David’s tongue will “sing aloud” (רָנַן, rannēn) of God’s righteousness, highlighting the public nature of praise following forgiveness.

**51:15** David acknowledges that even praise is enabled by God. The verb “open” (פָּתַח, pātaḥ) implies divine initiative. “Declare” (יָגִיד, yaggîd) is a strong term for proclaiming or announcing. This verse reflects the regenerative work of grace—God not only forgives but empowers the forgiven to worship rightly.

**51:16** David contrasts external ritual with internal repentance. “Delight” (חָפֵז, ḥāpēš) and “pleased” (רָצָה, rāṣāh) are terms of divine acceptance. Though sacrifices were commanded in the Mosaic Law, David recognizes that mechanical offerings without contrition are insufficient. This anticipates the prophetic critique of empty ritual (cf. Isaiah 1:11–17; Hosea 6:6).

**51:17** Here David defines the true sacrifice God desires: a “broken spirit” (רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה, rūaḥ nišbārāh) and a “humble heart” (לֵב נִדְכָּה, lēḇ nidkeh). “Broken” and “humble” convey deep humility and sorrow over sin. Theologically, this verse affirms that God values inward repentance over outward ritual. “Despise” (בָּזָה, bāzāh) is a strong term—God will never reject genuine humility.

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**JESUS SEEKS AND SAVES: Luke 19:1-10**

**The Point:** Jesus pursues sinners with transforming grace.

**The Purpose:** Welcome Jesus' saving pursuit and reflect his grace toward others.

**Christ Connection:** Luke 19:1-10 reveals Jesus as the promised Savior who seeks and saves the lost.

**CREATE INTEREST**

**Question: What kinds of people do others tend to write off too quickly?**

People often sort others by reputation, usefulness, attractiveness, comedic relief or failure. Jesus sees the lost with redeeming purpose and moves toward them with grace.

**Transition to the Study**

Luke 19 gives the church one of Scripture's clearest pictures of personal transformation through an encounter with Jesus. Zacchaeus is wealthy, compromised, and socially despised, yet Jesus calls him by name and chooses to stay at his house. The crowd grumbles, but grace moves forward. As your group studies this passage, help them see that salvation is not earned by moral cleanup before Jesus arrives. It begins when Jesus seeks the lost and changes them from the inside out.

**STUDY THE BIBLE****Luke 19:1-4**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read Luke 19:1-4.

**Discussion: What do these verses reveal about Zacchaeus?**

He is a chief tax collector, wealthy, curious about Jesus, and willing to overcome social barriers to see him. Spiritual interest can begin in surprising places.

**What obstacles keep people from getting close to Jesus today?**

Shame, pride, distraction, social pressure, unwelcoming Christians and false assumptions about Jesus can all block people from seeking him. Many barriers are real, but not final.

**What barriers did/do you have to overcome to come to Jesus?**

People will likely talk about the business of life or hard experiences they had with Christians or decisions they have made. Highlight how worthwhile overcoming those previous barriers was and encourage people to overcome the barriers in front of them now keeping them from coming to Jesus.

*Teaching Tip: Notice physical details*

*Simple narrative details often carry spiritual meaning. Encourage the group to ask why a Gospel writer includes a specific action, place, or response.*

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### **Luke 19:5-7**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone to read Luke 19:5-7.

#### **Discussion: What does Jesus do that surprises the crowd?**

He calls Zacchaeus by name and chooses to stay at his house. Jesus moves toward the man others reject. Grace often shocks people who prefer neat categories.

#### **How can believers imitate Jesus' pursuit of people who are overlooked or judged?**

They can initiate relationships, show hospitality, listen with compassion, and move toward people others avoid. Oftentimes it isn't arrogance that keeps people from welcoming others in but insecurity. Gospel shaped love crosses social boundaries.

#### **Why does the crowd react with grumbling?**

They cannot reconcile Jesus' holiness with his welcome of a notorious sinner. Their response exposes a shallow view of both sin and grace. Self righteousness struggles to celebrate mercy.

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### **Luke 19:8-10**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read aloud Luke 19:8-10.

#### **Discussion: What evidence of change appears in Zacchaeus?**

He responds with generosity, restitution, and visible repentance. Grace produces a transformed life. Salvation bears fruit.

#### **What might repentance look like in practical, costly terms today?**

It may involve confession, restitution, generosity, changed habits, or repaired relationships. Real repentance has visible expression. Grace changes direction, not only feelings.

#### **Why is verse 10 such an important mission statement for Jesus?**

It summarizes his purpose clearly. Jesus did not come merely to instruct the lost, but to seek and save them. The mission of Jesus explains the mercy of Jesus.

### **CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)**

#### **Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?**

This passage points to Jesus as the Savior who actively seeks the lost and transforms them by grace.

**Connect to Christ: Jesus is the center of salvation in Luke 19:1–10: he seeks, calls, enters, and transforms Zacchaeus, so that grace not only saves him but also produces real repentance and restitution. The story shows the promised Son of David bringing God's saving mercy to the compromised and despised, gathering lost sheep back into God's family.**

**Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:**

**Pray** for one person who seems far from God and ask for an opening to move toward them.

**Practice** repentance in one concrete area, not merely in words but in action.

**Show** intentional hospitality to someone outside your normal circle.

### **PRAYER TIME**

Ask group members to share prayer requests. Close by thanking God that Jesus seeks and saves the lost.

## COMMENTARY

**The New American Commentary**, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor  
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

### Background

Luke 19 is closely associated with the healing of the blind beggar is one of Jesus' most famous pronouncement stories - the story of Zacchaeus. Found only in Luke, it, along with the healing of the blind and lepers, illustrates the reception of the good news of the gospel by the outcasts. Its conclusion functions as a summary of Jesus' ministry in the travel narrative. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And, despite the difficulty, he can save even a rich man.

### Verse by Verse

**19:1** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. Luke tied this account closely to the preceding (18:35) and to the whole travel narrative in which Jesus was passing through to Jerusalem (cf. 17:11).

**19:2** Zacchaeus. "Zacchaeus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew Zaccai (cf. Ezra 2:9; Neh 7:14). Nothing else is known about this man. Although the name in Hebrew means Righteous One, nothing is made of the meaning of the name, and it is quite unlikely that its root meaning would have been known to Luke's readers.

A chief tax collector. This term (architelōnēs) is found nowhere else in contemporary literature. Jericho was a well-known toll place in Palestine, especially for goods passing east and west between Judea and Perea. And was wealthy. Compare Luke 18:23.

**19:3** He wanted to see who Jesus was. We are not explicitly told why. It was not for the sake of curiosity (cf. 9:9; 23:8) or to see him perform a sign (11:16, 29; 23:8). Luke revealed to his readers what Zacchaeus sought by describing what he received in 19:9. Zacchaeus sought the salvation Jesus spoke of in 19:9-10. "Who Jesus was" is literally who he is. For this same thought in question form, see comments on 9:9.

But being a short man he could not. This refers to Zacchaeus, not Jesus. The crowds proved to be a hindrance for Zacchaeus both here and in 19:7.

**19:4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree. Such undignified behavior, according to that culture, indicates that more than curiosity was at play here. For

“sycamore” cf. 17:6, where sykaminos is used. Sykomorea is found only here in the NT. Herodian Jericho, unlike OT Jericho, had numerous parks and avenues in which trees grew.

Since Jesus was coming that way. The phrase is literally because he was about to pass through [that way]. The same verb is used here as in 19:1.

**19:5** Zacchaeus, come down immediately. How Jesus knew Zacchaeus’s name is not stated. Was it due to supernatural knowledge (cf. John 1:47–48)? Was it due to Zacchaeus’s being small of stature and well-known? Whatever the explanation of this in Jesus’ setting in life, for Luke such a question was unimportant and probably irrelevant since he made nothing of this.

I must stay. The “must” (dei) implies a divine necessity to do so. See comments on 4:43; Introduction 8 (1). Just as Jesus’ forthcoming passion in Jerusalem was divinely ordained, so Jesus’ individual actions all fit into the divine plan, even his bringing salvation to Zacchaeus’s home. Because of Luke 19:10, Jesus had to stay at Zacchaeus’s home.

Today. Besides the literal meaning, there may be a suggestion here of God’s kingdom having come in Jesus’ ministry with its offer of salvation to the outcasts (cf. 4:21). “Today” prepares the reader for the “today” in 19:9.

**19:6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. Luke may have intended to imply by this joyful reception faith on Zacchaeus’s part. The use of the participle “gladly” (chairōn) seems to suggest this (cf. 19:37; Acts 5:41; 8:39; cf. also Luke 15:5).

**19:7** All the people ... began to mutter. An example of the hyperbolic use of “all” (see comments on 2:1). The symbolic significance of Jesus’ staying in Zacchaeus’s home was clear to all (see comments on 5:30). For other examples of such muttering, see comments on 5:30; 15:1–2; cf. also 7:39; 13:14; 14:1. The people’s negative attitude stands in contrast to Luke’s usual portrayal of their being positive toward Jesus (see comments on 4:15).

**19:8** But Zacchaeus stood up. We are not told if this took place after Zacchaeus came down from the tree, in Zacchaeus’s home, or after dinner. For Luke such a question was unimportant.

Here and now I give. “Here and now” is not found in the Greek text. The verbs “give” and “pay back” in this verse are in the present tense in Greek and may be translated “I am in the habit of giving” or “I shall now give.” The latter is far more likely (see “Context”), but the NIV is somewhat misleading here in that it gives the impression that “here and now” is part of the Greek text. The RSV (“behold”) is a more literal translation at this point.

Half of my possessions. This refers to half of his belongings (cf. 8:3; 12:33; Acts 4:32), not his earnings. As Ellis notes, "It is a thank offering expressive of a changed heart." Zacchaeus provides an example that whereas the demand to sell all (Luke 12:33; 18:22) is not obligatory for all believers, generosity is. See Introduction 8 (7).

To the poor. Use of financial resources to aid the poor is a clear Lukan emphasis (cf. 11:41; 12:33; 18:22).

And if I have cheated anybody ... four times the amount. Compare Exod 22:1; 2 Sam 12:6. In other less severe instances the OT requires only a 20 percent increase (Lev 6:5; Num 5:6–7). It is difficult to interpret this as a customary act of Zacchaeus in the past. It is best understood as a futuristic present, which along with his giving half of his goods to the poor reveals in Zacchaeus's actions what "I repent" says in words. See "Context." For "cheated" cf. 3:14; 2 Sam 12:6.

**19:9** Jesus said to him. The statement was made to Zacchaeus, but it was directed to the people because of their reaction in Luke 19:7. Today. Compare 19:5. The salvation brought by God's kingdom was now "realized" by Zacchaeus.

Salvation has come. This is not to be interpreted as meaning that the "Savior" had come to Zacchaeus's house but that salvation had occurred. The lost Zacchaeus had been sought (19:5) and now saved (19:10). The promised salvation had come to Zacchaeus and his family (cf. Acts 16:31).

Because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. This was not due to his being racially a descendant of Abraham (cf. 3:8bc) but to his having brought forth fruit in keeping with repentance (3:8a) and having responded in faith and repentance to Abraham's Seed (Acts 3:25–26; cf. Gal 3:16). By this Zacchaeus bore witness to God's grace by which even a rich man can be saved (Luke 18:27). For the sense of being Abraham's seed due to physical descent, cf. 13:16.

**19:10** For. What follows summarizes the preceding account. Son of Man. See comments on 5:24. Here the title describes the earthly ministry of the Son of Man. Came to seek and to save what was lost. See comments on 5:32; cf. 4:18–19; 15:4–7; cf. also Ezek 34:16. This indicates that Zacchaeus had not experienced vindication but rather salvation.

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**THE WORD BECAME FLESH: John 1:1-18**

**The Point:** Jesus is the eternal Word who became flesh to reveal God and bring life.

**The Purpose:** Behold Jesus rightly and respond to him with faith, worship, and witness.

**Christ Connection:** John 1:1-18 presents Jesus as the eternal Son, fully God, agent of creation, true light, and the one who reveals the Father.

**CREATE INTEREST**

**Question: When has knowing someone changed the way you view a group of people or life?**

Truth lands differently when it comes through a person we can know. John 1 shows that God's truth and grace come to us in the person of Jesus.

**Transition to the Study**

John begins differently from the other Gospels. Instead of starting at Bethlehem, he starts before creation. The eternal Word was with God and was God, and then that Word became flesh. These verses reveal Jesus not only as teacher or miracle worker, but as Creator, life, light, and the full revelation of the Father. As your group studies this prologue, help them see that Christianity rests on who Jesus is before it moves to what Jesus does.

**STUDY THE BIBLE****John 1:1-5**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read John 1:1-5.

**Discussion: What truths about the Word are stated in these verses?**

The Word is eternal, with God, fully God, the agent of creation, and the source of life and light. John begins with identity before activity.

**How does Jesus as light speak to confusion, darkness, or fear today?**

He brings truth, direction, and hope into places clouded by sin and uncertainty. His light is not weak or temporary. The light of Christ is strong enough for real darkness.

**Why does John echo Genesis with the phrase in the beginning?**

He wants readers to connect Jesus to creation itself and to recognize him as eternal rather than created. John presents Jesus within the largest possible frame.

*Teaching Tip: Define key words briefly*

*When a passage carries deep theology, explain major words like Word, light, or glory in plain language before moving into discussion.*

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### **John 1:6-13**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone or a few people read John 1:6-13.

**Discussion: What role does John the Baptist play in this section?**

He is a witness to the light, not the light itself. His role is to point people toward Jesus. Healthy ministry always points beyond itself to Christ.

**In what ways can believers bear witness to Jesus in ordinary life?**

They can speak truth, show grace, live with integrity, and direct attention to Christ in relationships and conversations. Witness is verbal and embodied. Deed and declaration.

**What tension appears between rejection and receiving in these verses?**

The world does not recognize Jesus, yet those who receive him are given the right to become children of God. The coming of Christ both exposes hearts and creates new family.

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### **John 1:14-18**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read aloud John 1:14-18.

**Discussion: What does it mean that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us?**

The eternal Son truly took on human nature and lived among people. God came near in the person of Jesus. The incarnation is the nearness of God without the loss of his glory.

**How does Jesus' fullness of grace and truth shape the way believers relate to others?**

It calls them to combine compassion and honesty rather than leaning into only one. Christ becomes both model and source. Grace and truth belong together in Jesus.

**Why does John end this section by saying Jesus has made the Father known?**

He shows that Jesus is the decisive revelation of God. To see Jesus rightly is to know what God is like. Jesus does not merely speak for God. He is him.

### **CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)**

**Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?**

This passage points directly to Jesus as the eternal Son who became flesh, reveals the Father, and gives life and new birth to all who receive him.

**Connect to Christ:** John 1:1-18 gives one of Scripture's clearest declarations of Christ's identity: the eternal Word who made all things entered his own creation, full of grace and truth, to reveal the Father and give life to all who believe. This incarnate Word stands at the heart of the gospel story, because only one who is truly God and truly man can fully reveal God, accomplish redemption, and embody God's presence, not merely in tabernacle or temple symbols, but as the true light dwelling among us.

**Application:** Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:

**Read** John 1:1-18 aloud several times this week and worship Jesus for who he is.

**Identify** one conversation where you can bear witness to Christ with both grace and truth.

**Reflect** on one area of darkness where you need Jesus' light and bring it to him in prayer.

### **PRAYER TIME**

Ask group members to share prayer requests. Close by thanking God for sending the eternal Word to dwell among us and reveal the Father.

## COMMENTARY

**The New American Commentary**, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor  
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

### Background

John chapter 1 serves as a profound theological introduction to the Gospel of John, distinct from the synoptic gospels. The term "synoptic" comes from the Greek *syn* ("together") and *opsis* ("view"), meaning "seeing together." In biblical studies, it refers specifically to the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because they share a similar structure, content, and perspective on the life and teachings of Jesus. These three gospels often recount the same events in a similar sequence and sometimes even use identical wording, suggesting they drew from common sources or traditions. In contrast, the Gospel of John is not considered synoptic because it presents a more theological and distinct portrayal of Jesus, with unique content and structure.

Written by the apostle John, the first chapter in the gospel that bears his name opens with a poetic and philosophical prologue that echoes Genesis: "In the beginning was the Word..." establishing Jesus as the eternal Logos (Word), coexistent with God and the agent of creation. It emphasizes Jesus' divine nature, his incarnation, and his role as the true light that enlightens humanity. The chapter also introduces key figures like John the Baptist, who prepares the way for Christ, and the first disciples who begin to follow Jesus. Rich in symbolism and layered meaning, John 1 lays the foundation for the gospel's central themes: light versus darkness, belief versus unbelief, and the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.

### Verse by Verse

**1:1** This verse opens with a deliberate echo of Genesis 1:1, signaling that the story of Jesus is rooted in the eternal purposes of God. The phrase "In the beginning was the Word" introduces the Greek term Logos, which carried deep meaning in both Jewish and Greek thought. For Jews, Logos was associated with God's creative and revelatory speech (see Psalm 33:6); for Greeks, it represented reason or the principle that governed the universe. John affirms that the Word was not only present at creation but was "with God" and "was God," establishing both the distinct personhood and full deity of Christ. This verse affirms the eternal preexistence of Jesus, countering any notion that He was a created being. Theologically, it sets the foundation for the doctrine of the Trinity—one God in three persons—though the full development of that doctrine comes later in Scripture.

**1:2** Here, John reinforces the truth of verse 1 by restating that “He was with God in the beginning.” This repetition emphasizes the eternal fellowship between the Word and God the Father. In the cultural context of the day, repetition was a common rhetorical device used to underscore importance. The verse also subtly affirms that Jesus was not a temporary manifestation or a later addition to God’s plan; He was present from the very start. This continuity is crucial for understanding Jesus’ role in creation, redemption, and revelation. It also aligns with passages like Colossians 1:17, which says, “He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.”

**1:3** This verse declares that “All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.” The Word is not merely present at creation—He is the active agent of it. This affirms Jesus’ divine authority and creative power, echoing Genesis 1 where God speaks creation into existence. The phrase “through him” highlights the Son’s mediating role in creation, a truth also taught in Hebrews 1:2 and Colossians 1:16. In a first-century Jewish context, attributing creation to anyone other than Yahweh would be blasphemous—yet John boldly proclaims that Jesus shares in this divine work. This verse refutes any dualistic or Gnostic ideas that might separate the spiritual from the material world; instead, it affirms that all creation is good and originates from Christ.

**1:4** “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” This verse introduces two major themes in John’s Gospel: life and light. The word “life” (*zoē* in Greek) refers not just to biological existence but to spiritual vitality and eternal life, which Jesus alone can give (see John 10:10). The “light of men” speaks to revelation, truth, and moral clarity—Jesus illuminates the path to God and exposes the darkness of sin. In Jewish thought, light was often associated with God’s presence and guidance (Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation”). By linking life and light to the Word, John affirms that Jesus is the source of both physical and spiritual life, and that His coming brings divine illumination to a world in need.

**1:5** This verse presents a dramatic contrast: “That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.” The present tense “shines” suggests ongoing action—Christ’s light continues to pierce the darkness. The “darkness” symbolizes sin, ignorance, and spiritual blindness, themes that recur throughout John’s Gospel (see John 3:19). The Greek word translated “overcome” (*katalambanō*) can also mean “comprehend” or “grasp,” implying that darkness neither understood nor defeated the light. This dual meaning enriches the verse: the world failed to recognize Jesus, and yet it could not

extinguish His light. This is a powerful assurance for believers—no matter how deep the darkness, the light of Christ prevails. It also sets the tone for the spiritual conflict that unfolds in the rest of the Gospel.

**1:6** This verse introduces John the Baptist, described as “a man sent from God.” The phrase emphasizes divine commissioning—John’s role wasn’t self-appointed but divinely ordained, echoing prophetic language from the Old Testament (see Malachi 3:1). In first-century Jewish culture, prophets were recognized as messengers of God, and John’s arrival signaled the fulfillment of long-awaited messianic expectations. His appearance marks a transition from the prophetic age to the messianic age, and his identity as a witness—not the light himself—sets the stage for his humble, preparatory ministry.

**1:7** John’s mission is clarified: “He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.” The word “witness” (*martyria* in Greek) carries legal and relational weight, indicating John’s role in publicly affirming Jesus’ identity. His testimony was meant to lead others to faith, not to elevate himself. In Jewish custom, the testimony of two or three witnesses was required to establish truth (Deuteronomy 19:15), and John’s witness begins a pattern of testimony throughout the Gospel. His purpose was evangelistic—pointing people to the light so they might believe.

**1:8** This verse reinforces that John “was not the light,” but came to testify about it. The repetition serves to clarify any confusion among early readers or hearers who may have elevated John beyond his role. In Luke 3:15, we see that some people wondered if John might be the Messiah, so John’s Gospel makes it unmistakably clear: he was a forerunner, not the fulfillment. This distinction is vital for understanding the humility and clarity of John’s ministry, and it models the posture of all Christian witnesses—pointing to Christ, not ourselves.

**1:9** Here, Jesus is described as “the true light that gives light to everyone,” emphasizing both authenticity and universality. The word “true” (*alēthinos*) means genuine or ultimate, distinguishing Jesus from all lesser lights or partial revelations. His light “coming into the world” recalls Isaiah’s prophecy that the people walking in darkness would see a great light (Isaiah 9:2). The phrase “gives light to everyone” affirms the availability of revelation and salvation to all people, Jew and Gentile alike, though not all will receive it. This verse underscores the inclusive scope of Christ’s mission and the clarity He brings to a spiritually dark world.

**1:10** This verse presents a tragic irony: “He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.” The repetition of “world” (kosmos) highlights the disconnect between Creator and creation. Despite Jesus’ active role in forming the world (see Colossians 1:16), the world failed to acknowledge Him. In the cultural context, “recognize” implies relational knowing—not just intellectual awareness but spiritual perception. This verse speaks to the blindness of fallen humanity and sets up the theme of rejection that will unfold throughout the Gospel.

**1:11** The rejection becomes more personal: “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” The phrase “his own” likely refers to Israel, the covenant people who had been prepared for the Messiah through Scripture and prophecy. Yet, when Jesus arrived, they largely rejected Him (see Matthew 23:37). This verse echoes the pain of divine rejection and highlights the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:3—“He was despised and rejected by men.” It also sets the stage for the surprising inclusion of Gentiles and outsiders who would receive Him gladly.

**1:12** In contrast to rejection, this verse offers hope: “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God.” The word “receive” implies more than passive acceptance—it involves welcoming, trusting, and believing. The phrase “the right” (exousia) means authority or privilege, underscoring that adoption into God’s family is a divine gift, not a human achievement. Becoming “children of God” is a radical shift in identity, echoing themes from Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6. This verse affirms that faith in Christ opens the door to spiritual rebirth and belonging.

**1:13** This verse clarifies the nature of that new birth: “who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.” The emphasis is on divine initiative—spiritual birth is not inherited, earned, or engineered by human effort. In Jewish culture, lineage and ancestry were central to identity, but John makes clear that being part of God’s family transcends bloodlines. This verse anticipates Jesus’ later conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, where He explains the necessity of being “born again.” It affirms the doctrine of regeneration—new life initiated and sustained by God alone.

**1:14** This verse marks one of the most profound declarations in all of Scripture: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The eternal Logos, previously described as divine and active in creation, now takes on human nature. The Greek word for “dwelt” (eskēnōsen) literally means “tabernacled,” evoking the Old Testament imagery of God’s presence

dwelling among His people in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8). This signals that Jesus is the new meeting place between God and humanity. The phrase “we observed his glory” recalls the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle and temple, now revealed in the person of Christ. John emphasizes that this glory is “the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The term “one and only” (*monogenēs*) denotes uniqueness, not origin—Jesus is the singular, eternal Son, not a created being. His fullness of grace and truth reflects the perfect balance of divine mercy and righteousness, a theme echoed in Exodus 34:6 when God reveals Himself to Moses as “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”

**1:15** John the Baptist’s testimony is inserted here to reinforce Jesus’ preeminence. He declares, “The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.” Though John was born before Jesus in earthly terms (see Luke 1), he acknowledges Jesus’ eternal nature and superior rank. This statement affirms the deity of Christ and the humility of John’s role as forerunner. In first-century Jewish culture, age often conferred honor, yet John reverses that expectation to highlight Jesus’ divine origin. This verse also reinforces the theme of witness—John’s voice prepares the way, but his message always points beyond himself to the eternal Son.

**1:16** Here John writes, “Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness.” The word “fullness” (*plērōma*) conveys the complete sufficiency of Christ—He lacks nothing and overflows with divine blessing. The phrase “grace upon grace” suggests an ongoing, layered experience of God’s favor. Some scholars interpret this as a contrast between the grace of the Old Covenant and the greater grace of the New, while others see it as a continual supply of grace in the believer’s life. Either way, the emphasis is on abundance and generosity. This verse echoes Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 1:7–8, where he speaks of the riches of God’s grace “that he richly poured out on us.”

**1:17** John draws a clear distinction between Moses and Jesus: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” This is not a dismissal of the law but a fulfillment. The Mosaic law revealed God’s standards and pointed to humanity’s need for redemption, but it could not save. Jesus brings what the law could not—grace to forgive and truth to reveal God fully. In Jewish tradition, Moses was revered as the great lawgiver, yet John affirms that Jesus surpasses him by bringing the fullness of God’s redemptive plan. Romans 8:3–4 supports this, stating that what the law could not do, God did by sending His Son.

**1:18** The passage concludes with a climactic affirmation: “No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.” This verse underscores the invisible nature of God (see Exodus 33:20), while affirming that Jesus, as the incarnate Son, makes the Father known. The phrase “at the Father’s side” (eis ton kolpon) implies intimate fellowship, like a child resting against a parent’s chest. Jesus doesn’t merely speak about God—He reveals Him perfectly because He shares His nature. Hebrews 1:3 echoes this truth: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature.” This final verse seals the prologue with a declaration of Jesus’ deity, intimacy with the Father, and unique role as revealer of divine truth.

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**THE BREAD OF LIFE: John 6:25-40**

**The Point:** Jesus alone satisfies spiritual hunger and gives eternal life.

**The Purpose:** Turn from temporary pursuits and trust Christ as their lasting source of life.

**Christ Connection:** John 6:25-40 reveals Jesus as the true bread from heaven who gives life to the world and secures all who believe in him.

**CREATE INTEREST**

**Question: What are different things people look to for satisfaction or fulfillment?**

People tend to answer this with very concrete, everyday pursuits: money, success, relationships, etc. These things promise fullness but leave people hungry. Jesus redirects the crowd from temporary bread to himself as the only lasting source of life.

**Transition to the Study**

After feeding the five thousand, Jesus confronts a crowd that wants more of the gift without understanding the giver. Their hunger is real, but shallow. In John 6:25-40, Jesus exposes misplaced motives, challenges works based thinking, and then announces one of the most important self descriptions in Scripture: I am the bread of life. As your group studies this passage, encourage them to move past curiosity about Jesus and toward deep trust in him.

**STUDY THE BIBLE****John 6:25-29**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read John 6:25-29.

**Discussion: Why does Jesus challenge the crowd's motives?**

They are seeking him mainly because they ate bread and were filled, not because they understood the sign. Their interest is material more than spiritual. People can pursue Jesus for benefits while missing his identity.

**What temporary things are you tempted to treat as ultimate sources of satisfaction?**

Members may mention approval, comfort, success, control, or entertainment. Jesus calls believers to examine what truly feeds their hearts. Misplaced hunger can shape an entire life.

### **Why is Jesus' answer about the work of God so surprising?**

The crowd expects a list of religious duties, but Jesus calls them to believe in the one God has sent. Salvation rests in faith, not self earned effort. The gospel overturns performance based spirituality.

*Teaching Tip: Expose false assumptions gently*

*When a passage challenges religious instincts, help people see the text before correcting their conclusions. Discovery often leads to deeper conviction than quick correction alone.*

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### **John 6:30-34**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read John 6:30-34.

**Discussion: What comparison does the crowd make, and how does Jesus correct it?**

They point to manna through Moses, and Jesus redirects them to the Father as the true giver of bread from heaven. God's gifts should lead people to God himself.

### **How can faith become transactional rather than relational?**

People may approach God mainly for provision, relief, or signs while resisting deeper surrender. Jesus invites trust in his person, not merely his benefits. Mature faith wants Christ, not only what Christ can provide.

### **Why does Jesus shift from past tense to present reality in talking about true bread?**

He shows that God's provision is not merely historical. The Father is now giving the true bread in the person of Jesus. The fulfillment stands before them.

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### **John 6:35-40**

**Read Aloud:** Have someone read aloud John 6:35-40.

**Discussion: What promises does Jesus make to those who come to him?**

He promises lasting satisfaction, acceptance, eternal life, and resurrection on the last day. Jesus offers more than survival. He gives security.

### **How can a believer feed on Christ in daily life?**

Through faith, prayer, Scripture, worship, and ongoing dependence. Coming to Jesus is not a one time glance, but a continual trust. Spiritual nourishment grows through abiding dependence.

**What do these verses reveal about both divine sovereignty and human response?**

The Father gives people to the Son, and those who come to the Son are received and kept. The passage holds assurance and invitation together. Salvation is secure because it rests in God's will and Christ's keeping power not our own effort or merit.

**CONNECT TO CHRIST (APPLY GOD'S WORD)**

**Discussion: How does our passage this week point to Jesus?**

This passage points to Jesus as the true bread from heaven who satisfies spiritual hunger, grants eternal life, and keeps his people secure.

**Connect to Christ: John 6:25–40 centers fully on Jesus as the bread of life, not merely a teacher about spiritual things. The manna in the wilderness sustained Israel for a time, but Jesus is the true bread from heaven, sent by the Father to give eternal life to the world and to keep all who come to him. The Messiah does not just distribute God's provision; he himself is the provision, making this passage both an invitation to come and an assurance of being kept.**

**Application: Choose one of the following ways to apply the study to your life this week:**

**Reflect** daily, What am I hungry for, and how does Christ meet that need?

**Read** a portion of John's Gospel daily as spiritual nourishment.

**Share** the hope of eternal life with someone who feels empty or fearful.

**PRAYER TIME**

Ask group members to share prayer requests. Close by thanking God for sending Jesus, the true bread from heaven who gives eternal life.

## COMMENTARY

**The New American Commentary**, Dr. Ray Clendennen, General Editor  
Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

### Background

John chapter 6 unfolds in the Galilee region during the time of Passover, a feast rich with themes of divine provision and deliverance. A large crowd follows Jesus, drawn by His healing miracles, and He responds with compassion by performing the well-known miracle of feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. This sets the stage for deeper spiritual teaching, as Jesus later walks on water to reach His disciples and then delivers a profound discourse in Capernaum, declaring Himself the “Bread of Life.” The chapter highlights the tension between physical needs and spiritual truth, revealing the crowd’s desire for signs and sustenance while challenging them to embrace faith in Jesus as the source of eternal life.

### Verse by Verse

**6:25** The crowd finds Jesus in Capernaum and asks, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” This question reflects their confusion after Jesus’s miraculous crossing of the sea (John 6:19–21). The term Rabbi means “teacher” and was a respectful title, though here it may be used superficially. Their pursuit of Jesus is driven not by faith but by curiosity and material benefit. This sets the stage for Jesus to challenge their motives.

**6:26** Jesus responds with penetrating insight: “You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.” The word signs (Greek: σημεῖα) refers to miracles meant to reveal divine truth and identity. The crowd missed the spiritual significance of the feeding miracle (John 6:1–14) and instead focused on physical satisfaction. This echoes the danger of seeking God for temporal gain rather than eternal truth (cf. Matthew 6:33).

**6:27** Jesus urges them, “Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life.” This contrast between perishable and eternal sustenance recalls Isaiah 55:2—“Why do you spend money on what is not food?” The phrase food that lasts points to spiritual nourishment found in Christ alone. Jesus identifies Himself as the one “the Son of Man will give you,” affirming His messianic role and divine authority. The phrase Son of Man connects to Daniel 7:13–14, where the Son of Man is given dominion and glory.

**6:28** The crowd asks, “What can we do to perform the works of God?” This question reveals a works-based mindset common in Jewish thought, shaped by the Mosaic Law and rabbinic tradition. They assume that eternal life can be earned through religious performance. Jesus will redirect this thinking toward faith, not effort.

**6:29** Jesus answers, “This is the work of God—that you believe in the one he has sent.” This is a pivotal theological statement. The work of God is not ritual or law-keeping, but belief in Jesus as the sent one. The verb believe (Greek: πιστεύω) implies trust, reliance, and personal commitment. This aligns with John 3:16 and Romans 4:5, where faith—not works—is the means of justification. Jesus reframes their understanding of spiritual labor: it begins and ends with faith in Him.

**6:30** The crowd demands, “What sign, then, are you going to do so we may see and believe you?” Despite witnessing the feeding of the 5,000, they still seek proof. The word sign (Greek: σημεῖον) refers to a miracle with spiritual significance. Their request echoes the unbelief of Israel in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 16:2–3), and Jesus later rebukes this sign-seeking generation (cf. Matthew 12:39). Their question reveals a transactional view of faith—believe only if impressed.

**6:31** They reference the manna in the wilderness: “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” This quote paraphrases Exodus 16:4 and Psalm 78:24. The crowd elevates Moses as the provider, missing that it was God who gave the manna. Their expectation is for Jesus to replicate or surpass Moses’s miracle. This reflects a first-century Jewish belief that the Messiah would renew the gift of manna. Jesus will correct their theology and redirect their focus to the true source.

**6:32** Jesus clarifies: “It wasn’t Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” The shift from past tense (gave) to present tense (gives) is crucial. Jesus is revealing that the Father is now offering something greater—true bread, not just physical provision. This aligns with John 1:17: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Jesus is the fulfillment, not the repetition, of the wilderness miracle.

**6:33** For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Jesus identifies Himself as the bread—not merely a gift, but the giver. The phrase comes down from heaven emphasizes His divine origin (cf. John 3:13; Philippians 2:6–7). The scope of His mission—to the world—extends beyond Israel, pointing to the universal

offer of salvation (cf. John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). This verse begins to unveil the spiritual nature of the bread.

**6:34** The crowd responds, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Their request echoes the Samaritan woman’s response in John 4:15. It reveals a lingering misunderstanding—they still interpret Jesus’s words materially. The word always suggests a desire for ongoing provision, but not necessarily spiritual transformation. Jesus will now speak plainly to correct their thinking.

**6:35** Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life.” This is the first of seven “I am” statements in John’s Gospel, echoing God’s self-revelation in Exodus 3:14 (“I AM WHO I AM”). The metaphor of bread speaks to daily sustenance and survival—central to Jewish life and worship. Jesus promises, “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty.” These verbs (comes, believes) are present tense, indicating ongoing action. This parallels John 4:14, where Jesus offers living water, and Isaiah 55:1–2, which invites the spiritually thirsty to be satisfied by God.

**6:36** “But as I told you, you’ve seen me, and yet you do not believe.” Jesus confronts the crowd’s unbelief despite their firsthand experience of His miracles. This echoes John 1:11—“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” Their physical sight did not lead to spiritual insight. The verse underscores the biblical truth that faith is not produced by signs alone (cf. Luke 16:31).

**6:37** “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.” This verse affirms divine sovereignty in salvation. The phrase all that the Father gives me refers to the elect—those whom God draws to Christ (cf. John 6:44). The promise I will never cast out offers assurance of eternal security. This reflects the covenantal language of acceptance and protection (cf. Romans 8:38–39; John 10:28–29).

**6:38** “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.” Jesus emphasizes His divine origin and submission to the Father’s will. This statement affirms His incarnation (cf. John 1:14; Philippians 2:6–8) and mission as the obedient Son. It also reinforces the unity of purpose within the Trinity—Jesus does not act independently but in perfect harmony with the Father.

**6:39** “This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day.” The phrase lose none speaks to the

perseverance of the saints—those given to Christ will be kept by Him. The promise to raise them up points to bodily resurrection and eternal life (cf. John 11:25–26; 1 Corinthians 15:52). This verse offers deep comfort and assurance rooted in God’s unchanging will.

**6:40** “For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Jesus expands the invitation—everyone who sees and believes—while still affirming the necessity of faith. The phrase eternal life is a central theme in John’s Gospel (cf. John 3:16; 5:24), and the repeated promise of resurrection reinforces the hope of future glory. This verse beautifully balances divine initiative and human response.