

Journey Into
Knowing Jesus

A Study of the Gospel of John



Tommy C. Higle

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1	What Jesus Can Do for You (Jn 1:1-18)	7
LESSON 2	How Jesus Can Change You (Jn 1:19-2:25)	12
LESSON 3	Receiving a New Beginning (Jn 3:1-21)	16
LESSON 4	When You've Been Bad (Jn 4:1-42)	20
LESSON 5	Understanding Who Jesus Is (Jn 4:43-5:47).....	24
LESSON 6	When You Have Problems (Jn 6:1-71)	28
LESSON 7	Becoming a Bold Believer (Jn 7:1-53).....	32
LESSON 8	Becoming More Like Jesus (Jn 8:1-11)	36
LESSON 9	The Difference Jesus Can Make in Your Life (Jn 8:12-59)	40
LESSON 10	Improving Your Spiritual Sight (Jn 9:1-41).....	45
LESSON 11	Letting Jesus Be Your Shepherd (Jn 10:1-42).....	49
LESSON 12	Experiencing Resurrection Power (Jn 11:1-57)	55
LESSON 13	Why People Follow Jesus (Jn 12:1-50).....	59
LESSON 14	How To Please Jesus (Jn 13:1-38).....	64
LESSON 15	Making Fear Disappear (Jn 14:1-31).....	69
LESSON 16	How To Be Best Friends with Jesus (Jn 15:1-17).....	74
LESSON 17	Preparing To Follow Jesus (Jn 15:18-16:4)	78
LESSON 18	The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:5-15)	82
LESSON 19	How Jesus Helps with Our Problems (Jn 16:16-33)	86
LESSON 20	Benefits of Believing (Jn 17:1-26)	90
LESSON 21	When Life Is Dark (Jn 18:1-27)	96
LESSON 22	Making Great Choices (Jn 18:28-19:16).....	100
LESSON 23	Learning from the Shadow of the Cross (Jn 19:17-42)	104
LESSON 24	What the Resurrection Proves (Jn 20:1-18)	108
LESSON 25	When Your Faith Falters (Jn 20:19-31)	112
LESSON 26	When You Wander from the Lord (Jn 21:1-25).....	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY	121

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 1 . . . What Jesus Can Do for You (John 1:1-18)

NOTES

The gospel of John is my favorite book of the Bible because, more than any other book, studying it is truly a “journey into knowing Jesus.” The fourth gospel was written by John who was one of Jesus’ disciples and the younger brother of another disciple named James. John’s gospel is different from the other three gospels because it contains no parables and tells us nothing about the birth, baptism, temptation, or transfiguration of Jesus. Instead, God inspires John to tell us about Jesus’ relationships. Therefore, John records Jesus’ dialogues with people like Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

John didn’t write this gospel to give us a lot of facts **about** Jesus, but to help us get to **know** Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him. The purpose of this gospel is that we *may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God* (Jn 20:31a). Why does John want us to believe what he has *written* about Jesus, according to John 20:31b?

The key word, which appears over fifty times in this gospel, is the verb *believe* (PISTEUŌ, pist-you’-oh). It refers to actively trusting in Jesus. John begins his book with **four things Jesus can do for you if you believe**. First, He can . . .

Help with any problem (1:1-3)

John begins with an amazing statement: *In the beginning was the Word* (1:1a). Notice *Word* has a capital “W.” This is because the Greek word translated *Word* is LOGOS (log’-os) and is used as a title for Jesus. LOGOS refers to expression of thought or the spoken word that communicates. LOGOS means Jesus is God communicating with us.

John tells us Jesus, *the Word*, was *in the beginning* (1:2). There was never a time when Jesus did not exist because *in the beginning* of time, space, and matter, Jesus already existed because He is God. How does Jesus express this truth in John 8:58?

In the beginning, Jesus already existed in eternity past. If Jesus always existed, where was He before the beginning of creation? John tells us *the Word was with God* (1:1b). However, He was more than just *with God*; John tells us *the Word was God* (1:1c). How does Jesus express this fact in John 10:30?

Through the eternal Jesus *all things were made*, and *without him was not any thing made* (1:3). Therefore, through Jesus molecules and galaxies were *made*. More than that, what does Colossians 1:17b tell us?

Jesus, who is God, keeps the planets on course in their orbit around the sun; He keeps everything from disintegrating into chaos. This is great news for us because it means there is nothing too difficult for Jesus. He can help us with every problem. There is no wayward child, no sickness, no financial problem, and no troubled marriage too difficult for Him. Therefore, Jesus, who is God, can **help with any problem**, and He can . . .

Bring light to darkness (1:4-5)

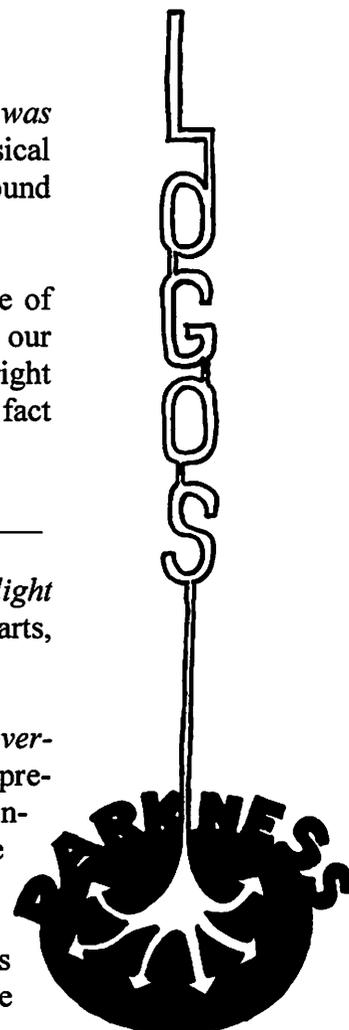
Not only is Jesus the great creator God, but John also tells us: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men* (1:4). Jesus is the source of physical and spiritual life. The word translated *life* (ZŌĒ, zoh-ay'), which is found fifty times in this gospel, always refers to spiritual life.

Jesus is the only source of eternal *life* and also of *light*. The purpose of *light* is to banish darkness. *Light* refers to the fact that Jesus enlightens our minds and consciences. He enables us to understand what is morally right and to discover God's purpose for our lives. This is because of what fact found in John 1:5a?

The verb *shines* is present tense, meaning continuous action. So, the *light* of Jesus continually—every day—*shines* into every corner of our hearts, minds, and consciences to reveal what is right and wrong.

John writes: *and the darkness has not overcome it* (1:5b). The word *overcome* (KATALAMBANŌ, cata-lam-ban'-oh) can also be translated "comprehended" or "understood." Satan, the prince of darkness, tries to hold unregenerate humanity in *darkness*, but he cannot *overcome* the divine *light* of Jesus.

Also, when you have a problem or a moral decision to make, Jesus is the *light* that *shines in the darkness*. In the darkest days of your life, He

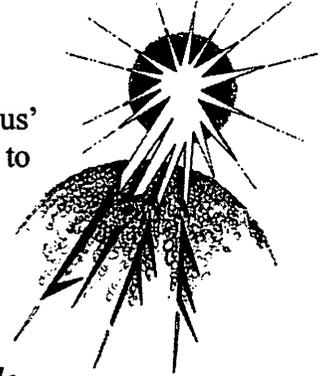


is always present, waiting to lead and comfort you. This *light* is found in the Bible, which Jesus also created because He created *all things* (1:3). Therefore, what do we read in Psalm 119:130?

Jesus can help with any problem, bring *light to darkness*, and . . .

Give new life (1:6-13)

The apostle John now tells us about John the Baptist, who is Jesus' cousin but is not the author of this book. God *sent* John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus (1:6-7). John *was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light* (1:8). We'll get to know John the Baptist later in our study.



Jesus *was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* ¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him* (1:10-11). *His own* refers to His people—the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel—through whom He chose to reveal Himself. Why did they not *know him* and as a result *not receive him*? Because they did not want to *know him*. If a person doesn't want to see the truth, he or she will not see it. Why do people today not see Jesus for who He really is? They don't want to because then they would have to acknowledge Him as Lord, or CEO, of their lives. In John 3:19b, why does John tell us the Jews of His day, as well as people today, don't *know* or *receive* Jesus?

In other words, people don't want to change. That's the bad news. But the good news is *all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God* (1:12). The vast majority of people in Jesus' day rejected Him, but some received Him as Savior and Lord. The same is still true today.

John explains: *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God* (1:13). John is referring to what Jesus later calls being *born again* (3:3). Being born in a garage doesn't make you an automobile; being born in a kitchen doesn't make you a biscuit; and being born in a Christian family doesn't make you a Christian. Only those who *receive* Jesus as Lord and Savior receive new life and *become children of God*.

Jesus can help with any problem, bring *light to darkness*, give new life, and . . .

Reveal what God is really like (1:14-18)

We now come to one of the most important verses in the Bible—John 1:14a. It is important because it is the most concise statement in the Bible about the Incarnation. Write this verse below:

In other words, God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. The word translated *dwelt* (SKĒNOŌ, skay-nah'-oh) means “tabernacled” or “pitched a tent.” So, God “tabernacled” among us, or came to earth in a “tent” of flesh and blood, in the person of Jesus Christ.

John continues: *we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father . . .* (1:14b). The *glory* of God is often called the “Shekinah” (she-ki'-nah) glory, which is a Hebrew word used to describe the visible presence of God in the world. Probably the best example of Shekinah glory is when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus *transfigured* (Mt 17:2a). What does Matthew 17:2b tell us happened to Jesus?



The word translated *transfigured* (METAMORPHOŌ, me-tah-mor-fah'-oh) is the Greek word from which we get our English word “metamorphosis,” which is used to describe the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

Jesus is *full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14c). The Greek word translated *grace* (CHARIS, kar'-is) means favor or kindness shown without regard to worth or merit of the one who receives it. Therefore, Jesus gives us something we don't deserve—forgiveness of all our sins. The Incarnation is the greatest expression of God's *grace*. Jesus is also *full of . . . truth*, which means He reveals what God is really like.

John reminds his readers that John the Baptist is another witness to Jesus' deity (1:15). John the Baptist was older and began his ministry before Jesus. However, what does he say about Jesus in the last phrase of John 1:15?

Jesus existed in eternity past, *before* John the Baptist, because He is the eternal God come to earth in human form. As a result, *from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace* (1:16). *Grace upon grace* means “grace replenishing grace.” In other words, the *grace* given in Christ can never be exhausted. How does Paul express this truth in Romans 5:20b?

No matter how much you and I sin, God’s grace is always greater. This is so beautifully described in the chorus of the hymn, “Grace Greater than Our Sin.” It reads: “Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin” (Julia H. Johnston).

John concludes this section by writing: *No one has ever seen God* (1:18a). Many passages in the Bible record various people seeing representations of God (Ex 33:21-23), seeing visions of God (Isa. 6:1-5), or hearing the voice of God (Deut. 4:12). Some are described as seeing *God face to face* (Gen. 32:30), which suggests clear (Num. 12:8a) and friendly (Ex 33:11) communication. *Face to face* doesn’t refer to seeing the essence of God because it is described as God speaking *out of the midst of the fire* (Deut. 5:4). No one has ever seen the essence of God (1 Jn. 4:12a). Why, according to Exodus 33:20b?



Therefore, John tells us: *the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known* (1:18). The phrase *made him known*, or “declared him,” (EXĒGEOMAI, ex-ayg-eh’-oh-my) is the Greek word from which we get our English word “exegesis” and “exegete.” In seminary I was taught to “exegete” the Scriptures, which means to explain from the original language. Jesus explains, or gives a full revelation, of the Father because He is the Original in flesh and blood (Col. 1:15a). How does Hebrews 1:3a express this fact?

What can Jesus do for you? He can **help with any problem, bring light to darkness, give new life, and reveal what God is really like.** This all begins when you receive Him as Lord and Savior. To do that, Jesus said, “*repent and believe in the gospel*” (Mk 1:15c).

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 2 . . . How Jesus Can Change You (John 1:19-2:25)

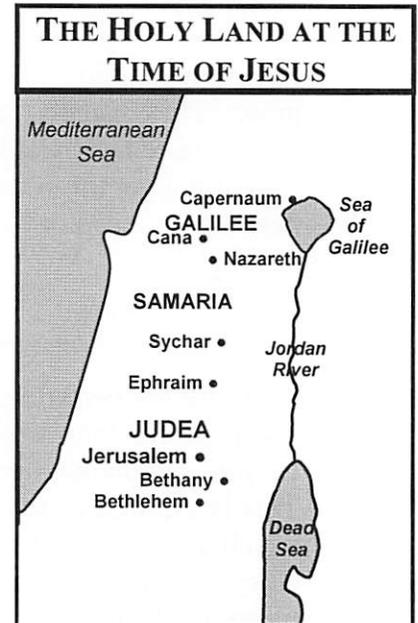
NOTES

By John chapter two, Jesus has already been baptized by John the Baptist (1:19-34) and has called several of His twelve disciples. They include the apostle John, though he doesn't mention his name (1:35), as well as Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael (Jn 1:35-51; see *Journey Into Following Jesus* for details). Now, let's look at **how Jesus can change you . . .**

He can transform you (2:1-11).

John begins this section by writing: *On the third day there was a wedding at Cana of Galilee (2:1a). The third day probably means three days after Jesus' departure from the place of His baptism. Cana was a town about nine miles north of Nazareth. John also tells us the mother of Jesus was there (2:1b), but there is no mention of His stepfather, Joseph. He had probably died by the time Jesus began His ministry. We assume this because what does John do with Mary after Jesus' crucifixion, according to John 19:27b?*

Jesus was not a social recluse; therefore, He accepted an invitation to this wedding (2:2). Jesus often accepted invitations to parties and suppers. As Christians, we should never be so focused on "religious" activities that we don't have time to socialize with people who need to know Jesus. Like Jesus, we can do this without compromising our convictions. Because He often socialized with all sorts of people, of what do Jesus' enemies accuse Him in Luke 7:34b?



The first part of this accusation was obviously false, but the second was true. Jesus is truly the *friend . . . of sinners* and we should be, too.

Jewish weddings often lasted a week. Not having plenty of food and wine was a sign of being inhospitable and could result in social disgrace. Jesus' mother informs Him of their host's embarrassing predicament of running out of wine (2:3). Jesus responds: "*Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come*" (2:4). It may seem rude to us for Jesus to address His mother as *woman*, but in His culture it was actually a courteous

remark, like calling a woman “Ma’am” today. As He is dying on the cross, Jesus uses this same word when He lovingly asks John to take care of His mother (19:26).

By telling His mother His *hour*, or time, *has not yet come*, Jesus is just saying He doesn’t perform miracles on demand. He will not perform miracles just to please relatives and friends. Therefore, what does Jesus’ mother tell the servants (2:5b)?

This is what we also must do if Jesus is to **transform** us and work miracles in our lives. Nearby are six stone jars that could each hold *twenty to thirty gallons* (“two or three firkins,” KJV). Jesus tells the servants to fill each of the jars with water. After they fill them full, He tells them to take some out and “*take it to the master of the feast*” who tastes the water Jesus has turned into wine (2:6-8). Not knowing from where the wine has come, the *master* calls the groom aside and asks why they saved the *good wine*, or the best, *until now* (2:10).

Normally, the host of a social gathering served the best wine at the beginning. They usually saved inferior wine for later in the week when the guests’ taste buds would have become dulled from drinking. However, we should not get the wrong idea; Jews did not condone or promote drunkenness. Also, our Lord would not have violated what command in Proverbs 23:20a?

Jesus did not perform this miracle just to save a family from social embarrassment, for John writes: *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him* (2:11). This is the first of seven miracles recorded in the gospel of John, five of which are not recorded in the other gospels. Jesus always performed miracles to reveal His *glory* and authenticate who He was and is. If Jesus can transform 120 gallons of water into wine, He can certainly **transform** you and me. How is this truth expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

Not only can Jesus change water into wine, but He can change a sinner into a saint. Jesus **can transform you**, but also . . .

He can reform you (2:12-17).

After the miracle in Cana, Jesus goes to Capernaum, which is east of Cana and on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, and stays for a few days. Here



Jesus calls another disciple named *Matthew* (Mt 9:9). When it is almost time for Passover, Jesus goes south to Jerusalem.

In the temple courts He finds men *selling oxen and sheep and pigeons* at outrageously high prices to be used as sacrificial animals (2:14). Other men are exchanging foreign currency into local currency for a fraction of its real worth. So, in essence, people coming to the temple to worship God are being “ripped off” unmercifully.

Therefore, Jesus makes a whip and drives *them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen*. Then, He overturns the moneychangers’ tables, scattering the money, and tells the spiritual swindlers to get out (2:15-16). Jesus did not lose His temper because He was always in control of Himself. He demonstrated what is called “righteous indignation.” How does Ephesians 4:26a describe this kind of anger?

Some things, such as child molestation and rape, should make us angry. But our anger must be righteous indignation, not uncontrolled rage. After watching Jesus cleanse the temple, His disciples remember what King David had written in Psalm 69:9a, “*Zeal for your house will consume me*” (Jn 2:17b). God has always been very particular about His house, or temple. That’s why we need to remember what truth in 1 Corinthians 6:19a?



Our Lord doesn’t want His temple to be a place of deceit, selfishness, or sin of any kind. So, we must be careful not to let anything into our lives that will defile and desecrate God’s temple. Therefore, we must continually let Jesus reform us. This is what the Bible calls “sanctification,” the life-long process of becoming more and more like Jesus.

Jesus can **transform you** and **reform you** because . . .

He can empower you (2:18-25).

After Jesus cleanses the temple, the Jews demand a *sign* from Him to prove His authority to do such things. They want immediate proof of His power. However, Jesus tells them of a miracle that will take place two years later. How does Jesus respond to their request in John 2:19?

The Jews reply: “*It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?*” (2:20). To appease the Jews, King Herod was renovating the temple in Jerusalem. He promised to make it larger, more beautiful, and more dazzling. Work started on the temple in about 20 B.C. and wasn’t completed until 64 A.D., a period of 84 years. At the time of Christ, the temple had been under construction for 46 years and still wasn’t completed. So, the Jews were very skeptical about Jesus’ words concerning tearing it down and rebuilding it *in three days*.

However, Jesus wasn’t referring to Herod’s temple but to the *temple of his body*. Even the disciples were not fully convinced of who Jesus was until after the resurrection (2:21-22).

The resurrection is the most important event in history because it proves Jesus is who He claims to be. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to empower us to become the kind of people God wants us to be. To have a “journey into knowing Jesus,” you must have what sincere desire Paul expresses in Philippians 3:10a?

Most people don’t know Christ; they just know **about** Him. But when we really know Jesus, we also get to experience the power that raised Him from the dead. The resurrection power of Jesus can empower us to change our habits and hang-ups. It can also empower us to get over hurts and forgive those who hurt us. Because of the resurrection power of Jesus, what can you say with Paul (Philippians 4:13)?

When you need to make changes in your life, remember Jesus can **transform** you and **reform** you because **He can empower you**.

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 3 . . . Receiving a New Beginning (John 3:1-21)

NOTES

In John chapter three, Jesus meets with Nicodemus, a very moral person. In chapter four, He encounters a very immoral woman, who has been married five times and is living with a man to whom she is not married. John tells us how Jesus relates to the most moral and the most immoral people and how both can receive a new beginning. **Receiving a new beginning has three requirements . . .**

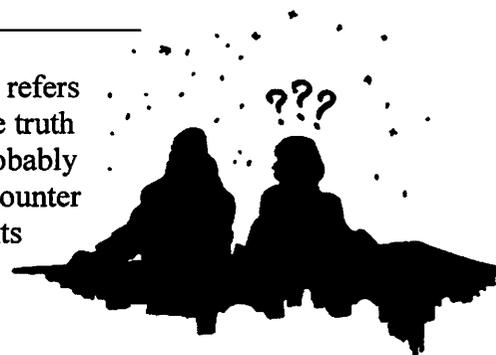
1. Be a seeker (3:1-8).

To avoid confusion, let me clarify the word “seeker.” A “seeker” is a person drawn to Christ because God is already working in his or her heart. The desire to be saved originates with God. How does Jesus state this truth in John 6:44a?

John tells us about a “seeker” named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee, the strictest, most conservative, and fundamental of Jews. Nicodemus was also *a ruler of the Jews*. This means he sat on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court composed of seventy Jewish religious leaders with the High Priest as president (3:1). Any church would be glad to have a member like “Nic.” He would be a prominent citizen who believes the Bible, tithes of every dollar he makes, goes to church every Sunday, and never cheats on his wife.

Nicodemus is an example of the most difficult group of people to win to Christ. They are smart, good, moral people, but they suffer from spiritual blindness because they think their goodness can get them into heaven. However, what does Isaiah 64:6b say?

The Hebrew word translated *polluted*, or “filthy,” (IDDÂ, ayd) refers to menstrual rags. In his heart Nicodemus apparently knows the truth of this verse, so he comes to Jesus *by night* (Jn 3:2a). He probably doesn’t want his associates to see him with Jesus. (This encounter has been called the original “Nick at Night.”) Nicodemus wants to meet Jesus personally and respectfully calls Him *Rabbi*, which means teacher.



Then, Nicodemus says to Jesus, *we know You are from God* because of the miracles You have performed (3:2b). *We* may include another person on the Sanhedrin we will mention later. However, Jesus cannot be flattered. Therefore, what does He tell Nicodemus in John 3:3b?

Nicodemus doesn't understand and asks: "*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" (3:4). At this point he can only imagine a full-grown man crawling back into his mother's womb. Therefore, Jesus says: "*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (3:5). The phrase *born of water* has been interpreted in many ways, some of which are very technical. However, I believe Jesus is referring to physical birth—the water, or amniotic (am-knee-ah'-tic) fluid, that protects and nourishes an unborn child in a mother's womb. I think this because what does Jesus say in the next verse (3:6)?

This means human flesh can only give physical birth. We cannot evolve from flesh to spirit; we must be *born* that way. Therefore, Jesus says: "*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'*" (3:7). As Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, perhaps the wind is blowing outside because Jesus says: "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (3:8). In other words, we can see the effects of the wind, but we cannot see the wind itself. So, it is with those who have been *born again*. We can see the effects of the Holy Spirit in people's lives, even though we can't see the Holy Spirit. How does John describe the effects of the Holy Spirit in our lives (1 John 5:18a)?

There is an old saying: "It is faith alone that saves, but a faith that saves is never alone." Saving faith is always accompanied by a changed life. Because God is working in his heart, Nicodemus desires a new beginning, so he goes where he can get some authoritative information. The first step in **receiving a new beginning is be a seeker**; then . . .

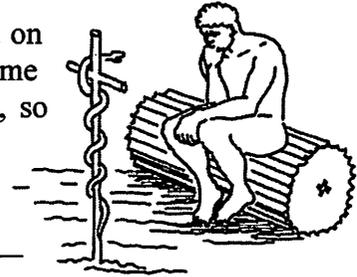
2. Be a believer (3:9-18).

For a man so versed in Scripture, Nicodemus is really slow to understand. Therefore, he asks Jesus: "*How can these things be?*" Jesus replies, "*Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?*"

(3:9-10). In other words, “Nicodemus, you are a Bible teacher; you have all this Bible knowledge and still you don’t understand?” Jesus knows the best way to teach is with illustrations. Therefore, Jesus gives what great Old Testament illustration of how to be *born again* (3:14)?

Jesus is referring to an incident Nicodemus knows very well. While wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites become impatient and begin to complain against God and Moses. Therefore, God sends poisonous snakes that bite some of them, and many die (Num. 21:4-9). As a remedy for the penalty of their sin, what does the Lord tell Moses to do in Numbers 21:8?

If the Israelites had enough faith just to *look* at the bronze serpent on the pole, they would be saved. Jesus tells Nicodemus that in the same way He must “*be lifted up,*” referring to His death on the cross, so “*whoever believes in him may have eternal life*” (3:14-15).



We now come to the greatest explanation of the Gospel, literally the Gospel in one verse, and the most famous verse in the Bible—John 3:16. It is the Gospel in a nutshell. Someone has said this verse contains all the “greatests”: *For God* [the greatest Lover] *so loved* [the greatest degree] *the world* [the greatest number], *that he gave* [the greatest act] *his only Son* [the greatest gift], *that whoever* [the greatest invitation] *believes* [the greatest simplicity] *in him* [the greatest attraction] *should not perish* [the greatest escape] *but* [the greatest difference] *have* [the greatest certainty] *eternal life* [the greatest possession] (adapted from J. Edwin Hortell).

Jesus further explains His purpose for coming into the world, which is not to *condemn* but to save the people of the world (3:17). The person who *believes in Jesus is not condemned*, but the person who *does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God* (3:18). There are only two possible responses to Jesus: belief or unbelief; acceptance or rejection. How does Jesus express this fact in Matthew 12:30?

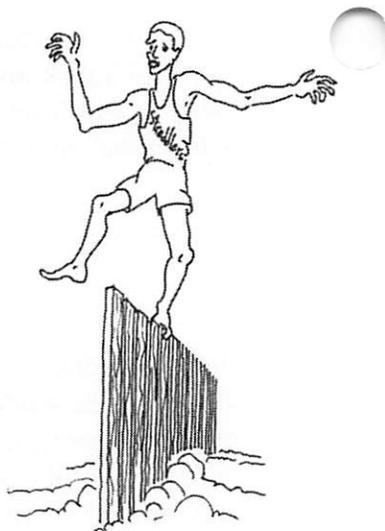
We are either with Jesus or opposed to Him. There is no middle ground;

we can't straddle the spiritual fence. Failure to place one's faith in Christ results in spiritual death, just as the Israelites' failure to look at the brazen serpent resulted in physical death.

For a new beginning in life, **be a seeker, a believer,** and . . .

3. Be a repentor (3:19-21).

Most people will not come to Jesus to be born again (Mt 7:14). Jesus explains it is because they love *darkness rather than the light because their works*, or "deeds," are *evil*. The *darkness* hides their sin, and they hate *the light* because it exposes their sin (Jn 3:19-20). People don't refuse to accept Christ because of any lack of evidence of who He is. They simply don't want to repent and turn from their sins.



On the other hand, those who want to live by *what is true* come to *the light* (3:21a). They do not try to cover up their sin, but instead repent of their sin. Of them, Jesus says: "*so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God*" (3:21b). True believers acknowledge their salvation and all their good deeds are the result of God working in and through them. Therefore, God deserves the credit and glory. Those who come *to the light* obey what command in 1 Corinthians 10:31b?

This story has a good ending. After Jesus is crucified, two prominent Jewish men, both members of the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:43), come to take Jesus' body down from the cross. They want to give Jesus a proper Jewish burial. What are their names (John 19:38-39)?

So, Nicodemus, the man who came secretly to Jesus by night, is now seen with Jesus, fearlessly and unashamedly, in broad daylight. The difference between believers and unbelievers is not sin because we are all sinners. Instead, it is our attitude toward the Light. Like Nicodemus, a person who comes to the Light to receive a new beginning must **be a seeker, a believer, and a repentor.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 4 . . . When You've Been Bad (John 4:1-42)

NOTES

In the previous chapter Jesus encountered Nicodemus, an example of the best of moral people. Now, He encounters the polar opposite, a woman living in Samaria. We might call her the “bad Samaritan” because she has been married five times and is living with a man to whom she is not married. This encounter reveals what Jesus does **when you've been bad . . .**

He seeks you (4:1-6).

Because Jesus' disciples have baptized more people than John the Baptist, Jesus has gotten the attention of the Pharisees. Therefore, Jesus leaves Judea and heads back to Galilee. But what do we read in John 4:4?

Instead of taking the normal Jewish route **around** Samaria, Jesus chooses to go **through** Samaria. The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were mixed-ancestry Jews whose ancestors intermarried with Gentiles during Assyrian captivity. The Jews considered them unclean traitors to their nation and their God, and therefore, would not even walk through their land. However, Jesus **needs** to go through Samaria because there is a woman there He must meet. Jesus wants to meet her because she is the reason He came to earth. According to Luke 19:10, what is that reason?

About noon, Jesus arrives at Sychar (sigh'-kar), a town in Samaria. Tired from two days of walking, He sits down by Jacob's well just outside the city. Even though Jesus is God incarnate, He is also fully human, and shares the same exhaustion as anyone who has walked for two days.

His disciples go into town to buy food (Jn 4:8). While they are gone, a Samaritan woman, carrying a water pot on her head, comes to the well. Because of the hot Palestinian sun, women normally came to the well at dawn or dusk, when it was cooler. This woman comes at noon, the hottest time of the day, probably because she doesn't want to be taunted by the other women who want nothing to do with her. She would not be welcome at any synagogue, but she is welcome in the presence of the sinless Son of God. Jesus is waiting for her at the well to give her living water.

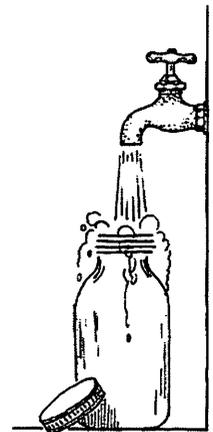
The woman thought she was going to Jacob's well because she needed physical water, but in fact she had an appointment with the Son of God. In the same way, no one is listening to or reading this lesson by accident. You have an appointment with Jesus! He has something to say to you and is already waiting in these pages for you. **When you've been bad, He seeks you** and . . .

He draws you (4:7-15).

Since He doesn't have a bucket or jar, Jesus says to this "bad" girl, "*Give me a drink.*" But she defensively responds: "*How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?*" (*For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*) (4:7, 9). Jesus is breaking all Jewish social rules of His day. A Jewish man would not even speak to a Samaritan man. For a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman is unthinkable. However, Jesus speaks to her because of what truth found in Romans 2:11?

Jesus says to this astonished "bad" girl: "*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water*" (Jn 4:10). The woman tells Jesus the well is deep, and since He has no container with which to draw water, she asks where He will get this *living water*. Jesus tells her people who drink the water from this well will soon be *thirsty again* (4:13). Then, He says: "*but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life*" (4:14).

Why do we continually drink water? Because we keep getting what? Thirsty! The water from Jacob's well would only temporarily quench the woman's thirst. Not only does the water Jesus offers quench our thirst so we will never thirst again, but it will also be a perpetual *spring* inside us that gives us *eternal life*. The woman doesn't know exactly what Jesus is talking about. Therefore, what does she ask in John 4:15?



Jesus' answer is going to shock her even more. Like this woman, **when you've been bad, Jesus seeks, draws, and . . .**

He confronts you (4:16-26).

The woman doesn't understand what Jesus means by *living water*, but she wants a changed life. However, though she doesn't yet know it, she must

first confront her sin. Jesus tells her to go get her husband (4:16). Why? He wants her to consider her sin and her need for repentance and forgiveness. What does the woman tell Jesus in John 4:17?

Jesus acknowledges her truthfulness, but it is only part of the truth. Therefore, He tells her she has had five husbands and is presently living with a man to whom she is not married (4:18). Jesus knows all about her and her sin because He is God in flesh and blood. Nothing can be hidden from Him (Heb. 4:13a). What else does Hebrews 4:13b tell us?

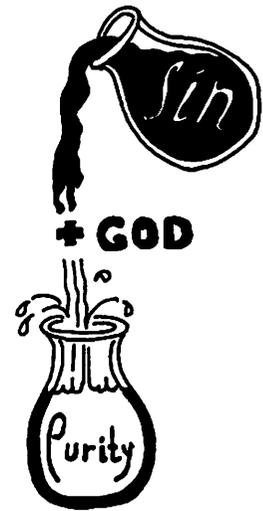
Jesus doesn't accuse or excuse her. He simply describes her life, so she can draw her own conclusions. He just wants her to take an objective look at her life. Jesus knows she has been trying to fill the emptiness in her life with relationships with men. This woman is just looking for someone who will accept and love her. Jesus is willing to do that, but first she must confess and forsake her sin.

The woman admits Jesus is right by calling Him *a prophet*, but she changes the subject rather than deal with her sin. She tries to get Jesus into a religious debate by saying: "*Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship*" (4:20). The implication is: "If you are *a prophet*, who is right?" Because the Samaritans were not welcome at the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, they had their own temple on Mount Gerizim.

Jesus points out to her that the real issue isn't **where** we worship but **how** we worship. Then, Jesus says: "*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers*" are recognized by the way they worship, not where they worship (4:23a). What does Jesus tell her in verse 24?

This means it's not location that matters; we are to worship God from our hearts according to the *truth* of His Word. The word translated *worship* in the Old and New Testaments means to bow down or fall down in homage. It is the idea of reverence and submission.

When we come to worship God, we must offer ourselves to Him as *living* sacrifices, willing to make any changes He points out in our lives (Rom. 12:1). True worship is not to be a sad, dull, solemn experience. How does



Psalm 100:2 describe those who worship by the truth of God's Word?

The Hebrew word translated *singing* means joyful, triumphant, loud singing. That's the spirit with which God wants us to worship Him, and that's how *true worshippers* worship Him. Talking about a new kind of worship must have caused the Samaritan woman to think about the coming Messiah, because she says: "*I know that Messiah is coming*" (*he who is called Christ*). "*When he comes, he will tell us all things*" (Jn 4:25). Jesus now tells this woman something He has not told anyone else up to this point. What does He tell her in John 4:26b?

This woman's mind must be reeling! She has just encountered the Messiah—God in flesh and blood—and He's talking to her. Jesus needed to go through Samaria to find one lost "sheep" who was ready to believe in Him. Today, in the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus still **confronts**, or convicts, us about our sin.



When you've been bad, Jesus seeks, draws, confronts, and . . .

He forgives you (4:27-42).

As Jesus tells the woman He is the Messiah, the disciples return and the woman goes back to town (4:27-28). Jesus then teaches them about the spiritual fields that are ripe unto harvest (4:34-38). Meanwhile, back in town the woman is telling everyone about her encounter with Jesus. As a result of the testimony of this former "bad" girl, many Samaritans come to hear Jesus and many become believers (4:39-42). When we become Christians, our focus should be the same as this "bad" girl—telling others about Him. During the past year, how many people have you invited to Bible study or worship services, so they might encounter Jesus? How does Jesus describe the number one problem with winning the world to Him (Matthew 9:37b)?

We all know some "bad" girls and guys who need us to influence them to take a "journey into knowing Jesus." They also need to know that when they've been bad, Jesus **seeks, draws, confronts, and forgives** them.

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 5 . . . Understanding Who Jesus Is (John 4:43-5:47)

NOTES

Leaving Sychar in Samaria, where He offered *living water* to the woman at the well, Jesus travels into Galilee (see map on page 13). As He comes to Cana, a royal official from Capernaum begs Jesus to come to his home and heal his dying son. Jesus tells him to go home because his son will live. As the man goes home, his servants tell him his son was healed at the exact time Jesus declared he would live. As a result, the official and his household believe (4:43-54). This is Jesus' second miracle recorded in *John*. Now, we will discover what is required for **understanding who Jesus is**. First . . .

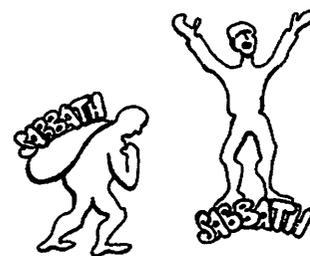
Investigate His miracles and claims (5:1-18).

Sometime after performing His second miracle, Jesus travels to Jerusalem for a Jewish feast. He walks by a pool called Bethesda, where blind, lame, and paralyzed people come to be healed because they believe the water has healing powers. At this pool Jesus encounters a man who has been an invalid for thirty-eight years (5:1-5). Jesus goes to him and asks what question in John 5:6?

The man tells Jesus he has no one to help him into the pool when the water stirs, and while he is trying, someone else gets into the water ahead of him. The pool rippled periodically because of a subterranean spring. Legend says it was an angel stirring the water, and the first one into the water would be healed. This man doesn't know who Jesus is, much less anything about His power. Yet, Jesus is going to do far more for him than he could ever imagine. What does our Lord tell this crippled man in John 5:8?

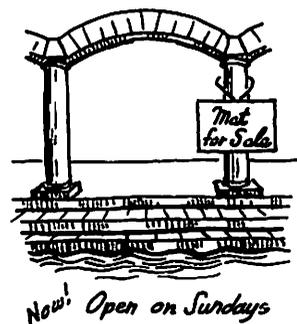
The man is immediately healed, picks up his mat, and walks. Jesus hasn't changed. He still wants to do far more in our lives than we can ever imagine. That's a big part of who He is.

This miracle takes place on the Sabbath. So, when *the Jews* (the name John uses for the Pharisees) see the healed man, they say to him: "*It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed*" (5:10). There is nothing in the Old Testament that prohibits carrying a mat on the Sabbath. This is just one of hundreds of rules the legalistic Pharisees have added to God's Law. The healed man explains to them that the man who healed him



told him to pick up his mat and walk. They want to know who the healer is, but the man doesn't know (5:11-13).

Later, Jesus finds the man at the temple and says: "*See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you*" (5:14). Jesus seeks out this man to tell him that though he had been an invalid for 38 years, his infirmity would be nothing compared to the penalty for sin. Continuing in sin eventually leads to something worse than any physical ailment. How does Jesus express this truth in Luke 13:3?



The word *perish* refers to eternal destruction. After Jesus warns the healed man about the consequences of continuing in his sin, the man goes to the Jews and tells them it was Jesus who healed him. The Jews now face a real dilemma: an indisputable miracle and a broken rule. They decide to persecute Jesus and confront Him about the miracle. How does our Lord respond in John 5:17?

In other words, God is not subject to Sabbath rules. If God stopped working on the Sabbath, the world would fall into chaos. He is always at work—keeping the planets on course, maintaining gravity, and healing people. God never suspends His work, even on the Sabbath.

The Jews now try even harder to kill Jesus, not just because of the indisputable miracle but because He is calling God His Father. The Jews knew that by "*calling God his own Father,*" as opposed to "our" Father, Jesus was claiming to be God's Son and thus *equal with God* (5:18). The Jews regarded Jesus' claim as blasphemy, an offense punishable by death.

To understand who Jesus is, **investigate His miracles and claims** and . . .

Contemplate His words (5:19-30).

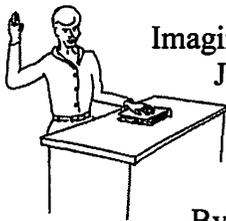
In verses 19-23, Jesus defines His relationship to God and says all who honor the Son honor God, and whoever doesn't honor the Son doesn't honor the Father. Then, He says: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life*" (5:24a). The process is hearing and believing. How does Romans 10:17 explain this process?

When a lost person hears the Gospel contained in the Bible, faith develops in his or her heart. If someone hears and believes just enough to ask, Jesus promises that person “. . . *eternal life*. *He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life*” (5:24b). When we hear and believe, we receive *eternal life*.

To emphasize the power of His words, Jesus says: “. . . *an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live*” (5:25). Jesus is probably referring to His power to raise the dead during His lifetime, as in the case of Lazarus. Still emphasizing the power of His words, Jesus says: “*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment*” (5:28-29). This refers to His second coming when He will descend from heaven with a *cry of command*, or “shout,” accompanied by the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:16d). What will happen as a result?

To understand who Jesus is, **investigate His miracles and claims, contemplate His words**, and . . .

Evaluate His witnesses (5:31-47).



Imagine you are on the jury in a court of law. In verses 31-47 Jesus, the Master Defense Attorney, produces five witnesses to testify about Himself. The first witness is Jesus Himself, who says: “*If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true*” (5:31).

By Jewish Law, the validity of any claim had to be verified by two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Therefore, Jesus’ witness alone is not enough.

Thus, Jesus brings in a second witness, John the Baptist. The Jewish leaders revered John the Baptist as a true prophet of God (Mt 21:26). So, Jesus says: “*You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth*” (Jn 5:33). The Jews sent a delegation to John, who told them there was One among them whose sandals he was not even worthy to untie (Jn 1:27). No doubt John also told them what he told his own disciples. What does John tell his disciples about Jesus in John 1:29b?

Third, Jesus tells the Jews there is a *testimony* even more powerful and credible than John the Baptist. It is the *works* the Father gave Him that He is *doing* (5:36). This refers to His miracles, including healing the lame man.

The fourth witness is God the Father. Jesus says: *“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me”* (5:37a). Jesus is referring to His baptism when God the Father spoke from heaven concerning Him. As soon as Jesus comes up out of the water, what does a voice from heaven say (see Matthew 3:17b)?

The only other time God the Father speaks from heaven to testify about Jesus is at the Transfiguration, when again God calls Jesus *“my Son”* (Lk 9:35).

Finally, Jesus calls His fifth witness, the Bible. Jesus says: *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life”* (5:39-40). The Law and the prophets both predict Jesus’ coming, and Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah, including His miracles.



Jesus warns it will not be He who accuses them before the Father but Moses (5:45). Moses never suggested the Law was a means to salvation, as the Jews taught. Jesus continues: *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷But if you do not believe his writing, how will you believe my words?”* (5:46-47). When did Moses write about Christ? One incident is when God tells Moses He will raise up a prophet from among the Israelites (Deut. 18:18a). Then, what does God tell Moses this prophet will do (see Deuteronomy 18:18b)?

These five witnesses have been carefully chosen by the Son of God. Each has taken the stand and presented the evidence. The defense rests. Now you, as a member of the jury, must weigh the testimony and reach a verdict—if you haven’t already. If you objectively consider the testimony about Jesus, you will reach the right verdict—Jesus is who He claims to be.

To understand who Jesus is, **investigate His miracles and claims, contemplate His words, and evaluate His witnesses.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 6 . . . When You Have Problems (John 6:1-71)

NOTES

After healing the man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years, Jesus leaves Jerusalem and returns to Galilee. He crosses the Sea of Galilee to the east side, and a large crowd of people follow because they know about His miracles of healing the sick. To better teach them, Jesus goes up on a mountainside and sits down in an area known today as the Golan Heights (6:1-3). During this time of teaching, Jesus performs the feeding of the 5,000—the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. In this chapter we find **three** principles you should follow **when you have problems** . . .

Include God in your calculation (6:5-15).

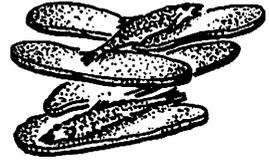
As we come to this miracle, Jesus is in His second year of ministry, and the Twelve have already seen many miracles John doesn't record (21:25). A huge crowd of 5,000 men, plus women and children (Mt 14:21), is following Jesus because of His miracles. It is late in the day (Mk 6:35), and the people are hungry. Therefore, Jesus asks Philip where they can buy bread for the people to eat (Jn 6:5). How does Philip answer (Jn 6:7)?

A denarius was one day's wages for a common laborer (Mt 20:2). Therefore, *two hundred denarii*, or "penny-worth," would be about three quarters of a year's salary. However, Philip isn't answering Jesus' question. Jesus asked *where* they could get the bread, not how much it would cost. After all the miracles Philip has witnessed, he doesn't have the faith of the Roman centurion who asks Jesus to heal his servant. What does the centurion tell Jesus in Matthew 8:8b?

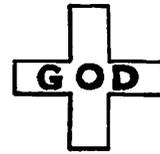


Philip still doesn't understand he is in the presence of the One who spoke the universe into existence. When he left Jesus out of his calculations, as we often do, he came up way short. At this point Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, speaks up to say he has found a boy who has five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:9). The barley loaves were much like pancakes, and the two fish more like dried sardines. The impossibility of the situation is obvious. That's why Andrew asks how they can feed so many people with so little food. It is often good for us to be in this type of situation so we understand our own limitations. Then, there is no mistake about who takes care of the problem.

Jesus tells the disciples to have the crowd sit down. He then takes the five barley loaves, gives thanks, and has the disciples distribute the food to those who are seated. Everyone gets all they want to eat. I wonder about the expression on the disciples' faces as they distribute this food. Simon Peter passes his basket of bread down one row of people, and John gets it at the other end. He sends the basket down another row, and when Peter gets it back, it is still full of bread.



Row after row this happens, as the disciples witness the power of Jesus, the Bread of Life, in this awesome way. Because Jesus created atoms and molecules, they are obedient to His voice, and He is able to multiply the molecular structure of the bread and fish. As soon as one piece of bread is taken, another appears. Jesus does the same thing with the fish (6:11). After everyone has eaten their fill, Jesus tells them to gather all the food that is left. How much do they gather (6:13)?



Why that many full baskets? Each disciple would have one basket to carry, so they would remember to never again leave Jesus out of their calculations. That day the disciples learned something we should never forget: "Little is much when God is in it!" Too often we make our calculations and leave out God. You may have a financial problem, a marital problem, a career problem, or some other kind of problem. Don't leave God out of your calculations. When you have problems, remember what words of Jesus in Luke 18:27b?



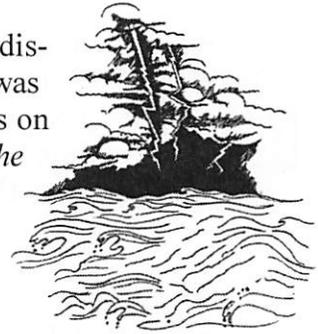
After this miracle the people want to make Jesus their king, so He can use His power to free them from Roman rule. Knowing this, Jesus withdraws to a mountain alone (6:15).

When you have problems: include God in your calculation and . . .

Be ready for an examination (6:16-21).

As Jesus goes to the mountain, the disciples get into a boat and set out for Capernaum, on the northwest side, which is Jesus' headquarters (6:16-17). It's now time for an examination to see if the disciples understand the lesson of the feeding of the 5,000. A strong wind begins to blow and tosses the boat around, causing the waves to break over into the boat. The disciples are three or four miles from shore (6:18-19) Therefore, they are in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, which is about seven miles across and about 15 miles long, north to south.

In the middle of this violent storm that could cost them their lives, the disciples see someone approaching, walking on the water. Not only was Jesus walking on water, but He had evidently walked over three miles on the raging sea. Mark tells us this happens about the *fourth watch of the night* (Mk 6:48), or between four and six in the morning. So, they are exhausted from battling the storm all night. They are also terrified, thinking Jesus is a ghost. Therefore, what does Jesus say to them in John 6:20b?



John doesn't include nearly as many details about this miracle as do Matthew and Mark. From reading the other gospels, we know this is when Peter tries to walk on the water. Then, as soon as Jesus and Peter get back into the ship, the wind stops (Mt 14:28-32). The disciples are amazed because of what fact found in Mark 6:52a?

John now records a miracle within a miracle because the boat *immediately*, or instantly, reaches shore (6:21b). (Maybe this happened like on "Star Trek" when they use the transporter.) You see, Jesus never promises smooth sailing, but He does promise a safe landing.

We are all going to have some very rough storms, or problems, in our lives. However, we can have peace because even in the violent storms of life, Jesus comes treading across the waves of the problems that afflict us.

When you have problems, **include God in your calculation, be ready for an examination,** and . . .

Make sure of your salvation (6:22-71).

The next day the crowd locates Jesus on the other side of the lake. They want to find Jesus for selfish purposes—so He will feed them. Jesus tells them that instead of seeking perishable food, they should be seeking the eternal life He can give them because God sent Him for that purpose. The crowd then asks what God wants them to do. Jesus tells them they must believe in the One the Father has sent (6:22-30). The crowd then asks Jesus for a miracle, citing what miracle concerning their ancestors (6:31b)?

The implication is, if Jesus will feed them for years, then they will believe. In response, Jesus tells them it was not Moses but His Father who performed the miracle. Then, Jesus tells them *the bread of God* comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. So, the crowd asks Jesus for that



bread, and Jesus responds, “*I am the bread of life*” (6:32-35). Jesus continues to explain that all those the Father gives Him will come to Him. Jesus is referring to God’s electing grace that draws people to Him (6:37a). Of those who come to Him, what does Jesus say in John 6:37b?

Those whom God draws to Christ, the Bible calls the *elect* (Mt 24:22, 24; Rom. 11:7; 2 Tim. 2:10). How do you know if you are one of the *elect*? You have a desire to come to Jesus for salvation. Jesus also says He will raise the *elect* to eternal life *on the last day* (Jn 6:39-40). Some of the Jews begin to argue about Him because they think He is the son of Joseph, though Joseph had probably already died. Jesus tells them to stop arguing and that no one can come to believe in Jesus without divine help (6:43-44).

Jesus continues explaining and tells them He is the *living bread* who gives life to the world, and whoever feeds on this *bread* will live forever (6:45-59). Even Jesus’ disciples don’t understand and begin to argue among themselves. Finally, many would-be disciples decide not to follow Jesus any longer and desert Him. Therefore, Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks if they want to go away also (6:61-67). How does Simon Peter answer in 6:68?

This chapter concludes with Jesus telling His disciples that one of them is *a devil*, referring to Judas Iscariot’s betrayal (6:70-71). Like Judas and the crowd, many people today only want to come to Jesus for selfish reasons. They fill large churches and convention centers to hear promises of financial prosperity and health.

Jesus makes it clear salvation is the work of God from beginning to end. Divine enablement is required for anyone to come to faith in Christ (6:65). This enablement comes as a result of the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. That’s why Jesus gives us what command in Mark 16:15?

The Bread of Life solves our greatest problem—finding forgiveness for our sin. When you have problems, **include God in your calculation, be ready for an examination, and make sure of your salvation.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

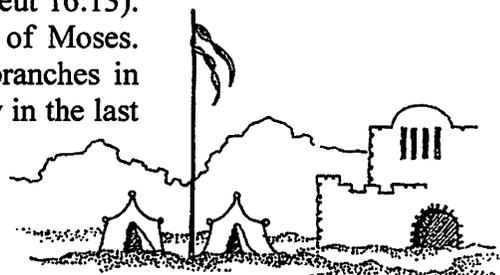
LESSON 7 . . . Becoming a Bold Believer (John 7:1-53)

NOTES

After the miracle of feeding the 5,000 and His “Bread of Life” discourse, our Lord says He must ascend back from where He came. At this point, the crowds desert Him (6:66). Now, Jesus purposely remains in Galilee because the Jews in Judea are trying to kill Him (7:1). Jesus stays away from Judea, not because He is afraid of the Jewish leaders but because His time to die has not yet come. In chapter seven we find **four** requirements for **becoming a bold believer** . . .

Be resilient to ridicule (7:2-13).

The Feast of Tabernacles is now approaching (7:2). This feast was held around the second week of October and lasted for one week (Deut 16:13). It commemorated the wilderness wanderings during the time of Moses. Each Jewish family would build a tabernacle, or shelter, of branches in which to live for a week. Scholars generally agree Jesus is now in the last six months of His life and will be crucified in the spring. Jesus’ half-brothers advise Him to go to the feast because they think He wants to be famous and can be better known if He goes to the feast (7:3-4). However, what does verse five tell us?



Sometimes the most hurtful ridicule comes from relatives. Two of Jesus’ half-brothers are named James and Judas (Mt 13:55). This James later wrote the epistle of James, and Judas (or Jude) wrote the epistle of Jude. The moral here is to keep on serving the Lord and, in time, even your worst critics may become devout believers.

Jesus tells His brothers it is not the right time for Him to go to the feast. He knows going with His family will make it easier for His enemies to find and kill Him. Therefore, He stays in Galilee and later goes to Jerusalem in secret. At the feast some people say Jesus is a good man, but others say He deceives people (7:12). However, Jesus doesn’t let the ridicule from His half-brothers and His peers divert Him from God’s purpose for His life. If what we do is truly motivated by a desire to serve the Lord, we will be **resilient to ridicule**. Also, if we are fully committed to the Lord, what promise do we find in 2 Chronicles 16:9a?

To become a bold believer, **be resilient to ridicule** and . . .

Be committed to God's will (7:14-36).

About halfway through the weeklong feast, Jesus appears in the temple and begins to teach. The Jews marvel at His knowledge of the Old Testament because He had no formal training by a rabbi (7:15). He was just a "country boy" from Galilee. What does Jesus tell them in John 7:16?

Then, Jesus says something very important: "*If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority*" (7:17). This means if anyone really wants to do God's will, not just know God's Word, God will enable that person to have spiritual understanding and come to faith in Christ (6:44).

Have you ever wondered why many intelligent people, who know a lot about the Bible, still don't believe Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus explains why. We discover the truth about Jesus through a desire to do God's will, not through our intellect. Spiritual understanding doesn't come solely from studying the Bible; there must also be a commitment to doing God's will.

Finally, Jesus asks why they are trying to kill Him, and they accuse Him of having a demon, or at least of being paranoid (7:19-20). Jesus then mentions the man He healed at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath and points out they circumcise a baby boy on the eighth day, even if it is a Sabbath, so they can obey the Law. Jesus knows the Jews are aware that the Law also teaches compassion. What does the Law require in Leviticus 19:18b?

So, circumcising and healing on the Sabbath are both just obeying the Law. Therefore, Jesus says: "*Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment*" (Jn 7:24). The Jewish leaders are so obsessed with laws and regulations about the Sabbath, they can't see the divine nature of Jesus' miracles.

Many people today don't really know who Jesus is because they are obsessed with religion or their objections to religion. However, any objective person who wants to do God's will and studies the gospel of John, will come to the conclusion Jesus is who He claimed to be.

Some people thought Jesus could not be the Messiah because they mistakenly thought no one would know where the Messiah would come from, and they knew Jesus grew up in Nazareth (7:27). This is just a lack of Bible knowledge because the prophet Micah prophesied He would be born in Bethlehem, as Jesus was (Micah 5:2).

Because Jesus' teaching was having such a powerful impact, the Jews try to arrest Him. Jesus eludes them because His time has not yet come. Yet, many people come to faith in Him (Jn 7:30-32). Knowing His death is only about six months away, Jesus tells the Jews He is only with them *a little longer* until He returns to the One who sent Him. The Jews think Jesus might be going to a foreign country (7:33-36). However, Jesus is referring to His death and ascension.

Where will you go when you die? It's really not important **how** you die or **when** you die; the only thing that really matters is **where** you go when you die. When you are **committed to God's will**, you will know this important truth.

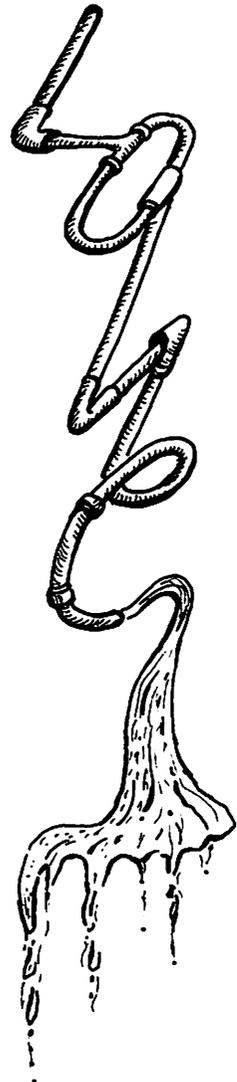
To become a bold believer, **be resilient to ridicule, be committed to God's will**, and . . .

Be a conduit of Christ's love (7:37-39).

On each day of the Feast of Tabernacles a priest would stand in front of the temple with a golden pitcher and pour water on a rock. This commemorated the water flowing out of the rock Moses struck to give the Israelites water to drink. In this context, on the final day of the Feast, Jesus stands and says with a loud voice: "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water' "*" (7:37b-38). Jesus would become the smitten Rock by being crucified, and thereby provide life-giving water. How does John explain what Jesus means (verse 39a)?

At this time, the Holy Spirit has not yet been given because Jesus has not died on the cross to pay for our sins (7:39b). In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon people to empower them to perform God's will, but they were not permanently indwelt (Judg. 3:10, 6:34, 14:6). Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we become a **conduit**, or pipeline, through which the love of Christ flows to others. How does Romans 5:5b express this fact?

To become a bold believer **be resilient to ridicule, committed to God's will, a conduit of Christ's love**, and . . .



Be certain Jesus is Lord (7:40-53).

After hearing Jesus' words, some think He is *the prophet* mentioned by Moses (Deut. 18:15). Evidently, it is His offer of *living water* as Moses provided physical water that leads them to this conclusion. Others think He is *the Christ*, or Messiah, while still others are unsure who He is (7:40-41). Therefore, what do we read in verse 43?

Today, there are still many opinions, but no consensus, about who Jesus is. When it comes to Jesus, you have three choices and three choices only. Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. He is deceptive, deluded, or divine. Some today believe He was a good man, but not the Son of God. However, if He is not the Son of God, He is not a good man because He would be the biggest liar and fraud in history.

When the temple guards sent to arrest Jesus return without Him, the chief priests and Pharisees, who compose the Sanhedrin, are furious and want to know why they didn't bring Him (7:45). How do the guards answer in John 7:46a?

They sense Jesus is more than just a man. One of the Pharisees is Nicodemus, who went to see Jesus by night (Jn 3). In an attempt to make his fellow Pharisees follow the Law they claim to revere, Nicodemus asks if they can convict a man without first giving Him a hearing as the Law requires (7:51, Deut. 1:16). However, Nicodemus' colleagues have already decided Jesus should be put to death by stoning and don't want to give Him a hearing. Therefore, they accuse Nicodemus of being from Galilee and seeking to defend another Galilean (7:52). Being called a Galilean was like being called an uneducated, ignorant, "country bumpkin." The Jewish leaders think only Galileans could believe Jesus is the Son of God. How does Titus 1:15c explain why the Jewish leaders, and many people today, do not believe?

Probably because they can't reach a consensus about Jesus, they all go home in frustration (7:53). How will you go home today? Believing Jesus is a liar or a lunatic? Or, will you go home believing Jesus is Lord?

The requirements for **becoming a bold believer** are: **be resilient to ridicule, be committed to God's will, be a conduit of Christ's love, and be certain Jesus is Lord.**



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 8 . . . Becoming More Like Jesus (John 8:1-11)

NOTES

Jesus is in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. His teachings astonish everyone because He is not an educated rabbi, or teacher, but just an ordinary, uneducated country boy from Galilee (7:15). When He finishes teaching in the temple, He goes to the Mount of Olives for the night. At dawn, Jesus returns to the temple courts where people gather around Him and He sits down to teach them (8:1-2).

To some, this passage involves some serious textual problems because the majority of Greek manuscripts prior to the sixth century do not contain John 7:53-8:11. However, I see no problem including it because it is totally consistent with Christ's wisdom, compassion and forgiveness, as taught in the gospels. In this passage we find **two** requirements for becoming more like Jesus . . .

Avoid "casting stones" (8:3-9a).

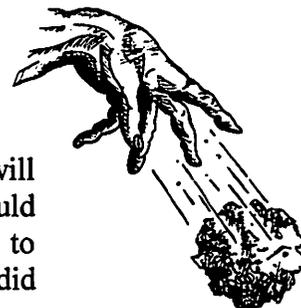
In chapter seven, the Jewish leaders fail in their attempt to have Jesus arrested while He is teaching in the temple courts. Therefore, they devise a despicable plan to entrap and discredit Him. As Jesus is again teaching in the temple courts, the scribes and Pharisees bring in a woman and make her stand before the crowd gathered around Jesus. No doubt she is scantily clothed, humiliated, and trembling in fear. They tell Jesus she was caught in the very act of adultery, and they remind Him the Law says she should be stoned (8:3-5a). Then, what do they ask Jesus in verse 5b?

This scene raises some important questions. First, how did they happen to come upon someone in the very act of adultery? It is obviously a set-up and very likely that these religious leaders hired a man to help them catch this poor woman in the act. I think the failure of the religious leaders to bring the man before Jesus indicates this is probably the case. Where is the man? It is just as bad for a man to commit adultery as it is a woman. If a man and woman commit adultery, what does Leviticus 20:10b require?

I don't know where the idea came from that sexual immorality is more wrong for a woman than a man. The reason for bringing this woman to

Jesus was not a regard or love for the Law. According to John 8:6a, what is the real reason?

For some time, the scribes and Pharisees had been looking for a way to kill Jesus, or at least to publicly discredit Him. This looks like the perfect trap, and they are using this poor woman as bait.



Jesus faces a dilemma. If He says the woman should be stoned, He will lose forever the name He has gained for having love and mercy. He would never again be called “a friend of sinners.” Also, if Jesus tells them to stone her to death, He would be quickly reported to the Romans, who did not allow Jews to carry out the death penalty (Jn 18:31). Jesus would have been arrested and imprisoned, or even executed, by the Romans.

On the other hand, if Jesus says, “Let her go,” the Jewish religious leaders would immediately accuse Him of condoning adultery and being a heretic who teaches people to disobey the Law of Moses. This situation appears to be the perfect trap and a no-win situation for Jesus. However, Jesus doesn’t even dignify their evil scheme with an answer. Instead, what does He do (8:6b)?

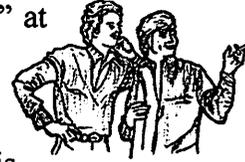
Jesus didn’t just teach; He used visual aids like many pastors today. If they had been available, He would have used PowerPoint® or an overhead projector. However, we are left to wonder just what Jesus wrote on the ground. It might have been a list of the sins of the accusers who brought this frightened woman to Jesus. Since He usually answered questions by quoting scripture, I think He may have written the command found in Exodus 23:1. Write it below:

Whatever Jesus writes on the ground, the conspirators ignore it and keep questioning Jesus about what should be done with the woman. Finally, Jesus stands up and says: “*Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her*” (Jn 8:7).

The requirement that accusers cast the first stone is also part of the Law (Deut. 17:7), but Jesus adds they must be *without sin*. He did not mean

they had to be sinless, because no one is without sin (Rom. 3:23). He means they must be innocent of committing the same sin as the accused woman and also not be guilty of entrapment by arranging the woman's adultery. The Master Teacher has now turned the table on these evil accusers.

If we are honest, we know we are all prone to "cast stones" at other people. Slander and gossip are our ways of "casting stones" at someone, even though these sins are among the most harshly condemned sins in the Bible. Slander is saying something false that damages someone's reputation. Gossip is repeating the private affairs of others. Whether it is true or not doesn't matter. If it is not repeated to **help** or **protect**, then it is the sin of gossip.



King David asks the Lord who may dwell in His *tent* and live on His *holy hill* (Psa. 15:1). David then answers his own question by writing it is the one who *walks blamelessly* and *does what is right* (15:2). However, as inherent "stone casters," we need to ponder carefully the rest of the answer in the next verse (15:3). Write it below:

After saying the one without sin should cast the first stone, Jesus stoops down again. This is probably to give the conspirators time to rethink their evil act. Convicted in their hearts by the words of Jesus, the accusers begin to leave one at a time, beginning with the oldest (Jn 8:9a). Why did the oldest one leave first? Probably because age mellows our youthful tendency to be self-righteous and judgmental! As we mature, we realize we are not the "hot-shot" Christians we may have once thought. Also, as we get older, we have made so many mistakes, it is much harder to "cast stones." When tempted to be harsh "stone casters," we need to remember what words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:7?

We will receive judgment *without mercy* if we have not been merciful (Jas. 2:13). I don't know about you, but on Judgment Day I will need all the mercy I can get!

At this incident, the only person qualified to cast a stone is Jesus. However, He has already said he did not come "to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:17).

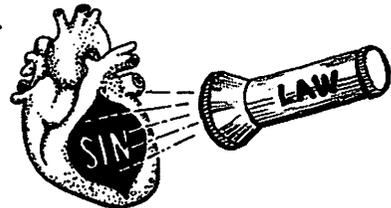
To become more like Jesus, **avoid "casting stones"** and . . .

Always be compassionate (8:9b-11).

The accusers finally leave, so only Jesus and the woman remain (8:9b). Our Lord says to her: "*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*" (8:10). This statement reveals Jesus' great compassion. He calls her *woman* (GUNE, goo-nay'). In Jesus' day this was a term of "endearment or respect" (W. E. Vine). It is the same word Jesus uses to address His loving mother at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:4) and from the cross when He asks the apostle John to take care of her (Jn 19:26). As mentioned in Lesson Two, calling a female *woman* in Jesus' day was much like calling a woman "Ma'am" today.

Jesus could have legitimately called her an adulteress or whore, but He doesn't. He respectfully and compassionately calls her *woman*. The humiliated woman responds, probably with a voice trembling in fear: "*No one, Lord*" (8:11a). Then, what does our Lord say to her (8:11b)?

Jesus did not condemn the woman, but He did condemn her immorality by calling it *sin*. This incident is a wonderful example of the fact that the Law and grace complement each other. We are not saved by keeping the Law, but we cannot be saved by grace if we are not first condemned by the Law. How does Romans 3:20 describe the purpose of the Law?



No matter what part of the Law we have broken, even committing adultery, God's grace is always greater than all our sin. It is the Law that makes God's grace so attractive. As Jesus points out, God's awesome grace is designed to cause us to *sin no more*.

If you want to become more like Jesus, **avoid "casting stones" and always be compassionate.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 9 . . . The Difference Jesus Can Make in Your Life (John 8:12-59)

NOTES

In the 1970's there was a hit country western song entitled, "What a Difference You've Made in My Life." Every Christian should be able to say that about Jesus. In chapter seven of *John*, the religious leaders tried to have Jesus arrested, but they failed. In the first eleven verses of chapter eight, their attempt to trap Jesus concerning the woman caught in the act of adultery also failed. Now in the remainder of this chapter, we find **three** differences Jesus can make in our lives, as well as the choice we have when faced with the truth about Jesus . . .

He is the difference between light and darkness (8:12-20).

The Feast of Tabernacles is still being observed, and Jesus is teaching in the treasury area of the temple, which is in the court of the women, the second outermost court (8:20). During this feast, four huge menorahs—one at each corner in the court of the women—were lit at night to commemorate how the Lord led the Israelites with a pillar of fire at night during their wilderness wanderings (Ex 13:21). A menorah is a candelabrum with seven branches; a menorah with nine branches is used during Hanukkah. At night the great flames would illuminate the temple area and could be seen from all over Jerusalem. In the context of this dazzling display, what does Jesus say in John 8:12b?



Jesus had already said, "*I am the bread of life*" (6:48), which means He is the source and sustainer of spiritual life. In saying He is the "*light of the world*" Jesus is claiming to be God, for in the Bible *light* symbolizes the presence of God. For example, what do we read in Psalm 27:1a?

As our Light, Jesus enables us to distinguish between truth and falsehood because He gives us spiritual understanding and reveals God to us. The Pharisees challenge Jesus and say His witness alone is not true (Jn 8:13). According to Mosaic Law, two or three witnesses were required to establish a fact in court (Deut. 17:6).

Jesus replies that His divine claims are above natural and legal standards (8:14-15a). Then, in essence Jesus says, "You want two witnesses; there

are two.” He says: “*I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me*” (8:18). The Pharisees are mystified and immediately ask, “*Where is your father?*” Jesus responds: “*You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also*” (8:19). Their unwillingness to *know* Jesus kept them from truly knowing the *Father*. This means, if we want to know God, we can only get to know Him through Jesus. When we get to know Jesus, we get to know God. Knowing God through Jesus brings *light* into our lives. How does Proverbs 4:19 describe those who do not *know* God?

The word *stumble* means their lives are a mess—relationally, emotionally, vocationally, or spiritually. Though they may have a lot of money and be successful, people who don’t know Jesus live in *darkness*. They think if they can make more money, become more successful, have another relationship, drink a little more, etc., life will make sense. Then, they can get



out of the *darkness*. However, without Jesus they just *stumble* through life. Jesus makes the difference in our lives between **light and darkness**, and . . .

He is the difference between life and death (8:21-30).

Now Jesus tells the Pharisees He is going away and where He is going they cannot come (8:21-22). What does Jesus tell the Jews in John 8:24b?

In Greek, Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I AM (EGO EIMI, ego ay-mee’), you will die in your sins.” The word “He” after “I am” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV) is not in the Greek text and is therefore italicized in most versions. The Jewish leaders know the Old Testament well and understand Jesus is referring to the name of God given in Exodus 3, when God speaks to Moses from the burning bush. Moses asks God what he should say when the people ask him the name of his God. What does God tell Moses to say (Exodus 3:14)?



The name *I AM* is a verb that cannot be translated into English because it is all three tenses at once. It means He is the God who has always been, who

is now, and who will always be. Jesus is saying if we don't believe He is the eternal God, we will die in our sins.

The Pharisees ask Jesus who He is, and Jesus tells them He is who He has always claimed to be (Jn 8:25). He then says He has much more to say and His purpose for coming is to tell the world the message of the One who sent Him. However, His hearers don't understand He is referring to the Father (8:26-27). Just as a deaf person cannot fully appreciate music, an unbeliever cannot understand spiritual things.

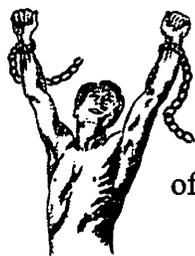
Now Jesus tells them they will see the ultimate proof of who He is when He is *lifted up* (8:28a). The people of Jesus' day understood to be *lifted up* was to be crucified. Jesus being *lifted up* on the cross was His final revelation of who He is, because three days later He would rise from the dead. As Jesus speaks, *many believed in him* (8:30). Yet, in spite of the evidence of His miracles and His powerful teaching, the vast majority of people refuse to believe.

Jesus is not only the difference between **light and darkness, life and death**, but also . . .

He is the difference between freedom and bondage (8:31-47).

The animosity toward Jesus grows more intense as the religious leaders defend themselves. Knowing some of the new followers would not follow Him very long, what does Jesus say in John 8:31b?

True disciples of Jesus *continue* to follow Him. There is an old saying, "A faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first." First John 2:19 expresses it like this: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.* What does Jesus say about those who *continue* in John 8:32?



The *truth* is Jesus Christ (14:6). When we get to know Jesus, we are free from the guilt of the past, free from a life without purpose, and free to break away from sin. However, the Jews fire back, saying they are descendants of Abraham and have never been in bondage to anyone.

Therefore, they want to know why Jesus says He can set them free (8:33). How does Jesus respond in verse 34c?

The very act of sin reveals we are enslaved to sin; otherwise we wouldn't sin. Sin is a cruel master, but our Lord says, "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (8:36). The Jews think of themselves as being part of God's family because they are descendants of Abraham, so they remind Jesus they have Abraham as their father. Jesus responds that if they were true descendants of Abraham, they would be like Abraham and listen to God. Instead, they want to kill the One who comes from God, something Abraham would never do (8:39-40). Being a descendant of Abraham is not a big deal. How does Jesus reveal this in Matthew 3:9c?

No individual has ever become a child of God based on biological descent. Growing up in a Christian home doesn't make you a Christian anymore than being born in a kitchen makes you a biscuit or growing up on a university campus makes you a professor.

Jesus can make the difference in your life between **light and darkness, life and death, and freedom and bondage**. However, when faced with these truths about Jesus, you have only two choices . . .

Cast stones or cling to the Savior (8:48-59).

Because of Jesus' teaching, the Jews, in words of hostility, ask Jesus: "*Who do you make yourself out to be?*" (8:53c). In response, Jesus says something mind-boggling. What is it (8:56)?

Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Christ, so how could he see Christ's day? I believe Abraham saw Christ's day when he went to sacrifice his son Isaac. God tells Abraham to take his *only son* Isaac, whom he loves, and go the mountain range of Moriah. There he is to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). It is significant God says Isaac is Abraham's *only son* since Ishmael is also Abraham's son through Hagar. However, Isaac is the *only* son of promise. Isaac is not married nor does he have children, so without Isaac, God's promise to multiply Abraham's seed would be impossible.

Abraham goes to Moriah, builds an altar, and binds Isaac. Then, he stands over his *only son* with his knife raised to sacrifice him. At this moment, the angel of the Lord calls out from heaven and tells Abraham not to harm Isaac. Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket. He takes the ram and offers it as a sacrifice instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:11-13). How could Abraham be willing to sacrifice the *only son* through whom God would fulfill all His promises? How does Hebrews 11:19a answer this question?

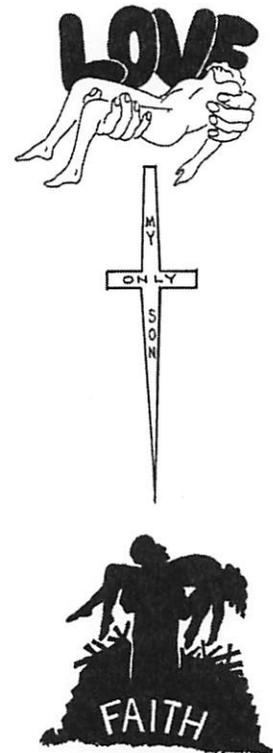
But there is more. When the test is over and God has provided a ram for the sacrifice, Abraham calls the name of the place, *The LORD will provide*, or JEHOVAH JIREH (Gen. 22:14a). Then, we read, "*On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided*" (22:14b). What do we read about Mount Moriah in 2 Chronicles 3:1a?

JEHOVAH JIREH is the symbolic name for Mount Moriah, where Jerusalem sits today. On Mount Moriah there is a hill where Jesus was crucified, providing the sacrifice that paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

Though Abraham didn't understand it all, on Mount Moriah he received a vague picture of the coming death and resurrection of God's only Son. He knew some day the Lord would provide a sacrifice for the sins of the world in the region of Mount Moriah. So, he saw Jesus' *day*; but even more shocking, what does Jesus say in John 8:58c?

This means before Abraham was born, Jesus already existed eternally because He is the great I AM come to earth in flesh and blood. After this statement, the Jews pick up stones to throw at Jesus, but He slips away and leaves the temple (8:59). So, when faced with the truth about who Jesus is, you have only two choices: **cast stones or cling to the Savior** (Mt 12:30).

Jesus can make the difference in your life between **light and darkness, life and death, and freedom and bondage**. However, when confronted with the truth about Jesus, you only have two choices: **cast stones or cling to the Savior**.



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 10 . . . Improving Your Spiritual Sight (John 9:1-41)

NOTES

One of God's greatest gifts to us is sight. Do you like to see beautiful sunrises or sunsets? Do you like to see beautiful flowers or snow-capped mountains? Our world is full of beautiful sights, and yet we often don't see them. What is your favorite natural sight? Whatever it is, nothing can compare with the wonder of seeing spiritual things contained in the Word of God. Therefore, you should be very interested in **improving your spiritual sight**, which requires **three** things . . .



Be faithful (9:1-12).

Jesus is still in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. He and His disciples come upon a beggar who has been blind from birth. The disciples ask Jesus who sinned—the beggar or his parents (9:2). Many Jews believed illness and physical handicaps, like blindness and deafness, were the result of sin, and even a parent's sin could be punished through a child's suffering. Jesus tells them the beggar is not blind because of his sins or his parents' sins. What reason does Jesus give for the man's blindness (9:3b)?

In other words, his blindness is an opportunity for God to do His work. The disciples want to know why this man is blind. When problems come our way, we also ask, "Why me?" However, Jesus shifts their attention to the purpose for this problem. God has a purpose for every problem He allows in our lives. Instead of asking God "why," we should be asking Him "what"—what is the purpose for this problem? James tells us to *count it all joy* when we encounter all kinds of problems because problems develop *steadfastness*, or patience (Jas. 1:2-3). Then, what do we read in James 1:4b?

This means problems develop character. So, instead of asking God "why," we should ask, "God, **what** are You trying to develop in my character?"

Jesus then tells His disciples they must work while it is *day* because the night is coming when no one can work (Jn 9:4-5). The word *day* reveals we have limited time to do God's will. Hostility is growing toward Jesus, and He knows His time is short. The Feast of Tabernacles takes place in October, and Jesus will be crucified in the spring. So, most scholars agree Jesus is now in the last six months of His life.



After reminding His disciples He is the Light of the world, Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud with the saliva, and puts it on the blind man's eyes. Next, Jesus tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The blind beggar does what Jesus says and then goes home seeing (9:6-7).

To be healed, the blind man had to do something. Do you think the man would have been healed had he not performed that simple act? Of course not! It is the same in spiritual matters. We must be faithful in little things to improve our spiritual sight. If we are not faithful in prayer, Bible study, worship attendance, and giving back to God, our spiritual sight will be impaired. Only when we are faithful can we pray what prayer found in Psalm 119:18?

Verses 8-12 of John chapter nine record various reactions to this miracle. If you want to improve your spiritual sight, **be faithful** and . . .



Be bold (9:13-34).

Since this was a supernatural act, the shocked neighbors bring the seeing man to the Pharisees for an explanation. The Pharisees ask him how he received his sight, and he tells them. Some of these Pharisees say Jesus is not from God because He healed someone on the Sabbath. Others, probably led by Nicodemus, aren't sure and ask how a sinner could perform such miracles. Because there is no consensus, they ask the former blind man who he thinks Jesus is (9:13-16). How does he reply in verse 17c?

This is a great answer because an Old Testament prophet named Elisha performs a similar miracle. Naaman, a commander in the Syrian army, has leprosy, an incurable disease. He hears about Elisha and goes to him for healing. Elisha doesn't even go outside his home to see this important man. However, through a messenger, what does Elisha tell Naaman, according to 2 Kings 5:10?

At first Naaman is mad because he thought Elisha himself would come out and wave his hand over the spot of leprosy, and he would be healed. He also thinks the rivers in Syria would be better water in which to wash. He probably thinks Elisha is a "quack," so he goes away in a *rage*. Then, one

of Naaman's servants suggests to him that since Elisha's instructions are so simple, they should be tested (5:11-13). Therefore, Naaman goes and dips himself seven times in the Jordan. As a result, what happens (2 Kings 5:14c)?

Just like Naaman, the blind beggar had to do something to be healed. Many of the Pharisees cannot believe the beggar is really healed, so they call for his parents, who confirm he was born blind. They further interrogate the parents, asking how they think he gained his sight. However, his parents are afraid because the Jews had already agreed that anyone saying Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) would be expelled from the synagogue. Because they fear excommunication, they evade the issue, telling the Pharisees to ask their son (Jn 9:18-23).

Once again, the Jewish leaders summon the former blind man and try to make him agree with them Jesus is a sinner. The man replies honestly, saying he doesn't know. However, he says there is one thing he does know (9:25a-b). What does the former blind beggar know for sure (9:25c)?

As Christians, we don't need to have all the answers before we can share our faith. All we need to know is what Jesus Christ has done for us. Nothing is as powerful as a personal testimony.

The interrogation continues as they again ask the man to explain how he was healed. Running out of patience, he tells them he has already explained it and they refused to listen. He sarcastically suggests their repeated questions show they too want to become disciples of Jesus (9:27). The Jewish leaders try to insult the man by saying he is a disciple of Jesus and they are disciples of Moses. They say they know God spoke to Moses, but they don't even know from where Jesus comes (9:28-29). This illiterate man is shocked at their stupidity because his being able to see proves where Jesus comes from. He reminds them that everyone knows God doesn't listen to sinners, just godly people. He then tells them the healing of someone born blind is unheard of (9:30-32). Finally, what does the man say in John 9:33?

In other words, he could do *nothing* about his blindness. Unable to refute the blind man's logic, the Jewish leaders say he was born a sinner. Then,

in anger they excommunicate him, which isolates him from his family and prevents him from finding any employment among the Jews. The Pharisees are desperate. Like the former blind man, they know there is only one explanation for his sight. Nicodemus has already said what all these Pharisees know in their hearts. What is it (John 3:2c)?

The former blind man has very little knowledge of Jesus, but at great cost he boldly remains committed to what little he does know about Him. To improve your spiritual sight, **be faithful, be bold, and . . .**

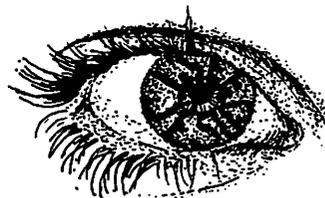


Be receptive (9:35-41).

When Jesus hears they have thrown the man out of the synagogue, He finds him and asks if he believes in the *Son of Man* (“God,” KJV). This is one of the titles of the Messiah (Dan. 7:13). The former blind man asks who the *Son of Man* is because he wants to believe. When Jesus identifies Himself as the Messiah, the man believes and worships Jesus (9:35-38). The evidence of who Jesus really is overwhelms any objective mind.

Jesus then declares He came into the world that the blind might *see* and to expose those who think they see but are spiritually *blind* (9:39). Some Pharisees overhear this statement and ask Jesus if they are also *blind*. Jesus replies: “*If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains*” (9:41). Those who admit their spiritual blindness receive sight, but those who claim spiritual sight without Christ are blind. Therefore, their *guilt*, or “sin,” *remains*. There is an old saying: “The same sun that melts butter hardens clay.” What brings spiritual sight to some adds to the spiritual blindness of others. It’s all a matter of the heart. How does Jesus express this truth in Matthew 5:8?

Because of his *pure, receptive* heart we see the spiritual sight of this former blind man progressively improve by what he calls Jesus. First, he calls Jesus a *man* (9:11); then he calls him a *prophet* (9:17). Finally, what does he call Jesus in verse 38?



When we have 20/20 spiritual sight, that is what we too will call Jesus.

To improve your spiritual sight: **be faithful, be bold, and be receptive.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 11 . . . Letting Jesus Be Your Shepherd

(John 10:1-42)

NOTES

In the previous two chapters, Jesus has called Himself “*the light of the world*” (8:12 & 9:5). He now calls Himself “*the good shepherd*” (10:11a). Some of the most powerful images in the Bible are of sheep and shepherds because they teach us so much about God’s love and care for us. Probably the best known verse in the Bible is Psalm 23:1a. Write it below:

In the Bible, believers are often called “sheep.” That is not as flattering as you might think because sheep are dumb animals. They get lost easily because they are directionally impaired. When lost, they are not like a homing pigeon; they can’t find their way home. Sheep need a shepherd to lead and guide them. Sheep are also helpless. They can’t defend themselves, so they are easy prey for predators. They need a shepherd to protect them.

We are much like sheep. We do dumb things and often lose our spiritual bearings. We are also spiritually defenseless without a spiritual shepherd. We need a shepherd; that’s why Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd.*” There are at least **three** reasons you should let Jesus be your Shepherd.

He gives life abundantly (10:1-10).

Jesus says: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep*” (10:1-2). There were two kinds of sheep pens, or sheepfolds, in Jesus’ day. First, when a shepherd was in a town at night, he would gather his sheep into the public, community pen to protect them from thieves and wild animals. The pen was guarded by a hired gatekeeper, or shepherd, who was on duty throughout the night. The gatekeeper knew each shepherd and would let them in through the gate but would not allow unknown shepherds or thieves to enter through the gate. They would have to sneak over the wall or hoist the sheep over it if they wanted to steal them.



Jesus is contrasting Himself with false messiahs. Christ came through the gate, which fulfills Old Testament prophecies. For example, what does Isaiah 35:5-6a reveal about the Messiah, or the Christ?

Jesus has miraculously caused the blind to see and the lame to walk as proof He is the true Messiah coming through the gate of Old Testament prophecies. Jesus says anyone who tries to get in any other way *is a thief and a robber* (10:1b). Jesus' miracles authenticate Him as the Christ.

Next, Jesus says: *"To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them"* (10:3-4a). Then, what does Jesus say in the last part of verse four?

Shepherds in the Middle East knew each of their sheep by name and led them, rather than herding them as we do in the west. In verse five, Jesus says sheep will never follow a stranger. This means true believers will not follow false shepherds or teachers, such as the religious crooks and prophets for profit who are so common on television today.

Now, Jesus begins to talk about the second kind of sheep pen and gate. He again says, *"Truly, truly I say to you"* (10:7b). Then, what does He say in John 10:7c?

This second kind of sheep pen was not public and was in the countryside. It was made from rocks and branches and had one opening, through which the shepherd would lead his flock at night. There was no door to close, just an opening across which the shepherd would lie down and sleep throughout the night—literally becoming the *door*. When Jesus says, *"I am the door"* (gate), He is referring to the sheepfold in the countryside.



Jesus also says others who claim to be the Messiah are thieves and robbers who come to steal, kill, and destroy (10:8-10). False prophets don't care about people's spiritual needs; they are only concerned with "fleecing their flock." If we have spiritual discernment, we can spot them on religious television. They are always preaching what people want to hear, spiritualizing selfishness and greed. In contrast, what does Jesus say in John 10:10b?

The word translated *abundantly* (PERISSOS, paris-sos') means super, or exceedingly, abundant. It is the idea of providing more than a plentiful supply.

You should let Jesus be your Shepherd because **He gives life abundantly** and because . . .

He gave His life sacrificially (10:11-21).

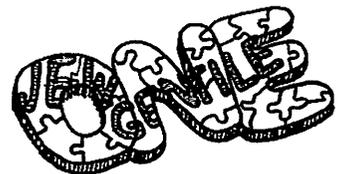
In contrast to the thieves and robbers, Jesus says: “*I am the good shepherd*” (10:11a). Why does Jesus call Himself *the good shepherd*? He tells us in John 10:11b. Write it below:

Three times in verses 12-18 Jesus emphasizes why He is *the good shepherd*. He says: “*I lay down my life for the sheep*” (10:15b) and “*I lay down my life*” (10:17b). He also says: “*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord*” (10:18a).

Good people give their lives for others, and Jesus is the ultimate example of what good people do. In our materialistic, selfish world, we desperately need good people who give their lives for others. Most of us are too selfish and busy just to give someone a listening ear, much less our lives. Good people do things that benefit others. Because God wants us to be good people, what does He command in Galatians 6:10?

Are you a good person? If you are, you will sacrificially do good things for the benefit of others.

Did you know Jesus talks about you in this chapter? He talks about me, too. Look at what Jesus says in verse 16a-b: “*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*” The *other sheep* are non-Jews—Gentiles—and that’s you and me. Jesus didn’t die just for the Jews; He died for you and me also because He is *the good shepherd*. Jesus says Jews and Gentiles will be *one flock* with Him as the *one shepherd* (10:16c). What does Galatians 3:28d say about Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free people, men, and women?



Some of the unbelieving Jews, who hear Jesus call Himself the Good Shepherd who will give His life for His sheep, say Jesus is demon-possessed and insane. Then, they ask why anyone should listen to Him (Jn 10:20). Anyone who doesn’t believe Jesus is the Christ must believe He is a liar or a lunatic. Jesus is either Lord, liar, or lunatic. There are no other choices as to whom you believe Him to be.

You should let Jesus be your Shepherd because **He gives life abundantly, He gave His life sacrificially**, and because . . .

You can live eternally (10:22-42).

In John 7:1-10:21, Jesus is in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurs in early October. About two months pass between 10:21 and 10:22 because it is now *the Feast of Dedication*, which is in December. That's why John says *it was winter* (10:22). This feast is not one of the festivals of the Old Testament but was instituted in 165 B.C. to commemorate Israel's victory over the king of Syria. This is the present-day Festival of Lights called Hanukkah. The event is recorded in the books of Maccabees, which are part of the Apocrypha—the books between the Old and New Testaments—but are not inspired Scriptures.

Jesus is walking in the temple in Solomon's Colonnade (Caw'-len-nade) or "porch" (10:23). The colonnades were a series of tall, stone columns supporting roofed porches that surrounded the temple on all sides, forming long walkways. Solomon's Colonnade was on the east side of the temple.

The Jews gather around Jesus and ask Him to tell them plainly if He is the Christ, or Messiah. Jesus tells them He has already told them, but they did not believe. He says His miracles verify His claim as Messiah. He tells them they don't believe because they're not His sheep. He says His sheep listen to His voice and follow Him (10:25-27). To those who do believe and follow Him, what does Jesus say in John 10:28?

This is Jesus' ironclad guarantee to His followers. Jesus also says His Father who gives us to Him *is greater than all*, and no one can "*snatch*" us "*out of the Father's hand*" (10:29). Notice that we do not hold on to Jesus or the Father; we are held by Them.

In the Old Testament, Noah's ark is a symbol, or type, of Christ because Noah and his family were saved from the Flood by the ark. As the rain begins to fall, imagine God saying to Noah: "Noah, I want you to get some broom sticks, cut them into eight 24-inch pieces, and drive them into the outside of the ark. Drive in one for you and one for Mrs. Noah; then one for each of your sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. Now, Noah when the flood waters come, I want you to get a ladder and each of you take hold of one of those pegs. Noah, if you can hold on until the water goes down, you will be saved." Can't you hear Mrs. Noah saying to Noah, "Honey, pray for me that I can hold on to the end and be saved." Is



that the way it happened? Absolutely not! But that's how some people think of salvation. If they can "hold on until the end," they will be saved.

When the ark was completed, what really happened was the Lord (JEHOVAH) told Noah and His family to *go into the ark* (Gen. 7:1). Then, *the LORD shut him in* (7:16). Of what does Revelation 3:7e inform us about Christ, who is Jehovah Incarnate?

So, just as Noah and his family were secure in the ark, we are secure in Christ. We don't hold on to Christ; we are **in** Christ, as Noah was in the ark. The phrase *in Christ* occurs more than ninety times in the New Testament. One of the greatest is Romans 8:1. Write it below:

Noah may have slipped and fallen **in** the ark, but he never fell **out**. Likewise, we may stumble and fall *in Christ*. However, we will never fall out of salvation because no one can *snatch us out of God's hand*.



Finally, Jesus says: "*I and the Father are one*" (10:30). This angers the Jews, and they pick up rocks to stone Him. Jesus asks them for which of His miracles they are stoning Him. They say, "*It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God*" (10:31-33).

Then, Jesus points out that in the Old Testament, God's representatives were sometimes called *gods*, such as the judicial judges of Israel who represented God in meting out justice (Psa. 82:6). God said Moses would be *like God* to Pharaoh (Ex 7:1). What very important statement does Jesus then make in John 10:35b?

This means *Scripture* cannot be set aside or proven false. In this statement Jesus clearly points out the inerrancy of the Bible. Therefore, it would be inconsistent for these Jews to claim the Bible as their source of authority and then to disagree with something it says. Since the Old Testament refers to humans as being like *gods*, the Jews would be breaking Scripture if they stone Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus also asks how it is blasphemous for Him to call Himself God when He is verifying His claims as Messiah with miracles. Jesus then

says: “*but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand* (10:38a-c). Next, what does Jesus say in John 10:38d?

The Jews try again to arrest Jesus, but He escapes. He goes back across Jordan where John the Baptist had been baptizing (10:40). John, though almost the same age as Jesus (Lk 1:39-56), who is about thirty-three, is now dead. King Herod Antipas imprisoned John for preaching that his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, was against God’s Law. Herod was afraid to execute John the Baptist because the Jews believed he was a prophet (Mt 14:3-5). However, on Herod’s birthday, Salome (the daughter of Herodias by Philip) dances for Herod. She pleases him so much he promises to give her anything she wants (Mt 14:3-7). Because of a plot with her mother, Herodias, for what does she ask (Matthew 14:8b)?

Even after his ruthless murder, John the Baptist’s witness continues to bear fruit, with many believing in Jesus (Jn 10:41-42). Jesus does not return to Jerusalem until the day we call “Palm Sunday,” the Sunday before His crucifixion.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He’s calling His sheep right now. Can you hear His voice? He may be calling you into the fold. His voice may be calling you back into the fold because you temporarily went astray. For whatever reason you hear His voice, you need to remember what warning in Hebrews 4:7c?

You should let Jesus be your Shepherd because **He gives life abundantly, He gave His life sacrificially, and you can live eternally.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 12 . . . Experiencing Resurrection Power (John 11:1-57)

NOTES

All of us have things in our lives we need supernatural power to change. It could be an attitude, a habit, bitterness, or something else. Thus far, Jesus has revealed Himself as Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the Good Shepherd. Now, He reveals Himself as the Resurrection, demonstrating even more awesome power. Experiencing Jesus' resurrection power has **three** requirements, beginning with . . .

Anticipate things you can't understand (11:1-16).



As this chapter opens, Jesus' dear friend Lazarus is very ill. He is the brother of Mary and Martha and lives in Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem (11:1 & 18). It appears whenever Jesus visited Jerusalem He often spent the night in their home. Mary and Martha send Jesus a message about Lazarus. What do they say (John 11:3b)?

When Jesus receives this news, He is on the east side of Jordan, about a day's journey (twenty miles) from Bethany (10:40). Because Mary and Martha know Jesus loves them deeply, they expect Him to come immediately. However, Jesus waits *two days* (11:6), and Lazarus dies before He arrives. We need to remember this incident when God doesn't immediately answer our desperate prayers as we desire. Maybe a loved one is suffering from a fatal disease. Maybe we are experiencing financial reverses or marriage problems. We pray for God to take care of the problem, but the loved one dies, the finances don't improve, or the divorce becomes final. Why doesn't God answer our prayer? Does He not love us like we thought? At these times, we need to remember what words of Jesus found in John 13:7?

God wants us to know how much Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters. Jesus didn't immediately respond to Mary and Martha's request—not because He didn't love them but because He had a plan they would not understand until later. Don't let your confidence in God's love be shaken when He fails to answer your prayers the way you expect. Sometimes God allows things to happen we just can't understand at the time.

However, God has a divine purpose for every problem He allows. Therefore, Jesus says of Lazarus' illness: "*It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it*" (11:4b). Then, after two days Jesus tells His disciples they are going back to Judea. The disciples can't understand why Jesus wants to go since some Jews there want to stone Him. In response, what does Jesus say in 11:11b?

The disciples don't understand; they think if Lazarus is sleeping, he will get better. Therefore, Jesus tells them plainly: "*Lazarus has died*" (11:14b). In the Bible, sleep is often a euphemism for death. If someone is sleeping, they will eventually what? Wake up! For a believer, death is falling asleep in one place and waking up in another. Led by Thomas, the disciples finally decide to go with Jesus, even if it costs them their lives (11:16).

To experience **resurrection power**, **anticipate things you can't understand** and . . .

Articulate your complaints to God (11:17-37).

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, many people are there to comfort Mary and Martha. When Martha hears Jesus is approaching, she goes out to meet Him. What does she say to Jesus (11:21)?



This means she believes if Jesus had been there, He could have healed Lazarus. However, Martha doesn't believe Jesus can raise the dead (11:39). Jesus says to Martha, "*Your brother will rise again,*" to which Martha responds, "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day*" (11:23-24). Knowing Martha doesn't fully understand who He is, what does Jesus say in John 11:25?

In other words, Jesus says, "Martha, the resurrection is not something for which you have to wait; the Resurrection is standing in front of you. I AM the Resurrection." Jesus asks her if she believes those who believe in Him will never die. Martha says she believes He is *the Christ, the Son of God*, but she still has no hint He is going to resurrect her brother (11:26-27).

Martha goes and tells her sister Mary, *"The Teacher is here"* (11:28). Mary then goes out to meet Jesus, and she also says: *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"* (11:32). In other words, "Lord, where were You?" Have you ever felt like saying, "Lord, where were You when my world was falling apart?"

It is important to notice the Lord doesn't rebuke Martha or Mary for being honest about their feelings. God wants us to be honest and tell Him how we really feel. If you are mad at God, tell Him; He knows anyway. We need to be reverent, but we also should be honest about our feelings. The prophet Habakkuk was honest. What does he pray in Habakkuk 1:2a?

God wants us to pour out our hearts to Him, even if we are disappointed or upset with Him. He knows we are human and sometimes just don't understand.

After Jesus sees Mary and the others with her are still weeping because they don't understand the truth about Him, we come to the shortest verse in the Bible (Jn 11:35). Write it below:

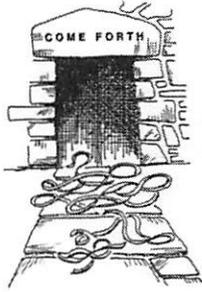
Why? Because Lazarus was dead? Some thought so (11:36). But that wasn't the reason Jesus wept; Jesus knows He will soon raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus wept because even His closest friends didn't believe in His power.

Experiencing resurrection power requires you anticipate things you can't understand, articulate your complaints to God, and . . .

Concentrate on the power of Christ (11:38-57).

Jesus comes to the tomb where Lazarus is buried. It is a cave with a stone lying against the entrance (11:38). Standing by the tomb, Jesus tells the mourners to remove the stone. Martha protests, saying there will be a bad odor because he has been dead four days (11:39). This means Lazarus died the day the messenger left to contact Jesus. It took a day to get word to Jesus. Jesus waited two days before heading to Bethany, and late on the fourth day He arrived in Bethany.

However, Jesus says: *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* (11:40). Jesus allowed Lazarus to die so everyone could *see the glory of God*. For this miracle to occur, Martha must have enough faith to allow the stone to be removed from the tomb's entrance.



They move the stone, and after praying to His Father, Jesus calls out with a loud voice, “*Lazarus, come out!*” (11:43b). Guess what happened? Lazarus came out! If Jesus had not called Lazarus by name, all the dead would have come out of their graves. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16a-b, what will happen some day, maybe soon?

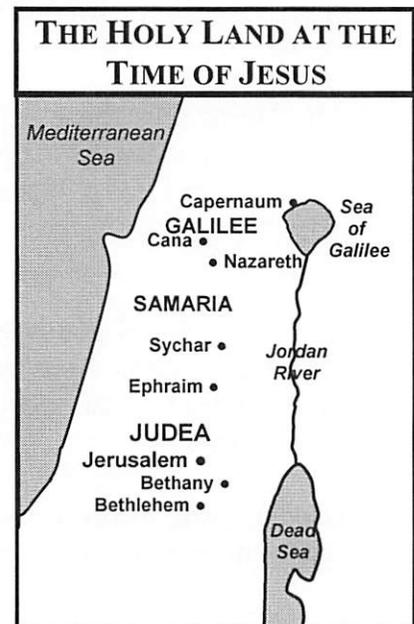
At this event, what will our Lord say? I believe He will say, “*Come out,*” and every dead believer will rise from the dead.

When Lazarus comes out of the tomb, Jesus tells those watching to take off his grave clothes and let him go (11:44). Many of the mourners believe in Jesus, but some of the Jews who witnessed this miracle go to the Pharisees and tell them what Jesus has done. They call a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court (11:45-52). What is the result of this meeting (11:53)?

They also put out a warrant for Jesus’ arrest (11:57). Therefore, Jesus no longer moves about publicly among the Jews but withdraws to Ephraim, a village north of Jerusalem on the edge of the wilderness, or desert (see map). Jesus stays there for a time with His disciples (11:54).

You can experience the same resurrection power that raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus has the power to forgive your sin and empower you to live for Him. He can empower you to conquer your temper, your finances, your schedule, or whatever. However, you must have what desire expressed by Paul in Philippians 3:10a?

To experience Jesus’ resurrection power, **anticipate things you can’t understand, articulate your complaints to God, and concentrate on the power of Christ.**



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 13 . . . Why People Follow Jesus (John 12:1-50)

NOTES

We are now in the last week of Jesus' life. Almost half the book of John describes the last week of Jesus' life. As chapter twelve begins, it is less than a week until Jesus will be crucified. In this chapter we discover several reasons people follow Jesus. First is . . .

Out of passion (12:1-4)

It is now late March or early April, only a few weeks since Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It is *six days before the Passover* (12:1), so it is Saturday since Passover begins Friday evening at sundown. Jesus is again in Bethany, only two miles east of Jerusalem, to attend a dinner given in His honor. According to the other gospels, He is in the home of Simon the Leper, who also lives in Bethany (Mt. 26:6-13). Martha is serving the food, while Lazarus and the others are reclining at the table and eating with Jesus. Ancient Middle Eastern people did not sit to eat but reclined on couches with their heads near the table. As they eat, Mary takes some expensive perfume. What does she do with it (John 12:3b)?

Mary also anoints His head (Mt 26:7). The perfume she used was called *nard*, or "spikenard." It was often purchased as an investment, as gold is today. This perfume could have represented Mary's life savings. Through this act, Mary is showing her devotion to Jesus. She followed Jesus **out of passion** for God, but some follow Him . . .

To gain position (12:5-11)

According to the other gospels, all the disciples are offended (Mt 26:8 & Mk 14:4), but only John tells us that Judas Iscariot verbalizes their objection. He asks: "*Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?*" (12:5). This would be approximately a year's salary. John parenthetically tells us Judas did not say this *because he cared about the poor* (12:6a). Then, what do we discover about Judas (12:6b)?



Before Judas betrayed Christ, he was obviously very trusted among the disciples because he was elected the treasurer and carried the moneybag. He apparently has been stealing from the disciples' treasury all along.

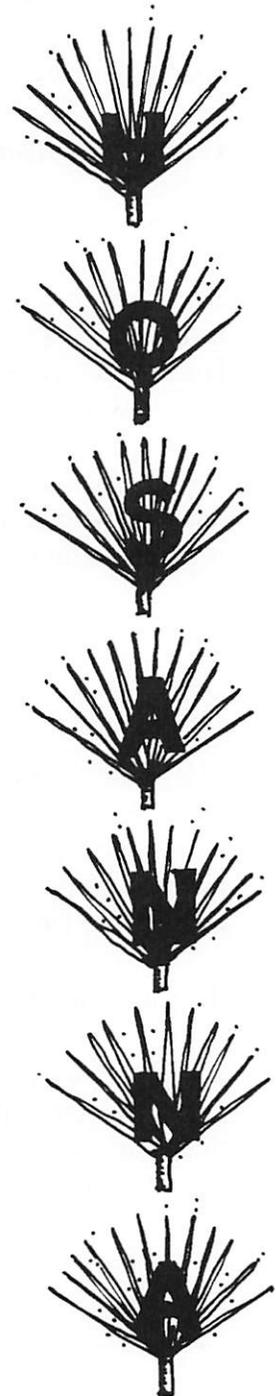
Jesus replies to Judas: "*Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial*" (12:7). Mary understood Jesus' teaching and knew He was about to die. Then Jesus says to Judas: "*For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me*" (12:8). He is explaining there will be many opportunities in the future to help the poor, but they have only a brief time to honor Him. Jesus is also probably alluding to Deuteronomy 15:11: *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'* However, at this point the disciples are only interested in **position**. What does Mark 9:34b tell us about them?

Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead convinces many Jews to put their faith in Jesus. As a result, *the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well* (Jn 12:10). They were already making plans to kill Jesus (11:53), but now they add Lazarus to their "hit list" because he is living proof of Jesus' indisputable, miraculous power. In Jesus' day and today also, people follow Him **out of passion, to gain position**, and some . . .

To obtain power (12:12-19)

The next day, Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem, which is His triumphal entry. Today we celebrate this event as Palm Sunday. A great crowd takes palm branches and goes out to meet Jesus (12:12-13a). They greet Him shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" (12:13b). The word *Hosanna* is Hebrew and means "Save now!" They think their conquering *king* has finally arrived to liberate them from Roman domination, because they heard about Him raising Lazarus from the dead (12:17-18).

Like many people today, they were following Jesus for the wrong reasons. They wanted a national leader who would restore Israel to her former glory. Many people today are drawn to Jesus because of the "prosperity gospel" that spiritualizes greed and selfishness. They don't want to hear what words of Jesus in Matthew 10:38?



Your cross is whatever makes it difficult for you to follow Jesus. It could be a position, a person, or a passion. But if you won't follow Jesus when it's tough, He says you are *not worthy* of Him.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (12:14), which fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 that John quotes in verse 15: "*Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!*" By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a horse, Jesus is identifying Himself as a new kind of king or conqueror. The donkey was an animal used by men of peace, whereas kings and conquerors rode horses. How does Romans 5:1b describe the peace made possible by Christ's coming?

This means there is no more hostility between us and God, no sin blocking our relationship with Him. However, many people don't follow Jesus for *peace with God* or **out of passion**; they follow Him to **gain position**, to **obtain power**, and

To investigate a phenomenon (12:20-36)

Next, some Greeks come to Philip and say, "*Sir, we wish to see Jesus*" (12:21). They are just curious to see the man who raised Lazarus from the dead. Unsure about what to do, Philip goes to Andrew, and together they go to Jesus with the request.

Knowing the Greeks are just curiosity seekers, Jesus ignores the request, saying: "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*" (12:23b). His *hour has come* because His crucifixion is only four days away. The phrase *Son of Man* refers to His humanity and imminent suffering on the cross. Jesus then compares His body to a *grain of wheat* sown in the ground, which dies so it may produce *much fruit* (12:24). What does Jesus say in verse 25?

This means a selfish person will lose his life, but someone who hates a life of selfish pleasures and purposes will find his life. Many people lose their lives in money, career, fame, etc.

Next, Jesus says: "*If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him*" (12:26). The crowds were following Jesus for the wrong reasons. Jesus is making this point: **don't use Me; follow Me.**



Jesus then prays: “*Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour*” (12:27). How does Jesus end this prayer in verse 28a?

This is how we should end our prayers when we have conflicting emotions about a problem.

After His prayer there came a thunderous voice from heaven, saying: “*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again*” (12:28b-29). In other words, God will glorify His name through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the third time in the Gospels the Father’s audible voice is heard from heaven. On what other two occasions does God the Father speak from heaven concerning Jesus (Matthew 3:17 & 17:5)?

Next, Jesus says: “*Now is the judgment of this world*” (12:31a). The word *world* refers to the evil, satanic world system. Referring to His death, Jesus says, “*now will the ruler of this world be cast out*” (12:31b). How does Jesus explain the casting out of Satan in the next verse (12:32)?

Through the cross Jesus would *draw all people* to Himself. Thus, Satan’s dominating influence would be *cast out*. As a result of Christ’s sacrifice, *all* races and classes of people will be drawn to Him.

Jesus’ prediction of His death puzzles His listeners because they don’t understand how Jesus can be the Messiah and die since the Messiah is to remain *forever* (12:34). Rather than debating how He fulfils prophecy, Jesus encourages them to *believe in the light* (12:35-36). Then, Jesus goes away and hides Himself from them.

People follow Jesus **out of passion, to gain position, to obtain power, to investigate a phenomenon, and . . .**

Some follow Him privately (12:37-50).

The key word in this section is *believe*, which is used eight times. John tells us: *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him* (12:37). Even after He raised Lazarus, many still refused to believe Jesus was the Son of God. However, there were many *of the authorities*, or “chief rulers,” who believed in Him (12:42) but would not

openly confess their faith. Why, according to John 12:43?

Like them, many people today will not take a stand for Jesus Christ because they fear rejection or ridicule. Revelation 21:8 reveals two groups of people at the head of God's list of horrible sinners who will have their place in the lake of fire, or hell. Who are they?

God considers the worst of sinners to be those who know who Jesus is but are too *cowardly* to take a stand for Him.

In one final public appearance Jesus now appeals to the masses to believe He is God come to earth in flesh and blood. He says: "*And whoever sees me sees him who sent me*" (12:45). Then, Jesus says, "*The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge*" (12:48a). What does Jesus say next in 12:48b?

This means we are going to be judged by the words of Jesus contained in the Bible. Jesus explains why: "*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak*" (12:49). This means when we reject Jesus' words we reject God.

Jesus further explains He doesn't speak on His own but on the authority of the Father who tells Him what to say (12:49-50). In this chapter, Jesus makes it clear people will be judged by how they respond to what the Bible, God's eternal Word in written form, says. How does Jesus emphasize this fact in Luke 21:33?

People follow Jesus **to gain position, to obtain power, to investigate a phenomenon, and some follow Him privately.** However, we should all be like Mary and follow Jesus for the right reason—**out of passion** for God.

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 14 . . . How To Please Jesus (John 13:1-38)

NOTES

Now we come to the night before Jesus is crucified. John tells us far more about what Jesus said at the Last Supper than any of the other gospel writers. Chapters 13-17 tell us what Jesus said and did the night before His crucifixion, while chapter eighteen records His arrest and trials the same night. The first 12 chapters of John cover three years, and the next six chapters (13-18) cover one night—the night before His crucifixion. In John thirteen we find **four** things we must do to **please Jesus**.

1. Accept His cleansing (13:1-11).

It is just *before the Feast of the Passover* (13:1a). Though His disciples don't realize it, Jesus is about to transform the Passover meal into what we call the "Lord's Supper." Jesus knows it is almost time for Him *to depart out of this world to the Father* (13:1b). Therefore, He devotes His last evening to teaching His disciples and preparing them for His death. The disciples still don't have a clue about the significance of the evening, and continue to argue about a recurring topic. What is it, according to Luke 22:24?

In spite of their selfish power-seeking, Jesus *loved them to the end* (Jn 13:1c). As the disciples are eating and arguing about who would be *greatest* in His kingdom, over in the corner near the door are an untouched jar of water and empty wash basin. In biblical times people walked on dry, dusty roads wearing sandals. When guests entered a home, common courtesy was for a household servant to wash their feet.

Therefore, Jesus gets up from the meal, goes over to the corner, and takes off His outer garment. He wraps a towel around His waist like an apron and pours water into the basin (13:4-5a). What does He do next (13:5b)?



The disciples are astonished that their master is serving as a foot washer. The Creator of the universe is washing dirty feet! Jesus is doing for them what they are too proud and selfish to do for Him and each other. All the disciples allow Jesus to wash their feet until He comes to Peter. Peter tells

Him, “*You shall never wash my feet*” (13:8a). How does Jesus respond (13:8b)?

Washing of feet symbolizes the need for cleansing. Unless we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, we cannot have a home in heaven. Peter seems to understand and says, “*Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!*” (13:9).



Right now, Jesus is waiting with basin and towel in hand to cleanse your life and wash away all your sins. Jesus says to you and me, just as He said to Peter, “*If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.*” It’s like the old hymn says, “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” But how does Jesus wash away our sins? How does 1 John 1:9 answer that question?

As Christians, we have all been cleansed by faith in Jesus’ death on the cross, but we are also in need of continual cleansing from sins we still commit.

When Peter asks Jesus to wash him all over, Jesus answers: “*The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you*” (13:10). Later in the meal, how does Jesus explain how they have been cleansed (John 15:3)?

Only Judas was not clean, because he had not accepted the words of Jesus. The acceptance of Jesus’ words makes us spiritually clean. When we trust in His words, we are saved forever. When we sin after that, we don’t need to be saved again; we just need to ask forgiveness of that particular sin (Mt 6:12, 14-15), like getting our feet washed, so we can stay in fellowship with, or close to, Jesus.

To please Jesus, **accept His cleansing** and . . .

2. Attend to others (13:12-17).

When Jesus finishes washing the disciples’ feet, He returns to His place at the table and asks if they understand what He has just done. Then, Jesus tells them: “*For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*”¹⁶ *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater*

than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (13:15-16). Jesus is not teaching that we must literally wash each other’s feet, but we must be willing to serve one another in love.

Modern day foot-washing, or service to others, can take many forms, such as providing a meal, painting a house, providing childcare, mowing a lawn, lending a compassionate ear, taking time to encourage, etc. In verse 17, how does Jesus describe the result of doing something to attend to the needs of others?



You will not be *blessed*, or happy, if you just know or think about these things, but “*if you do them*” (emphasis mine). When Jesus washed His disciples’ dirty feet, He gave dignity to serving others and showed us how to be like Him. There are two kinds of people in this world: “givers” and “takers.” Guess which group is *blessed*? The givers!

To please Jesus, **accept His cleansing, attend to others, and . . .**

3. Avoid hypocrisy (13:18-30).

Finally, Jesus tells His disciples the events of this meal fulfill prophecy about the Messiah. Then, quoting Psalm 41:9, what does Jesus say in verse 18d?

This expression pictures a horse with a swift deadly kick. Knowing Judas would betray Him, Jesus chose Judas as a disciple to fulfill the prophecies of betrayal. Yet, Judas was not programmed, manipulated, or tricked by God. He gave in to his own wicked desires of greed and ambition. God doesn’t tempt anyone to sin (Jas. 1:13-14).

Jesus says, “*I am telling you this now, before it takes place*” (Jn 13:19a). Jesus is telling them in advance so they won’t be surprised when Judas betrays Him. Then, what does Jesus say in John 13:19b?

The word *he* is not in the Greek text, so Jesus is referring to Himself as the great *I AM*, the divine name for God (Ex 3:13-14). The disciples may have

thought having a traitor in their midst would destroy their creditability and the plans the Lord has for them. But in spite of Judas, they will soon be Jesus' representatives in a sinful world. Therefore, Jesus prepares them for the Great Commission He will later give by saying: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me*" (13:20). This statement prepares the disciples for something we know, but they don't at this time. What does Jesus tell them in John 13:21c?

When Jesus tells His disciples He is going to be betrayed, He is *troubled in his spirit* (13:21). Jesus loves Judas, and the psalm Jesus quotes in verse 18 is a psalm of David lamenting the defection of a friend. If you have ever been betrayed by someone you love, Jesus understands how you feel.

According to Matthew, after hearing there is a traitor in their midst, each disciple begins to ask Jesus, "*Is it I, Lord?*" (Mt 26:22). However, what does Judas ask (Matthew 26:25b)?

Judas never calls Jesus *Lord* because he is not a true believer and never was. Judas is reclining next to Jesus, and apparently the disciples don't hear Jesus tell Judas, "*You have said so*" (Mt 26:25c). The disciple *whom Jesus loved*, John, is reclining on the other side of Jesus. Peter motions for him to ask Jesus who the betrayer is, and John whispers to Jesus, asking Him who it is. Jesus tells John it is the one to whom He is about to give a piece of bread that He dips, which is an act of friendship. It is Judas (Jn 13:23-26)! After Judas *had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him* (13:27), which means Satan took control of him. Therefore, what does Jesus tell him in verse 27c?

None of the disciples understand what Jesus is saying (13:28). Judas immediately leaves to betray Jesus. Like Judas Iscariot, we can conceal our hypocrisy from fellow believers but not from the Lord (1 Sam. 16:7c).

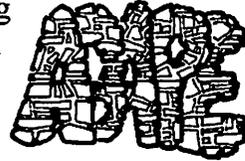
To please Jesus, we must **accept His cleansing, attend to others, avoid hypocrisy, and . . .**

4. AGAPE others (13:31-38).

After Judas leaves the room, Jesus looks beyond the crucifixion to His resurrection and says: "*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*"³² *If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself,*

and glorify him at once" (13:31-32). Then, Jesus tells His disciples He is only going to be with them a little longer and where He is going they "cannot come" (13:33). Next, He says: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (13:34). The word translated *love* is AGAPE, which means sacrificial love. This is a command for a new degree of *love*—the *love* true followers possess. What does John tell us in 1 John 4:8?

Again, the word translated *love* is AGAPE. AGAPE is not something we manufacture or produce within ourselves. It is the love God pours into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Continuing to use the word AGAPE, Jesus says: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35a). How, according to Jesus in John 13:35b?



When Jesus makes this statement, He is giving the world the right to judge us by our love (AGAPE). The doctrines we believe or the churches we attend, as important as those are, do not convince the world we are followers of Jesus. We convince them if we AGAPE one another.

Simon Peter asks the Lord where He is going, and Jesus tells him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward" (13:36b). Peter then wants to know why he can't follow and says he will lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus asks Peter, "Will you lay down your life for me?" (13:38b). Then, what does Jesus tell him in 13:38d?

Not only did Jesus know Judas' heart but Peter's as well. Jesus knows your weaknesses, as He did Peter's, and loves you anyway. Because Jesus loves you, when you fail Him, and you will, He will forgive and restore you, as He did Peter.

To please Jesus, **accept His cleansing, attend to others, avoid hypocrisy, and AGAPE others.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 15 . . . Making Fear Disappear (John 14:1-31)

NOTES

It is the night before Jesus' crucifixion. In chapter thirteen, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples and transformed it into the Lord's Supper. During the supper He set an example of service by washing His disciples' feet. As the disciples listen to Jesus predict His betrayal, Peter's denial, and His going away, they are terrified. When Jesus sees the fear in their faces, He tells them what we read in chapter fourteen. In this chapter we discover the requirements for **making fear disappear** . . .

Remember the Lord's promise (14:1-6).

Life is really just a series of problems, or storms, some of which can be terrifying. That's why Job 5:7 gives us what reminder?

Job is referring to a roaring fire in which *sparks fly upward*. When terrifying trouble inevitably comes, we need to remember what Jesus says to His disciples: "*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me*" (Jn 14:1). Here is the first step in **making fear disappear**. No matter how frightened we are, our faith in God and Jesus will calm our fears. How does Psalm 125:1 describe us when we trust the Lord?

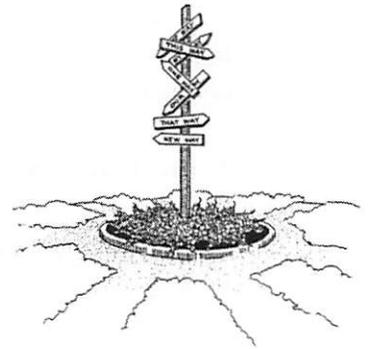
Next, Jesus says: "*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*" (Jn 14:2). The word "mansions" in the KJV has given some the idea that in heaven we will have individual homes. However, the word translated *rooms*, or "mansions" (MONĒ, mon-ay'), is the word from which we get our word "manor." Some nursing homes, such as "Lake Country Manor," use that word.

The word refers to a house with many rooms. In Jesus' day when a son married, the father would just add a room or wing onto the house. When another son married, another room or wing would be added. Eventually, the original dwelling would be a set of dwellings, or rooms, that enclosed a patio in the middle. All the family lived around the patio in fellowship and love. So, Jesus is not referring to individual houses, or mansions, but a complete manor, where all the rooms are attached to the Father's house.

Our fears can be greatly calmed when we remember Jesus is preparing an eternal place for us in His Father's house. For further reassurance, Jesus says: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also"* (14:3). The phrase *will come again* refers to His second coming.

Jesus then tells the disciples they know where He is going. Thomas says: *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* (14:5). In other words, we don't know where the Father's house is, so how can we know how to get there. How does Jesus answer in John 14:6?

This statement makes it clear not all religions lead to God; only one does. Jesus is not **a** way; He is **the** way—the one and only way to God. During Vacation Bible School, I teach our children a lesson using road signs. One of the signs is the "One Way" sign. The verse I use with the "One Way" sign is Proverbs 16:25. Write it below:



Jesus is also *the truth*, which means the source of all reliable knowledge about God. And, Jesus is *the life*, which means He gives eternal life to all who trust in Him as Lord and Savior. The **only** way to God is through Jesus Christ.

To make fear disappear, **remember the Lord's promise** and . . .

Remember the Lord's purpose (14:7-14).

Now, Jesus reaffirms His deity by saying: *"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him"* (14:7). This means Jesus is the visible manifestation of God the Father. How does Colossians 1:15a further express this fact?

Philip doesn't understand Jesus when He says He and the Father are one. So, he says: *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"* (14:8b). This request must have disappointed Jesus because Philip has been with Him for three years. Therefore, Jesus says to Philip: *"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* (14:9). If you ever wonder what God is like, just look at Jesus and you will see.

In the midst of frightening circumstances, we often want more assurance. We ask God to do this or that, and it will be *enough* to reassure us. However, we need to remember this: **God is not in the business of explaining but of sustaining.** That's why Proverbs 3:5 tells us: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* Then, what do we read in the next verse (Proverbs 3:6)?

Jesus tells His disciples they will do *greater works* than He (Jn 14:12). Jesus wants them to know He is not disbanding their group, but He is expecting them to continue His work in a greater way. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, they did just that. For example, there were more converts as a result of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost than at any one time during Jesus' ministry. Also, Jesus never made converts outside of the Holy Land, but by the time the last disciple (John) died, the Gospel had spread all over the Roman Empire.

Finally, Jesus says: *"If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it"* (14:14). This means the ability to do even greater things would originate in prayer. The promise to do *anything* we ask in His name doesn't mean to just end our prayers "in Jesus' name" or that His name can be used like Aladdin's lamp. Every Bible promise has a premise. The premise of this promise is whatever we ask must be consistent with Jesus' name or character. How does 1 John 5:14 explain this principle?



To make fear disappear, **remember the Lord's promise, the Lord's purpose,** and . . .

Remember the Lord's Paraclete (14:15-31).

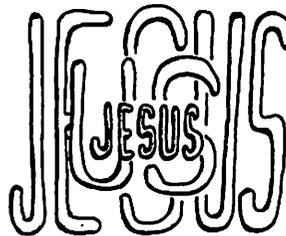
Jesus says if we truly love Him, we will *keep His commandments* (14:15). To help us obey Him, Jesus says: *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you"* (14:16-17). The word translated *Helper*, or "Comforter" (PARAKLĒTOS, para-klay'-tos), means called to one's side or aid. The Holy Spirit is our *Helper*, or Paraclete (Para-clete), which is one of His Greek names. This means He is always present in our times of need because He is **in** all true believers (Rom. 8:9b).

We all think it would be nice if Jesus could be with us visibly or physically during the frightening times of life. However, if He were, He would not be able to be everywhere at once. When Jesus was in human form, He was only able to be in one place at a time. Now, in the person of the Holy Spirit, He is everywhere at once, even though we can't see Him. Therefore, what does Jesus promise in John 14:18?

Just as physical babies need parents, we need a spiritual parent. Next, Jesus tells His disciples the world won't see Him anymore, but the disciples will (14:19a), referring to seeing Him after His resurrection. He also tells them they will know He is in His Father and the Father in Him, and *"I in you,"* referring to the coming indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Again, He reminds them whoever keeps His commandments is the one who loves Him (14:19b-21).

Judas (not Iscariot) asks Him: "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (14:22). Jesus again says if we love Him, we will obey His Word and His *"Father will love"* us. Then, what does Jesus say in 14:23c?

In the person of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, Jesus makes His home in the hearts of true believers who obey His Word. One of the most comforting things during the terrifying times of life is that Jesus is not just **with** us, but **in** us in the person of the Holy Spirit.



Jesus tells His disciples the Holy Spirit will teach them all things they need to know and remind them of His teachings (14:26). Then, Jesus says: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid"* (14:27). The word translated *peace* (EIRĒNĒ, i-ray'-nay) refers not to an absence of conflict or problems but to a calmness based on our confidence in God. It is a peace based not on circumstances but on Christ. This peace is a "supernatural tranquilizer" that passes all understanding (Philip. 4:7). This peace is the third component of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

In Romans 15:13a, Paul prays a beautiful, insightful prayer for believers: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.* What will be the results of the answer to that prayer (Romans 15:13b)?

What a wonderful prayer to pray for people facing a terrifying problem! God will always answer it because His will never contradicts His Word.

Jesus says the *“ruler of this world is coming”* but *has no claim* on Him (Jn 14:30). Then, Jesus says: *“but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father”* (14:31). In other words, Jesus is going to the cross because it is God’s will, not because Satan has any power over Him. Next, Jesus says, *“Rise, let us go from here.”* They leave the Upper Room and begin walking across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane where He will soon be betrayed. Jesus’ words in this passage are really an amplification of what promise in Isaiah 26:3?

As the Prince of Peace, Jesus deserves not only our obedience but also our trust. We must give Him both if we are to make fear disappear. At fearful times we need to remember the words of the old hymn: *“I’ve anchored my soul in the haven of rest, I’ll sail the wide seas no more; The tempest may sweep o’er the wild stormy deep, In Jesus I’m safe evermore”* (Henry L. Gilmour).

To make fear disappear, **remember the Lord’s promise, the Lord’s purpose, and the Lord’s Paraclete.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 16 . . . How To Be Best Friends with Jesus (John 15:1-17)

NOTES

As already mentioned, chapters 13-18 cover the events of one night, the night before Jesus' crucifixion. In chapter 13, Jesus transformed the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper. During the supper He predicted His betrayal, Peter's denial, and told His disciples He was going away. Then, in chapter 14, to calm their troubled hearts He told them He is going to prepare a place for them and He will send the Holy Spirit. Finally, they leave the Upper Room, and as they walk out of Jerusalem, heading to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus teaches them what we read in chapters 15 & 16 (Jn 18:1). In this passage, we discover **how to be best friends with Jesus**.

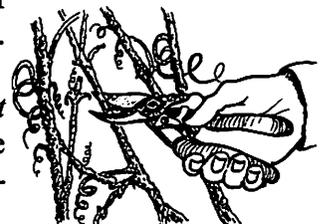
Abide in Him (15:1-6).

Now that He is about to leave, Jesus knows His disciples need a better understanding of their relationship with Him, as well as what He expects of them. So, He uses an analogy to explain their future relationship with Him and the Father. What does Jesus tell them in John 15:1a?

In this analogy Christ is the "trunk" and all who claim to be His followers are the *branches* (15:5). Jesus also says: "*my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away*" (15:1b-2a). Some branches, like Judas Iscariot, only appear to be connected to the Vine. They go to church, use Christian jargon, and may even be elected treasurer, as Judas was, but they are not true believers. How does Jesus tell us we can recognize true branches, or believers, in Matthew 7:20?

If we are truly connected to the Vine, spiritual fruit will be evident in our lives. But what is spiritual fruit? It is the fruit of the Spirit, which is a word picture of Jesus Christ (Gal. 5:22-23a). So, if we are truly connected to the Vine, Jesus, the nine components of the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in our lives. Fruit also refers to new converts. When the fruit of the Spirit is being produced in our lives, we will attract lost people to Jesus.

Referring to true believers, Jesus says: "*Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit*" (15:2b). Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches, and God the Father is our spiritual Pruner. Our Divine Pruner uses a two-step process to prune us . . .





Step 1: Precepts. God's **precepts** are contained in the Bible. They reveal what needs to be pruned so more fruit can be produced in our lives. God's Word is powerful, alive, and *sharper than any two-edged sword* (Heb. 4:12a-b). According to the last phrase of Hebrews 4:12, what does God's Word do?

The Word of God spotlights sin in our lives and then works to prune us as we read, study, or listen to the Bible being taught or preached. This is the primary way God prunes us and is also the least painful part of the pruning process. However, if this doesn't work, God kicks in with . . .



Step 2: Problems. When reading or hearing the Bible doesn't do the trick, God begins to prune us with problems or trials. The more pruning required, the more painful the problems. How does David express the result of this type of pruning in Psalm 119:67?

Jesus says: "*Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you*" (Jn 15:3). Jesus is assuring His disciples they are *already* . . . *clean*, or saved, but will need continual pruning to produce the fruit of the Spirit and to win the lost.

The branch, the believer, cannot produce fruit "*unless it abides in the vine*" (15:4). The word *abides* means to live in intimate union with Jesus. It is also present tense, which means continuous action. Abiding in Christ is a commitment we must make every day. If we do, Jesus says we will bear *much fruit*, but apart from Him we *can do nothing*, which means we cannot produce any spiritual fruit nor do anything of spiritual significance without Him (15:5).

Jesus continues: "*If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned*" (15:6). Those who do not *abide* in Jesus may be professing Christians, but like Judas, they are not genuinely saved. These are not true believers because this would contradict what words of Jesus in John 6:37? (See also Jn 5:24; 10:28-29.)

To be best friends with Jesus, **abide in Him** and . . .

Obey Him (15:7-11).

Next, Jesus gives us a tremendous promise if we *abide* in Him and His *words abide* in us (15:7a). What is that promise (15:7b)?

When Jesus' *words abide* in us, we take on His character and pray as He would. This means our prayers must always be unselfish (Jas. 4:3). When we are abiding believers, the "*Father is glorified*" through the answers to our prayers. We will also *bear much fruit*, thus proving ourselves to be true *disciples* of Jesus (15:8). Jesus then explains how much He loves us: "*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you*" (15:9a-b). Since Jesus loves us as the Father loves Him, we are loved to the highest possible degree. Then, Jesus says: "*Abide in my love*" (15:9c). We do this by keeping His commandments, just as Christ obeys the Father's commandments and abides in His love (15:10). This doesn't mean if we violate a commandment God stops loving us (Rom. 5:8). It means when we *keep* His commandments, we *abide* in His loving blessings. Jesus tells us *these things* so we can experience one of these blessings. What is it (15:11)?

Nothing can match the *joy* we experience when we obey Christ's commands and, therefore, *abide* in the blessings of His love (Psa. 16:8-9).

To be best friends with Jesus, ***abide in Him, obey Him, and . . .***

Love like Him (15:12-17).



Jesus expresses it like this: "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*"¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*" (15:12-13). We will probably never be asked to lay down our lives for others, but we can show our love by living for others. This means we take time out of our busy lives to listen to, encourage, write, call, or visit others. If we love as Jesus commands, what does He say about us in verse 14?

This is because He wants us to obey Him out of love—not duty, obligation, or fear. Jesus wants us to come to Bible study and worship services because we love Him. He wants us to give our tithes and offerings because we love Him. He wants us to live for others because we love Him. Jesus explains: "*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know*

what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (15:15). A servant (DOULOS, doo'-los), literally “slave,” does what he or she is told without any explanation. However, a master explains his plans and purposes to his friends.

Jesus says: “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you” (15:16a-b). What did Jesus choose and appoint us to do (15:16c)?*

There is an old saying: “Only one life! ‘Twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last” (C. T. Studd). Jesus *chose* and appointed us to *go and bear fruit*. The word *go* makes it clear this *fruit* is in addition to the fruit of the Spirit that must be produced first and does not require us to go anywhere, except church and Bible study. What does Jesus command us to *go* do in Matthew 28:19a?



C. T. Studd also said, “Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

Jesus again says, “*so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (Jn 15:16d). Jesus has already said this at least three times (14:13, 14; 15:7). Why does He repeat it a fourth time? I think He knows we all have a tendency to become lax in our prayer lives. I know I do! Jesus sums up His teaching by saying: “These things I command you, so that you will love one another” (15:17). How do we know if we are obeying this command? There are at least two ways:*

1. Pray for others. But for what specifically are we to pray? A great model or example is Colossians 1:9b. Write it below:

Knowledge refers to both moral and biblical knowledge. *Wisdom and understanding* refer to the ability to properly apply *knowledge*.

2. Refuse to stop loving. The first component of the fruit of the Spirit is *love* (Gal 5:22a). This love never stops even when people hurt us, disappoint us, or fall into sin. How does Proverbs 17:17a express this fact?

To be best friends with Jesus, ***abide in Him, obey Him, and love like Him.***

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 17 . . . Preparing To Follow Jesus (John 15:18-16:4)

NOTES

After transforming the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper, predicting His betrayal and Peter's denial, and telling His disciples He is going away, Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room (Jn 13-14). As they walk out of Jerusalem, going toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus teaches them what we read in chapters fifteen and sixteen. In this passage, we find **three** preparations for following Jesus . . .

Be prepared for persecution (15:18-25).

As they walk toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus teaches His disciples about three relationships. First, He speaks of their future relationship with Him after He leaves. What does He tell them in John 15:5a-b?

This means we must live in intimate union with Christ. The second relationship is our relationship with one another. To describe it, He commands: "*That you love one another as I have loved you*" (15:12b).

Next, Jesus teaches about the third relationship, our relationship with the world. He says: "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.*"¹⁹ *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*" (15:18-19). The world *hated* Jesus first—from the very beginning of His physical life. When He was born, the *world*—personified in King Herod—*hated* Him. Therefore, when the *wise men*, or Magi, didn't return to tell Herod the whereabouts of the baby Jesus, what did Herod do (Matthew 2:16b)?

The world hated Jesus so much at the end of His life, they crucified Him. The same world that hated Jesus will also hate you and me if we claim allegiance to Him. But what is *the world* to which Jesus is referring? The word translated *world* (KOSMOS, kos'-mos) means arrangement, or order of things. It is the word from which we get our words "cosmetics" and "cosmopolitan." The word *world* in the New Testament refers to the world order, or world's view, of things.

Does *the world* still hate Jesus and His followers? Just try to put a nativity scene on public property. Some cities even forbid singing Christmas carols that include the name of Jesus at schools or public events. That's why John gives us what warning in 1 John 3:13?

This *hate* has many faces. It takes the form of being ostracized, falsely accused, passed over for a job promotion, etc. To prepare us, Jesus says: "*Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you*" (Jn 15:20). Jesus has already mentioned this principle (13:16). However, just because you are being *persecuted* doesn't necessarily mean you are following Jesus. Some Christians deserve to be persecuted because they are obnoxious, rude, and act like they are better than everybody else.



Jesus continues: "*But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me*" (15:21). Because we are connected to the Vine, people will respond to us as they did Jesus. Jesus now gets to the root of the opposition: "*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin*" (15:22a-b). Then, what does our Lord say in the last phrase of verse 22?

This doesn't mean the world would be better off if He hadn't come. Jesus is not referring to sin in general. He is saying since God has now fully revealed Himself in the person of Jesus—not just in laws and symbols—there is no excuse for the specific sin of rejecting Him. This is the most serious sin of all because it is the only unforgiveable sin. Because Jesus is God come to earth in flesh and blood, what does He say in verse 23?

Jesus further explains: "*If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father*" (15:24). The whole Jewish nation should have said what Nicodemus said when he came to Jesus at night. He said no one could do what Jesus was doing unless He came from God (3:2).

However, Jesus knows His rejection is predicted in prophecy, so He says: "*But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause'*" (15:25, Psa. 35:19; 69:4). Jesus came fulfilling prophecies, healing the sick, lame, and blind, as well as offering forgiveness and eternal life. He never hurt anyone but taught love and forgiveness. Yet, the *world* persecuted Him and will do the same to us.

To follow Jesus effectively, **be prepared for persecution** and . . .

Be prepared to preach (15:26-27).

Though we will face persecution, we will not be alone because Jesus promises: *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father”* (15:26). Jesus uses two names in this verse for the Holy Spirit: *Helper*, or “Comforter,” and *Spirit of truth*. The word translated *Helper* (PARAKLĒTOS, para-klay’-tos) means an intercessor or a consoler. The Father and Jesus give us the Holy Spirit to help, encourage, and strengthen us. The *Spirit of truth* means He helps us understand the truth of God’s Word, the Bible. What else does Jesus say about the Holy Spirit in the last phrase of John 15:26?

People who are truly filled with the Holy Spirit do not constantly talk about the Holy Spirit. About whom do they talk? Jesus!

Jesus also tells His disciples: *“And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning”* (15:27). Jesus is asking the original disciples, who were eyewitnesses to His teaching, miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection, to *bear witness*, or testify, to the truth about Him. That’s why we have the gospel of John. John also bears *witness* by writing what testimony about Himself and the other disciples in 1 John 1:1?

We have a God-inspired Bible, written by eyewitnesses. We also have the Holy Spirit to help us understand God’s Word and strengthen our hearts. He also calls us to *bear witness*, or testify, to the truth about Jesus. We don’t have to stand behind a pulpit to preach. People would rather see a sermon than **hear** one, and they see a sermon every day in our lives (2 Cor. 3:2-3). Our lives either draw people to Christ or drive them away.

There is a poem that says: “You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day, by deeds that you do, by words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithless or true. Say, what is the gospel according to you?” (author unknown). As unbelievers read the Gospel in our lives, the Holy Spirit convicts their hearts of the truth about Jesus (Jn 16:8).

To faithfully follow Jesus, **be prepared for persecution, be prepared to preach**, and . . .



Be prepared for perplexity (16:1-4).

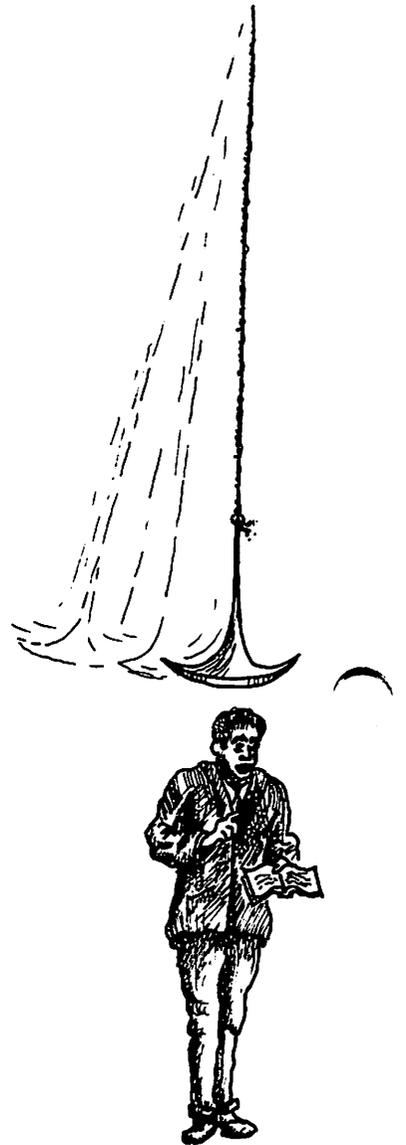
Jesus is always totally honest; therefore, He says: *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away"* (16:1). The word translated *falling away*, or "offended," (SKANDALIZŌ, scan-dal-id'-zoh) refers to being ensnared in a trap. It is the idea of being caught off guard or surprised. We get our words "scandal" and "scandalize" from this word. Following Jesus can sometimes seem like a "scandal" because He allows things to happen to us that surprise us. John's beloved brother James was the first of the twelve disciples (excluding Judas) to die. According to Acts 12:2, what does Herod Agrippa do to James the brother of John?

This suggests he was beheaded by an executioner, just as John the Baptist was by Herod Antipas. Was that fair? Of course not! Sometimes, what God allows to happen to Jesus' followers is very perplexing.

Jesus is very specific about the persecution: *"They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God"* (Jn 16:2). One example of this is what happens to Stephen, one of the Seven, after he preached a powerful sermon. He was stoned to death by Jews who thought they were *offering service to God* (see Acts 7:58). Jesus explains that they will do *these things* because they do not know the Father or Him (Jn 16:3).

Finally, Jesus informs His disciples He is telling them *"these things so when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you"* (16:4a). *Their hour* refers to the time when the disciples' persecutors will control their fate. Their memory of Jesus' knowledge of the future will strengthen their faith. Jesus also says: *"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you"* (16:4b). Jesus had not spoken much about the coming persecution because it was aimed at Him as long as He was with them. However, now that He is going away, the persecution will be directed toward His disciples. Now, the disciples and we can better understand what statement of Jesus in Matthew 10:16a?

Preparing to follow Jesus means: be prepared for persecution, be prepared to preach, and be prepared for perplexity.



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 18 . . . The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-15)

NOTES

In His last teachings to His disciples, Jesus now tells them about the Holy Spirit. They are still walking from Jerusalem toward the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus teaches them what we read in John 15-16. He has given them a lot of bad news—one of them will betray Him, one will deny Him, He will die, and He is going to leave them. Then, He tells them they will be persecuted and killed by people who think they are serving God. Finally, Jesus shares some very good news—the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which includes **four** components . . .

He dwells in us (16:5-7).

Jesus tells His disciples that none of them had genuinely asked about where He is going (16:5). Peter had already asked where Jesus was going (13:36) but was not really concerned about Jesus' destination or His reason for leaving. Peter was only thinking about how Jesus' leaving would affect the disciples and him. After all the bad news, Jesus says: "*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart*" (16:6). Therefore, He tells them it is good for them that He is going away (16:7b). Then, what does He tell them in John 16:7c-d?

His going away is good for them for at least two reasons. First, *for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified* (Jn 7:39c-d). Only after Jesus is crucified and resurrected—*glorified*—can He send the Holy Spirit. This is because our salvation is based on the atoning work of Christ on the cross. The Holy Spirit can only indwell people who are cleansed from their sin by faith in Jesus' death on the cross. The Holy Spirit can only indwell clean vessels. Later, in his early ministry, Peter would think Gentiles could not be saved because he considered them unclean. But what does God tell him in a vision in Acts 10:15b?



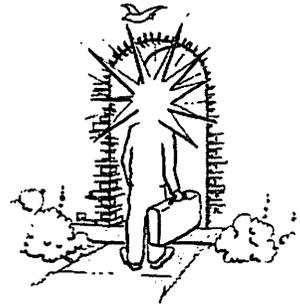
We are made clean **only** through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, and **only** clean vessels can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Would you go into a restaurant and eat from a filthy plate? No, and the Holy Spirit can only indwell us if we have been made clean by the blood of Christ.

Second, Jesus' going away will be good for the disciples because while He is on earth He is limited to being in one place at a time. However, His leaving by way of the cross allows the Holy Spirit to come and indwell every believer and thus be everywhere at once. Because Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross, the Holy Spirit lives in us (1 Cor. 6:19).

The Holy Spirit dwells in us and . . .

He draws us (16:8-12).

What three things does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do (John 16:8)?



The Holy Spirit is God's spiritual Prosecutor. The word translated *convict*, or "reprove," (ELENCHŌ, el-en'-ko) means to convince of the truth. So, the Holy Spirit creates in us an inescapable awareness of sin that cannot be excused or dismissed.

He convicts us of sin to bring us to repentance. Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit convicts "*concerning sin, because they do not believe in me*" (16:9). The only unforgivable sin is rejecting Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit convinces us we must believe in Jesus to have forgiveness of our sins. The Holy Spirit convicts us to draw us to Jesus.

Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit also convicts "*concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer*" (16:10). The Holy Spirit convicts us that Christ's claims are validated because He returned to the Father. The Holy Spirit turns on a light in our minds so we can see Jesus is the only way to God's holiness and righteousness (14:6). The Holy Spirit also convicts us of *judgment*. How does Jesus explain this in John 16:11b?

The Holy Spirit convinces people that Satan has already been defeated and condemned. In other words, He reveals the evil world system that seems to dominate us is in fact a defeated foe. Some people refuse to be saved because they think they can't live the Christian life. It's true; they can't without the power of the Holy Spirit. However, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, what does Philippians 2:13 promise us?

Jesus knows most of what He is telling His disciples will be impossible for them to understand until after His death, resurrection, and the day of Pentecost. Therefore, He tells them: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now"* (Jn 16:12). Like the other Jews, the disciples expected the Messiah to be a political, military deliverer who would free Israel from Roman domination. *Now*, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they could not *bear* the concept of the Messiah being crucified.

The Holy Spirit **dwells in us, draws us, and . . .**

He directs us (16:13).

What does Jesus tell us about the Holy Spirit in John 16:13b?

This means the Holy Spirit will help us understand and apply God's Word. The Holy Spirit is our spiritual *guide*, or navigator. God gives us a spiritual map we call the Bible. In it we find God's ways and God's will for our lives. It is a spiritual book that requires a spiritual *guide*. While reading the Bible, have you had a verse just stand out like it was in super bold type? It points out something you need to do or stop doing. Do you know who makes that verse stand out? The Holy Spirit! He guides us to particular verses in the Bible so we can stay on God's spiritual course.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus also says: *"he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak"* (Jn 16:13c). This means everything the Holy Spirit teaches will be in harmony with God's will and the Bible. He never teaches anything different or new. He only makes clear what God has already said in His Word. Therefore, the Holy Spirit never leads us to do anything that contradicts God's Word.

Jesus also says: *"He will declare to you the things that are to come"* (16:13d). This refers to what is contained in the New Testament as well as future events, such as John's vision of heaven, which is the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21:1-3). In Revelation 21:4, what does the Holy Spirit reveal to John will be gone forever in heaven?

The Holy Spirit revealed future things to the disciples, and they wrote them down in books we call the New Testament.

The Holy Spirit **dwells in us, draws us, directs us, and . . .**



He glorifies Jesus (16:14-15).

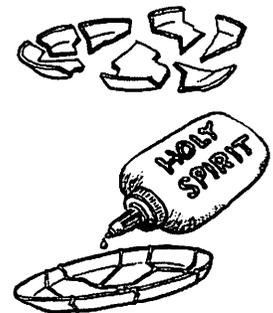
Jesus says of the Holy Spirit: “*He will glorify me*” (16:14a). The Holy Spirit never puts Himself in the spotlight; He always, without exception, glorifies Jesus. This gives tremendous insight to the purpose of what command found in the last phrase of Ephesians 5:18?

When we obey that command, we will do what the Holy Spirit does, which is *glorify* Jesus. When we are *filled with the Spirit* we will not do anything to disgrace Jesus, His church, or His followers.

Jesus tells us how the Holy Spirit will glorify Him: “*He will take what is mine and declare it to you*” (16:14b). This means the Holy Spirit will explain the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Part of the fulfillment of this statement is the New Testament. However, it goes farther. It means the Holy Spirit will help us understand and apply God’s Word.

Referring to the unity of the Trinity, Jesus says: “*All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you*” (16:15). What the Father has, the Son has, because they are one. Jesus is also saying the Holy Spirit will not glorify Jesus to the exclusion of the Father. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit minister in perfect harmony. How does 2 Corinthians 13:14 describe their harmony?

The *grace* of Christ reminds us we are all sinners saved by grace and leaves no room for pride and arrogance. The *love of God* banishes anger and jealousy from our lives, making us more like Jesus. The *fellowship of the Holy Spirit* leaves no room for quarreling and division in the fellowship of believers. That’s why we have what command in Ephesians 4:3?



The ministry of the Holy Spirit has four components: He dwells in us, draws us, directs us, and glorifies Jesus.

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 19 . . . How Jesus Helps with Our Problems (John 16:16-33)

NOTES

Jesus and His disciples are still walking from the Upper Room toward the Kidron Valley on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He will be betrayed. In this passage we will discover **how Jesus helps with our problems**. First, He helps us . . .

By turning our *sorrow* into *joy* (16:16-22)

Jesus continues comforting and encouraging His disciples, as His crucifixion is only hours away. Therefore, He says in *a little while* they will see Him *no longer* and in another *little while* they will see Him again. Jesus is talking about His crucifixion and then His resurrection three days later. However, His disciples don't understand and are very perplexed, so they keep asking each other what He means by *a little while* (16:16-19).

Knowing they are asking one another what He means, Jesus says: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful . . .*" (16:20). When Jesus is crucified, His disciples will *weep, lament, and be sorrowful* but *the world will rejoice*. However, in the last phrase of John 16:20, what does Jesus tell them will happen after the resurrection?

Jesus doesn't say their *sorrow* will be **replaced** by *joy* but will be **transformed** into *joy*. Someday, the very problems that cause us grief now will be turned into *joy*. Jesus illustrates this by reminding His disciples that when a baby is born, the mother "*no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world*" (16:21). When a woman hears her baby cry, her labor pain is transformed into *joy*. The cross of Christ will have a similar effect on the disciples.

Our *sorrow* can be very perplexing because life can seem so unfair. Sometimes we just don't understand why God allows good Christian people to suffer. At those times we need to remember what truth found in 1 Corinthians 13:12a?

Ancient mirrors were made of polished brass, reflecting only a vague image at best. Life is sometimes like that—vague and unclear. But when we



are in Jesus' presence in heaven, we will see as clearly as seeing someone *face to face*.

Knowing how confusing life can be, Jesus says to the eleven disciples: "*So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you*" (Jn 16:22). Life often has *sorrow* for all of us. Don't think you are the only one who has heart-breaking, perplexing problems. We all do. That's the bad news. The good news is found in 2 Corinthians 4:17. Write it below:

Which is far more important and valuable: something temporary or something that lasts forever? The answer is obvious. Compared to eternity, our *affliction* is *momentary*, but our reward and joy in heaven will be *eternal*. Our reward in heaven will be determined by how we respond to our *momentary* troubles. Troubles are a test of our faith. Troubles reveal how much we really believe the Bible and how much faith in God we really have. If we pass the test, God will give us an *eternal* glory, or reward. How are you doing so far in the *affliction* test? Maybe you need to improve. That's what Bible study and worship are all about—preparing you for those daily pop quizzes and those monthly or yearly semester tests.

When we have problems, Jesus helps us by **turning our *sorrow* into *joy*** and . . .

By giving us awesome prayer power in His name (16:23-28)

The concluding verses of John 16 are Jesus' final words to His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion. To prepare them for His departure, He says: "*In that day you will ask nothing of me*" (16:23a). The word *day* refers to Jesus' resurrection. On *that day* all their questions about His going away and turning their sorrow into joy will be answered. What does Jesus say will happen from *that day* forward (John 16:23b)?

This doesn't mean Jesus' name is a "magic wand" that gets all our prayers answered. It means we ask for things as Jesus would, things consistent with His will and character (1 Jn 5:14).

Jesus also tells His disciples: "*Until now you have asked nothing in my name*" (16:24a). Certainly the disciples had prayed, but they hadn't asked



for anything in Christ's name. But, after Christ's death and resurrection, they can pray in His name with much greater expectation and power. This is because of what promise of our Lord in John 16:24b?

Praying in Jesus' name means we pray on the basis of Jesus' merit, not ours. We can't get anything from God by praying in our own names. For example, if I go to a bank where I have no funds and present a \$10,000 check on which I have signed my own name, they will not cash it. But if I go to the same bank with a check signed by a person who has sufficient funds in that bank, I don't even have to have an account. With proper identification, the check will be honored.

It is the same way with prayer. Praying in Jesus' name is going to God with a "spiritual check" signed by Jesus, who has unlimited resources in heaven. We have a blank "spiritual check," signed by Jesus, which can bring us great joy. However, often we don't cash the check. How does James 4:2c express this fact?

In prayer, our joy will be *full* because it makes us conscious of God's love and power, allowing Him to work miracles in our lives.

Jesus says He is speaking to them in *figures of speech*, or "proverbs," but the time is coming when He will tell them *plainly* about His father (Jn 16:25). After His resurrection, Jesus appears to them for forty days and teaches them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Some day, in heaven, Jesus will explain *plainly* why God allowed all our problems.

Referring to the time after His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus says: "*In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf*" (16:26). This means Jesus will not make our requests for us because we can go directly to God in Jesus' name. As Christians, in Jesus' name we have direct access to God. To encourage His disciples, Jesus reminds them *the Father himself loves* them because they believe He came from the Father. He now tells them He is leaving to go to the Father (16:27-28).

No matter how perplexing the problem, we know God loves us and we have awesome power when we pray in Jesus' name. However, Jesus reminds us we must *ask, seek, and knock* in His name (Mt 7:7).

Jesus helps us with our problems **by turning our sorrow into joy, giving us awesome prayer power in His name, and . . .**



By not forsaking us when we falter (16:29-33)

The disciples think they fully understand and tell Jesus He is “*speaking plainly and not using figurative speech.*” They also tell Jesus they now understand He knows everything and that He *came from God* (16:29-30). Jesus replies, “*Do you now believe?*” (16:31). They *believe* in their heads but not in their hearts, because in hours they will scatter and leave Jesus to meet His fate. Yet, Jesus doesn’t give up on them, or us, even when our faith falters. How does 2 Timothy 2:13a verify this fact?



Any of us can be *faithless* at times; but even if we fail the Lord miserably, He *remains faithful*. This is because He is the God of the second chance, the third chance, or however many chances it takes (Jonah 3:1).

Alluding to the prophecy, “*Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*” (Zech. 13:7b), Jesus says: “*Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone*” (Jn 16:32). The eleven disciples think they have a strong faith. They are examples of what truth found in 1 Corinthians 10:12?

Knowing His disciples will desert Him, Jesus says: “*Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me*” (16:32d). Then, in John’s gospel, Jesus gives His final recorded statement to His disciples before He is betrayed: “*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace*” (16:33a). The *peace* to which Jesus is referring is not the absence of problems, but His *peace* we can only experience in the midst of problems. Finally, what does Jesus say in John 16:33b-d?

The word translated *overcome* (NIKAŌ, ni-kah’-oh) is the word from which we get our English word “*nike,*” which means “*to conquer*” or “*victory.*” This means Jesus conquered the evil world system by rising from the dead. Because Jesus has *overcome the world,* we can, too. Through faith, we can conquer every problem the world brings us (1 Jn 5:4).

When problems do come our way, Jesus helps us by **turning our sorrow into joy, giving us awesome prayer power in His name, and not forsaking us when we falter.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 20 . . . Benefits of Believing (John 17:1-26)

NOTES

Jesus and the Eleven have left the Upper Room (14:31) and are walking toward the Kidron Valley on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Somewhere along the way He prays *these words* (18:1) found in John 17. In this lesson, we will look at Jesus' intercessory prayer for His disciples, one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It has been called "the real Lord's Prayer" because it is not a model prayer, but a "real" prayer of our Lord. It is also called Jesus' high priestly prayer for His disciples. In His prayer we find three **benefits of believing** . . .

Benefit # 1: Regeneration (17:1-5)

It is around midnight, only about an hour before the temple guards will come to arrest Jesus. This has been a very long day, and our Lord is no doubt very tired as He looks up to heaven. Then, what does He pray (17:1c)?

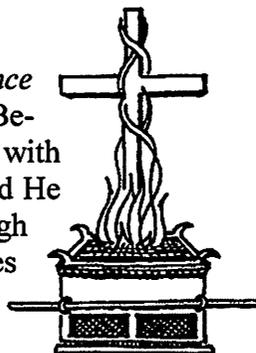
Jesus knows everything about to happen is according to God's pre-ordained calendar. We need to remember that sometimes our problems and sufferings are a very important part of God's purpose for our lives. Knowing the cross was part of God's plan for Him, Jesus continues, "*glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you*" (17:1d). The verb translated *glorify* (DOXAZŌ, dox-ad'-zo) means to honor in a way that results in a good opinion. On the cross, Jesus glorified God by revealing how much God loves us. Without the cross, we could never understand how much God loves us (Jn 3:16). How does Romans 5:8 express how much God loves us?

Soon, on the cross, Jesus will stretch out His arms and say in a language everyone can understand, "God loves you this much." Because of how much God loves us, Jesus prays, "*since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* ³ *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*" (Jn 17:2-3). In these two verses Jesus tells us the meaning of *eternal life*. It is not just living forever; it is knowing God through His Son Jesus Christ. This means we can talk to Him in prayer, be guided by His Spirit, and let Him speak to us through prayer and the Bible. *Eternal life* is knowing God personally.



Jesus continues: *"I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do"* (17:4). Once while visiting in a Goodwill Industries store, I looked up on a wall and saw these words: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jn 17:4b, KJV). This is the prayer we all should want to be able to pray when it comes our time to die.

Then, Jesus prays: *"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed"* (17:5). Before Jesus came to earth in flesh and blood, He lived in eternity past with the Father and shared in the *glory* of the Father. Jesus has already said He was before Abraham (Jn 8:58). Philippians chapter two tells us although Jesus was God, He did not demand to cling to His glory and privileges in heaven. Instead, He stepped out of heaven and came to earth. Then, what do we read in Philippians 2:8?



He did it all for **benefit #1: regeneration**, which we also call being "born again" (Jn 3:3), "saved" (Acts 16:31), or "redeemed" (Gal. 3:13).

Benefit #2: Sanctification (17:6-19)

Jesus now prays: *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world"* (17:6a). Revealing God's *name* means making known the very nature, or essence, of God (1:18). The name through which God fully reveals Himself is the name "Jesus." According to Acts 4:12b, why is it important for people to know this name of God?

Referring to His disciples, Jesus prays: *"Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word"* (Jn 17:6b). Those who truly belong to Jesus reveal it by their obedience. It's not enough to come to church, sing songs, or give an offering. If we do not keep, or obey, God's Word, we do not belong to Him. The disciples' immediate obedience will be far from perfect, but they will later return to faith and commitment.

Jesus says He has given the eleven remaining disciples God's words, and *they have received them*. He also says the Eleven *know in truth*, or with certainty, that He came from the Father who sent Him (17:7-8). Because the Eleven believe in Him, Jesus says: *"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours"* (17:9). God loves everyone in the world, but right now Jesus is

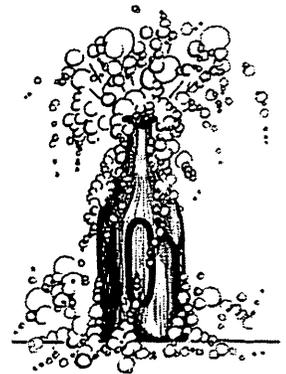
praying for the protection (17:11) and sanctification (17:17) of His disciples. We know Jesus is specifically praying for His disciples because He says: *“All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them”* (17:10). The disciples belong to God, and Jesus will entrust them with the Gospel. Since this is how Jesus will be *glorified in them*, their protection is of special importance. We, likewise, bring *glory* to Christ by revealing His character and love toward those who have not yet believed.

Jesus will soon leave this world, but His disciples must remain; therefore, He prays: *“Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me”* (17:11). The title, *Holy Father*, reminds us God is not only our heavenly Father, but He is also our *Holy Father*, which demands our sanctification. When Jesus prays *keep them in your name*, He is asking God to *keep* them loyal to Himself, which He does through the Bible, the power of the Holy Spirit, and Bible-teaching churches. How does Jude 24 explain God’s answer to this prayer?

Jesus also prays *“that they may be one, even as we are one”* (Jn 17:11e). Jesus knows the Evil One attacks us every day trying to divide us. He also tries to lead us into sin and separate us from our fellowship with the Father (Psa. 66:18). That is why Jesus is asking God the Father to keep us intimately connected to Himself.

Jesus continues: *“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled”* (17:12). This refers to Judas Iscariot, whose betrayal of Jesus fulfilled what prophecy in Psalm 41:9?

Now, Jesus says He is coming to the Father and has told His disciples many things while He was in this world. One reason is so they may have His *joy fulfilled in themselves* (17:13). This *joy*—a component of the *fruit of the Spirit*—is produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). All three members of the Trinity are involved in this *joy* being *fulfilled in us*. This supernatural *joy* is the result of fellowship with God the Father through faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In difficult times *the joy of the LORD is our strength* (Neh. 8:10).

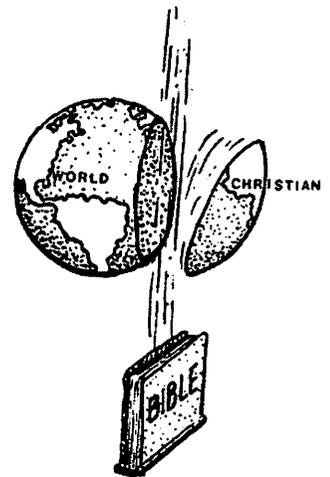


Jesus reminds us in His prayer that *the world* hates us because we do not belong to the world, just as He didn’t (17:14). As followers of Jesus, we

are not of this world because we don't share the morals, values, and goals of the world. The world hates us because we are lights shining in the darkness, exposing sin. However, Jesus doesn't pray for God to take us out of the world. Instead, what does He pray (17:15b)?

The only way we can be witnesses for Christ is to reflect His glory in the world. Our desire should never be to withdraw from the world but to win the world to Christ. As Jesus prayed, we *are not of the world*, just as He is not (17:16). What does Jesus pray for us next in John 17:17?

Sanctify (HAGIAZO, hog-ee-od'-zo) means to be set apart from sin to be used by God. Salvation (**regeneration**) is instantaneous, but **sanctification** is progressive. The only way to be sanctified is by *the truth* of God's Word. That's why attending weekly Bible study, worshiping where God's Word is preached, and having a daily quiet time are critical to the process of sanctification that makes us more and more like Jesus.



Jesus prays: "*As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world*" (17:18). This means Jesus came *into the world* with a purpose that could only be fulfilled if He remained undefiled by sin. And, Jesus wants to send His disciples *into the world* in the same way—holy, or sanctified.

Sanctification always separates us from sin for service. That's why Jesus prays: "*And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth*" (17:19). This means Jesus is our Model of what it means to be sanctified. Jesus was not a recluse or hermit; therefore, sanctification is not isolation. He attended wedding feasts, accepted invitations to dinner, and mixed with the social outcasts of His day. He was **in** the world but not **of** the world, and we must be also if we are to reflect His glory.

The **benefits of believing** are **regeneration, sanctification, and . . .**

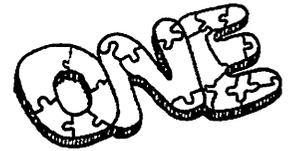
Benefit #3: Glorification (17:20-26)

After praying for His disciples, Jesus prays for future believers, including you and me: "*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*" (17:20-21). Jesus wants us to be *one*. How does Philippians 2:2 explain the oneness of believers?

Few things destroy oneness in a church like gossip. If we love as Jesus taught, we will never repeat or listen to it. Gossip promotes the polar opposite of unity and love. To promote the oneness for which Jesus prayed, we need to remember what truth found in Proverbs 17:9?

This means when we know something bad or negative about someone, and refuse to gossip about it, we promote love. However, if we gossip, we promote disunity and break the heart of the Lord Jesus.

Referring to all of His followers, present and future, Jesus prays: *“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one”* (17:22). Jesus gives us the *glory* He received from the Father, the *glory* of love and unity that identifies us as His disciples (13:35). Nothing glorifies Jesus and our heavenly Father like loving one another because this is the very essence of God. How does 1 John 4:8b state this truth?



Jesus continues: *“I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me”* (17:23). Jesus wants our love and unity to be so obvious to the world they will believe the Gospel because they see God’s love in us. Do your friends and associates see that kind of love and unity in your life?

Jesus wants us to see His glory that will be restored to Him after His ascension. Therefore, He prays: *“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world”* (17:24). Jesus wants all who follow Him to be with Him in heaven so we can see His *glory*. Why? To see what He gave up by coming to earth. Only then can we begin to realize how much He loves us.

Do you know what Jesus will look like when you see Him in heaven? One day Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountain to get a glimpse of His *glory* in heaven. As the three watched, *Jesus was transfigured before them . . . and his clothes became white as light* (Mt 17:2). This gave them just a glimpse and foretaste of Jesus’ glory. What does 1 John 3:2b-c tell us about our own glorification?

Our salvation will not be complete until our glorification. Only when we are glorified in heaven will we fully understand what promise found in Lamentations 3:22?

Jesus concludes His prayer as He began it—by addressing God as *Father*, saying: “*O righteous Father*” (Jn 17:25a). By calling God *righteous*, Jesus affirms His *Father* will do what is right by granting His petitions, which include bringing His disciples safely to heaven to be glorified. Our Lord then says, “*even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me*” (17:25). The world didn’t recognize Jesus as God on earth in flesh and blood. However, the disciples did.

Therefore, Jesus prays: “*I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known*” (17:26a). Through the Bible and the Holy Spirit Jesus continues to make God better known to us. Why? Jesus says it is “*that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them*” (17:26b). God wants you to know Him more, so you will love more. The better you know God, the more you love people, especially your brothers and sisters in Christ. How does 1 John 4:16b express this truth?

If you want to know how well you know God, examine your love.

The three **benefits of believing** are **regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 21 . . . When Life Is Dark (John 18:1-27)

NOTES

We now come to the darkest night in history. Jesus and the Eleven have left the Upper Room where Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (14:31). As they walked out of Jerusalem toward the Kidron Valley, they apparently stopped along the way for Jesus to teach them what we read in John 15 & 16 and for Him to pray the prayer recorded in John 17.

Now, we are in chapter 18, and it is sometime after midnight. Jesus and the disciples cross the Kidron Valley, which is east of Jerusalem between the city and the Mount of Olives, and enter *a garden* called *Gethsemane* (18:1; Mt 26:36). This passage reveals what we should do **when life is dark . . .**

Be patient (18:2-11).

Between verses 1 and 2, there is a gap that is filled in by the other gospels. As He arrives at Gethsemane, Jesus is overcome with agony because He knows everything that will soon happen to Him. Fully aware of the horrible suffering awaiting Him, what does Jesus pray in Luke 22:42?

Judas left the group while they were still in the Upper Room, but he knows Jesus and His disciples often spend the night in this garden (Jn 18:2; Lk 21:37). Jesus is clearly not trying to avoid arrest. Judas soon arrives at the garden, guiding *a band of soldiers*, temple guards, and *Pharisees* who are carrying *lanterns and torches and weapons* (18:3). The word translated *band* (SPEIRA, spay'-rah) can refer to a detachment of 200 to 600 Roman soldiers. They have decided to arrest Jesus away from the crowds to avoid a riot, but they are prepared for the worst.

The sight of hundreds of fully armed soldiers, along with torches blazing all the way down the dark path that leads to the garden and probably deep into the Kidron Valley, must have been terrifying. Judas has told the soldiers he will identify Jesus with a kiss. But, as Judas approaches Jesus, what does our Lord ask him in Luke 22:48b?



In other words, “Judas, are you making a mockery of the love I have been teaching you by betraying me with a kiss?” Then, Jesus asks the soldiers, “*Whom do you seek?*” They answer, “*Jesus of Nazareth,*” and Jesus replies, “*I am he*” (18:4-5). The word *he* is not in the original Greek, which could still mean Jesus was just identifying Himself. However, because of what happens next, Jesus is more likely calling Himself “I AM,” the name God used to identify Himself to Moses and the Israelites (Ex 3:14), as He has done before (Jn 8:58). As Jesus calls Himself “I AM,” what happens to those who have come to arrest Him (John 18:6)?

There is no logical explanation for this, other than the mere speaking of Jesus’ divine name renders His captors helpless. It may also be a foretaste of the day when *at the name of Jesus every knee will bow* (Philip. 2:10a). This would be Jesus’ last demonstration of the power of His voice that had calmed the sea, healed the sick, and raised the dead.

After His stunning demonstration of power, Jesus again asks His dazed captors whom they seek. He again identifies Himself and asks them to release His disciples (18:7-9). Then, the impulsive Peter, probably emboldened by Christ’s display of power, draws his *sword* and cuts off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest (18:10). The Greek word translated *sword* (MACHAIRA, mach’-ah-rah) refers to a small sword or large dagger.

When Peter draws his sword, no doubt hundreds of steel swords ring as they are drawn from the soldiers’ scabbards. Jesus tells Peter to put his sword away because He is willing to *drink the cup* His Father has given Him (18:11). Then, what does Jesus say He could ask His Father to do immediately (Matthew 26:53b)?



A legion was a Roman army unit consisting of about 6,000 troops. So, Jesus could call upon 72,000 angels—6,000 each for Him and His disciples—any one of which, according to the book of Revelation, could destroy the world. Jesus now performs His last miracle. According to Luke 22:51b, what is it?

This saves Peter from the consequences of his actions. We all have our “Gethsemanes,” **when life is dark**. Sometimes, like Peter, we take matters into our own hands instead of waiting for God’s plan to unfold. Therefore, **when life is dark: be patient** and . . .

Be submissive (18:12-14).

Jesus is arrested by the soldiers and temple guards, who bind His arms. Allowing Himself to be bound is the first sign of Jesus' full submissiveness. The captors take Jesus to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest (18:12-13). Arriving at the palace compound, Jesus is taken to stand before Annas. Annas and Caiaphas are both high priests because the Romans appointed high priests to best suit their political needs. Therefore, we find more than one high priest living at the same time (Lk 3:2). However, the Jews still regarded Annas as the legitimate high priest because, according to Mosaic Law, he was to serve for life (Num. 35:25).

Annas ran a monopoly of the sale of animals for sacrifices and of the money-changers' stalls in the temple. It was this corrupt, lucrative monopoly Jesus threatened when He drove the money-changers from the temple at the beginning and end of His ministry. The second cleansing was only three days earlier (Mt 21:12-13), when Jesus said God's house was to be "*called a house of prayer*" (Mt 21:13a). Then, quoting Jeremiah 7:11, what does Jesus say Annas and his cronies have made of God's house (Matthew 21:13b)?



Annas no doubt wants revenge. Therefore, he questions Jesus, trying to frighten Him before sending Him to Caiaphas, *who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people* (18:14). In other words, Caiaphas has set the stage for Jesus' execution. Fully aware of the diabolic plan, Jesus remains submissive to God's will.

When life is dark: be patient, be submissive, and . . .

Be attentive (18:15-27).

Peter and another unnamed disciple follow Jesus and His captors. Because the other disciple, undoubtedly John, is acquainted with the high priest, he is allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard (18:15). John is the son of a man who owns a prosperous fishing business (Mk 1:19-20). Therefore, he is the kind of person Annas would want to know. John secures permission for Peter to enter the courtyard, where a servant girl who keeps the gate asks Peter if he is one of Jesus' disciples. How does Peter answer (John 18:17b)?

It is a chilly, pre-dawn, spring morning, so Peter joins some people warming themselves around a fire (18:18). While Peter is warming himself at the fire, Annas is questioning Jesus. Jesus does not bother answering but

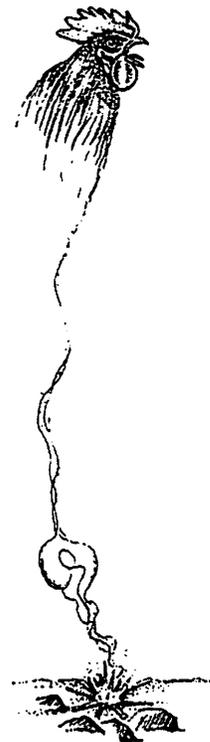
tells Annas He has spoken openly in the synagogues and in the temple. Therefore, He tells Annas to ask those who heard Him teach (18:21). Jesus is not being uncooperative or impolite. He is making the point that according to Jewish law, it is the duty of the high priest to produce witnesses, who are to be called first. Jesus is simply saying witnesses will be easy to find, and they should be questioned first.

Jesus' response angers one of Annas' officials, who slaps Jesus with his hand saying, *"Is that how you answer the high priest?"* Jesus responds calmly, asking for a fair, civil trial (18:22-23). In the Garden our Lord had already proved He could simply speak the word and overpower His captors. However, how does 1 Peter 2:23 describe His behavior?

Annas decides he will get nowhere with Jesus, so he sends Him to Caiaphas who is authorized to request action before Pilate (18:24). Meanwhile, Peter is still warming himself in the courtyard where he is asked a second time if he is one of Jesus' disciples. Again he says, *"I am not"* (18:25). However, Peter looks very familiar to at least one of those gathered around the fire. He is a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter cut off. He had seen Peter in the garden, but in the dim torch light before dawn, he couldn't be sure it was Peter. The relative asks Peter: *"Did I not see you in the garden with him?"* (18:26). Then, for the third time, Peter denies knowing the Lord, and *at once* a rooster crows (18:27). As Peter hears the rooster crow, what happens (Luke 22:61a)?

Perhaps Jesus' captors are leading Him past the spot where Peter is warming himself. Whatever the scenario, the rooster's crow is God's call for Peter to repent. As a result, Peter goes out and weeps bitterly (Lk 22:62). **When life is dark**, we, like Peter, sometimes fail the Lord and then hear our own "rooster" crow. It may be this lesson, a sermon, the words of a friend, a verse in the Bible, or something else. However God does it, when He reminds us of our sin, we should **be attentive** and have what attitude found in Psalm 38:18?

When life is dark: be patient, be submissive, and be attentive.



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 22 . . . Making Great Choices

(John 18:28-19:16)

NOTES

In the last lesson we saw Jesus arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was immediately taken before Annas (the former high priest), who tried to get Jesus to say something that could be used against Him before the Sanhedrin. Baffled and defeated, Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas (the current high priest) and the Sanhedrin. John doesn't give us any information about Jesus' hearing before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. However, Mark does (Mk 14:53-64), but he doesn't mention Jesus' appearance before Annas. Many falsely testify against Jesus, and finally Caiaphas asks Jesus if He is the Christ. Jesus answers, "*I am*" (Mk 14:62). Caiaphas calls Jesus' answer *blasphemy*, a capital offense (Lev. 24:16), and asks the Sanhedrin to give their verdict (Mk 14:62-64a). What is their decision (Mk 14:64c)?

Then, these dignified religious leaders spit on Jesus, blindfold Him, and hit Him with their fists (Mk 14:65). After this, Jesus is taken to Pilate. In the following passage, we find **two principles for making great choices**.

Refuse to envy (18:28-40).

It is early morning when Jesus arrives at Pilate's headquarters. Jesus' accusers don't go inside because to do so would have *defiled* them, leaving them unable to *eat the Passover* (18:28). This refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *which is called the Passover* (Lk 22:1) that lasted for seven days. Jesus had already eaten the Passover meal just hours before with His disciples. It is amazing these Jews thought it was more important to avoid ceremonial uncleanness than to avoid being involved in the execution of an innocent man. What does Jesus say to these religious frauds in Matthew 23:28?



Since the Jews won't go into Pilate's palace, Pilate comes out and asks what charge they are bringing against Jesus. The Jews tell Pilate that Jesus is a criminal, and Pilate tells them to go judge Him by their own law. However, the crowd objects, saying it is unlawful for them to put anyone to

death (18:29-31). According to Roman law, only Roman officials could execute criminals. It seems though that certain spontaneous executions, like the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), were overlooked by the Romans to keep peace with the Jews. Therefore, the Jews possibly could have gotten away with stoning Jesus. However, Jesus was so popular among the common people that the Sanhedrin wanted Him killed by the Romans. Yet, there is another reason Jesus must be crucified—it fulfills Jesus' prophecy about how He would die (18:32). Also, Jesus had already told His disciples that the chief priests and scribes would condemn Him to death (Mt 20:18). Then, in Matthew 20:19a, what does Jesus say they will do?



The Jews accuse Jesus of claiming to be Israel's king, which would be insurrection (Lk 23:2). Therefore, Pilate takes Jesus inside his palace and asks Him if He is *the King of the Jews* (Jn 18:33). Jesus answers: "*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world*" (18:36). Since Jesus' kingdom is spiritual, not earthly, He does not need to fight with earthly weapons. Jesus acknowledges to Pilate that He is a king and says: "*Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*" Pilate cynically asks, "*What is truth?*" (18:37-38a). Then, without waiting for an answer, he turns away from the only One who can tell him *the truth* (Jn 14:6).

John does not tell us that when Pilate finds out Jesus is a Galilean, he sends Him to Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist, but Luke does (Lk 23:6-12). Pilate can see Jesus does not have any political ambitions and is no threat to Rome. Therefore, he goes out to the Jews and says he can't find Jesus guilty of anything (Jn 18:38b). Then, Pilate says he will release one man, which is the custom of the Roman governor at Passover, as a goodwill gesture to the Jews. He offers to release either Jesus or Barabbas (Jn 18:39). What does Mark 15:7 tell us about Barabbas?

However, the crowd shouts for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus (Jn 18:40). So, Jesus is condemned to death, instead of Barabbas.

The Jews and Pilate are making some really bad choices, and it can all be traced to one thing. What does Mark 15:10 reveal Pilate knows is the real reason the chief priests have delivered Jesus to him?

Harboring *envy* in your heart will cause you to make many bad decisions. Therefore, to make great choices, **refuse to envy** and . . .

Reflect on the long-term consequences (19:1-16).

After condemning Jesus, Pilate orders him to be *flogged*, or “scourged,” (19:1). This is an attempt to appease the Jewish leaders without crucifying Jesus (Lk 23:16). The scourge is a whip with one or more leather straps embedded with broken bone, sharp pieces of metal, and anything that would cut the flesh. Victims often died from the flogging alone. This is the fulfillment of what prophecy in Isaiah 53:5d?

After flogging Jesus, they place a crown of thorns on His head, clothe Him in a purple robe, and mock Him, calling Him the *King of the Jews*. They also strike Him *with their hands* (19:1-3).

Then, Pilate again presents Jesus to the crowd and says he can *find no guilt in him* (19:4). Jesus is wearing the crown of thorns and purple robe. He is probably so weak from the scourging and beating that the Roman soldiers must help Him stand. His back is dripping with blood, and some scholars say at this point His face is probably beaten beyond recognition. Pilate says, “*Behold the man!*” (19:5). In other words, “look at this poor man we have so brutally beaten.” If you want to see how much God loves you, look at Jesus now in your mind. Pilate hopes the pitiful sight of the unmercifully beaten Jesus will change their hearts. However, what do the chief priest and their officers (temple guards) shout (Jn 19:6b)?

Pilate again says he finds Jesus guilty of nothing. In exasperation, he tells them to defy his authority and crucify Jesus themselves, which could have had grave consequences. However, the Jewish leaders are determined not to give up and tell Pilate they have a law that anyone claiming to be the Son of God must die (19:7). When the Romans conquered the Jews they followed their usual policy of leaving the laws of their captives in force. Only capital punishment must be carried out exclusively by the Romans. According to Roman law, Jesus has been condemned to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin. So, now it is the lawful duty of the Roman government to carry out the execution.

Pilate knows they are right and is *even more afraid*. He goes back into his headquarters and asks Jesus where He came from, but Jesus gives no answer (19:8-9). This is the fulfillment of what prophecy in Isaiah 53:7a?

Shocked by Jesus' silence, Pilate reminds Him he has the power to set Him free or crucify Him. This doesn't intimidate Jesus, who replies: "*You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above*" (19:11a). Then, Jesus tells Pilate: "*Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin*" (19:11b). Most of the guilt for Jesus' crucifixion was on Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, whose scheme intentionally trapped Pilate into crucifying Jesus. Pilate was only a pawn in that diabolical scheme, but he was still responsible for his choices.

Pilate continues trying to set Jesus free, but the Jews shout that Pilate is no friend to Caesar if he lets Jesus go because Jesus claims to be a king who opposes Caesar. Therefore, Pilate has Jesus brought out and sits on his *judgment seat*, where his legal judgments originate. This judgment comes on *the day of Preparation of the Passover*, which indicates it is the day of preparation for the Sabbath—Saturday—that begins Passover week. This means it is Friday (19:12-14a). Passover week includes the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread that starts the Sabbath after Passover (Lk 22:1). Why does John mention it is *the day of Preparation of the Passover*? Because he is making it clear Jesus is the long-awaited, final sacrificial Lamb of Passover.

John tells us it is *about the sixth hour* (19:14b). By Jewish time, this would be noon. However, since Mark tells us *it was the third hour when they crucified him*, which is 9:00 a.m. (Mk 15:25), the *sixth hour* in John's gospel probably refers to Roman time, which means it is about 6:00 a.m.

The Jewish crowd continues shouting, "*Crucify him.*" Pilate, angry at being forced to condemn Jesus, sarcastically asks the Jews, "*Shall I crucify your King?*" (19:15a-b). How do the chief priests answer in 19:15c?



Finally, Pilate gives in and hands Jesus over to Roman soldiers to be crucified (19:16). Pilate and the Jewish leaders made choices based on short-term goals. They wanted the present benefits of power, popularity, and prestige, without reflecting on long-term consequences. That's why God gives us what command in Colossians 3:2?

That means you should always consider the long-term consequences. To make great choices: **refuse to envy and reflect on the long-term consequences.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 23 . . . Learning from the Shadow of the Cross (John 19:17-42)

NOTES

In the previous lesson, Pilate condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion. John doesn't tell us anything about Jesus' walk to Calvary, except to write: *and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha* (19:17). "Calvary" comes from CALVARIA, the Latin word for "skull." The other gospels tell us the Roman soldiers place the transom, or crossbeam, of the cross, which weighs more than 100 pounds, on Jesus' lacerated shoulders. He is then led through the most populous street in Jerusalem as people shout and spit on Him. The path He follows is called the "Via Dolorosa" ("way of the cross" or "way of suffering").

After carrying His cross only a short distance, Jesus falls under the load. He is so weak and exhausted even the cruel Roman soldiers realize no amount of kicking, hitting, or cursing can force Him to stagger on. Therefore, what does Matthew 27:32b tell us?

We learn at least **three** truths from the shadow of the cross . . .



The smallest amount of faith is enough (19:18-27).

When they arrive at Calvary, about 9 a.m., the soldiers nail Jesus' hands, or wrists, to the crossbeam. Jesus' behavior during His crucifixion is in striking contrast to the way victims of crucifixion usually reacted. They usually begged, cursed, and even spit at the soldiers and spectators. But what does our Lord do, according to Luke 23:34a?

After nailing His hands to the crossbeam, they quickly hoist it into place. His legs dangle until they are nailed to the upright beam. His legs are bent just enough so He can stand up and continue breathing until His chest muscles begin to contract and smother Him. Words do not have the power to describe the agony our Lord endures during the next six hours.



All the gospel writers mention that two others are crucified with Jesus, one on each side of Him (Jn 19:18). This is a fulfillment of the prophecy He would be *numbered with the transgressors* (Isa. 53:12). John also tells us

Pilate has an inscription written in the three common languages of that day—Aramaic, Latin, and Greek—and nailed to Jesus' cross. How does it read (Jn 19:19b)?

All passersby could read this inscription, and the Jews are offended. So, the chief priests ask Pilate to change it, but he refuses (19:20-22).

When the soldiers finish crucifying Jesus, they take His clothes and divide them into four parts, one for each soldier since a squad of four Roman soldiers crucified each victim. Contrary to the paintings of Jesus on the cross, Jesus was crucified naked, another part of the horrible humiliation of crucifixion. In Jesus' day, clothing was rather expensive, and part of a soldier's pay for crucifying someone was receiving the victim's clothing. When the soldiers start to divide Jesus' clothing, they notice Jesus' tunic (a loose-fitting, knee-length garment worn next to the skin) is woven in one piece, which means it is of some value. Therefore, the soldiers decide to *cast lots*, something like rolling dice, for it (19:24). Imagine Jesus watching in agony from the cross! John notes this is another fulfillment of prophecy and quotes Psalm 22:18. What is it (Jn 19:24c)?

Jesus was nailed to the cross at about nine o'clock in the morning. The gospels record Jesus' seven sayings from the cross (Lk 23:34 & 43; Jn 19:26-27; Mt 27:46; Jn 19:28 & 30; and Lk 23:46). The second saying is when one of the two thieves being crucified with Jesus joins in to mock Him. The other thief believes in Jesus but doesn't even know what or how to ask. Therefore, he simply asks Jesus to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. How does Jesus answer this simple but sincere request (Luke 23:43b)?

At the foot of the cross, John is standing with Jesus' mother, probably consoling her. Imagine Mary's incredible grief as she watches Jesus suffering on the cross. The third saying of Jesus concerns His mother. Apparently Joseph has already died, so Jesus asks John to take care of His mother, who is watching all this in horror (19:25-27).

Do you have as much faith as the thief on the cross? The second stanza of the old hymn, "There Is a Fountain," reads: "The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away; Wash all my sins away" (William Cowper). It's not the amount of faith but the object of our faith that saves us. That's why **the smallest**

amount of faith is enough. But also, we learn from the shadow of the cross that . . .



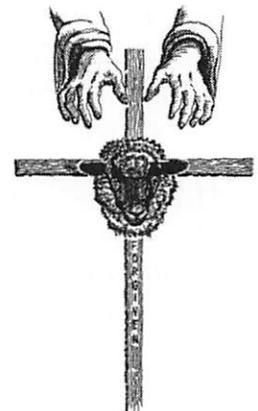
Jesus is our Passover Lamb (19:28-37).

After hanging on the cross for three hours and probably gasping for breath, Jesus cries out, “*I thirst*” (19:28). A jar of *sour wine*, or “vinegar,” is there, so the executioners soak a sponge, attach it to a *hyssop branch*, and lift it to Jesus’ mouth (19:29, Psa. 69:21b). Every detail of this event is according to prophecy and God’s divine plan. What were the Jews commanded to use to apply the blood of the Passover Lamb to their doorposts and lintels (Ex 12:22a)?

Finally, at three o’clock in the afternoon, after six hours on the cross, our Lord’s journey is complete. Therefore, our Lord cries out, “*It is finished.*” Then, Jesus bows His head and gives up His spirit, or dies (19:30). Jesus didn’t say, “I’m finished”; He said, “*It is finished.*” **What is finished?** Everything that must be done for our salvation *is finished*. Now, anyone can come directly to God for forgiveness of sin. Therefore, what does Matthew 27:51a tell us happens the moment Jesus dies?

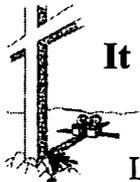
The *curtain*, or “veil,” separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement to atone for the sins of Israel (Lev. 16:1-34). The moment Jesus dies on the cross it is as though God reaches down from heaven and tears the veil *from top to bottom* to reveal Jesus has opened the way for anyone to come directly to Him.

The Sabbath begins at six p.m. that evening (Friday). Therefore, the Jews want the bodies removed from the crosses immediately. This is because, according to Jewish law, a criminal’s body cannot be left hanging on a tree, or cross, overnight because it would desecrate the land (Deut. 21:22-23). So, they ask Pilate to have the victims’ legs broken to hasten their deaths, so the bodies could be taken down. The soldiers, therefore, break the legs of the two thieves, but when they see Jesus is already dead, they do not break His legs. To make certain He is dead, one of the soldiers pierces Jesus’ side with a spear. As a result, what happens (Jn 19:34b)?



Some suggest this means the pericardial (par-uh-car'-dee-al) sac that surrounds the heart and contains fluid to lubricate the heart was ruptured. Whatever the reason, the wound proves Jesus was dead. Therefore, the soldiers do not break Jesus' legs, fulfilling the prophecy that none of His bones would be broken (19:33-36). This was a requirement of the Passover Lamb (Ex 12:46b). John is connecting the Passover lamb with Jesus and His crucifixion. Also, what does Paul write in 1 Corinthians 5:7b?

From the shadow of the cross we learn **the smallest amount of faith is enough, Jesus is our Passover Lamb, and . . .**



It is never too late to take a stand for Jesus (19:38-42).

Now, two secret disciples of Jesus finally take a bold stand. Late is always better than never. First is Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Sanhedrin (Jn 19:38 & Mk 15:43a). The Romans usually left crucified bodies exposed to rot as a lesson to everyone who dared to break Roman law. Joseph was a man *looking for the kingdom of God* (Mk 15:43b). What else does Mark 15:43c tell us about him?

Joseph was *a good and righteous man* who did not consent to the decision of the Sanhedrin to crucify Jesus (Lk 23:50-51). Joseph's asking for the body of Jesus was a bold act for a prominent member of the Sanhedrin and something not even one of Jesus' disciples would do.

Joseph is accompanied by Nicodemus, who earlier came to Jesus by night (Jn 3). He brings *a mixture of myrrh and aloes* weighing *about seventy-five pounds* (Jn 19:39). The spices were very expensive, and *seventy-five pounds* of them was extravagant, indicating both the wealth and devotion of the giver. Joseph and Nicodemus take Jesus' body down and wrap it with spices in strips of linen, in accordance with Jewish burial customs. There is a new, unused tomb nearby, and they put Jesus' body in it (19:40-41). Like the dying thief, Joseph and Nicodemus reveal **it is never too late to take a stand for Jesus**. This is because of what truth about God's love that is repeated over forty times in the Bible (1 Chron. 16:34b)?

From the shadow of the cross we learn **the smallest amount of faith is enough, Jesus is our Passover Lamb, and it is never too late to take a stand for Jesus.**



Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 24 . . . What the Resurrection Proves (John 20:1-18)

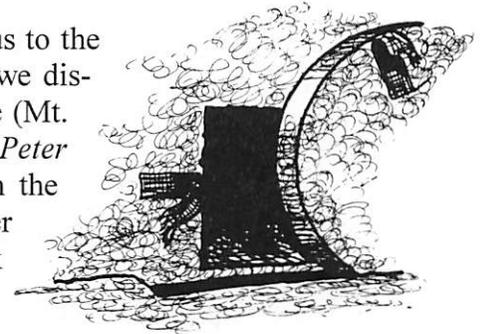
NOTES

After Jesus died on the cross, His body was placed into a tomb by two members of the Sanhedrin—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. It is Friday, and it seems like the end of everything for Jesus and His disciples. We all have dark “Fridays” when our whole world seems to be falling apart. A loved one dies, a marriage is in trouble, finances are a nightmare, a child becomes a prodigal, a terrible sin has been committed, etc. On your heartbreaking “Fridays,” remember Sunday is coming, and the Resurrection proves **three** things . . .

1. All your sins can be forgiven (20:1-10).

Our Lord’s body was laid in the tomb on Friday afternoon; it is now early *on the first day of the week*—Sunday. While it is still dark, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb. What does she see (20:1c)?

Mary Magdalene is one of at least four women who followed Jesus to the cross, and watched Him die (Jn 19:25). From the other gospels we discover that several women come to the tomb with Mary Magdalene (Mt. 28:1, Mk 16:1 & Lk 24:10). Mary Magdalene runs to tell *Simon Peter and the other disciple* (John) that the Lord has been taken from the tomb and she doesn’t know where they have put Him (20:2). Other women also go with Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples (Lk 24:10).

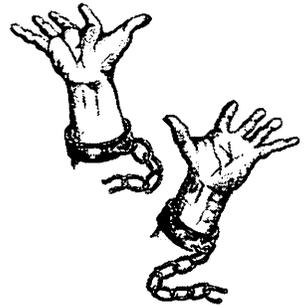


Peter and John run to the tomb. John arrives first but waits for Peter, who goes in first and finds the strips of linen used to wrap Jesus’ body lying in the tomb. Jesus’ body had been wrapped, but a *face cloth* had been laid over His face. This *face cloth* was not lying with the linen cloths but was *folded up in a place by itself* (20:3-7). This neatness shows there was no hasty removal of Jesus’ body by grave robbers. If His body were stolen, the cloths would have been taken or scattered around. Finally, John goes into the tomb. What does he write about himself in John 20:8b?

John then writes parenthetically: *for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead* (20:9). In other words, John knew Jesus had risen from the dead but did not understand it was according

to Scripture. Later, they would come to understand that Jesus' resurrection fulfilled what prophecy about the Messiah in Psalm 16:10?

The disciples did not fabricate the story of Jesus' resurrection; they were just as surprised as anyone. None of the disciples believed Jesus would be resurrected. The resurrection proves Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Son of God who would give His life for the sins of the world (Jn 3:16). Many people do not have a relationship with God because they don't believe they can be forgiven of all their sins. However, the resurrection proves they can. This is because of what fact found in Ephesians 1:7?



Our forgiveness is not determined by the degree of our sin but by the unlimited *riches* of God's *grace*, which is greater than all our sin. John and Peter believe, but they are perplexed by the empty tomb and don't know what to do. So, they go *back to their homes* (20:10). The Greek text literally says "to their own" and doesn't include the word "homes." Therefore, it may mean they returned to their friends, perhaps the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany, only two miles from Jerusalem. We know they didn't go to their own homes in Galilee because that evening they are still in Jerusalem (20:19).

The Resurrection proves **all your sins can be forgiven** and . . .

2. God cares about you (20:11-16).

The first person to see Jesus after His resurrection is Mary Magdalene who apparently follows Peter and John back to the tomb. After Peter and John leave, Mary stands crying outside the tomb. As she weeps, she looks into the tomb and sees two angels seated where Jesus' body had been. The other gospels tell us Mary and the other women have already seen the angels when they first came to the tomb (Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4). The angels ask why she is crying. She says someone has taken away the body of her Lord, and she doesn't know where they have put Him (Jn 20:13).

Perhaps the angel motions for Mary to turn around. Whatever the reason, Mary turns, and when she does, Jesus is standing there; but she doesn't know who He is, perhaps because her eyes are filled with tears and she is blinded by her grief. Jesus asks her why she is weeping and whom she is seeking. Thinking He is the gardener (because the tomb is in a garden), Mary asks where he has taken Jesus' body (20:15).

Then, Jesus simply says, “*Mary*” (20:16a). The sweetest word you ever hear is when your name is spoken by someone who loves you. No gardener could speak Mary’s name like Jesus. Jesus also knows your name. He knows more about you than you know about yourself. Jesus taught that God cares about everything in your life. That’s why Jesus makes what remarkable revelation in Matthew 10:30?

God cares about our small problems, as well as the big ones. There is a saying, “I’d rather be swallowed by a whale than nibbled to death by minnows.” You may feel like you are being swallowed by a whale or being nibbled to death by minnows. However, because God cares about both situations, what does Peter write in 1 Peter 5:7?

Mary turns toward Jesus and says in Aramaic (Hebrew), “*Rabboni!*” (Rab bow-nee’), which means *teacher*, or “Master” (Jn 20:16b). Mary’s experience reveals that just because you are brokenhearted or suffering doesn’t mean the Lord has forgotten you. Because God cares for you, He knows about and remembers your every tear. What does Psalm 56:8b-c tell us about God?

The Resurrection proves **all your sins can be forgiven, God cares about you, and . . .**

3. You can be part of God’s family (20:17-18).

When Mary recognizes Jesus, she apparently throws her arms around Him, because Jesus says, “*Do not cling to me*” (20:17a). Jesus is not refusing to be touched (20:27); He just doesn’t want to be detained. He still has much to do and has a message for Mary to take to His disciples. Jesus explains: “*for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers*” (20:17b). Jesus now calls His disciples *my brothers*, whereas before He called them *friends* (15:15). The Resurrection places the followers of Jesus in a new relationship with Him. Therefore, what does Jesus tell Mary to say to His disciples (John 20:17c)?



that's me!

FAMILY PORTRAIT

When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we become part of God's family and can call Him *Father*, because He is not just a god but **our God**. Mary Magdalene then goes to the disciples and tells them she has *seen the Lord*. She also tells them all the things He said to her (20:18).

It is significant that all four gospels record Christ appearing first to Mary Magdalene. Also, when the women who followed Jesus are listed Mary Magdalene is always listed first, even before Mary the mother of Jesus (Mt 27:56, 61; Mk 16:1). This probably indicates a leadership role among the women or that she was the most committed follower. Little is known about her, but what does Mark 16:9b tell us about Mary Magdalene?

Some believe she was previously a prostitute because the name "Magdalene" indicates she came from Magdala, a city on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee with a reputation for prostitution. Coupled with this fact is that Luke first mentions Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2), immediately following the account of the sinful woman who washes Jesus' feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair (Lk 7:38). Therefore, some people conclude they are the same woman. This all seems to fit Mary Magdalene, because what does Jesus say about the sinful woman in Luke 7:47?

However, since the Bible doesn't say, we will not know until we get to heaven if Mary Magdalene was that sinful woman. Whatever her background, the fact that Jesus cast *seven demons* out of her indicates her life prior to becoming a follower of Jesus was horrible. This explains why she was the most devoted of all Jesus' followers at His crucifixion and was first at the tomb. Jesus had done great things for her; therefore, her devotion to Him was great. Mary Magdalene is a wonderful example of what truth Paul declares in 1 Timothy 1:15b?

Remembering we are all great sinners causes our devotion to Jesus to remain great. Jesus' resurrection proves **all your sins can be forgiven, God cares about you, and you can be part of God's family.**

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 25 . . . When Your Faith Falters (John 20:19-31)

NOTES

It is the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection, and the disciples are hiding behind locked doors *for fear of the Jews* (20:19). *Fear* is the opposite of faith. Because of their *fear*, the disciples have faltered in their faith, but then our Lord appears to them. From their experience, we learn **two** truths to remember when our faith falters.

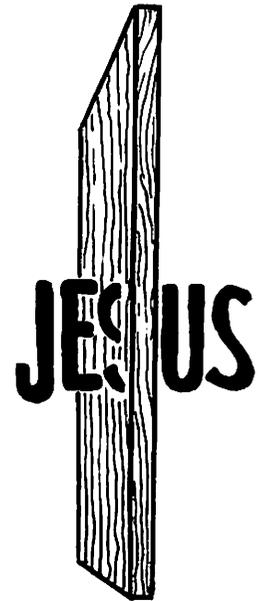
Jesus transforms us (20:19-23).

Though the doors are locked, Jesus suddenly materializes in the midst of the disciples. Apparently, similar to the television show "Star Trek," Jesus can transport Himself at will. From this incident we discover **Jesus transforms us** in four ways . . .

1. He transforms us with His *peace*. Jesus' first words to His disciples are "*Peace be with you*" (20:19). When we fail the Lord, as the disciples did, we also need to hear these words. They had deserted Jesus, Peter had denied Him, and even after the resurrection they are hiding in fear because of their faltering faith. Our Lord could have rebuked them for being cowards and for deserting Him, but instead He says, "*Peace be with you.*" Like the disciples, we may fail the Lord, but He will never fail us. How does Jesus describe the purpose for **His *peace*** in John 14:27c?

Jesus wants to give us **His *peace***, which passes *all* human *understanding* (Philip. 4:7). When the Lord's *peace* fills hearts, anxiety and fear are expelled. **Jesus transforms us with His *peace*** and . . .

2. He transforms us with His *purpose*. The disciples are *startled and frightened*, thinking He is a *spirit*, or ghost (Lk 24:37). Jesus then shows them the wounds in His hands and side to convince them it is really He, and not a ghost. Then, the disciples are *glad when they see the Lord* (Jn 20:20). Jesus apparently gave His commission on three different occasions (Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:46-48). Each Gospel records a different aspect of it. Write John's below (20:21b):



That sums up the Lord's purpose for all of His disciples. Jesus not only commissioned His first disciples; He also says to us: "*I am sending you.*" Just as the *Father* sent Jesus, He is *sending you* and me to impact the world with the Father's love. He wants us to impact our families, our churches, our communities, and our associates for Him. Wherever you go after this Bible study, remember Jesus is *sending you* to share His love and forgiveness. **Jesus transforms us with His *peace*, *purpose*, and . . .**

3. He transforms us with His power. Before the disciples can be sent out, they need supernatural power and gifts because thus far they have been failures. Therefore, Jesus breathes on them. Then, what does He say (20:22c)?

This was a foretaste, or sample, of the Holy Spirit, who was to come in fullness fifty days later, on the day of Pentecost. They would at that time receive their spiritual gifts and power (Acts 2:1-4). Jesus never commissions us to do anything without empowering us to complete it (Philip. 2:13 & 4:13).



Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we be effective disciples. **Jesus transforms us with His *peace*, *purpose*, *power*, and . . .**

4. He transforms us with His proclamation. Jesus tells His disciples: "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld*" (20:23). Jesus doesn't mean the disciples can forgive sin. There is not a single instance in the New Testament of the disciples absolving anyone of sin. Only God can forgive sin. Jesus is giving the disciples, and by extension us, the privilege of proclaiming God's terms of obtaining *forgiveness*. If a person believes and confesses Christ, we have the privilege of proclaiming his or her sins are *forgiven*. We do not **provide** forgiveness; we **proclaim** forgiveness through Christ's death. How does 2 Corinthians 5:20a-b express this privilege?

If people refuse to accept Christ and repent of their sins, then with the authority of Christ, we can inform them they are not *forgiven*. **When your faith falters, remember Jesus transforms us with His *peace*, *purpose*, *power*, and *proclamation*.** But also, remember . . .

Jesus understands our doubts (20:24-31).

When Jesus first appears to His disciples, Thomas is not with them. Therefore, the disciples find Thomas and tell him they have seen the risen Lord.

Thomas tells them unless he sees Him and places his finger into the nail marks and puts his hand into Jesus' side, he "*will never believe*" (20:25). It wouldn't be enough for Thomas just to see Jesus; he must also touch Him.



Thomas was not a coward. In John 11, Jesus tells His disciples He must go to Bethany, only two miles from Jerusalem, because their friend Lazarus has died. If Jesus were caught, the Jewish leaders would have him killed. The other disciples were afraid to go, but what does Thomas say to them (11:16c)?

Thomas was also called *the Twin*, or "Didymus," which is Greek for twin. We don't know who Thomas' twin was, but sometimes we all feel like his twin when we have times of doubts. Thomas is so discouraged he won't even believe the reports of his fellow disciples. The Lord understands when we have doubts about our faith.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is when John the Baptist was put in prison by Herod Antipas for his preaching. John had baptized Jesus and heard God say from heaven, "*This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased*" (Mt 3:17). He is also the only person in the Bible to call Jesus "*the Lamb of God*" (Jn 1:29). However, in his prison cell, John becomes very discouraged, and his faith falters. Therefore, he sends his disciples to Jesus to ask if He is the Messiah or should he expect someone else (Mt 11:3).

Jesus tells John's disciples to go back and tell John that the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is being preached (Mt 11:4-5). These are things only the Messiah could do. When John's disciples leave, Jesus knows the crowd heard John's question and would wonder about John. Therefore, what does Jesus say about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11a?

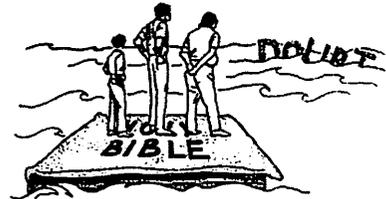
From this incident, we can see that Jesus knows discouragement and doubts sometimes get us down. He understands when our faith falters.

The next Sunday (eight days after Thomas had said he must have proof) the disciples meet again behind locked doors. Jesus again materializes among them and says, "*Peace be with you*" (Jn 20:26). Jesus then walks over to Thomas and says, "*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe*" (20:27b). None of the disciples have seen Jesus since His last appearance,

so no one told Jesus what Thomas said. Therefore, Thomas instantly realizes that Jesus supernaturally knows all about him. Overwhelmed by what he sees and hears, what does Thomas say to Jesus in John 20:28b?

This confession surpasses all others made by the disciples, because none of the other disciples has ever called Jesus “*God*.” Thomas was the last to believe in the resurrection but the first to grasp its implications. Jesus was not only his *Lord* but his *God*. After Thomas’ response, Jesus doesn’t rebuke him for his doubts. Instead, He says: “*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (20:29). The word *blessed* refers to a satisfied faith. This is a faith that doesn’t require visions, miracles, prosperity, or seeing someone return from the dead. A faith that doesn’t require those things, but is simply based on the Word of God, is far superior and therefore *blessed*. How does 2 Corinthians 5:7 describe this kind of *blessed* faith?

We have all the proof we need in the Bible. Faith doesn’t come from seeing; *faith comes from hearing* the words in the Bible (Rom. 10:17). As you read and hear the words of the Bible, **your faith will grow and your doubts will go**. That’s why you need to be in Bible study and worship services every week.



John writes that Jesus did many other signs, or miracles, not recorded in his book (20:30). Thirty-five miracles are recorded in the gospels, but John only records seven (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-9; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9:1-12; 11:1-16). How does John sum up the purpose for writing his gospel (20:31)?

John’s purpose is not academic or historical; it is spiritual. He wants his readers to have eternal *life* by believing Jesus is *the Christ* and *the Son of God*. However, sometimes after we believe, our faith falters. When it does, we need to remember **Jesus transforms us** and **Jesus understands our doubts**.

Journey Into Knowing Jesus

LESSON 26 . . . When You Wander from the Lord (John 21:1-25)

NOTES

John added chapter 21 to his gospel years after chapter 20 was written. He wrote this chapter to clarify some misunderstandings about the relationship between his death and the second coming of Christ (21:23). In this chapter, Jesus appears to His disciples for the third time (21:14). The disciples are now in Galilee on the Sea of Tiberias, the Roman name for the Sea of Galilee. Seven of the disciples are together: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee (the author John and James), plus two other disciples whose names are not mentioned (21:2). Not knowing what else to do as it is getting dark, what does Peter say in John 21:3a?

The other six disciples say they will go with him. So, they get into their boat and fish all night but catch nothing (21:3). In this context, we discover what to do **when you wander from the Lord**.

Remember the Lord's provisions (21:4-14).

For the disciples, fishing wasn't recreation; it was the labor-intensive profession of Peter, Andrew, James, and John before following Jesus (Mk 1:16-20). Confused and unsure of the future after Jesus' death, the disciples return to their old occupations. After fishing all night and catching nothing, the seven disciples are very tired and hungry. At daybreak they hear a voice calling to them from shore saying, "*Children, do you have any fish?*" They answer, *No*. Then, the voice tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat and they will find some fish (21:5-6a). When they do what the voice says, what happens (21:6b)?

John remembers the only other time this happened. Peter, James, and John had fished all night and caught nothing (Lk 5:1-10). Then, as now, Jesus tells Peter to put his nets out into the deep water, which is a bad place to fish because fish feed in shallow water. Peter obeys, and as a result, they catch so many fish their nets begin to break (Lk 5:6). Remembering this incident, what does John say to Peter (Jn 21:7a)?



As soon as Peter hears this, he knows it is true; so, he leaps into the water and swims to shore. He can't wait to see His Lord. The other six disciples hurry to shore in the boat, towing the net full of fish. When they get to shore, they see a fire of burning coals with fish and bread on it. Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish they have just caught. Therefore, Peter brings the catch of 153 *large fish* to shore. It should have torn the net but it didn't (21:7b-11). This was indeed an unbelievable catch of fish.

Why does Jesus perform this miracle? I think it is because He wants His disciples to remember He will still more than meet their every need. When we, like Peter, fail the Lord we need to remember what it was like when we were living for Him. For example, we need to remember what words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33?

When we follow the Lord, we don't have to worry, because He will provide everything we need. Remember the old saying: "Where the Lord guides, He will provide."

After they are all on shore, Jesus says, "*Come and have breakfast*" (21:12). The disciples stand in awe and silence as the Lord serves them breakfast. Jesus performs His last miracle for His disciples to cause them to **remember the Lord's provisions**. This is what you need to remember **when you wander from the Lord**. But also . . .

Recognize your weakness (21:15-17).

When they finish eating, Jesus uses Peter's original name and asks: "*Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?*" (21:15). With that question Jesus may have been pointing at Peter's boats and nets. However, more likely He was asking, "Simon, do you love me more than these other disciples love Me?" This is because what did Peter earlier say to Jesus in Matthew 26:33?

After this statement Jesus had told Peter he would deny Him three times. Now Jesus is saying, "Simon, you boasted about your love for me. Now, I ask you, do you love me more than these." The Lord is trying to teach Peter that even though he loves Him, pride can bring him down. This is because of what truth found in Proverbs 11:2a?

Our Lord changed Simon's name to Peter (Mt 16:18), which means rock, and the "rock" has crumbled before the other disciples. However, Jesus doesn't want Peter's pride to bring him down again. He knows that before Peter can become the leader of the disciples, he must learn humility because *humility comes before honor* (Prov. 15:33b).

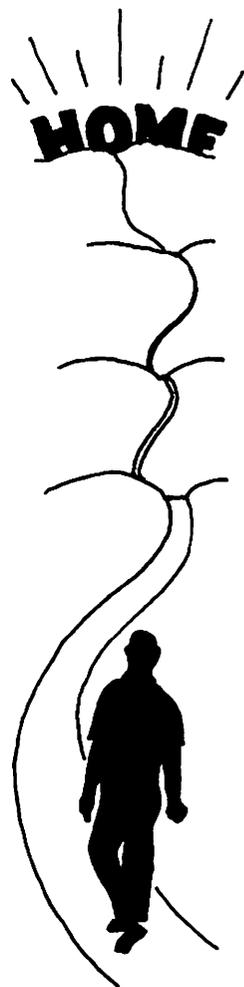
Peter answers, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you" (21:15b). Jesus replies, "Feed my lambs." That means, "OK, prove your love by taking care of my lambs." Again Jesus asks, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" To which Peter answers, "Yes, Lord: you know that I love you." Jesus then tells him, "Tend my sheep" (21:16). The word translated *tend*, or "feed" (POIMAINŌ, poy-my'-no), means "shepherd." Jesus, as the Chief Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11), appoints Peter and other leaders who will follow as under-shepherds, or pastors. Peter never forgot these words. About 30 years later, and three years before his death, what does Peter write to the elders in the church (1 Peter 5:2a)?

Finally, Jesus, still using his old name, asks Peter a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (21:17a). Peter is hurt because the Lord has asked him three times, "Do you love me?" Why three times? How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Three times! So, Jesus now gives Peter opportunity to confess Him three times. On the third time, Peter, no longer proud and boastful, probably with tears streaming down his face, says: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (21:17c). Peter knows what truth about the Lord found in Psalm 44:21b?

The Lord knows all about Peter's denial and lapse in faith, but He also knows Peter's heart. Therefore, He says to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (21:17d). With these words Jesus restores Peter to his place as leader among the disciples and later of the church. But Jesus first wanted Peter to recognize his weakness. The Lord wants us to do the same because our weaknesses cause us to wander from the Lord. It could be pride, drugs, greed, success, the internet, a hobby, jealousy, bitterness, lust, etc. Whatever your weakness, you need to recognize it, confess it, and forsake it—get it out of your life. **When you wander from the Lord: remember the Lord's provisions, recognize your weakness, and . . .**

Recommit your life (21:18-25).

Now, Jesus tells Peter how he will die. He says that when Peter is old, he will *stretch out* his hands for someone else to dress him and lead him where he does not want to go (Jn 21:18b). The phrase *stretch out your*



hands suggests Peter will be crucified. The stretching of hands took place when the Roman soldiers would stretch the victim's hands and fasten them to the crossbar, or transom, of the cross. Then, they would lead them to the place of crucifixion. John explains that Jesus said this *to show by what kind of death Peter was to glorify God* (21:19a). Some thirty years later, not long before his martyrdom, what does Peter write in 2 Peter 1:14?

For three decades, Peter lived with the prediction of his gruesome crucifixion. Then, according to tradition, around A.D. 66 Peter was taken exactly as Christ said to the place of crucifixion. However, as his last request Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same way as his Lord.



After telling Peter how he will die, Jesus says to him: *"Follow me"* (21:19b). Three years before, on this same seashore, Jesus was walking and saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake. What does Mark 1:17b record He says to them?

Peter has lately been a very disappointing follower. Therefore, Jesus is giving him a chance to recommit to that call. Peter would never again deny his Lord, though it eventually cost him his life.

Peter turns and sees John following behind them and asks, *"Lord, what about this man?"* (21:21). In other words, what will happen to John? Jesus says to Peter, *"If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"* (21:22a-b). From time to time, we are all like Peter, especially if we are going through a difficult time. We tend to compare our situation to those of others. Jesus tells Peter: *"You follow me"* and do not be concerned with John (21:22c). We must not compare ourselves to other believers because it only distracts and hinders us from following Jesus. Instead, we are to *lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us* (Heb. 12:1). Then, what does Hebrews 12:2a tell us?



When we compare ourselves with other believers, we detour from *the race*

that is set before us by God, which is His purpose for our lives. We must fix our eyes on Jesus, and Him alone.

John records this passage to correct a rumor that he would not die until Jesus returns (21:23). John then writes that he is *the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true* (21:24). The phrase *we know* probably refers to John and his original readers or his associates.

John closes his gospel by writing: *Now there are also many other things that Jesus did* (21:25a). John is saying he doesn't record everything Jesus said and did. Even combining all four gospels doesn't do that. John concludes: *Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written* (21:25b). This means the world *could not contain the books* it would take to fully capture the passion, power, person, love, and glory of the Son of God.

When you wander from the Lord: remember the Lord's provisions, recognize your weakness, and recommit your life.

We have completed our study of *John*, which is a "journey into knowing Jesus." Now, you must answer the most important and personal question in this study. Do you really know Jesus? You may ask, "How can I know for sure?" How does 1 John 2:3 answer that question?

If you are not sure you know Him, or you know you don't because you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, be sure to seek the counsel of a pastor, a Bible teacher, or a trusted Christian friend. You may also email the Journey staff at staff@journeyseries.com.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barton, Bruce, & Philip W. Comfort, eds. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.
- Boice, James Montgomery. *The Gospel of John* (A five-volume set). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979.
- Brand, Chad, Charles Draper, & Archie England, eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003.
- Brown, Robert K. & Philip W. Comfort. *The New Greek English Interlinear New Testament*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 1993.
- Constable, Thomas L. *Tom Constable's Notes on the Bible*. Galaxie Software. Database Copyright, WORDsearch Corporation.
- Gaebelein, Frank E., ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Volume ten). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1978.
- Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary, The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1953. Database © 2008 WORDsearch Corporation.
- Lenski, R. C. H. *Commentary on the New Testament, Volumes 1-12*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961. Database © 2008 WORDsearch Corporation.
- MacArthur, John, Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, John* (a two-volume set). Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 2006.
- Pratt, Richard & Max Anders. *Holman New Testament Commentary, John*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000. Database WORDsearch Corporation, 2005.
- Thayer, J. H. *Thayer's Greek English Lexicon: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996.
- Vine, W. E. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, (no copyright).
- Walvoord, John F. & Roy B. Zuck, eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive (John 1-12); Be Transformed (John 13-21)*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1986.
- WORDsearch Version 9. Austin, Texas: WORDsearch Corporation, 1987-2009.