

# Quest for Fulfillment

*Studies from the Book of John*  
*Part 1 (Chapters 1 - 9)*

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# Foreword

*Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.*

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# Quest for Fulfillment

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# **LESSON 1**

## **LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD**

### **Prologue (John 1:1-18)**

The author of the Gospel of John is the apostle John 2 who was among the original twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Historians date his writing around A.D. 85. This would have made John about 85 years old when he penned his gospel, having experienced some 60 years of faith in Jesus Christ. In his 20's as a close disciple of Jesus, John had personally witnessed Christ perform countless miracles (John 20:30, 21:25) such as feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, walking on water, calming storms, and healing the leprous, crippled and demon possessed. He saw Jesus restore sight to the blind and bring Lazarus and a widow's son back from the dead. John saw heaven opened, Elijah and Moses bearing witness to the glorified Christ and heard the voice of God declaring "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!" (Mark 9:2-8.)

John was there when Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, was crucified on a cross, and most incredible of all, as Jesus walked and talked with him and many others during a forty-day period after His resurrection from the dead.

But this was only the beginning. After this, John witnessed the miraculous coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) to indwell and empower believers to witness for Christ in the face of hostility. He saw God enable the early believers to perform miracles as the church grew and spread the Good News about Christ. John witnessed the incredible conversion of a formerly ruthless persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus (Paul), whom the Lord used to spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Last but not least, John lived through the persecution and martyrdom of countless believers and all the apostles except himself. He was now full of years and, more than ever, full of faith.

Tradition states that John wrote his gospel at the request of Christian friends, and agreed to do so only after the church had fasted and prayed for three days.<sup>2</sup> After all he had seen and heard, what did the aged apostle have to say? John began his book with a prologue, which summarized the contents of the book



4. What personal testimony about Christ did the apostle give (1:14)?

5. John described Jesus as the incarnate Word of God (1:1-2,14). With this title, he referred to Christ as both the reason and force behind all creation as well as the expression of God to mankind. How are these concepts reiterated by the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:1-3)?

**Reference:** Note 3, *The Word*, page 12.

6. John the Baptist, a contemporary prophet in Israel, also declared the deity of Jesus Christ. What was John the Baptist's role (1:6-8,15)?

**Reference:** *John the Baptist*, Note 4 page 12.

7. The Apostle John was probably about 25 years old when he became Jesus' disciple, which would have placed him in his 80's when he wrote his gospel. With 60 years as a believer behind him, what did the apostle testify to be the experience of one who receives Christ (1:16-18)?

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **The Need for Light**

John begins his Gospel by addressing the need for light. Small children, and even adults, instinctively fear the darkness. It is a place of possible danger that gives a profound sense of being out of control.

Life can hold spiritual and emotional darkness for us all. We are a people who universally benefit from light in our lives. We not only need physical light to give us direction, understanding, and security, but we also need spiritual light to have these needs met.

Biblically, the word "light" is often synonymous with good and truth while "darkness" represents evil and falsehood. As in the physical realm, light is opposite darkness, but darkness is not equal to light in strength. A wonderful biblical truth is that spiritual light, or good and truth, ultimately cannot be overcome by darkness (John 1:5). Thus, the light of God John speaks of promises not only to meet our needs for direction, understanding, and security, but also to enable us to overcome evil and fill our lives with truth. Here lie some very important keys to fulfillment. As we begin our study, let's look at what the Bible has to say about our need for light.

1. a. What are the contrasts between light and darkness in the physical realm?

b. How do these contrasts relate to spiritual and emotional darkness?

2. What circumstances in life make us feel like we are in the dark?

3. a. What do the following verses reveal about the light God gives spiritually and emotionally?

Psalm 27:1

Isaiah 42:16

Isaiah 60:20

b. What is mentioned about our part in receiving God's light?

Matthew 7:7-8

Proverbs 3:5-6

4. How does the Bible describe the darkness that comes from life without God's light?

Deuteronomy 28:29



Proverbs 4:19

5. What causes of spiritual darkness are suggested in the following?  
Romans 1:21-22

Ephesians 4:18

6. As John states in his prologue, what does the apostle Paul declare about the source of the light we need?  
II Corinthians 4:6

7. a. The prophets referred to Jesus Christ as "Immanuel," which means "God is with us" (Matthew 1:23). What spiritual light was God able to give through His Son coming to earth?

b. What do the following passages tell us about God which add to our understanding of Jesus Christ as Immanuel, the light of the world?

2 Samuel 22:31

Philippians 2:5-8

Hebrews 4:14-15

8. What did Jesus promise to the one who believes in Him?

John 8:12

## **Summary**

9. a. When or how have you experienced spiritual and/or emotional darkness in your life?

b. What have you found life to be like without the illumination of God?

10. a. Are there present areas of your life in which you need the direction, understanding or security that God promises when we seek Him?

b. Take a moment to acknowledge your need and His faithfulness to meet it.

11. John declares that receiving Jesus Christ brings us out of darkness into light. Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ to do this for you?

If not, and you would like to, the following is a suggested prayer:

*Heavenly Father, I need the light that comes through receiving your Son, Jesus Christ. I now invite Him to come into my life and illuminate my understanding of Your truth. Amen.*

## **LESSON 1 NOTES**

1 *Gospel is a literal translation from the Greek euaggelion and means "good news."* In the New Testament the term is applied to the revelation of God's plan for reconciling man to Himself by forgiving his sin and by transforming his character. The Gospel is the story of God's gift of salvation through the person and work of Christ which the church has been commissioned to proclaim (Mark 16:15; Acts 20:24; Ephesians 1:13). The impact of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ compelled His disciples to present His message to the public. *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, page 318.*

2 *Authorship of John.* Like many biblical authors, John, who refers to himself only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7), does not mention his name in the book. This fact would be hard to explain had John not been the author; any other writer would have mentioned this important disciple by name. The author's thorough understanding of Jewish life, geography of the region and eyewitness accounts support John's authorship. Tradition and early writers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian also attribute the book to the apostle. John's father was Zebedee (21:2), his mother Salome, who was also a close follower of Jesus (cf. Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1). Some believe Salome was the sister of Jesus' mother Mary (cf. Mark 15:40; John 19:25). Perhaps the closeness between Jesus and John was born in early years as cousins.

John's older brother was the apostle James, who later became the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2). They were fishermen by trade, on the Sea of Galilee. After the death of Christ, John became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9), and later wrote the Gospel near Ephesus where he spent the last years of his life. In all, John wrote five New Testament books: three epistles (I, II and III John), the Gospel of John, and Revelation (penned in exile on the Isle of Patmos).

Tradition states that John wrote his gospel at the request of Christian friends, and agreed to do so only after the church had fasted and prayed for three days. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, page 438.

3 *The Word.* The term "Word" is the outstanding title given Jesus in the prologue. It is the best possible translation of the Greek *logos*, which is best defined by the word "reason." To the Greek, *logos* represented the origin and power behind order in the universe. To the Jew, *logos* referred to the mighty word of God which spoke the universe into existence.

4 *John the Baptist* was a very important personality in Israel. (See *Commentary*, Lesson 2.) John was rugged, living in the wilderness area beyond the Jordan. He preached repentance and baptism symbolic of the washing away of sins in preparation for the soon-coming Messiah. Jew and Gentile alike who embraced John's message were baptized with water. John's teaching

and baptism angered Jewish religious leaders who felt prepared to meet the Messiah just because they were Abraham's descendants and God's chosen people; only Gentile proselytes of the Jewish faith had received water baptism before. Even so, multitudes flocked to the Jordan to hear John and be baptized by him.

The gospels emphasize that John's sole mission was to be the God-appointed messenger to announce the arrival of Christ. John recognized and introduced Jesus as the Messiah when Jesus was baptized. Later, the prophet was imprisoned and put to death by Herod.

## **LESSON 2**

### **THE FIRST DISCIPLES**

#### **John 1:19-51**

While biblical accounts do not reflect the fact, John the Baptist was a very powerful personality in Israel and stirred up enormous interest in Palestine through his preaching. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote more about John the Baptist than Jesus Christ.

The reason John was so powerful was that he was widely believed to be a prophet. Israel's history involved prophets through whom the people heard the very words of God. The Jewish people took great pride in their prophets, but in the four hundred years since Malachi, there had been no prophet in Israel. God had been silent. Then came John the Baptist who was rugged, living in the desert on locusts and wild honey. He uncompromisingly preached repentance from sin in order to prepare for the soon-to-come promised Messiah.

The Jews had looked forward to a Messiah who would deliver them from Roman oppression and make them the world power.<sup>1</sup> But John the Baptist announced that the Messiah would soon come to judge the hearts of individuals and that being a descendant of Abraham alone was not enough to make one righteous before God. John preached that Jew and Gentile alike should repent of sin and be baptized in preparation to meet the Christ.

Multitudes flocked to the Jordan River to hear John and be baptized by him. Because of his teachings on repentance and baptism, however, many Jewish leaders rejected the prophet. They were offended that John was baptizing God's chosen people alongside Gentiles (the Jews had previously baptized only Gentile proselytes of the Jewish faith). The Jews also believed that simply being a physical descendant of Abraham made one righteous before God. The religious leaders were insulted that John was instructing them to repent of sin and be baptized to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. But John's popularity and the public's opinion that he was a prophet forced his critics to remain silent. Instead, they began to devise subtle plans to undermine his ministry.

So it was that as John was busy baptizing people in the Jordan, the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem sent a deputation to openly question his ministry credentials (John 1:19-28). They asked him if he was the Old Testament prophet Elijah who never saw death (Malachi 4:5) or The Prophet foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. If not these, would he claim to be the Messiah? What they were really asking was, "Where do you get the right to preach repentance and baptize Jews?"

John handled his adversaries wisely, denying that he was any of the Old Testament prophets yet to come. Instead he declared, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, that God sent him to "prepare the way for the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3). As much as the religious leaders tried to focus on him, John consistently turned the focus on the coming Christ.

The very next day after this confrontation, Jesus came to be baptized by John in the Jordan. While John, being a cousin of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:13-17, 30-31,36), may have known Him before, at this point in time John recognized Jesus as the Messiah. God had previously revealed to John how he would recognize the Christ. When He came, John would see the Holy Spirit descend and rest upon Him. So it was that when he baptized Jesus, John clearly saw the Spirit descending in the form of a dove and remaining on Jesus.

Immediately, John declared Jesus superior to himself in importance and ministry and encouraged his own disciples to follow Him. The Baptist boldly introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God<sup>2</sup> who takes away the world's sin" (1:29), as "He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (1:33),<sup>3</sup> and as "the Son of God" (1:34).

Therefore, Jesus began His public ministry with the entire ministry and powerful endorsement of John the Baptist behind Him. There, in the region of Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan where John baptized, Jesus began to collect His first disciples. John the Baptist, who had baptized all of these men, sent John and Andrew to Jesus. Andrew brought his brother Simon, whom Jesus named Peter. Jesus called Philip who then brought Nathanael. Nathanael was skeptical, until Jesus revealed knowledge only God would have known about Nathanael's character and life. Nathanael was amazed, but Jesus promised

them all that they would see more incredible revelations of God through their time with the "Son of Man."

**Read John 1:19-28.**

1. When the Jewish leaders came to question John the Baptist at Bethany beyond-the-Jordan, what did he claim about himself (1:19-23)?

**Reference:** *The Christ*, Note 1, page 23.

2. When questioned further by the Pharisees, to whom did John turn his focus (1:26-27)?

**Read John 1:29-34.**

3. a. John the Baptist was Jesus' first disciple. After baptizing Jesus (see Matthew 3:13-17), how did John introduce Jesus to the people (1:29-31)?

**Reference:** Note 2, *Lamb of God*, page 24.

b. How did God reveal to John that Jesus was the Messiah (1:32-33; see also Matthew 3:13-17).

**Reference:** Note 3, *baptize with the Holy Spirit*, page 24.



c. What was John's declaration as he fulfilled his mission of introducing the Christ (1:34)?

**Read John 1:35-42.**

4. a. Of what did Andrew become convinced during his visit with Jesus (1:35-41)?

b. What did Andrew's new conviction and excitement motivate him to do (1:42)?

5. How did Jesus receive Simon (1:42)?

**Note:** *Cephas* (Aramaic) and *Peter* (Greek) mean *rock*. "In the Gospels, Peter was anything but a rock; he was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, he was a pillar of the early church. Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1595.

**Read John 1:43-51.**

6. What was different about Philip's calling (1:43)?

7. a. When Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus, how did Jesus dispel Nathanael's questions (1:44-49)?

**Note:** In verse 47, Jesus, who could see Nathanael's heart, was not saying he was perfect, rather that he was honest and genuine in his faith. Nathanael obviously knew Jesus was not in physical range to see him under the fig tree (1:48). Christ's statement evidenced the omniscience and omnipresence of God and led Nathanael to boldly declare Jesus the Son of God (1:49).

b. What did Jesus promise (1:50-51)?

**Reference:** Note 5, *heaven open* page.25, and Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Discovering Our Uniqueness**

While the lives of the disciples were not necessarily easy, they were no doubt full and meaningful as a result of their faith. John the Baptist, John the apostle, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael and Peter were distinct individuals to Jesus. He had special purposes for each of them, and He dealt with them as unique persons.

In a fast-paced world, we can easily feel lost in the crowd, like just a number in the masses. The media exposes us to people who are exceptionally gifted, wealthy, beautiful, intelligent, or just more "together." The predictable result is that we feel ordinary and insignificant.

But the Bible says, and Jesus demonstrates in His interactions with each of His disciples, that we are uniquely significant to God. He created us and knows our potential much better than we. As with Peter, He knows our personalities and what He can make of them. He does not focus on our

limitations, rather factors them into the perfect equation of a special plan for your life and mine. . . if we will allow Him to work in our lives.

As we continue our study on the *Quest for Fulfillment*, let's look at the biblical foundation for building a deep and lasting sense of worth: our uniqueness to Jesus.

1. What in our society encourages low self-esteem? What are some false values by which people determine their self worth?

2. How can low self-esteem affect:  
our relationship with God?

our relationships with other people?

our daily tasks?

3. Jesus responded to each of His disciples as distinct individuals whom He had created for special purposes. The Bible states that Jesus Christ created us

and knows us individually (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16). What do the following verses say about:

a. your uniqueness and worth to the Lord?

Psalm 139:13-18

John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16

Luke 12:6-7

b. His plans for you?

Jeremiah 29:11

5. Knowing we are loved by the Creator of the universe can radically build our self esteem. What do the following verses say about God's love?

Jeremiah 31:3

Romans 8:38-39

6. Seeing God's perspective on our lives can change the focus of our achievement. What do the following verses infer about worthwhile ambitions?  
I Samuel 16:7

Proverbs 31:30

**Note:** *fear* means *reverent trust*.

Micah 6:8

7. We can be paralyzed by a fear of failure or sense of inadequacy, which prevents us from reaching our potential or trying new things. What does God promise if we put our trust in Him?

Philippians 4:13

II Corinthians 12:9

8. The early disciples embraced John the Baptist's message of repentance and forgiveness for sin. This freed them to respond to the Lord and follow

His great plans for them.

a. We must be free from guilt if we are to have a healthy sense of self-esteem.

What does the Lord continually invite us to do with sin?

I John 1:9

b. On what basis are we forgiven by God?

Matthew 26:28 (Hebrews 9:22)

Ephesians 1:7

**Reference:** Note 2, *Lamb of God*, page 24.

9. It was the individual response of each disciple to Jesus that allowed Him to begin working to help each one realize his potential. What were their choices in responding to Jesus?

## Summary

10. a. What have you learned in this lesson about your uniqueness to Jesus?

b. How do you view the area(s) in which you have been struggling with self-esteem after studying this lesson?

11. Is there any area of your life where you have been carrying guilt? You might want to take a piece of paper and list the sin(s) you want to confess and leave behind. Write I John 1:9 over the paper and destroy it as a symbol of receiving God's forgiveness through the cross of Christ. This exercise can have a tremendously cleansing effect.

12. What do you choose as your personal response to Jesus and His desire to lead and direct your life?

Take a moment to talk to God about these things. Know that He loves you, wants you to love yourself, and, despite your weaknesses, has special plans for your life.

## **LESSON 2 NOTES**

**1** *The Christ* (1:20). *Christ* (Greek) or *Messiah* (Hebrew) means "anointed one." Authors ascribed this title to Jesus thousands of times in the New Testament. The Jewish people believed Old Testament prophecy that pointed to a King and Savior anointed by God to deliver them from their enemies. This Messiah was referred to as the *Son of David* because He was to come from the line of David (I Chronicles 17:11-15). He was referred to as the *Son of Man*

(Daniel 7:13-14), and He would be a *suffering servant* (Isaiah 53), a reality many Jews preferred to overlook.

**2** *Lamb of God* (1:29,36) refers to sacrifice, specifically the sacrifice that would atone for the sin of the world prophesied in Isaiah 53:3-8 and clarified further by Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:11-22 and Hebrews 10:8-14. Man since the beginning (cf. Genesis 3) had been under the death penalty for sin. Jesus came to take that death penalty on Himself, allowing men and women to be freely forgiven by God if they choose to believe. The Lamb of God came to lay down His innocent life for sinful man.

**3** *baptize with the Holy Spirit* (1:33). John the Baptist's baptism was a temporary preparatory water baptism for repentance and symbolized forgiveness and the washing away of sins (Luke 3:3). "Jesus, by contrast, would baptize with the Holy Spirit. He would send the Holy Spirit upon all believers, empowering them to live and to teach the message of salvation. This outpouring of the Spirit came after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven (see 20:22; Acts 2)." *Life Application Bible NIV*, page 1872.

See also **Note 2**, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

**4** *Son of Man* (1:51) was the title Jesus used most for Himself. When the Jews heard the word "Messiah", they instantly thought of the Old Testament prophecy of a victorious earthly king who would establish Israel as *the* world power. (See also **Note 5**, *Scripture Prophecy Concerning Messiah*, pg 60.)

Knowing that He must suffer and die for sin with this earthly visit, Jesus avoided being openly discovered and called the Messiah lest he be stormed by the masses and enthroned as an earthly king (cf. John 6:15). Instead, Jesus referred to Himself as the *Son of Man*, a title used in the Messianic prophecy of *Daniel 7:13*. There, the prophet reveals a vision of the Son of Man being entrusted by God with authority, glory, everlasting dominion and an indestructible kingdom. When Jesus used this term as a title for Himself, He referred to Himself as the Messiah and as deity in such a way as to control and teach His audience.



**5** *heaven open...angels of God ascending and descending (1:51). "This is a reference to Jacob's dream recorded in Genesis 28:12. As the unique God-man, Jesus would be the ladder between heaven and earth. Jesus is *not* saying that this would be a physical experience (that they would see the ladder with their eyes) like the transfiguration (cf. Mark 9:2-8), but that they would have spiritual insight into Jesus' true nature and purpose for coming." *Life Application Bible NIV*, page 1872.*

## **LESSON 3**

### **AT A WEDDING & IN THE TEMPLE**

#### **John 2**

After a few days of travel from Bethany to Galilee, Jesus and his disciples attended a wedding in Cana to which His mother was also invited. In biblical times, a wedding was a weeklong celebration attended by everyone in the village. At this particular event, however, a very embarrassing situation arose for the bridegroom. Before the party was over, the wine ran out. Jesus' mother came to Him with this problem.

Jesus' response to Mary is difficult to understand: "Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come" (2:4). Perhaps she failed to realize that her son had now begun his Messianic ministry, and from now on their relationship would be different. Perhaps He was saying to her that His power was to be used for the purpose of drawing people to God's grace. Nevertheless, the second part of His statement, "My time (or hour) has not yet come," no doubt referred to the revelation of His glory that would come through His death and resurrection (cf. John 12:27, 13:1, 17:1).

Still Mary turned to the servants and told them to do whatever Jesus told them. They followed His instructions carefully, and Jesus turned 120 to 180 gallons of water into fine wine. This first incredible miracle strengthened his disciples' conviction that Jesus was truly the Messiah.

After a brief time in Capernaum, where Jesus later headquartered his ministry in Galilee, He and His family and disciples went to celebrate the Passover<sup>1</sup> in Jerusalem. This was the greatest of the Jewish annual feasts, and dealers took advantage of the situation by doing business in the Temple.

Some provided foreign currency exchange while others sold animals for purification rites, both for an exorbitant profit. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He went straight to the Temple and proceeded to break up the greedy business dealings there. He made a whip of cords and moved through the Temple, overturning the tables of the moneychangers and driving out the

merchants. He commanded they stop profaning "My Father's house" with their greedy trade.

This was no small event. As to be expected, the Jews demanded what authority Jesus had to do such things. To understand His answer, we must first understand that the Temple was the center of Jewish religion, representing the presence of God among them. Over time various temple practices had become corrupted and for many the Temple no longer reminded them of God's presence. So in answer to their challenge that Jesus prove His authority to clear the Temple, Jesus referred to *Himself* as the Temple (2:19, 21). He was the actual living presence of God in their midst, a presence which some would be unable to see because greed and ritual had replaced their earnest desire for God.

Jesus went on to refer to His forthcoming death ("destroy this Temple") and resurrection ("and in three days I will raise it up."). Later the disciples would understand that Jesus spoke of the sacrifice of Himself that would end the need for Temple sacrifices. But at this time everyone thought He was speaking literally about the massive Temple structure, and they were shocked.

Even so, in the days ahead many began to believe in Jesus because of His miracles<sup>2</sup> of healing and deliverance He performed among them. Jesus could read their hearts like an open book and could see how much loyalty and understanding the people truly possessed. The faith of most would waver because it was conditioned upon what He did for them. Jesus would only give the understanding of His Person and purpose to those He knew were unquestionably faithful and allegiant.

### **Read John 2:1-10.**

1. What problem arose at the wedding, and what did Mary do about it (2:1-5)?

**Reference:** Commentary paragraph 2, page 26 re: *Jesus' response to Mary.*

2. a. How did Jesus take care of the problem (2:6-10)?

b. What happened as a result of this miracle (2:11)?

3. Jesus referred to the "hour" of His death at the very beginning of His ministry (2:4). The miracles He performed would set off the chain reactions that would lead to His death. What did Jesus know about the timing of His redemptive mission that is apparent from these verses (7:6, 8:20, 12:23, 27, 17:1)?

**Read John 2:12-25.**

4. a. What situation brought about strong words and action from the Lord (2:13-16)?

c. To what did His disciples later attribute Jesus' actions (2:17)?

**Note:** The quotation is the Old Testament Messianic prophecy of Psalm 69:9.

5. a. How did Jesus respond to the Jews' demand for credentials (2:18-20)?

b. What did the disciples later understand about the Lord's statement (2:21-22)?

6. a. Why did many people begin to believe in Jesus (2:23)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88.

b. What did Jesus know about these believers (2:24-25)?

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **The Transformation We Seek**

Most people experience times when they feel the need for big changes. Some attack the problems by attempting to alter their circumstances or modify their environment. Others try to change the people around them rather than themselves--*always* a disappointing endeavor--while others embark on serious self-improvement programs. They make specific resolutions, but are soon exhausted and confused by lack of success.

Professional counseling may bring light to many subjects but may also create confusion with new revelation of human complexities. In our commitment to

change, we often start off with high expectations and determination but end up in despair when, in spite of our great efforts, the problems persist.

But our situation is not at all hopeless in the eyes of God. The Bible states that not only does the Lord see our potential, as discussed in Lesson 2, but He is prepared to walk us through the transformation process step by step. A beautiful word picture that illustrates the power of Christ to change us is in the story of the wedding at Cana where He turned *water into wine*. The promise of the Scriptures is that Christ can transform a life from the inside out. The good news of the New Testament is that in trusting Christ *and* continually yielding to His leadership and power, we are changed into the fulfilled individuals He created us to be. Not instantly, but steadily and in increments we can handle, the Lord brings about the transformation we seek. Let's look at what the Scriptures say about these biblical truths.

- a. What are the personal difficulties that lead people to crave change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What does this desire for change lead people to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What are the results of our own efforts to realize the transformation we need?

2. How is the transformation Christ promises described? What does God promise?

II Corinthians 5:17

Isaiah 43:18-19

3. The Bible states that transformation comes from Christ *living His life in and through us*. His Spirit promises to lead and empower us to respond differently. What do the following verses say about this?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Ephesians 3:16-17a

Colossians 1:27b

4. The analogy of Jesus turning "water into wine" in our lives could be stated as allowing Him to transform our negative experience into a positive and healthy one. As we choose to yield to Christ moment by moment, with what does He replace:

*lack of direction?* Psalm 32:8

*insecurity?* Isaiah 33:6

*fear?* Isaiah 41:10

*lack of joy?* Psalm 16:11

*unrest?* Matthew 11:28-30

*lack of purpose?* Matthew 5:14,16; Psalm 138:8

*self-centeredness?* Philippians 2:3-4

*anxiety/worry?* Philippians 4:6-7

*negative disposition/lack of self-control?* Galatians 5:22-23



## Summary

5. a. To be transformed by Christ, He must first indwell our lives. What is His invitation and promise to you in Revelation 3:20?

b. Is this the desire of your heart?

6. a. To continue to be transformed by Christ requires yielding to Him in each area of our lives. Are there any specific areas of your life which you want to yield to Him now for His transformation?

b. Referring back to Question #4, what does the Lord promise as you present your need to Him?

## LESSON 3 NOTES

**1** *Passover*, or the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, was the first and most important sacred festival in Judaism. It lasted a week with Passover on the first day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread the rest of the week. The celebration commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:1-13) and the establishment of Israel as a nation redeemed by God.

**2 Reference:** Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88.

## **LESSON 4**

### **NICODEMUS AND THE NEW BIRTH**

#### **John 3**

Shortly after Jesus had driven greedy businessmen from the Temple, a prominent religious leader named Nicodemus came by night to question Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee<sup>1</sup> and a member of the powerful seventy-member Jewish council called the Sanhedrin. Later this man would be one of the few religious leaders to stand up for Jesus (7:50-52) and even assist with Jesus' burial (19:39-40).

At their first meeting, Nicodemus stated he was drawn to Jesus because of His character and miracles. He knew Jesus was from God (3:2), but he could not reconcile his religious understanding with the Person of Jesus. In forthrightness, he had come to see Jesus in an attempt to clear up his confusion.

In the conversation that resulted, Jesus addressed two needs in Nicodemus' life. The first was his need for a spiritual birth brought about by the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Fulfillment of this need was dependent on the second need, which was faith in God's way of entrance into His Kingdom -- through belief in His Son. (Nicodemus believed being a descendant of Abraham assured him righteous standing before God.) As He talked with this honest and seeking religious leader, Jesus guaranteed Nicodemus that He had come from heaven and His witness about heavenly eternal truth was absolutely sure. The Son of Man,<sup>3</sup> Jesus promised, would be lifted up (a reference to the crucifixion), and only those who believed in Him would receive eternal life.

Many interpreters believe that Jesus' words to Nicodemus stop after 3:15, and the author adds his reflections. Whether the words are spoken by Jesus or John, they are God's word and speak of the incredible love of God. His infinite love compelled the Father to send the best He had to give--His only Son--not to condemn the world, but to draw it to Himself for eternal salvation and life. John proclaims that God sent His Son so that those who believe His testimony would be acquitted, not judged.

The crisis is that while God's light streams into the world through His Son, many uninterested in pleasing God will prefer to flee from that light. They will hide in the darkness of denial, illusion and ungodly practices. But all who love truth<sup>4</sup> will respond to God's light and welcome His Son.

After this, Jesus moved his ministry into the Judean countryside where apparently His disciples were baptizing under His authority (3:22, 4:2).<sup>5</sup> Some of John the Baptist's disciples were distressed when they heard this. They were also concerned that more and more people were flocking to Jesus rather than to John. When they approached John about this, his reply was gracious and humble. He stated that Jesus' ministry was God-given as his own had been and restated that *his* God-given task was to herald the Messiah. Using the example of a bridegroom and friend, John showed how the friend is there to aid the bridegroom and rejoice when all goes well with the wedding. John was satisfied to have introduced Jesus to the faithful in Israel and see them begin to follow Him. "He must increase, but I must decrease," were the Baptist's last recorded words in this Gospel.

Now the author reflects further on John the Baptist's testimony. Anointed as this prophet and forerunner of Jesus was, he was 'from the earth' and so limited. Jesus, on the other hand, came from heaven and was able to tell of what He had actually seen and heard in heaven. He was sent by God, spoke God's words and had the power of God's Spirit without measure. The apostle once again declares his complete conviction: eternal life depends on faith in the Son, who the Father sent from above.

### **Read John 3:1-15.**

1. Who was Nicodemus and what was his understanding about Jesus (3:1-2)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *Pharisees*, page 41, and Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88

2. What did Jesus tell this religious leader about the kingdom of God (3:3-5)?

3. What did Jesus reveal about the work of the Holy Spirit in spiritual birth (3:6-8)?

**Reference:** Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

4. As a religious teacher in Israel, Nicodemus should have understood the power of God to give spiritual life (cf. Ezekiel 36:26-27). To what did Jesus attribute Nicodemus' ignorance (3:11-12)?

5. What three specifics did Jesus declare about Himself to Nicodemus (3:13-15)?

**Reference:** Note 6, *snake lifted up*, page 42, and Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

**Read John 3:16-21.**

6. What was God's purpose in sending His Son (3:16-18)?

7. What basic problem is described in 3:19-20?

8. What would Nicodemus' response to Jesus reveal about him according to John 3:21?

**Reference:** Note 4, *all who love truth*, page 42.

**Read John 3:22-36.**

9. What was John the Baptist's general response to the concerns of his disciples (3:27-30)?

10. Most theologians believe 3:31-36 to be the statements of the author rather than John the Baptist. How would you summarize the convictions stated here?

**Note:** "When we speak of God's wrath [3:36] we are, of course, using a human term to describe a characteristic of God. It is hard to understand how a man can be angry and exercise wrath without vindictiveness and even hatred entering in. This is not so with God. Wrath is the reverse side of love. It is a way of describing a loving God's hatred of sin and evil and disobedience and all that spoils the lives of those He loves . . . The wrath of God teaches us that God does not stand by and condone sin and injustice and evil in the world." Gordon Bridger, *The Man Outside*, page 40.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Free From the Inside Out**

Nicodemus not only had witnessed the teachings and miracles of Jesus, but he had seen firsthand Christ's integrity. There was an obviously patient and compassionate love for people which motivated Jesus as He ministered to rich and poor alike. Furthermore, Jesus seemed to at once see the spiritual realm on earth *and* in heaven. And Jesus spoke of God as a loving Father with whom He had a personal relationship and with whom He was at peace. Nicodemus had observed many religious leaders over the years, but this One was quietly powerful and unique. The devout Pharisee was drawn irresistibly to seek counsel from Jesus, and Jesus met him at his point of need.

Spiritual wholeness, Jesus explained to Nicodemus, would never come from earthbound religious ritual and works. Rather, the Holy Spirit transforms a person, producing spiritual *new life* from the inside out. Nicodemus had only to *believe* in Jesus--to put his trust in Him--and the Spirit would give him spiritual birth, entrance into God's kingdom and eternal life.

The good news Jesus gave Nicodemus is for all of us: We need not strive to please God. God can produce the wholeness of Christ in our lives if we simply trust Christ and take Him at His word. While our nature is to "do it by ourselves," God knows the impossibility of the task. We need His power--the strength and wisdom and transformation of His Spirit--from the inside out.

Let's look more closely at the wonderful news which Jesus gave Nicodemus.

1. What do most people think of when they contemplate pleasing God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When people determine to try to please God in these ways, what is the result?

3. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life which begins with simple faith or *belief* in Christ. The word "believe" (the Greek word *pioteuo*) means to "be persuaded of and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, ...reliance upon, not mere credence."<sup>7</sup>

a. In light of this definition, how would you summarize what John 3:14-18 teaches about the relationship with Jesus that leads to spiritual transformation?

b. In John 15, Jesus used the analogy of a vine abiding in a branch to illustrate how faith in Christ enables us to live the Christian life. What does Jesus say about attempting to live the Christian life apart from Him (John 15:5)?

4. How did Jesus describe the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

John 14:16-17

John 14:26

5. What qualities are manifested in our lives when the Spirit lives in us and is given control? Galatians 5:22-23

6. What assistance does the Holy Spirit give as we seek to trust and rely on God? Romans 8:26

7. Each of us begins to believe in Christ at a point in time and with a willful decision. This decision frees the Holy Spirit to give spiritual birth and power from within to live the Christian life.

After initial faith, trusting Christ with each daily need is a choice which allows the Holy Spirit to continue to transform the believer. How is this choice described in the following?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Galatians 5:25

## **Summary**

8. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus had trusted in his own efforts (following religious rules and regulations) to please God. Jesus wanted to free Nicodemus and



transform him through simple faith. What does Eph 2:8-9 reveal about trying to please God in our own strength?

9. In order for the Holy Spirit to continue to transform you into the person God created you to be, what must you do?

## LESSON 4 NOTES

**1 Pharisees.** The name *Pharisee* means "separated ones." The Pharisees of Jesus' day were a legalistic and separatist group who strictly, but often hypocritically, kept the law of Moses and the unwritten "tradition of the elders." They numbered about 6,000 in Palestine, about one percent of the population. Pharisees, although nowhere appointed by God, were respected by the people as the "unofficial religious leaders." They were teachers in the synagogues, religious examples in the eyes of the people and self-appointed guardians of the Old Testament law and its proper observance. Their "interpretation" of the laws, handed down as traditions for generations, were regarded by them to be as authoritative as the Scripture itself.

**2 Holy Spirit.** God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12, 14:16-17). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (3:8). The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live

the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you," as in Colossians 1:27b.

**3 Reference:** Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

**4** *all who love truth come into the light* (3:21). "No explicit mention is made here of those who have never had the opportunity of believing in Christ, those on whom the light in its fullness has never shone. But John's words probably unfold the principle of their judgment too. As the eternal Word came to men and women before becoming incarnate in Christ, so it is with the light of God. If men and women are judged by their response to the light, they are judged by their response to such light as is available to them.

All true light is in some degree an effulgence from him who is the light of the world. Those who accept the partial light that is available to them will gladly accept the perfect light when it shines on them. Those who refuse the light, in whatever fashion it shines on them, pronounce sentence on themselves." F. F. Bruce, page 92.

**5** *Jesus' disciples baptizing* (3:22, 4:2). These are the only verses of the Gospels that ascribe baptism to Jesus' earthly ministry. His disciples, not Jesus, baptized under his authority. Apparently this water baptism was like that of John the Baptist and symbolized repentance from and washing away of sins. It was not the beginning of the baptism with the Holy Spirit by Jesus (John 1:33) that would first come on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**6** *snake lifted up*. In 3:14, Jesus explained how the event in Numbers 21:8-9 was a foreshadowing of salvation through Jesus. The Israelites had disobeyed God and were judged by a plague of snakes. All would die from snakebite except those who obeyed God's command to look upon an elevated bronze snake and believed in the healing promise of God.

Similarly, Jesus was saying, He would be lifted up (on the cross), and all who believed in Him would be spared from the penalty for their sin.

**7** *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, page 116.

## LESSON 5

### JESUS IN SAMARIA

#### John 4

The Pharisees had learned that the popularity of Jesus was becoming greater than that of even John the Baptist. With this, Jesus determined to leave Judea and return to Galilee. By leaving, He would avoid the competition the Pharisees seemed to be trying to cultivate between Him and the Baptist, and He would curtail the growing opposition of Judean religious leaders.

The direct route back to Galilee was through Samaria, where Jesus and His disciples stopped around noon at Sychar. The disciples went to buy food while Jesus rested by Jacob's well. Then Jesus defied etiquette when he asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. No orthodox Jewish man would drink from a Samaritan<sup>1</sup> cup or initiate conversation with a woman in such a setting.

Regardless, Jesus proceeded to have a long talk with this woman. He told her about the gift of living water that He would give to anyone who asked. This water would forever quench thirst and would be like a well springing up into eternal life. "Sir, give me this water," was her natural response. But Jesus asked her first to go and get her husband. She answered that she had no husband, and the Lord agreed, telling her she had had five and now lived with a man who was not her husband.

Perceiving Jesus to be a prophet, the Samaritan woman quickly changed the subject. She brought up the smoldering spiritual issue between Jews and Samaritans regarding where to worship. Most important to God, Jesus told her, was not where one worshiped, but who and how one worshiped. He explained to her that *the Father* (a new concept of God to anyone of that day) "is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." Then Jesus told her that the Samaritans *did not* have the pure knowledge of God preserved by the Jews<sup>2</sup> and that the Messiah who would bring salvation would be a Jew.

"When the Messiah comes, He will tell us everything," she boldly stated. To this, Jesus replied, "I who speak to you am He."

Imagine how powerfully this statement must have struck this woman, especially from One who knew "everything she ever did." She left her water jar and hurried into the city to tell others about this man who claimed to be the Christ.

The disciples had returned, and Jesus talked with them about the fulfillment that comes from simply doing the task God gives you. He explained the concept of sowing and reaping in God's "harvest field." "Look at the fields," He said, "they are ripe for harvest."

Meanwhile, the woman returned with many Samaritans who came to see Jesus because of her testimony. Obviously, these people were comfortable with Jesus, even though He was a Jew, and invited him to stay longer in Sychar. Many believed, and their conviction after being with Jesus was: "This man really is the Savior of the world" (4:42).

Upon returning to Galilee, Jesus began His 2<sup>nd</sup> year of public ministry there. He received a warm reception because of the miracles they had seen Him do in Jerusalem. But He knew that "a prophet has no honor in his own country."

Upon arrival in Cana, a royal official--a Gentile in Herod's service -- came from Capernaum asking Jesus to heal his son who was at home critically ill. Jesus saw genuine faith in the heart of this man and healed the boy without even going to him. Jesus declared, "Your son lives," and the official took Jesus at His word and set out for home. While he was still traveling, his servants met him to announce that at one o'clock the day before the fever had left his son. That was the very hour Jesus had announced the child would live. As a result, the official and his entire household believed.

### **Read John 4:1-15.**

1. a. Imagine and describe the situation as Jesus met the woman at the well (4:3-6).

**Note:** *Sixth hour* is noon.

b. Why was the woman so surprised that Jesus spoke to her (7-9)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *Samaritans*, page 51.

2. How did Jesus arouse the woman's curiosity about Him (4:10-12)?

3. What did Jesus claim He could give (4:13-14)?

**Read John 4:16-26.**

4. What did Jesus accomplish by revealing that He knew her personal life (4:16-18)?

5. a. What did Jesus teach the woman about worship (4:23-24)?

**Reference:** Note 2, *You worship that which you do not know*, page 51.

b. Jesus spoke of God as a perfect heavenly *Father*. This was not a term used for God prior to Christ's coming. What image of God and relationship with Him did Jesus introduce?

6. When the woman brought up the coming Messiah, what did Jesus tell her (4:26)?

**Note:** This is the first recorded time that Jesus made a direct statement to be the Messiah. He normally referred to Himself as the "Son of Man." (See Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

**Read John 4:27-42.**

7. What motivation energized Jesus which He wanted his disciples to experience (4:34-35)?

8. What resulted from the witness of the woman at the well (4:39-42)?

**Read John 4:43-54.**

9. a. How did the official demonstrate his faith in Jesus' words (4:46b-47, 50)?

b. What was the result of the official's faith (4:50-53)?

**Note:** *Re: 4:54.* Jesus had done many miracles prior to this time (2:23; 3:2). John refers to this as the second miracle in Cana.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Fully Known and Fully Loved**

The woman at the well was surprised when a Jew actually lowered Himself to converse with her, a Samaritan woman. How much more surprised she must have been when she realized He knew everything about her embarrassing past and present failures. Yet He talked to her respectfully and treated her as a person of worth, even to the point of confiding in her that He was the promised Messiah.

We all have a desire to be fully known and fully loved. We are all wounded and imperfect people. While the society around us encourages us to hide our imperfection in order to be accepted, Jesus welcomes us as we are and sees us as we can be. Let's examine more about this One who knows us better than we know ourselves and still loves us perfectly.

1. a. What feelings do we experience when our shortcomings are exposed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What do we expect from those who see?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What happens when we are criticized or rejected because of our weaknesses?

2. What happens when our shortcomings are exposed but the one who sees them still loves us?

3. How does I Corinthians 13:4-8a describe the kind of love that builds and the love Christ showed the woman at the well?

4. a. Jesus told a parable about the love of God in the face of failure and imperfection. What does Luke 15:11-24 disclose about the heart of God?

b. What does the parable tell us about receiving that love?

5. What do the following state about God's knowledge of you?  
Psalm 139:1-4,13-14,16

Hebrews 4:13

6. One of the titles given Christ in the Bible is *redeemer*. The word describes one who brings about the release of a captive by paying a ransom note *or* who



purchases a slave in order to set him free. How is Jesus described as our redeemer in the following?

Colossians 1:13-14

Titus 2:14

7. a. Put another way, the redemption of Christ "fixes broken things"-- our broken relationship with God, the broken pieces of our lives, difficult situations we face. He came to redeem broken people like the woman at the well. As a loving redeemer, what did Jesus picture for this woman's life as He spoke of living water "welling up" inside her?

b. In redeeming love, what does Jesus want us to experience today?

John 8:32

John 10:10b

Romans 8:28

Romans 15:13

Ephesians 3:19

8. How can we, as the Samaritans and the Gentile official of John 4:46-53, experience the redemptive love Christ offers, even as we are fully known by Him for our failures?

John 4:10b, 13-14

Isaiah 55:1,6-7

## **Summary**

9. What have you observed in this lesson about Christ's awareness and understanding of your life and circumstances?

10. What have you observed about the love and acceptance of Christ from His interaction with the woman at the well?

11. What would you have Jesus redeem in your life?

## LESSON 5 NOTES

**1** *Samaritans.* The Jews had a strong prejudice against the Samaritans. These people were descendants of colonists whom the Assyrian kings had planted in Palestine after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. Because of their mixed blood (through intermarriage with Jews) and religion that combined pagan and Hebrew faith, the Jews regarded the Samaritans as worse than Gentiles. The feeling was mutual; the Samaritans reacted to Jewish rejection and encroachment on their land. (Galilee was at one time part of Samaria.) For this reason, Samaritans often refused lodging to Jews passing through, and Jews often traveled on the east side of the Jordan River to avoid Samaria.

**2** *You worship that which you do not know...(4:22).* The Jews had more completely preserved the Scriptures. Only the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament Scriptures, were contained in the Samaritan Bible. While they did worship God, the fact that they did not embrace much of the prophetic revelation limited their knowledge of God.

**3** *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, page 263.

## **LESSON 6**

### **TRIP TO JERUSALEM**

#### **John 5**

After a time of ministry in Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem to attend one of the annual Jewish feasts. In Jerusalem, there was a Pool called Bethesda where blind, crippled and paralyzed invalids waited in hopes of miraculous healing. At the pool, Jesus came upon a man who had been lame for thirty eight years. With the Lord's words, "Pick up your mat and walk," the man was able to get up and walk. As a crowd formed, Jesus slipped away without the man even knowing who had healed him.

Rather than rejoicing with the cured man who had been healed, the Jews<sup>1</sup> protested that the man carried his mat on the Sabbath. (The "tradition of the elders"<sup>2</sup> prohibited one from carrying any load on the Sabbath.) The man told them that the one who healed him commanded him to do this.

Later, Jesus recognized the man at the Temple and encouraged him, now that he was physically well, to turn from sin and be spiritually healed. Some believe that the words, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen," suggest that Jesus knew the man's lameness was the result of something he had done wrong. Nevertheless, Jesus' clear concern was for the man's soul. After this, the man told the authorities that it was Jesus who healed him. Knowing Jesus was aware He had violated their Sabbath laws, the Jewish leaders launched a hostile campaign against Him. Their attacks did not cease until His crucifixion a year and a half later.

But Jesus took advantage of the conflict to teach His opponents about who He was, and none of what He shared pleased them. He claimed to be the Son of God who only worked in conjunction with His Father's wishes, received through firsthand communication. In this Father-Son relationship, Jesus claimed to have been given power and authority to give life, to judge man's sin and to be honored equally with the Father who sent Him. Jesus declared that those who believed the Father's words through the Son would be spared

condemnation and receive eternal life. He told them that in the future, people would rise from death to life<sup>3</sup> because He was doing the Father's work.

These words only increased the Jewish leaders' determination to kill Jesus. Even so, Jesus continued to attempt to break through their denial of truth by giving evidence that supported His claims. The powerful prophet John the Baptist had testified that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. The miracles of healing Jesus was performing could not be done apart from God and were God's authentication of His Son's claims. The Father himself bore witness<sup>4</sup> of Jesus at His baptism and throughout the Scriptures, and the Scriptures themselves gave specific information that would identify Him as the Messiah.

Then Jesus, knowing their hearts, confronted the Jewish leaders about the pride that was blinding them to God and his truth. "I know you," He told them. "I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" Furthermore, Jesus stated, even Moses, the supreme lawgiver to whom the Jewish leaders proudly attached themselves, had written prophecy<sup>6</sup> concerning the Messiah which would in the end condemn them.

**Read John 5:1-18.**

1. What was the condition of the invalid Jesus healed? What seemed to motivate Jesus to help him (5:5-7)?

2. As the crowd gathered around the healed man, Jesus slipped away. On what did the Jews focus (5:10)?

**References:** Note 1, *The Jews* and, Note 2, '*tradition of the elders*,' page 60.

3. What did the Jewish leaders set out to do and why (5:16-18)?

**Read John 5:19-30.**

4. How did Jesus describe His relationship with the Father (5:19-20)?

5. What did Jesus claim the Father had given Him power and authority to do (5:21-22,27)?

**Reference:** Note 3, *death to life*, page 60.

6. What honor did Jesus claim (5:23)?

7. What did Jesus claim He would give the one who believes in Him (5:24-26)?

**Note:** Vs. 25 refers not only to the future resurrection of believers to possess imperishable bodies (I Corinthians 15:42-54) but also to the fact that Christ gives life now. The spiritually dead who hear him receive life from him. *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1604.

**Read John 5:31-47.**

8. In His confrontation with the Jewish leadership, Jesus had clearly claimed to be equal with God (5:18), to be the source of life (5:26), to be able to give eternal life (5:26) and to judge sin (5:27).

Jesus did not support His claims to deity by His testimony alone. He pointed to the testimony of John the Baptist on His behalf (5:33) and the miracles (like the healing of the lame man) which God was enabling Him to perform (5:36). The voice of the Father<sup>4</sup> (5:37), the Scripture prophecy about the Messiah<sup>5</sup> (5:39) and the prophecy of Moses<sup>6</sup> (5:46) also validated Jesus' claims.

In spite of this evidence, the Jewish leaders would not believe. Why did Jesus say they did not have the heart to recognize him?

John 5:37-38

John 5:39-40

John 5:41-44

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Guarding Against Pride**

The Jewish leaders of the day held tremendous power over the people. Some of these leaders, no doubt, were faithful men, but most made a show of piety while using their spiritual leadership position to feed addictions to power, prestige, and pride.

The growing popularity of Jesus threatened the control that the religious leaders held over the people. Jesus cared only about God's approval. He lived

simply, owned nothing and moved among the poor and common people as readily as the rich. The miracles He performed and His authoritative and equitable teaching drew the people to Him. They loved Him. But the religious leaders became more and more infuriated by Jesus, who exposed their hypocrisy and claimed, as the Son of God, to be spiritually superior to them.

Had they not been ruled by greed and status, the Jewish leaders would have recognized the Christ sent to them by God. Had their love and knowledge of God not been destroyed by pride and conceit, they would have heard the voice of God as Jesus stood before them. Had they been motivated by God's approval rather than the praise of men that gave them power and control, they might have recognized and embraced their Savior.

There is a great warning here for us. We, too, can easily become controlled by maintaining a certain image or status which gives us a sense of being in control or better than others. The world around us or our own family heritage may support such practices, but God has no part in them. He knows that pride can completely negate the truly fulfilling experience of knowing and loving God and others.

Conceit and feelings of superiority *toward anyone* is a warning sign to step back and, with God's help, make different choices. Let's make some observations from the Scriptures on these important principles.

1. How would you define vanity or conceit?

2. a. Where do you see snobbery and conceit in the society around you?



b. How is snobbery used manipulatively? What do pride and conceit reveal about a person?

c. How do pride and conceit affect relationships in the family, workplace or community?

3. What results of conceit and pride does the Bible warn us about?

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 16:18

James 4:6b

4. a. The religious leaders demonstrated that pride can lead to hypocrisy in the professed believer. How did Jesus define hypocrisy?

Matthew 23:28

b. What principles in the following verses can help us to identify and avoid hypocrisy?

Psalm 36:2

Matthew 6:24

James 1:22,25

Romans 12:2

5. a. How did Jesus, fully God and fully human, avoid conceit?

Matthew 20:28

John 5:30,41

**Note:** "I'm not interested in crowd approval" (5:41). *The Message* translation.

b. How does the Bible instruct us to avoid conceit and selfishness in our relationships with others?

Leviticus 19:15

Philippians 2:4-8

Colossians 3:12,14

## **Summary**

6. a. Are there areas in which you struggle periodically with conceit or feelings of superiority over others, or when you are tempted to use money or position to gain control?

b. While God wants you to appreciate the abilities and gifts He has given you, what is the balance He knows will lead to true fulfillment?

7. How can conceit or vanity prevent you from experiencing a fulfilling relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

8. What warning about pride is most obvious to you from this lesson?

## LESSON 6 NOTES

**1** *The Jews* (5:10) is a term used by John 70 times in his Gospel. It generally means the city leaders and more often the Jewish leaders who were hostile toward Jesus.

**2** *The 'tradition of the elders'* distinguished thirty-nine categories of work which might not be undertaken on the Sabbath; the thirty-ninth of these involved carrying a load from one dwelling to another. By this standard the man's action in carrying his pallet home violated the Sabbath law. Jesus initially met serious conflict with the religious authorities because He infringed on the traditional interpretation of the Sabbath law (not the law of Moses, but their interpretation of it). Jesus met deadly hostility from his opponents when He declared to be Lord, i.e. to have sovereign authority, over the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). See also Note 2, *he does not keep the Sabbath*, page 119.

**3** *death to life*. "Jesus' life-giving power can call a person out of the grave (11:43), everyone from their tombs (5:28-29), or anyone in spiritual death (5:24) to eternal life." Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, page 291.

**4** *Witness of God the Father* (5:37). The Father had given audible and visual testimony about His Son at His baptism (cf. Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:10; John 1:32-33), but as the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1-2,14), Jesus was also referring to Himself as the embodiment of all Scripture given by God through the prophets.

**5** *Scripture Prophecy Concerning Messiah fulfilled in Jesus*. The Old Testament Messianic prophecies described a Kingly Messiah and a Suffering Messiah. The Jews preferred to focus on the Kingly Messiah who would establish Israel as *the* world power (cf. Psalm 2:6-8; Isaiah 9:6-7; 42:1-4;

Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14). Jesus said that after the suffering of His incarnation, He would come again (cf. Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28) and completely fulfill the Kingly Messianic prophecy. Major Messianic prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus' first coming to earth follow:

## **Major Prophecies Concerning the Messiah Fulfilled in Jesus**

"Offspring of a Woman" Genesis 3:15 Galatians 4:4

Descendant of Abraham Genesis 18:18 Acts 3:25

Descendant of Isaiah Genesis 17:19 Matthew 1:2

Descendant of Jacob Numbers 24:17 Luke 3:34

Descendant from tribe of Judah Genesis 49:10 Luke 3:33

Descendant of David Isaiah 9:7 Matthew 1:1

Place of birth Micah 5:2 Matthew 2:1

Born of a virgin Isaiah 7; 14 Matthew 1:18

Ministry in Galilee Isaiah 9:1-2, 6 Matthew 4:12-16

As a Prophet Deuteronomy 18:15 John 6:14

His rejection by Jews Isaiah 53:3 John 1:11

Some of his characteristics Isaiah 11:2 Luke 2:52

His triumphal entry Zechariah 9:9 John 12:13-14

Betrayed for thirty silver pieces Zechariah 11:12 Matthew 26:15

Money returned for potter's field Zechariah 11:13 Matthew 27:6-7

Silent when accused Isaiah 53:7 Matthew 26:62-63

Struck and spit on Isaiah 50:6 Mark 14:65

Suffered vicariously Isaiah 53:4-5 Matthew 8:16-17

Crucified with sinners Isaiah 53:12 Matthew 27:38

Hands and feet pierced Psalms 22:16 John 19:29

Mocked and insulted Psalms 22:6-8 Matthew 27:39-40

His side to be pierced Zechariah 12:10 John 19:34

Soldiers cast lots for his clothes Psalms 22:18 Mark 15:24

Buried with the rich Isaiah 53:9 Matthew 27:57-60

Resurrection Psalms 16:10 Matthew 28:9

Ascension Psalms 68:18-20 Luke 24:50-51

**Note:** Sometimes it is difficult to understand these prophecies from a non-Jewish mindset, but they were clear to the Jew.

6. *Moses wrote prophecy*, which was recognized by the Jews to be about the Messiah. These included the Genesis, Numbers and Deuteronomy references above (in italics). His writings also included Exodus 12:21 and Leviticus 16:5 which pointed to the sacrifices foreshadowing the Lamb of God (cf. Note 2, *Lamb of God*, page 24), and Numbers 21:9, mentioned in John 3:14 (cf. Note 6, *snake lifted up*, p 42).

## LESSON 7

### FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND (PLUS)

#### John 6:1-34

Around the end of Jesus' second year of ministry, He and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee and withdrew to a mountain northeast of the sea.

Their respite did not last long, however, because so many knew of Jesus' miracles among the sick that thousands followed Him and His disciples. At mealtime, Jesus asked the Twelve how they thought they might feed the people. No doubt overwhelmed at the very idea of taking such responsibility, the disciples had no answers for Jesus.

Then a young boy offered five small barley loaves and two small fish to meet the need. Jesus instructed everyone to be seated on the grass (5,000 men plus women and children; cf. Matthew 14:21), then gave thanks to God for the food and proceeded to multiply the loaves and fish to feed *everyone* in the crowd! After everyone had eaten their fill, there were still twelve baskets of bread remaining.

The people were thrilled and decided to make Jesus their king. Knowing that the people were still more focused on what He could give them physically and materially than spiritually, Jesus withdrew to the mountains to be alone. That evening, the disciples, without Jesus, headed back across the Sea of Galilee for Capernaum in a boat. A storm came up, making the sea very turbulent. But the disciples were even more terrified when they saw Jesus, whom they thought to be a ghost (cf. Mark 6:49), walking on the waves toward them! "It is I; don't be afraid," He said as He approached them. Jesus entered the boat, and they quickly reached their destination.

Meanwhile, the crowds continued to search and finally found Jesus in Capernaum. They wanted more of the miracles Jesus could give them. But Jesus sought to turn their focus away from the gifts and onto the Giver. The purpose of His miracles were to lead them to believe in the Son of God and

bread of life. A relationship with Him, He promised, would sustain life eternally.

**Read John 6:1-15.**

1. What were the interests of the people who followed Jesus (6:2,14-15)?

**Note:** *The Prophet* (6:14) is the one Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15.

2. a. Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples how they could feed the crowd (6:5-9)?

b. What did the disciples have to do to feed the thousands of people (6:10-13)?

3. What was Jesus' response to the crowd (6:15)?

**Read John 6:16-21.**

4. Within several hours, the disciples witnessed Jesus miraculously feeding thousands and then walking on the Sea of Galilee during a storm. What do you think these incidents taught the disciples about Jesus?

**Reference:** Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.



## **Read John 6:22-34.**

5. a. What was Jesus' assessment of the crowds' motives in searching Him out, and what did Jesus want the people to have (6:26-27)?
- b. What two types of bread did Jesus compare (6:27,30-33)?
- c. How did the crowd's response validate Jesus' statement regarding their motives (6:30,34)?

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Provisions for Body & Soul**

All of us face circumstances when the task seems too overwhelming or the need too great. There are wonderful implications for these times from the accounts of Jesus feeding the hungry thousands and later walking across the water to join his fearful disciples on the stormy sea. One clear implication is that God can do the impossible to meet our needs. When our human capacity and resources fall short, the problem is still not too difficult for God. But there is a second very important principle to be learned from these stories. It is that God's priority is the need within our soul. This is seen in Christ's concern that the people focus on knowing and walking with Him rather than seeking Him simply as One to meet basic needs and alleviate temporal problems. Beyond meeting our physical needs, the great fulfillment Jesus offers is intimacy with

God, the source of food for the soul and provision for the emotional needs of the heart.

As we continue our study of *Quest for Fulfillment*, let's take a closer look at what the Scriptures say about God's desire to meet *all* our needs.

1. The crowd was without means to feed themselves. The disciples were at risk on the stormy night sea. What types of overwhelming experiences do we face in our daily lives?

2. a. How did the disciples approach the problem of the hungry crowd in ways that mirror typical human responses to overwhelming situations?

b. What types of things do we often turn to before God for help?

3. a. What does the story of Jesus feeding of the five thousand illustrate about seemingly impossible situations?

b. Of what can we be assured in the face of seeming impossibilities?  
Luke 1:37

## Philippians 4:19

4. a. What did the little boy and his meager offering demonstrate about God's provision?

b. What does II Corinthians 12:9-10 suggest?

5. The feeding of the 5000 illustrated God's concern for our everyday needs. How do the following describe the Lord's ability and desire to provide for:

*Our practical needs?*

Psalm 23:1,5

Matthew 6:31-33

*Our need for protection?*

Psalm 91:14-15

Isaiah 46:4

6. What does God invite us to do with our need?

Psalm 62:8

Philippians 4:6-7

7. As long as people came to Jesus seeking only temporal things, Jesus knew their deepest needs would go unmet. What does the Bible say will satisfy our deepest needs?

Matthew 5:6

Ephesians 3:16-19

I Timothy 6:17-19

8. What did Jesus know the person would receive who desired to know Him and the truth He brought?

Psalm 37:4

Psalm 112:8a

Matthew 11:28-29

John 8:32 (Psalm 119:32)

## **Summary**

9. Are there any situations in your life right now where you have to say honestly, "This is impossible" or "I can't do it." What hope does the story of the feeding of the five thousand hold for you?

10. Are there any dangerous or fearful situations in your life today? What does the story of Jesus coming to the disciples on the stormy sea say to you?

11. In addition to these helps, what are the greater gifts that Jesus wants to give you as you choose to put Him first?

12. If you have known these truths for some time, what reminders are here for you?

## **LESSON 8**

### **JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE**

#### **John 6:35-71**

Jesus had miraculously fed thousands of people on the plain near Bethsaida, and many of those wanted to make Him their king. Even though Jesus sought to evade these people, they finally found Him back in Capernaum.

Knowing they wanted Him as king only because of His ability to give them food and healing, Jesus explained that the food He wanted to give was far more valuable. Unlike the perishable manna which God rained down to feed the Israelites in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 16:4), the life-giving Bread which God now sent from heaven could give power over death. Jesus claimed to be this Bread of Life and declared that those who made Him king in their hearts would receive food that sustained unending life. The one who would unite with Him, or, figuratively speaking, who would "eat His flesh and drink His blood,"<sup>1</sup> would live forever.

While the Jewish hearers knew Jesus was not suggesting cannibalism, the word picture was thoroughly repulsive to them because of their laws (cf. Leviticus 17:10-11). For this reason, many of Jesus' disciples ceased to follow Him. He then turned to the Twelve and asked if they, too, would leave. Peter, their spokesperson, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." To this Jesus replied that even one of the Twelve would betray Him.

#### **Read John 6:35-51.**

1. What did Jesus promise the person who receives Him as the Bread of Life (6:35)?

2. a. According to Jesus, how are we drawn to Him in faith (6:37, 44)?

**Reference:** Note 2, *All that the Father gives me*, page 78.

b. List the promises of Jesus regarding those the Father draws to Him (6:37- 40).

**Reference:** Note 3, *raise them up at the last day*, page 78.

3. a. What problem did the Galilean Jews have when Jesus claimed to have "come down from heaven" (6:42)?

b. What did Jesus claim about anyone who "listens to the Father" and believes (6:45, 47)?

4. How did Jesus contrast the bread He offers with the manna God rained from heaven for the Israelites (6:48-51)?

*Manna*

*Bread of Life*



**Read John 6:52-59.**

5. What did Jesus proclaim one must do to receive eternal life (6:56-58)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *eats my flesh*, page 78.

**Read John 6:60-71.**

6. Jesus encouraged his disciples to accept His teaching as from the Spirit who gives life and not to be ruled by their human reaction. What happened (6:66)?

7. a. When Jesus asked the Twelve if they wanted to leave, too, what was Peter's response (6:67-69)?

b. What did Jesus reveal about the *slight* inaccuracy in Peter's statement (6:70-71)?

**References:** Note 4, *one of you is a devil* page 78, and Note 5, *Satan, demons*, page 79.

c. What did this knowledge demonstrate about Jesus' character?

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Satisfying the Hunger of the Heart**

Pascal, the French physicist and philosopher said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which only God can fill through His Son, Jesus Christ." He was describing a hunger in the heart of man that must be filled by the Bread of Life.

People attempt to feed this hunger with different things: relationships, accomplishments, new acquisitions, travel, even excessive work or play. Living with the illusion that the hunger inside will at last be satisfied by that *thing* we do not yet possess, we strive to secure *it*. If we are successful, we discover *it* doesn't fill the vacuum. The relationships take work; friends, spouses and children can often disappoint us. Material things take maintenance and wear out with time. New experiences become memories.

The quest to fill the vacuum can lead to extreme disillusionment, even hopelessness. The hunger remains, coupled with the longing for something *permanently* fulfilling.

When Jesus announced that He was the Bread of Life, He was bringing wonderful news. He was claiming that knowing Him personally could satisfy the hungry heart. In calling Himself the Bread of Life, Jesus created a word picture that describes our *daily* need for interaction with Him in a loving and everlasting relationship. He offers Himself to us as daily "manna," to fill the need that God created in us for a secure relationship with our Creator and for permanence in that relationship.

St. Augustine of Hippo wrote centuries ago, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Let's look at how Jesus offers rest and eternal fulfillment to satisfy the hunger of the heart.



John 15:11

John 15:9

Romans 8:35,38-39

6. a. Jesus compared Himself to the manna God sent from heaven when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. What was God's instruction to the Israelites about how often they were to gather the manna?

Exodus 16:4

b. What does this suggest about nurturing Christ's life in us?

c. How does the Lord's prayer reflect this? Matthew 6:11

7. What is involved in being nourished by the Lord?

Psalm 105:1-5

Matthew 11:28-30

8. What are we promised as we seek to feed the hunger inside with the Bread of Life?

Matthew 5:6

Psalm 34:8

Psalm 16:11

## **Summary**

9. a. Have you or has someone you know been trying to fill the daily need for relationship with Christ with other things instead?

b. What has been the result?

10. What is the Lord's promise as you accept Him as the Bread of Life?

## LESSON 8 NOTES

**1** *eats my flesh* (6:56) "How can Jesus give us his flesh as bread to eat? To eat living bread means to accept Christ into our lives and become united with him. We are united with Christ in two ways: (1) by believing in his death (the sacrifice of his flesh) and resurrection and (2) by devoting ourselves to living as he requires, depending on his teaching for guidance and trusting in the Holy Spirit for power." *NIV Life Application Bible*, page 1888.

Clear in this analogy are: (1) the voluntary and vicarious death for sin Jesus would undergo (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), and (2) the oneness and union that feeds the soul of the one who receives Him.

**2** *All that the Father gives me* (6:37). "God's action (see v. 44; 10:29; 17:6; 18:9), not man's (v. 28), is primary in salvation, and Christ's mercy is unfailing (see vv. 31-40; 10:28; 17:9,12,15,19; 18:9)." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1607.

**3** *raise him up at the last day* (6:39). Jesus claimed that living forever with God begins by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior. At that time, new life begins (II Corinthians 5:17). While we still face physical death, the Scriptures say that we will be raised to unending life when Christ returns again (I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-17).

**4** *one of you is a devil* (6:70). Jesus knew from the beginning that in the end Judas would betray and oppose Him in the power of Satan (13:2,18-30).

**5 Satan, demons.** In other gospels there are numerous incidents sited where Jesus delivered people from demons. While the whole idea of Satan and evil adversaries called demons is incredible to some, it is important to understand what the Bible has to say about them. The Bible refers to Satan as an angelic being who led a heavenly revolt against God. Consequently, God cast him out of heaven with his rebelling host of angels (II Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9). Under Satan's leadership, these angelic beings became known as demons, and are very organized in their schemes and attacks on human beings (Ephesians 6:12). Satan and his forces work to get people to worship Satan (Luke 4:7) and to prevent individuals from turning to God (Luke 4:8). Satan's defeat is promised in Genesis 3:15 and was completed at the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:15). He is still a force to be reckoned with until Christ returns to judge the earth (Matthew 16:27). James 4:7 instructs believers to resist the devil (or demonic forces) by continually willing God's leadership in their lives.

## LESSON 9

### AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

#### John 7

Jesus continued to preach and perform miracles in Galilee instead of Judea, where the religious leaders were seeking to kill Him. In the autumn, as the Feast of Tabernacles approached, his brothers urged Jesus to go to Jerusalem and make a public display of His miracles.<sup>1</sup> Although His brothers later became believers (cf. Acts 1:14), at this time Jesus had utterly disappointed them regarding their expectation of a kingly Messiah,<sup>2</sup> and they did not believe in Him. Jesus explained to them that it was not God's timing for Him to go and display His power. To do so would hasten His death.

But after His family left, Jesus went quietly to the celebration in Jerusalem, hiding from the mobs, because everyone wanted to see Him. Halfway through the Feast of Tabernacles, He began to teach in the Temple. Jewish leaders were astounded at His learning; even so, they questioned His authority to teach. Jesus answered as before. He declared his words to be utterly true and His teaching to be the message of God from whose presence He had come.

Knowing the hostility of some, Jesus rebuked their murderous intentions. Most of the crowd were unaware of plans to kill Jesus, and some accused Him of being demon-possessed in His accusations. The people remained perplexed over Christ's identity. However, they were intimidated about openly discussing the subject because the religious leaders had threatened to excommunicate those who believed in Jesus.

Because it was not yet time for His death, none of those seeking to kill Jesus were able to lay a hand on Him. Then Jesus began to teach that He would soon be going where they could not follow. The people, already confused over who Jesus was, were now even more confused about His destiny, as were the religious leaders.

On the last day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out an invitation to follow Him. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink," He said.



"Whoever believes in Me," He promised, "streams of living water will flow from within him" (7:37-38).

The Temple police, who had been instructed to arrest Jesus, came back to the chief priests and Pharisees without having done so. They explained that they had never heard anyone speak like this man. The religious leaders were infuriated with the guards and cursed the crowd who continued to be drawn to Jesus.

Then Nicodemus, himself a Pharisee who had talked with Jesus earlier (John 3:1-15), rebuked the leaders for not judging Jesus through their own laws of fairness. But the leaders, now blinded by pride, became obsessed with killing Jesus. They were beyond reasoning fairly.

### **Read John 7:1-13.**

1. a. What confused Jesus' brothers? What did they suggest in their unbelief (7:1-5)?

**Reference:** Note 5, *Scripture Prophecy Concerning Messiah*, page 60.

b. How did Jesus respond to the pressure (7:6-10)?

2. Even before Jesus arrived, what was happening in Jerusalem (7:11-13)?

### **Read John 7:14-24.**

3. What amazed the Jewish leaders (7:14-15)?

4. a. What did Jesus declare in response to the Jews' amazement at His learned teaching (7:16)?

b. What did Jesus say about one's discernment regarding His teaching (7:17)?

c. What principle of honor did Jesus declare (7:18)? What subtle comparison did He make?

5. a. What did Jesus openly reveal about the Jewish leaders (7:19)?

b. What did Jesus urge the Pharisees to do (7:21-24)?

**Note:** In vs. 21, Jesus probably referred to the healing of the lame man on the Sabbath (5:1-9). He had performed many miracles, but mostly in Galilee. (Cf. Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88.)

**Read John 7:25-32.**

6. a. What increased the frustration of the Jewish authorities (7:25-26, 30-31)?

b. What did the religious leaders determine to do (7:32)?

7. What did Jesus announce to the people that caused further confusion about who He was (7:33-36)?

8. What open invitation did Jesus give on the last day of the feast (7:37-39)?

**References:** Note 3, *baptize with the Holy Spirit*, page 24, and Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

**Read John 7:40-52.**

9. a. What was the general response to the presence and teaching of Jesus (7:40-43)?

b. What prevailed in the midst of the confusion and hostility (7:44-46)?

10. Describe the response of the religious leaders to the people, the guards, and Nicodemus, one of their own (7:47-52)?

**Note:** *a prophet does not come out of Galilee (7:52)*. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and from the line of David (Isaiah 9:7), both of which were true of Jesus. These meticulous religious leaders were not seeking, but rather covering over truth at this point. See also Isaiah 9:1-3, 6.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Understanding Perfect Timing**

Throughout the Gospel of John and particularly in John 7, there are many references made to the *timing* of God. Jesus expressed sensitivity to God's timing regarding when to go to Jerusalem and what to do there. Again and again, the Jewish leaders were unable to lay hands on Jesus because it was not *time* for His death. Even so, Jesus told them that the *time* was coming soon when they would no longer be able to see and hear and touch Him. He would soon go back to the Father. And He spoke of the time to come when the Spirit would indwell every believer.

In a broader sense, it was not *time* for the Messiah to reign, but it was now time for Him to die for the sin of the world. It was not *time* to reveal the power of God, but time to demonstrate the sacrificial love and humility of God. It was not time to glorify Israel but time to draw the faithful in Israel to their Savior.

While Jesus continually submitted to God's perfect timing, He also experienced the difficulty of submission to God's plan. Although He never gave in to the temptation, He experienced the desire that we are born with to be in control of our circumstances. We want what *we* want when *we* want it, and can become very frustrated when we cannot get life to work that way.

Jesus knows from experience this human struggle, but because He understood that God's plan and timing are perfect, He found peace and even joy (Hebrews 12:2) on the difficult road of His earthly mission. He was motivated to persevere in spite of the hideous criticism and death He faced. He found present joy in His ministry to receptive people (John 15:11) and experienced deep love for His disciples (John 15:9).

If we do not cultivate trust in God's timing, worry and bewilderment can rob us of the good in the present moment that will never come again. Like the crowd who did not appreciate the privilege of actually being in the presence of the Son of God, we miss the blessings and the wholeness God desires to produce in us through the difficulties. But if we seek His plans and timing for our individual lives, the Bible promises peace and fulfillment.

Jesus moved perfectly and fearlessly with the timing of God, and so can we. Let's observe how understanding and embracing God's timing is essential in our quest for fulfillment.

1. What is stated about God's timing in the following verses?

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6

2. What must we realize about God's ways as we seek God's timing?

Psalm 18:30,32

Psalm 25:10

Isaiah 55:8-9

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:32

3. How did Jesus know His Father's timing? Luke 5:16; 6:12

4. What must we do in order to sense and rest in God's perfect timing? What do the following suggest?

Psalm 46:10a

Psalm 130:5 (Psalm 27:14)

5. Discerning God's timing requires wisdom. Where can we find wisdom?

Colossians 2:2c-3

Proverbs 2:6 (James 1:5)

6. In Isaiah 9:6, Christ is described as a Wonderful Counselor. What does He promise as you seek His wisdom to discern God's perfect way and timing?

Psalm 23:1-3

Isaiah 45:2-3

## Summary

7. a. Is there an area of your life which you want to submit to God's timing?
- b. According to the Bible, what will result from submitting to God's plan and timing in this area?
8. a. What is your part in experiencing God's timing in your situation?
- b. What decision described in Psalm 31:14-15a will give you peace?

## LESSON 9 NOTES

**1 MIRACLES OF JESUS.** John clearly stated that Jesus did many miracles not recorded in his gospel (20:30; 21:25). He chose only eight of Jesus' miracles to reveal His divinity and validate His claims to be sent from God to give life. The following are a list of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the gospels. (\*Healed on the Sabbath.)

*Water changed to wine*, Jn 2:9.

*Nobleman's son cured*, Jn 4:46.

*Catch of fishes*, Luke 5:6.

*\*Demoniac in the synagogue delivered*, Mk 1:26; Luke 4:35.

*\*Peter's mother-in-law healed*, Mat 8:14; Mk 1:31; Luke 4:38.

*Cleansing the leper*, Mat 8:3; Mk 1:41; Luke 5:13.



*Paralytic*, Mat 9:2; Mk 2:3; Luke 5:18.  
*\*Invalid healed*, Jn 5:5.  
*\*Shriveled hand healed*, Mat 12:10; Mk 3:1; Luke 6:6.  
*Centurion's servant healed*, Mat 8:5; Luke 7:2.  
*Raising the widow's son from death*, Luke 7:11.  
*Demoniac delivered*, Mat 12:22; Luke 11:14.  
*Tempest stilled*, Mat 8:26; Mk 4:39; Luke 8:24.  
*Demoniacs of Gadara*, Mat 8:28; Mk 5:1; Luke 8:26.  
*Raising of Jairus' daughter*, Mat 9:18; Mk 5:42; Luke 8:41.  
*Bleeding woman healed*, Mat 9:20; Mk 5:25; Luke 8:43.  
*Blind men*, Mat 9:27. *Demoniac*, Mat 9:32.  
*Feeding five thousand*, Mat 14:15; Mk 6:41; Luke 9:12; Jn 6:5.  
*Walking on the sea*, Mat 14:25; Mk 6:49; Jn 6:19.  
*Daughter of Canaanite or Syrophenician*, Mat 15:22; Mk 7:25.  
*Feeding the four thousand*, Mat 15:32; Mk 8:8.  
*Deaf and dumb healed*, Mk 7:33.  
*Blind man*, Mk 8:23. *Malchus healed*, Luke 22:51.  
*Afflicted child*, Mat 17:14; Mk 9:26; Luke 9:37.  
*Tribute money*, Mat 17:24.  
*Ten lepers*, Luke 17:12.  
*\*Blind man*, Jn 9:1.  
*Lazarus raised*, Jn 11.  
*\*Heals woman with the spirit of infirmity*, Luke 13:11.  
*\*Man with dropsy*, Luke 14:2. *Cursing the fig tree*, Mat 21:19.  
*Blind men*, Mat 20:30; Mk 10:46.  
*Second catch of fishes*, Jn 21:6.  
*His resurrection*, Luke 24:6; Jn 10:18.  
*Resurrection appearances*, Mk 16:9; Mt 28:9,17; Luke 24:15,36,50;  
Jn 20:19,26; 21:1; Ac 9:5; I Co 15:5-8.

**2 Reference:** Note 5, *Scripture Prophecy Concerning Messiah*, p.60.

**3 Reference:** Note 3, *baptize with the Holy Spirit*, page 24.

## **LESSON 10**

### **CHRIST CONFIRMS HIS TEACHING**

#### **John 8:1-30**

After the feast was over, the people returned to their homes, but Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives. He arrived at the Temple at dawn to teach the people that crowded around to hear Him. In an attempt to get a charge against Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who had been caught in adultery and asked Him to pronounce a judgment on her case.

The law of Moses stated that such a person must be put to death (Leviticus 20:10), but Roman law reserved rights to all capital punishment. If Jesus pardoned her, He could be accused of encouraging people to commit adultery and break the laws of Moses. If He condemned her, however, He would be undermining Roman authority.

Jesus answered, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." His answer did not pardon the woman's sin nor negate the laws of Moses, but rather turned the focus onto the harsh, judgmental ways of the Jewish leaders. In response to His statement, the leaders left one by one, starting with the oldest. The woman was left with Jesus, who said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (8:11). The religious leaders tried to use the woman's situation to put Jesus on trial, but He used the trial to free the woman and attempt to open the eyes of those persecuting Him.

As He continued to teach in the Temple, Jesus made the second of seven "I am" statements recorded in the Gospel of John.<sup>1</sup> "I am the light of the world," He said. "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12).

In Jewish thought, "light" was another word associated with a claim to be God or Messiah. (Cf. Psalm 27:1; Job 29:3; Micah 7:8; Isaiah 60:19.) The Jewish leaders insisted that Jesus' word about Himself was not enough. His claims must be supported by more than one witness. In the past, Jesus supported His claims by the miracles<sup>2</sup> God enabled Him to do and by Old Testament

prophecy about the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> But this time, Jesus used only the witness of the Father who sent Him. Jesus simply stated that they would hear and receive the Father's witness about Him if they knew the Father. Jesus went on to say that those who did not believe in Him would die in their sins, having missed the way to God.

The religious leaders' animosity continued to grow. In the midst of the hostility, however, many who heard Jesus put their faith in Him.

**Read John 8:1-11.**

1. What do you observe about Jesus from John 7:53-8:2?
2. How did the Pharisees use the woman's situation? What was their attitude toward her (8:3-6)?
3. What sin in her life and in theirs did Jesus acknowledge (8:7-11)?
4. What do you observe about the mercy of Jesus in this story? What did His mercy make possible for the woman?

**Read John 8:12-19.**

5. What promise did Jesus make to the one who believes in Him (8:12)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *"I am" statements of Jesus*, page 99.

6. What did Jesus claim to know about Himself that the religious leaders did not know (8:14)?

7. How did Jesus contrast the judgments of the Pharisees with His own ability to judge (8:15-16)?

**Note:** "The judgment of the Pharisees was limited and worldly. In the sense they meant, Jesus made it clear that He did not judge at all. In the proper sense, of course, He did judge (v. 26)." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1612.

8. a. What claim did Jesus make that continued to fuel the hostility of His opposition (8:19)?

b. How did Jesus state this claim in John 14:9-10?

**Read John 8:21-30.**

9. a. What did Jesus promise those who opposed Him (8:21,23-24)?

**Reference:** Note 4, *die in your sins*, page 99.

b. What did Jesus promise those who believe in Him (John 11:25-26; 14:2-3)?

10. With tenderness and calmness, Jesus spoke to those who would crucify Him. What did Jesus tell the Jews about His identity (8:28)?

**Note:** Jesus referred to His coming crucifixion and resurrection when He spoke of being *lifted up*.

**References:** Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

11. What assurance did Jesus have as He lived to please the Father that we can also have (8:29)?

12. a. In spite of the hostility from religious leaders, what happened (8:30)?

b. Optional Question: What do you think caused people to believe in Jesus?

## **The Importance of Compassion**

As Jesus' responded to the woman caught in adultery, He modeled a character quality essential to fulfillment: compassion.

Maintaining a heart of compassion instead of falling into patterns of judgment and insensitivity requires unselfishness. In the end, however, this choice leads to tremendous blessing. The person who lives only for himself and does not cultivate a heart of compassion will ultimately find life empty, unfulfilling and purposeless. It is essential that we foster compassion in our quest for fulfillment.

While it comes naturally for most to show compassion on the helpless, it is much more difficult to extend mercy to the wrongdoer and nearly impossible to show compassion to those who declare themselves our enemies. In this regard, it is important to notice that from a heart of compassion, Jesus responded differently to different people. He was merciful to the woman caught in adultery, but firm and unyielding with the hypocritical religious leaders. With the woman, He knew mercy and acceptance could change her life. But with the Pharisees, Jesus knew that exposing their hypocrisy and repeating the truth about Himself was the only possible way to break through their denial. Jesus refused to choose the natural defensive responses of retaliation or compromising the truth, but rather continued to take the only path He could to make repentance available to them.

A life of compassion requires that we continually seek the best for other individuals. With this goal in mind, we respond to each situation to the best of our ability. Wisdom, or skill at living, is knowing what form compassion should take with a given person in a given situation. God wants to give us the wisdom and compassion we need in our quest for fulfillment. In this lesson, we will observe the biblical guidelines related to a life of compassion.

1. a. What attitudes did the religious leaders demonstrate toward the woman?  
How are these typical responses toward wrong doers?

b. How did Jesus respond to her? What did He desire for her?

2. a. Because of pride and blindness to their own sin, the Pharisees viewed the woman as inferior and worthless. What warning is here for us?

b. What enables us to have a merciful approach toward people?  
Philippians 2:5-8

3. How does God promise to produce this kind of unselfishness in us?  
Romans 5:5

**Reference:** Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

4. a. How did Paul describe the love that the Holy Spirit produces in the humble, willing heart? I Corinthians 13:4-8a

b. About what did Paul warn in I Corinthians 13:1-3?

5. a. How did Jesus respond differently to the Pharisees than to the woman?

b. Why should caring responses differ in different situations?

c. What does God desire to give us as we seek to respond wisely?  
James 1:5

Proverbs 15:4a,23

Proverbs 16:21

6. While He was very firm with them, what attitude toward His enemies did Jesus demonstrate as He hung on the cross?  
Luke 23:33-34



II Peter 3:9

7. While extending compassion, Jesus never compromised truth. What must we always do in order to truly help people?  
Ephesians 4:15

Job 23:11

8. Maintaining a compassionate heart toward people can require sacrifice and sometimes emotional or physical discomfort. What do the Scriptures promise to the one who sacrificially gives to the needs of others?  
Proverbs 11:25

Proverbs 28:27

Luke 6:38

9. As in His Son, what does God want people to see in His children?  
Colossians 3:12-14

## **Summary**

10. Is there an individual or group you are struggling to show compassion toward? What do you see in Jesus' example and in the principles we have studied in this lesson that are helpful to you?

11. a. Why is maintaining a compassion for people essential in your personal quest for fulfillment?

b. What can hinder your maintaining a compassionate heart?

12. What is your prayer for this area of your life?

## LESSON 10 NOTES

**1** *"I am" statements of Jesus.* The Gospel of John records seven "I am" statements:

6:35 The Bread of Life.

8:12; 9:5 The Light of the World.

10:7,9 The Gate to God.

10:11,14 The Good Shepherd.

11:25 The Resurrection and the Life.

14:6 The Way, the Truth and the Life.

15:1,5 The Vine.

**2 Reference:** Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88.

**3 Reference:** Note 5, *Scripture Prophecy Concerning Messiah fulfilled in Jesus*, page 60-61.

**4** *die in your sins* (8:24; 8:21). "The singular 'sin' [referred to in 8:21 and made plural in 8:24] is that of rejecting the One who offers salvation (cf. 16:9). They would 'die' because they continued living in the realm of sin, remaining under its power. Physical death would be their prelude to eternal separation from God. If they would reject Jesus as the revelation of God, they would miss their only hope for salvation." Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament, page 304.

## LESSON 11

### MORE PUBLIC DEBATE

#### John 8:31-59

Still teaching in the Temple, Jesus instructed those who had professed belief in Him to hold to His teachings. "Then you will know the truth," He promised, "and the truth will set you free" (8:32).

With this statement, pride welled up within the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Obviously disregarding their oppressive political bondage to Rome, the Jewish leaders declared that as descendants of Abraham, they were in bondage to no man. But Jesus explained that He was referring to the human bondage to sin that dominates and controls people. As the Son, He claimed the power to set a person free from sin and give him an increased knowledge of godly truth. "Then you will know the truth," He said, "and the truth will set you free" (8:32).

While Jesus agreed that the Jews were related to Abraham as they claimed, He begged the point that a person akin to Abraham *spiritually* would not be seeking to kill Him, an innocent man. Not only this, but Jesus said that one as obedient to God as Abraham would also recognize Jesus as sent from God the Father.

Angered by these words, the Jews retaliated with a slur most likely aimed at Jesus' virgin birth: "We are not illegitimate children. The only Father we have is God Himself" (8:41).

"If God were your Father," Jesus replied, "you would love me, for I came from God...He sent me" (8:42). Then Jesus stated that their intent to kill Him, one guilty of no crime, proved that they were not inspired by God, but by Satan,<sup>2</sup> the father of lies and a murderer.

Desperate to undermine Jesus' logic and authority, the Jewish leaders called Jesus a demon-possessed Samaritan.<sup>3</sup> After denying these unfounded accusations, Jesus claimed He sought no honor for Himself. But He warned

His enemies that they would answer to the Father for dishonoring the Son whom He had sent. Boldly, Jesus went on to make an unquestionable claim to eternal power. "I tell you the truth," He said, "if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (8:51).

Again His enemies accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon, since His claim would make Him eternal and greater than Abraham and the prophets. "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day;"<sup>4</sup> Jesus stated. "He saw it and was glad" (8:56). Protesting that Jesus, not even 50 years old, should claim to have seen Abraham, they received an even more shocking statement: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" Jesus thus identified Himself with the Old Testament name of God, "I Am" (Exodus 3:14),<sup>5</sup> thus making an undeniable claim to be God.

Immediately, the Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Jesus for blasphemy, but Jesus slipped away from the Temple area untouched.

### **Read John 8:31-41.**

1. a. What did Jesus say He required of His disciples (8:31), and what do you think this means in reality?

b. What reward did He promise (8:32)?

2. a. When the Jews claimed to be slaves to no one, how did Jesus explain the bondage to which He referred (8:34)?

b. What did Jesus explain about the freedom He could give from this bondage (8:35-36; see also John 1:12)?

3. Upon what did the Jews base their security and righteousness before God (8:33,39)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *The Jews*, page 109.

4. While Jesus agreed on their blood kinship to Abraham, how did He disprove their claim to be righteous like Abraham (8:37,39-40,56)? What inconsistencies did Jesus point out in their behavior?

**Reference:** Note 4, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day*, page 109.

**Read John 8:42-47.**

5. How did Jesus respond to the Jewish leaders' claims to God as their Father (8:42)?

6. Because they intended to kill Jesus, with whom did Jesus ally the Jewish leaders and why (8:44)?

**Reference:** Note 5, *Satan, demons*, page 79.

7. How did Jesus explain the unbelief of the Jewish leaders (8:47)?

8. What did the Jewish leaders call Jesus in their angry attempt to undermine His teaching (8:48)?

**Reference:** Note 3, *Samaritan*, page 109.

9. a. What points did Jesus make in response (8:49-50)?

b. What promise (8:51)?

10. a. What did the Jews realize Jesus was saying about Himself as He promised to give eternal life (8:52-53)?

b. Briefly list the points Jesus made in response to the question, "Who do you think you are?" (8:54-58).

**Reference:** Note 5, *before Abraham was born, I am*, page 109.

c. What proved that the Jews understood Jesus' claim to be God (8:59)?

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Standing on the Side of Truth I**

Lies and deceit are at the foundational levels of injustice, selfish ambition and hatred in our world. Because Jesus experienced firsthand the dishonesty and deceit of our world, we can know He understands the suffering we experience here. He knows our struggle with the lies that cause innocent people to suffer. He also understands our human struggle to be completely honest and the courage it takes not to compromise truth or become complacent in our stand against untruth. And He knows the confusion over right and wrong we have apart from His help.

With this full understanding, Jesus promises to free us from the power of deceit and lies. By revealing more and more truth to the teachable heart, He promises to impart wisdom and courage to stand fearlessly and sensitively on the side of truth as He did. Jesus promises that holding to the truth He teaches not only allows one to be a part of God's eternal family, but also to experience freedom from the deceitfulness of sin in our own hearts and in the world around us.

There is freedom and fulfillment in knowing and standing for truth. Let's survey the wonderful biblical principles regarding truth and the place standing on the side of truth must take in our *Quest for Fulfillment*.

1. a. Where do you see dishonesty in the world around you?



b. What does dishonesty cause?

2. a. What motivates people to lie? What does the lie promise in the short run?

b. What happens when we lie? How does dishonesty actually rob us of the fulfillment we seek?

3. What does the Bible warn about lies in the following verses?

Proverbs 12:22

I Peter 3:10,12

4. What clear commands regarding lies do these Scriptures give?

Leviticus 19:11

Zechariah 8:16

5. Greed is often a motivating factor for dishonesty. Such was the case with many of the religious leaders who opposed Jesus. What do the following verses warn about lying and material gain?

Proverbs 21:6

I Timothy 6:10

6. a. Why does the Bible say we are unable to discern truth accurately without God's help?

Jeremiah 17:9

Proverbs 14:12

b. How does the Bible describe the fleshly or sinful nature in every human being? Romans 8:7

7. In John 8:34-36, Jesus speaks of His ability to set us free from bondage to our selfish nature. What makes this possible according to the following?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

**Reference:** Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

8. In our search for truth, what are we assured about the principles found in God's word, the Bible?

Psalm 19:7-10

9. What does the Bible say about Jesus and the truth?

John 1:14b

John 14:6

John 18:37

10. a. What did Jesus reveal about the origin of lies in John 8:44b?

**Reference:** Note 5, *Satan, demons*, page 79.

b. How does God assure us of protection from this enemy (Eph 6:14,17)?

8. Regardless of what it costs us, what does Jesus promise in the way of fulfillment when we side with the truth?

John 8:32,36

## **Summary**

9. What part does truth play in your quest for fulfillment? What have you found when you failed to be honest?

10. According to the Bible, what part must faith in Jesus Christ play in discerning honesty and freedom from our own deceitfulness?

11. At whatever cost, what does God command you to do in your pursuit of fulfillment? Proverbs 23:23

## LESSON 11 NOTES

**1** *The Jews* (8:48) refers to the Jewish leaders who were hostile to Jesus. John used this term 70 times in his gospel, sometimes in a favorable sense (e.g. 4:22), sometimes in a neutral sense (e.g. 2:6), but most often to speak of Jesus' enemies. *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1594.

**2 Reference:** Note 5 *Satan, demons*, page 79.

**3 Samaritan** (8:48). The Samaritans were seen as a type of half-breed, not Pharisee stock, and their religious practices mixed Jewish and pagan rituals (See Note 1, *Samaritans*, page 51). When the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of being a Samaritan, they were either accusing Him of unorthodoxy in His teachings or were referring to his birth.

**4 Abraham rejoiced to see my day** (8:56). For his faithfulness, God promised Abraham that his offspring would produce a nation that would bless the entire world. In His statement about Abraham's joy, Jesus was probably speaking about Abraham's general joy in the fulfillment of God's purposes through the incarnate Christ, who would bless all nations of the earth. (Genesis 18:18). By faith, Abraham saw the day of Christ from afar and was glad. *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1614.

**5 before Abraham was born, I am!** (8:58). When Jesus declared "I am" rather than "I was," He used the holy name by which God defined Himself in the Old Testament, *I Am* (Exodus 3:14). Through this identification, Jesus claimed eternal existence through oneness with God the Father. With this statement, Jesus explained His ability to give unending life to true believers (8:51) and His acquaintance with Abraham (8:56-57). See also Note 1, "*I am*" statements of Jesus, page 99.

Jesus' statement in John 8:58 was a powerful and emphatic declaration of deity. For this reason, the Jews immediately picked up rocks to stone Jesus for blasphemy, a capital offense in Old Testament Judaism.

## LESSON 12

### HEALING OF A MAN BORN BLIND

#### John 9

It was the Sabbath, possibly the day after Jesus fled the angry religious leaders at the Temple (8:59). Walking along with the disciples, He saw a beggar man who had been born blind. The Jewish rabbis espoused the belief that people suffered disabilities because of their sin or the sin of their parents. But Jesus explained to the disciples that the blind man's condition had nothing to do with sin, but that God would use his condition to reveal His work in the man's life. With this, Jesus placed mud on the blind man's eyes and instructed him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. There the blind man discovered he could see.

Quite a stir resulted as people began to realize what had happened. However, the commotion was not a celebration but rather a debate over the incident and who Jesus was. The people took the man to the Pharisees, who became focused on the fact that Jesus broke their Sabbath laws when He healed the man. They repeatedly interrogated the man, and at one point his parents, about his prior blindness and how he was healed. Finally, the Pharisees became divided among themselves about whether Jesus was from God or was a sinner, so they asked the healed man who *he* thought Jesus was. The man, amazed that they should wonder, stated what was obvious to him: Jesus had to be from God because God would not enable a sinful man to do such a miracle of healing.

Enraged with both the man's answer and his obvious faith in Jesus, the religious leaders threw the man out of the meeting place, claiming he was "steeped in sin at birth" and not worthy to lecture them. Jesus heard of his expulsion, found the man, and gently revealed to him that He was the Messiah. The man immediately believed and worshiped Jesus.

Later turning to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind" (9:39). The Pharisees had demonstrated by their response to Jesus' miracles<sup>3</sup> that while they claimed to have spiritual insight they refused to accept truth if it did not fit into their agenda. In so doing, they left themselves condemned.

But the story of the blind man remains a dramatic and vivid illustration in the physical realm of Jesus' power to bring those who are willing out of spiritual blindness to see the truth of who He is.

**Read John 9:1-13.**

1. a. What philosophy about hardship did Jesus refute in His response to the disciples' question about the blind man (9:1-3)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *who sinned . . .?* page 119.

b. Optional Question: What principle did Jesus give to His disciples that can be applied by believers today (9:4-5)?

2. a. How do you think the healed man must have felt as he saw vivid colors and images for the first time?

b. How did people who knew him respond (9:8-13)?

**Read John 9:14-34.**

3. How did the Pharisees respond to the blind man's healing (9:14-17)?

4. What caused the blind man's parents to be cautious as they answered the Pharisees questions (9:18-23)?

5. a. What was the blind man's ringing statement when the Pharisees summoned him a second time (9:24-25)?

b. The former blind man preached a mini-sermon in answer to the Pharisees' unreasonable behavior. What points did he make (9:30-33)?

**Read John 9:35-41.**

6. When He found the healed man, whom did Jesus reveal Himself to be? How did the man respond (9:35-38)?

**Reference:** Note 4, *Son of Man*, page 24.

7. a. In his warning to the Pharisees, how did Jesus promise to deal with the spiritually open and the self-righteous (9:39)?



b. Because of their spiritual knowledge but refusal to see truth, of what would the religious leaders remain guilty (9:41)?

**Note:** "The Pharisees were shocked (9:40) that Jesus thought they were spiritually blind. Jesus countered by saying that it was only blindness (stubbornness and stupidity) that could excuse their behavior. To those who remained open and recognized how sin had truly blinded them from knowing the truth, He gave spiritual understanding and insight. But He rejected those who had become complacent, self-satisfied, and blind." *NIV Life Application Bible*, page 1897. See also Note 1, *Pharisees*, page 41.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **Standing on the Side of Truth II**

Jesus had gloriously healed the blind man's life-long disability and forever freed him from begging to become a responsible citizen. Yet the people around the healed man did not rejoice with him, but rather became focused on how to overpower Jesus. The man who should have enjoyed celebration found himself in a meat grinder of religious politics.

When our eyes are initially opened to see spiritual truth and understand who Jesus is, the natural response is to be overjoyed as we begin to trust Him. But when others ask us about our faith, our truthful answers may provoke a response similar to that of the healed man in John 9. Rather than encouragement and celebration, we may be met with discouragement and even disdain from those who want to hang onto their own views and agendas.

There are two very important messages from this story that we will look at now. One is the importance of being wide open to the truth and refusing to become stuck in a teaching that does not fit reality. The second is the importance of expecting, and knowing biblical principles about dealing with, persecution for faith in Christ.

As we continue to study the importance of standing on the side of truth in our *Quest for Fulfillment*, let's observe some of the Scriptures that relate to these very important issues.

***A. Maintaining a Teachable Attitude.***

1. a. What was the concern of the religious leaders, the man or their own agenda?

b. What does this teach us about rejection from some who would discourage our faith?

2. a. What kept the religious leaders from seeing the truth?

b. What can destroy our ability to comprehend truth?  
Luke 8:11-14

**Reference:** Note 5, *Satan*, page 79.

c. How did Jesus describe the teachable heart in Luke 8:15?

3. a. What do the following verses reveal about the importance of maintaining a teachable attitude?

Proverbs 2:1-8

b. What can happen if we do not maintain a teachable attitude toward God?

Romans 1:21

4. How does the Bible instruct us to grow in spiritual understanding?

James 1:21-22

Proverbs 1:5

5. New spiritual understanding must be consistent with God's word, the Bible. What does Psalm 119:160 say about this?

### ***B. Facing Persecution for Faith.***

6. What do the Scriptures warn believers in Christ about?

John 15:20

2 Timothy 3:12

7. What are the promised rewards of persecution for faith?  
Matthew 5:10-12

Romans 5:3-5

8. a. What does I Corinthians 2:14 remind us about those without Christ?

b. *Optional:* How does Ephesians 4:17-19 describe the state of some who resist God?

c. What must we remember about ourselves in order to *respond* rather than *react* in judgment of those who persecute us? Titus 3:3-5

9. How does the Bible instruct us to respond to the attacks of others on our faith?

I Corinthians 15:58

I Peter 2:21-23

10. a. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus refers to believers as "the light of the world."  
How can we best witness for Christ in the world around us?

II Timothy 2:24-26

I Peter 3:15-16\*

b. What should be the mark of the Christian according to I John 4:7?

11. When we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our lives (Ephesians 5:18b), how does He help us to face persecution for our faith? Luke 12:11-12

**Reference:** Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, page 41.

## Summary

12. Is there anything in your life that is keeping you from growing in spiritual truth?

13. What must you be cautious about as you hear new spiritual truth?

14. a. When have you faced resistance to your faith? What subtle pressures in the world around you have tempted you to be silent or complacent about who Christ is and what He has done in your life?

b. What has this study encouraged you to do?

## LESSON 12 NOTES

**1** *who sinned . . .?* (9:2). "The rabbis had developed the principle that 'There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity.' They were even capable of thinking that a child could sin in the womb or that its soul might have sinned in a preexistent state. They also held that terrible punishments came on certain people because of the sin of their parents." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1614.

"But Christ used the man's suffering to teach about faith and to glorify God. We live in a fallen world where good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior not always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If God took suffering away whenever we asked we would follow him for comfort and convenience, not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When you suffer from a disease, tragedy, or disability, try not to ask, 'Why did this happen to me?' or 'What did I do wrong?' Instead, ask God to give you strength for the trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening." NIV *Life Application Bible*, page 1895.

**2** *he does not keep the Sabbath* (9:16). When Jesus worked the clay and then healed the man born blind, he had twice violated the Sabbath which allowed neither work nor healing to be performed. Above all else the Pharisees stressed the observance of the Sabbath. "On no other subject is Rabbinical teaching more painfully minute and more manifestly incongruous to its professed object. For if we rightly apprehend what underlay the complicated and intolerably burdensome laws and rules..., it was to secure, negatively, absolute rest from all labor, and, positively, to make the Sabbath a delight." The terrible exaggerated views of the rabbis, and their endless, burdensome rules about the Sabbath are an area far too lengthy for this study. In fact, the Babylon Talmud contained 24 chapters on Sabbath rules, and one rabbi is said to have spent 2 1/2 years just studying the law put forth in one single chapter." A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix XVII, page 777.

**3 Reference:** Note 1, *Miracles of Jesus*, page 88.

**QUEST FOR FULFILLMENT:  
STUDIES FROM THE BOOK OF JOHN**

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