

-- BIBLE STUDY --

-- Visiting with Jesus --  
“THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR”

for  
American English Language Training Students

By  
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for  
ACCTS  
(Association for Christian Counseling,  
Teaching, and Service)  
2004



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BIBLE STUDY  
VISITS WITH JESUS:  
“The All-Sufficient Savior”

Introduction

Seven Bible lessons have been developed in which Jesus interacts with people around Him. The selection and development of these Bible studies are predicated on the idea that it is through a relationship with another person that we get to know that person and he or she gets to know us, and that the relationship develops through frequent visits with that person. Each of these scripture passages illustrates how Jesus made a difference in the lives of the people who visited with Him. Likewise, these scripture passages reveal who Jesus was, what His mission on earth was, what His priorities were, and how He felt about Himself and those around Him. In all the circumstances in which Jesus encountered people, He made a difference in their lives -- sometimes obvious and other times not so obvious. Jesus said that He came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10-11). When we know His mind, are transformed by His Spirit, and experience the power of His resurrection, we will truly live.

From childhood on we have to learn to do things for ourselves. At the same time that we are learning to do things on our own, we are supposed to learn the meaning of Christ's saying, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV). Many Christians know the verse by heart but live as though Christ had said, “Without me you can't do very much.”

Some people never learn the lesson. Some are separated from God forever because they have not learned that they cannot save themselves and that they must enter into the “rest” that is offered in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:10). Some believers in Christ have not learned to cease from their own efforts and depend on Christ.

God is indispensable in every phase of life. He maintains and sustains life, both here and for eternity. Jesus spoke of Himself as the “Savior,” the means of salvation (Luke 4:18-19; John 6:47) and presents seven different images of Himself, often called the “I Am” sayings, that are vital to human life and, when summed up, present Jesus as “The Indispensable Christ” – “The All-Sufficient Savior.”

Jesus Christ as Word and Son is the perfect revealer of God. As the commissioned envoy of the Father he speaks with full authority in the Father's name. This aspect of his nature is so far emphasized that even under the conditions of his mortal existence he is credited with omniscience and omnipotence. There is no limit to his miraculous power, and he lays majestic claims in a series of “I Am” sayings which recall the language used of Yahweh in the Old Testament – “I Am Who I Am.” In Galilee and Jerusalem his works and his teaching command attention. In Samaria he makes himself known as the giver of the water of life and is hailed as the Savior of the world. In Jerusalem the restoring of sight to the blind man on the Sabbath stirs up controversy; in Galilee multitudes follow and are miraculously fed. The discourse about the bread of life ends in a “hard saying” after which many of his disciples forsake him, but the twelve confess their belief in him. A series of controversies in Jerusalem led the rulers to resolve upon his death. Jesus declares himself to be the light of the world, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life. John 8:24 makes recognition that Jesus is the “I Am” a matter of

eternal life and death: “You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am.”

The Gospel of John highlights these sayings. In the “I Am” sayings, Jesus used concepts that were familiar to, well understood by, and of extreme importance to his listeners on which to build the spiritual aspect of. For example,

“The Living Water” (John 4:4-15, 7:37-39) – Water was an absolute necessity in Palestine and had been from the beginning of the life of Israel. Through their desert wanderings they sought after and were desperate at times for water. They pleaded with God for water. Only people who lived in desert conditions as they did, could appreciate the need for water. Jesus knew the Jewish people recognized this need.

“I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:22-58) – Hunger was also a part of Israel’s wanderings in the desert. God provided manna for them when they needed food. Bread was a staple, a minimum for subsistence in the lives of the Jewish people. Every meal had bread. All households baked bread. The multitude came to Jesus, following the miraculous feeding, looking for more bread. It was on this latter occasion that Jesus proclaims that he is the Bread of Life.

“I am the Light of the World” (John 8:12-16, 19) – In a land where darkness could be dispelled only by light from fire in one form or another, where darkness concealed terrible dangers, where light was sacred (a constantly burning light was kept in the Temple), where God was known as “Light,” the idea of constant light was something to be desired. The concept of Jesus as the Light of the World was well understood (but disagreed with) by many who heard him.

“I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:1-18) – Israel was a pastoral people. Sheep and shepherds figured importantly in the lives of the Jews. Sheep provided for the Jews food, clothing, oil, a trade item, leather, and supplied their burnt sacrifices before God. Good shepherds were in constant demand to care for sheep. The Jews well knew the value of sheep and of a good shepherd.

“I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:1-44) – What is more important than Life to any human being? To Martha whose brother had just died, life meant the return of her brother from the dead. Jesus’ statement meant that he provided eternal life. Some sects of Jews believed in resurrection from the dead, others did not. So, the idea of resurrection was not a new one. To his listeners it provided hope.

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:1-27) – The disciples, to whom Jesus spoke these words, knew that the end was drawing near for Jesus, that his death was imminent. They were floundering. It was crucial that Jesus sustain them with this message and to go further with the promise that after his death they would have his Spirit within their lives.

“I am the true Vine” (John 15:1-17) – From the earliest known times, Palestine was a vine-growing region, as indicated by numerous wine-presses found in and around early centers of civilization. In a land where drinking water was scarce, wine was a staple. It was a part of every meal. In addition to wine, the vine supplied the Jews with sugar and honey, which they obtained by boiling the juice of the grape to a thick “grape-honey.” The harvest festivals held were in celebration of grape harvests and to ask God for a plentiful growing season to come. The people well knew the importance of grapes.

Seven lessons are developed around these sayings. It is hoped that through these Bible studies and through the testimonies of teachers, the program staff, believers in classes, believers at other times among students, and through daily devotionals that students will come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and experience that abundant life which only Jesus gives.

*Theme:* “The All-Sufficient Savior” deals with the seven “I Am” sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John and which portray Him as indispensable in our lives.

*Presupposition:* When Jesus presents himself to us in these passages he is also introducing us to ourselves as well. The better acquainted we become with Jesus the more we know about ourselves and the more we know ourselves the more we know we desperately need Jesus in our hearts, minds, spirits, lives.

*Goal Statement:* To allow every student to meet Jesus personally through the introductions that Jesus makes of himself, showing how the identity of Jesus impacts our identity, and the implication of intimacy in each example.

*Objectives:* Students will

1. meet Jesus through the scripture readings.
2. learn why Jesus came to earth.
3. learn how Jesus perceived Himself and His mission.
7. learn how Jesus made a difference in the lives of those He touched.
8. learn how a relationship with Jesus can make a difference in their own lives.
9. learn concepts relating to Christianity and how to apply them in their own lives.
10. learn the different ways in which they can develop and maintain a relationship with Jesus.
11. learn that Jesus as Life leads to eternal life.
12. learn that they are totally dependent on Christ for life.
13. come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and follow Him.
14. grow through these introductions of Jesus.

*The Lessons:* “Visiting with Jesus, The All-Sufficient Savior”

Lesson 1: The Living Water

Lesson 2: I am the Bread of Life

Lesson 3: I Am the Light of the World

Lesson 4: I am the Good Shepherd

Lesson 5: I Am the Resurrection and the Life

Lesson 6: I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Lesson 7: I Am the True Vine

*Lesson Format:*

Each lesson contains the following, in the following order:

A Principle Thought,

A Lesson Summary which contains

a discussion of the pertinent concepts involved in each lesson,

a discussion of the content of the scripture passages,

Teacher Helps,

A “Set,”

Lesson Objectives,

Objective and Subjective questions,  
Reference Notes, and  
A scripture leaflet in English.

The Lesson Summary is intended to aid teachers by providing a background for passages, in some cases, and to aid somewhat in the understanding of the scripture. Since each of the “I Am” sayings involve a common everyday concept (e.g., bread, water, light, etc.), each lesson summary will discuss the various aspects of the pertinent concepts involved. The idea in each lesson is that students should be aided in bridging the gap between the common everyday concept and its spiritual use and application to their lives.

It is NOT intended for the Lesson Summary information to be taught to classes.

The Scripture Leaflet (provided in the appendices) is intended ONLY for those students who are proficient in English and uses the *New Living Translation* (NLT) and/or *The Message* (MSG). These two translations were chosen because both use contemporary English which will be more readable and more easily comprehended by non-English speaking persons. The scripture leaflets are ready for copying for students’ use.

### *Teaching-Learning Strategies*

Our teaching goal is to enable students to think rather than giving them the answers – to arrive at their own answers as much as possible. This starts with the beginning of the lesson (the “set”), continues through the reading of the scripture passages, and on through the discussions. “Teaching” to many of us often means lecturing, explaining, and giving answers in order to get information across to our students and to make sure that students “know” the information we want them to learn. When the goal is to provoke thinking, the teacher becomes an enabler, a catalyst, (rather than a “teacher/explainer”), creating an environment through which students learn. This is usually accomplished by question and discussion strategies. Questions lead from point A to point B in a somewhat logical sequential approach. Thus, students learn through their own subjective experiences, through the leading and enabling process on the part of the teacher. This is not to say that the teacher should do no explaining; there are times that it will be necessary to present information that is not provided in the scripture passages. But “explaining” should not be the primary approach. “Explain” when necessary and try to keep it to a minimum.

***The Interpreter in the Bible study class:*** The interpreter can be of great assistance (if necessary with students whose English proficiency is weak) in achieving the objectives of the Bible lessons. She will need to be able to translate the study questions into the students’ language in order that less English-proficient students can comprehend them. He will need, also, to be able to translate into the students’ language what you, the teacher, say to the class. Therefore, share with the interpreter well ahead of time a copy of each Bible study lesson so that he/she can become acquainted with the scripture both in English and in the native language, the intent of the lesson, be able to translate the questions into the students’ language, and to be able to translate your comments to students as well as students’ comments to you. It is important that you and the interpreter have a thorough understanding of what will take place in the class; you should communicate to the interpreter what your expectations for him/her are and what your approach will be. You will have to rely in most cases on the interpreter in order to know whether students understand the material or are having difficulty.

**Alternate Approach when an interpreter must be used:** Use primarily the lecture method with these students and intermix some attempt at discussion. It is still desirable that students be encouraged to think about the concepts outlined in the various kinds of

questions.

Experience has shown that strictly using the discussion method is less than successful with classes when you must depend totally on the interpreter. A discussion such as is suggested above requires not only a trained and intuitive discussion leader but also requires an interpreter equally qualified in discussion techniques. The teacher must know what students are saying and how they are saying it rather than relying on the interpreter. This isn't possible with the "back and forth" of a translation situation. The other undesirable factor with translation is the amount of time that is consumed with the back and forth situation.

***The preparatory step:*** This step in the lesson is particularly important for these lessons on the "I Am" sayings; its purpose in these lessons is to deal with the common everyday concepts that these sayings build upon – that is, in the "set" is when students will discuss these concepts and establish their importance in their lives in order to make transfer to the spiritual meaning and application. Don't leave it out!

The "*Set*" is **not** an introduction; it is a preparatory step through which the student is subtly led into the subject to be discussed. It is a question, statement, or picture with questions, a problem-solving activity, and the ensuing discussion that is related to something in the passage that is to be read; therefore, the set starts the student thinking about the subject or the primary thought of the passage. It is a substitute for saying, "Today we are going to talk about . . ." or, on the other hand, simply having students start reading the Bible passage without any introduction. The "set" can be used as well with classes where an interpreter is necessary; in fact, it must be used under any arrangement to get the class going and to establish the desired thought in students' minds.

For example, a "*set*" for the teaching of the story of Jesus feeding the four thousand (John 6:5-15) might go like this. Offer the following question to the class, "Suppose you suddenly had two dozen people show up at your home at dinner time and you knew there wasn't enough food to even start feeding them. What would you do?" You would probably get responses such as 'We would go buy some food,' OR 'We would go next door and borrow some,' OR 'We would tell our friends to go home,' and other similar answers. Be prepared to deal with responses like these in order to arrive at the idea that these suggestions would not work and to arrive at the idea that they would have to make do with whatever they had. Then, the set would proceed like this – "Suppose that you decided to use the little bread and meat that you had for sandwiches, and that every time you put your hand in the packages there was always more there to pull out, including some left over after everyone had eaten and was satisfied. What would you think about that?" Then, after responses and discussion, you would quickly relate this discussion to the experience in the story of Jesus feeding the four thousand and proceed with the lesson.

Each lesson will have a *suggested* "set" for the teacher to use. A creative teacher should be able to come up with his or her own set. Students' responses will determine follow-up questions and discussion. The set should not be prolonged since it is only a preparatory step. The idea is to get students thinking about the "subject" that has been introduced through the "set." Then – the subject of the scripture passage can be introduced, being careful not to answer any of the questions intended for the lesson. Following this preparatory step, the Bible passage(s) will be read, a few verses at a time and interspersed with questions.

**Reading the Bible Passages:** Except in the case of the most English-proficient students, the scriptures should be read by the students in the native language and questions asked through the interpreter who in turn will ask the questions in the language of the students. Less

English-proficient students may be able to “read” the English, but often do not understand it sufficiently or even not at all; they are simply “mouthing” the words. Even the most English-proficient students should read the scripture passages in their own language as well as alternately in English to make sure of their comprehension. Students need not be given copies of the questions. Longer passages should be read in sections and questions asked before moving on. Vocabulary: Every lesson has a list of vocabulary concepts that may cause students (and teachers) difficulty. While it is important that these words be understood by students, it is not intended for the teacher to make a conscious effort to teach them. The important thing is that teachers understand all the vocabulary items and be able to explain each one as needed. Observe as students answer questions to see if some of these concepts are not understood and then deal with them on the spot. Sometimes the apparent inability to answer questions is related to a lack of understanding of a vocabulary item.

**Questioning Strategies:** There are two kinds of questions – *objective questions* (those that are answered straight out of the reading material – the literal level -- and create a foundation for comprehension); and *subjective* (thought-provoking) *questions*, those which deal with the more substantive aspects of each lesson.

Each lesson starts off with *objective questions* which will be

1. different for each lesson,
2. at the literal level (no inference or speculative aspects),
3. are listed with each lesson,
3. directly related to and dependent upon the scripture passages.
4. have right or wrong answers that come directly from the reading material.
5. for the purpose of laying the foundation for students’ comprehension of what is being read.

It is important to make sure that all students understand the response that is given. One student may know the answers but others will not. Ask follow-up questions such as “What make you think that . . . ?” Or, ask someone else to verify a response given by the first student. In waiting for responses, we as teachers sometimes give the answer because students delay too long and we get uncomfortable with silence; don’t rush, be patient. Avoid giving the answer.

Mixed among these objective questions are a few subjective questions.

*Subjective questions* are intended to be thought-provoking. These questions should be asked in such a way that students do not live in fear of giving a wrong answer – for example, using phrases such as “what do you think,” “what is your thought about that,” “I really want to know what you think about . . . ,” and other such strategies. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions. The responses will come from students’ own experiences with their visits with Jesus from lesson to lesson.

The teacher should resist responding to students in such a way that even remotely gives the idea that the student has answered incorrectly, or even correctly. One way of dealing with responses that really are incorrect, undesirable, or “way out,” is to ask another student, “What do you think about what Jimmy said?” OR, “Mary, can you add something to what Jimmy said?” OR “Can you help Jimmy with that?” In other words, students can help students. But, don’t allow students to put down another student’s response. It is beneficial for students to be encouraged to discuss answers among themselves.

The teacher should give every opportunity for each student to share understanding, feelings, and needs. It is important to think and pray during lesson preparation about each question and possible responses. Be flexible and adapt to each level of grasping.

Don't rush; be patient. Be prepared for "surprises;" sometimes students come up with answers that we are not expecting. Accept all answers. Draw out students who are reluctant, but do not persist. Students will respond to these questions when they are ready. In fact, you may wonder by the end of the week whether certain students have any thoughts at all about any of these questions. But, remember, (to quote an English idiom) "still water runs deep." You are only the sower; God brings about the harvest.

The following thought-provoking questions will be used for all lessons and appear with each lesson plan. They may be slightly modified (especially question #3) to "fit" the specific lesson.

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is . . . ?
3. What is the result of being . . . ?
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is . . . ?

Give adequate time for reflection and comment on these questions. Students will not come up with answers readily; in fact, some students will still be arriving at answers at the end of the last lesson. Occasionally dip back into preceding lessons and connect some of the subjective questions with the current lessons by asking some of the subjective questions, perhaps during several lessons and from several lessons.

***Class Structure:*** This approach to Bible study is planned for approximately two hours daily and are intended for small groups of no more than ten students. During the first hour students will read the scripture passages and deal first with the objective questions. The objective questions are subdivided in order to ask questions after reading a few verses and then moving on to the next set of verses. It is important not to prolong the discussion of the objective questions since the subjective questions are primary to the lessons; however, it is also important to deal with unplanned questions that come up if they seem important. During the second hour, students will deal with the subjective questions; it is during this time that students deal personally with the scripture and make application.

The questioning process should not be limited to the listed questions with each lesson, however; each teacher may add questions when it is deemed appropriate. In asking impromptu questions, it is best to avoid "yes-no" questions. If you do ask questions that require a simple yes or no, be sure to follow up with a question such as "How do you know that?" The element of time will determine whether all questions of both types can be dealt with. If time does not permit, it may be necessary to skip some objective questions. However, be sure to cover some of the objective and all subjective questions for each lesson.

***Teacher Preparation:*** Each teacher should prepare for each lesson by

1. reading and studying the Lesson Summary for each lesson,
2. carefully reading and studying each Bible passage and relating the scripture to the objectives for each lesson,
3. thinking about the intent of each lesson including the questions,
4. making an attempt to answer questions for yourself in a subjective way,
4. trying to anticipate students' responses to the lessons and "surprise" questions.

Each lesson will have its own set of teacher helps and suggestions. Teachers may want to pursue other Bible references and thoughts in addition to what is given with each lesson. Teachers should have an understanding of each Bible lesson and the intent of the lesson before presenting it to students. A good Bible dictionary and/or commentary will provide helpful

information on vocabulary items and other concepts in the lessons.

### *Evaluation*

Following the seven lesson plans there is an evaluation form that each teacher should complete and return to the program director or to the Bible Study coordinator before returning home.

An evaluation will provide necessary information regarding the weaknesses and strengths of a format such as this. The goal of the evaluation is to determine whether the proposed Bible study curriculum “works” – if so, what was good about it? And, if not, where were its “failures?” The evaluation form can be found in Appendix A.

Lesson 1  
**THE LIVING WATER**

*Primary Thought*

There is no growing tired of Christ, no thought of seeking elsewhere for a fuller satisfaction than he gives. Whoso lives with Christ and in Christ has in his heart a spring of water perennial and inexhaustible; a peace that passes understanding; a joy deeper and more real than any other joy; a life far more abundant than anyone else can know; a power that can meet every call upon it – a perpetual fountain, clear and clean, cooling and refreshing.

*Lesson Summary*

We all know what **water** is -- a colorless, transparent, liquid compound of oxygen and hydrogen; it is found in seas, rivers, lakes, ponds, springs, and rain.

We take **water** for granted. There have been wars fought over water. But, **water** is absolutely essential for life. It is necessary for plant growth – irrigation, flood waters cause fertile deposits. It is necessary for humans and animal life – water must be consumed on a frequent and continual basis to sustain life; water prevents dehydration of the skin and hair, it prevents constipation, it flushes out the kidneys to avoid toxins in the body. Water is refreshing – a cool drink, a shower in hot weather or when we are tired, a moist breeze in hot weather, air conditioning that reduces water for cooling.

We use water for cleansing – laundry, the body, sanitation, removing contaminants. Water is a dilutor for certain chemicals. Water is used to mix with dry ingredients.

Just as physical water is an absolute essential, so spiritual water is also. We must have this water on a frequent and continual basis (never ending) – it provides restoration, cleanses from sin, sustains life, provides eternal life and spiritual refreshment.

The latter is the “living water” of which Jesus spoke. **Living water** means the water of running streams and fountains, as opposed to stagnant cisterns, pools, or marshes. (John 4:10, 11, 7:38; Revelation 7:17; Genesis 26:19; Leviticus 14:5, 50; Zechariah 14:8). It denotes the enlivening, refreshing, and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, whether in His ordinary openness in the hearts of believers (John 4:10, 14; compare 6:35); Revelation 21:6; 22:1, 17) or including His miraculous gifts (John 7:38; compare 7:39). In connection with this “living water,” Jesus speaks of “thirst” both in a physical sense and a spiritual sense. In a physical sense, “thirst” is a strong word meaning intense desire for water. Especially those who live in desert lands can appreciate the meaning of “thirst.” However, to thirst in a figurative sense means to desire ardently.

The Bible speaks of water in three different ways: a) as a material resource, b) as a symbol, and as c) a metaphor.

**Water as a Material Resource/Necessity:**

Water as a material resource is necessary for life and highly valued; it was even more valued by people in Palestine than in most other parts of the ancient world because it was more scarce. Water was a crucial element in God’s gift of the Promised Land to Israel (Deuteronomy 8:7). Palestine contains several natural sources of water -- rain, springs, wells, and a few short,

perennial streams (wadis<sup>1</sup>). The average annual rainfall in Palestine is about 25 inches, all of which normally falls between November and April. The dry months of May to October made necessary the use of cisterns and pools for water storage.

Adequate *sources of water* determined the sites of early settlement in the Near East (as it was in the settlement of America). Archaeology has revealed that water determined settlement on such strategic sites as Gezer, Jericho, Jerusalem and Megiddo (Judges 5:19). Several famous biblical cities had pools, such as Gibeon (II Samuel 2:13), Hebron (II Samuel 4:12), Samaria (I Kings 22:38), and Jerusalem (II Kings 20:20). Amazing underground water conduits and foot tunnels leading to protected springs have been excavated at Gezer, Jerusalem, and Megiddo. Rabbah (the present “Amman”) was known as “the city of waters” (II Samuel 12:27). Palestine, in spite of its description as “a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills” (Deuteronomy 8:7), has always been hampered by scant rainfall, frequent droughts, and inadequate water supply. Miles of parched desert have caused many mass migrations to the well-watered Nile Valley and to the regions of the children of “the east” (Genesis 29:1-3). Trans-Jordan (now the kingdom of Jordan) has many more useful rivers than Palestine despite the latter’s seasonal brooks (wadis). The highlands of Trans-Jordan lent themselves to irrigation. The Romans found terrain in eastern Palestine where their expert engineers could work out water supply techniques; land along the Jordan in Palestine was too low to lend itself to irrigation. Not until modern times has large-scale irrigation been projected or effected in Israel.

“Water is mentioned more frequently in Scripture than any other natural resource.”<sup>2</sup> It was recognized by writers of the early Old Testament books as essential to the life of man (the story of Hagar, Genesis 21:14, 19; water for people, Exodus 15:25, 17:1, 6, Numbers 20:2; Elijah in time of drought, I Kings 17:10; David in battle near Bethlehem, I Chronicles 11:17; Jeremiah in a Jerusalem dungeon, Jeremiah 38:6; Jesus, thirsting on the Cross, John 19:28); for flocks (Genesis 29:2, 7); and for plant and animal life (Job 8:11; Psalm 104:11, 14-15). Water was even bought by migrant peoples, as Moses vainly attempted to do from Sihon, King of Heshbon (Deuteronomy 2:28).

The Bible states that God made water a part of His good creation and that He exercises sovereignty over it (Genesis chapters 1 and 2; Isaiah 40:12). He controls the natural processes of precipitation and evaporation as well as the courses of bodies of water (Job 5:10, 36:27-28, 37:10; Psalm 33:7, 107:33; Proverbs 8:29). God normally assures the provision of water for human needs (Deuteronomy 11:14). However, water is sometimes used in punishment for sin, as with the flood of Noah’s day (Genesis 6:17) or the drought proclaimed by Elijah (I Kings 17:1). The divine control of water teaches people obedience to and dependency upon God.

Many of the great acts of God in history have involved water, such as the parting of the sea (Exodus 14:21) and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17). Water was also involved in several of Jesus’ miracles (Matthew 14:25; Luke 8:24-25; John 2:1-11).

### **Water as a Symbol**

Water is everywhere a vital aspect of life, but it is even more highly regarded in areas in which it is in short supply. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that water is frequently used as symbolic of God’s blessings. Water was a favorite symbol. The tremendous copper sea in Solomon’s Temple Area was symbolic of God’s creative “heavenly acts” (Genesis 1:6-10) and of water as the source of all life. It thus had a universal significance rather than a ritualistic function of cleansing, such as the portable laver<sup>3</sup> had. This “copper sea” (described in I Kings

7:25-26) was associated with the Mesopotamian *apsu*, the fresh-water body from which all living creatures were derived.<sup>4</sup> Shrines always tended to be established near springs or other sources of water. It is spoken of in the sense of spiritual refreshment (Psalm 23:2; Isaiah 35:6-7, 41:18; Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:38) and as a symbol of eternal life (John 4:14; Revelation 7:16-17, 21:6, 22:1).

Water was a theological symbol. God was the One Who watered the hills (Psalm 104:13); hence water was sacred. It was very early an element in ritual and worship. Hebrew laws found in the Old Testament codes were common-sense provisions for sanitation, as well as for religious rites -- the ceremony for cleansing lepers (Leviticus 14:1-9); the story of Naaman (II Kings 5:10, 12, 14); unclean people and things were also washed as a symbol of ritual cleansing for ridding people of uncleanness due to illness (Leviticus chapter 15) or from eating unclean animals (Leviticus 17:15-16). Another prominent use of water in the Bible (and in the ancient world) is in connection with symbolic cleansing. Pilate used water ceremonially at the Trial of Jesus to cleanse himself from guilt in the condemning of a just man to death (Matthew 27:24).

Washings figured prominently in the consecration of priests and in other aspects of the worship of ancient Israel (Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 16:24; Numbers 8:7). The Old Testament contains laws for the use of water in rituals as a symbol of purification. Sacrificial meat (Leviticus 1:9), ritual utensils (Leviticus 6:28; Numbers 31:23), and priests (Leviticus 8:6) were washed before involvement in rituals. Use of water in this way led to the practice of baptism, which was widely practiced among the Essenes and other Jewish sects, thus providing a background for John's baptizing activity and for Christian baptism. In New Testament times, water was essential for baptism, which denoted the washing away of sin (Matthew 3:6, 11, 13-19). The divine sonship of Jesus was manifested at his Baptism at the Jordan (Matthew 3:16). John baptized at Aenon because there was "much water" there (John 3:23). A wayside waterway was similarly used by Philip in baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36). In New Testament water was a symbol of baptism.

In the Old Testament water was also a symbol of instability -- before the completion of creation (Genesis chapters 1 and 2), as an unruly youth (Genesis 49:4), and of the fleeting quality of life (Job 11:16; Psalm 58:7). It typified Assyria's overflowing of Judah (Isaiah 8:7-8). Ezekiel spoke of water as a symbol of renewal in the age to come (47:1-12). Water for washing the dust from the feet was a symbol of hospitality (Genesis 18:4, 24:32; Luke 7:38, 44; John 13:6, 8, 10, 12, 14).

### **Water Used as a Metaphor**

The Bible contains dozens of metaphorical usages of water. For example, in the Old Testament water is a metaphor<sup>5</sup> or simile for *fear* (Joshua 7:5), death (II Samuel 14:14), sin (Job 15:16), God's presence (Psalms 72:6), marital fidelity (Proverbs 5:15-16), the knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9), God's blessings (Isaiah 58:11), God's voice (Ezekiel 43:2), God's wrath (Hosea 5:10), and justice (Amos 5:24).

Among the metaphorical uses of water in the New Testament are references to birth. Jesus used water metaphorically when he said to Nicodemus that "except one is born of water (baptism) and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5); to the Samaritan woman at the Sychar well he mentioned "living water" as a symbol of the eternal life which springs up within the redeemed (John 4:14).

The "cup of water" given in Christ's name describes Christian charity (Mark 9:41;

compare Matthew 25:35). Paul spoke of watering the planted seed of the Church, “I planted, Apollos watered” (1 Corinthians 3:6; Titus 3:5). The “great voice” of one “like unto the Son of Man” (Revelation 1:15) was “as the sound of many waters.”

### **John 4:4-15**

In verses 1-6, Jesus has withdrawn from Judea to Galilee, presumably to avoid a conflict which could lead to a premature end to his ministry. He therefore “had to go through Samaria.” It is generally thought that the quickest and safest way from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. The longer route (and the most dangerous way) was through Jericho and through the Jordan Valley (recall the story of the Good Samaritan and the traveler who fell among thieves, Luke 10:30<sup>6</sup>). In this incident, however, necessity laid on Jesus generally hints of the divine will for him: he goes through Samaria not only for safety, but to accomplish the work assigned to him by the Father (verses 32, 34). The mission to the Samaritans was unplanned by Jesus but willed by God.

The arrival at Jacob’s well (verses 5-6) sets the stage for the meeting of Jesus with the woman of Sychar, in Samaria, and the developments that come as a result of the event. Jesus’ conversation with this woman (verses 7-15) is striking on several counts. First, there is enmity between Jews and Samaritans that explains the woman’s words in verse 9. Moreover, few Jewish rabbis would initiate open conversations with women as Jesus does (see verse 27).

The antipathy between Jews and Samaritans was deeply rooted, going back to the origins of the Samaritans as a mixed race when they were settled in the northern kingdom by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17:24-41). The Samaritans nevertheless viewed themselves as true Israel, as heirs of the promises of God to Israel, and their version of the Pentateuch as the original one, direct from Moses.

This section (verses 7-10), like the next, introduces an “earthly” subject and, through the questions of the woman, leads to a spiritual message. Jesus’ request for a drink of water is rebuffed (verse 9). but he issues a challenge to the woman: if she knew who Jesus was, she would see that he is the supplier of living water (verse 10).

The woman understands this as a slight (verse 12) upon the gift of the patriarch who dug the well centuries before. Jesus replies that the water of which she is thinking can relieve only bodily thirst, and then explains that he refers to a spiritual gift. The woman’s response (that Jesus cannot supply water because he has no access to the well) is controlled by her misunderstanding<sup>7</sup> of the statement in verse 10, and this leads Jesus to elaborate the image he has used and clarify his real meaning – which is that his water ends all thirst and provides eternal life and that (verse 14) once a man has tasted this drink, he will never seek any other means of quenching his thirst; his need is past. John does not suggest that the believer must not again and again “drink” from the revelation, because the believer has an inexhaustible well within him; that it flows means not only that he may have eternal life, but simply “forever” – both for eternal life and the here-and-now.

Verse 15 shows that the woman has not yet grasped the hidden meaning.

Jesus returns in chapter 7 of the Book of John, to the claim that he is the “living water” when he travels back to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

John’s recounting of this event (7:37-39) builds on the symbolic ceremonies conducted at the temple. Two ceremonies in particular frame Jesus’ self-disclosure. Water and light (both involved in the Feast of Tabernacles) each played a ceremonial role based on prophecies in

Zechariah of things to come. It is in this context that Jesus announces that he is the source of “living water” (7:38) and later (8:12-20) that he is the “light of the world.” The discourses that follow pick up prior themes (Jesus’ authority and origin) and add to the judicial evidence for Jesus’ case which John has been accumulating. Just as Sabbath (chapter 5) and Passover (chapter 6) provided opportunities for Jesus to reveal who he is, so now Tabernacles becomes a place where Jesus unveils himself in Jewish imagery.

In the setting of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37-39) Jesus sweeps up this symbolism and announces that he is the source of true drink. It is virtually certain that the passage assumes the rite of water-drawing that took place on each of the days of the festival proper.

### **Feast of Tabernacles**

The Feast of Tabernacles (or “Booths” or “Ingathering,” *Sukkoth*), started the 15th of the 7th month, *Tishri* (September-October), five days after the Day of Atonement, and lasted a full eight days (Leviticus 23:34-36). This autumn festival (Deuteronomy 16:13-17), at the grape vintage and final harvest of olives and fruits, commemorating the end of the harvest field labor, (Leviticus 23:39), was most important as the beginning of the new civil year. Three aspects of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness were commemorated during the Feast of Tabernacles: 1) the great acts of God involving water -- the parting of the sea (Exodus 14:21), the provision of water for the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 15:22-25, 27; Numbers 20:2-12), and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17); 2) the great acts of God involving light – God guided the Israelites through the wilderness by means of a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day (Exodus 13:21-22) and saved them from their enemies by the same means (Exodus 14:19-25); and 3) tents -- remembering Israel’s tent life during their wanderings (Leviticus 23:42). The latter was celebrated by families erecting booths (tents) or huts on roofs or roads and living in them during the festival. Every Jewish male was obligated to attend the ceremonies sometime during the course of the eight days of worship and sacrifice (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16).

The Feast of Tabernacles joined Passover and Pentecost as a pilgrimage feast and became a high peak in the year’s joyous occasions. A pilgrimage was made to Jerusalem to offer first fruits and tithes and to enjoy festival meals and happy dances. Processions waving palm branches and citron and singing happy songs marked the celebrations. The pilgrims entered into the procedures with greatest delight.

At the break of day priests processed from the temple to the pool of Siloam. There they filled a golden pitcher with water and carried it back to the temple. On approaching the watergate on the south side of the inner court the Shophar was sounded three times – joyous blasts which were explicitly related to Isaiah 12:3, “*With joy* you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The priests bearing the water then processed around the altar, watched by the pilgrims, while the temple choir sang Psalms 113-118. When the opening words of Psalm 118 were reached, “Give thanks to the Lord,” every man and boy shook in his right hand a bunch of willow and myrtle tied with palms and held aloft citrus fruit in his left hand, a sign of the harvest gathered in, and the cry “Give thanks to the Lord” was repeated three times. The same thing happened at the cry “O Lord save us!” (Psalm 118:25). Since all this took place at the time of the daily offering, the water was offered to God in connection with the daily drink-offering of wine. A chosen priest mounted the altar on which stood two silver bowls, one for the reception of the drink-offering and the other for the water. When the priest had poured the wine and the water into their respective bowls, they were then poured out as offerings to God. The crowd then

called out, “Lift up your hand!” The demand was made as a sign that the rite was properly fulfilled. Accordingly the priest raised his hand aloft to show that he had faithfully discharged his duty.

The ideas behind the rite were complex. Since the festival was essentially bound up with the agricultural year, prayer for the sending of rain, which was a highly uncertain element in Palestinian weather, was a prime factor in the performance of the rite. Indeed, if rain fell during the festival it was regarded as a sign of the plentiful rains that would be given in the coming agricultural year. Since Tabernacles was also a celebration of the blessings of God upon Israel during the nation’s forty years sojourn in the wilderness, the water-drawing served as a reminder of the water that came from the rock smitten by Moses, when the people were in danger of perishing from thirst (Exodus 17:1-6). Furthermore the rite was also linked with the anticipation of the abundant gift of living water flowing from Jerusalem when the kingdom of God comes (compare Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8 with Isaiah 12:3). The association of the ceremony with the salvation of God, past, present, and future were accordingly evident to the people at the festival.<sup>8</sup>

### **John 7:37-39**

The saying of verses 37-39 is an outstanding example of a characteristic of the Gospel of John, in that a saying or episode embodies memory of the great deeds of God in the past and anticipation of the saving acts of God in the future, both united in an affirmation of their fulfillment in Jesus in the here and now. John 6:35, “I am the Bread of life . . . ,” forms a close parallel, alike in form and content, to 7:37-39, but without the high drama which the context of the festival bestows on the latter. Jesus’ use of the Tabernacles setting certainly ties in with these memories.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a reminder of the water given to the fathers from the rock in the desert in their time of need. On each of the seven days of the festival a full golden pitcher was carried in procession to the temple. But on the last and great day that rite was dispensed with; for now they were celebrating the entrance into Palestine with its springs and water courses. It was at this point, the “last day, that great day of the festival . . . ,” (NKJV) (“the final and climactic day . . . ” NLT) that Christ promised, not symbolism merely, but in reality, a living water, abundant, satisfying, overflowing. Certainly if Jesus “stood and cried out” at the moment when the priest at the altar had lifted up his hand to signify the completion of the rite, the effect of the cry on the multitude would have been as a thunderclap from heaven. Everybody would have known whose cry it was, and its significance, namely that everything embodied in that rite of past experience of salvation, present prayer, and future hope was available and offered through Jesus. John’s description of the effect of the cry upon the crowd and upon the temple police (verses 40-52) was inclusive of all possibilities – joy, consternation, turmoil, anger, confusion, fear. These verses illustrate all of these emotions – from the joy of those who said he was the Messiah and/or a prophet, to the expressed anger of the leading priests and the Pharisees, to the fear expressed by the temple guards, to the confusion of those who questioned Jesus’ origins in the light of his claiming to be the Messiah.

Nevertheless, the message is clear. Jesus is the source of a river of living waters for the world. Here the believer’s possession of the life of the kingdom of God is alone in view. What he offers is (a) the relieving of our own thirst (defined as an intense craving), the satisfying of our needs, of our legitimate desires, of the spiritual longings that disturb and harass us. But (b) better than that by far, he promises that through him we shall be a strength and inspiration to

others round about us; no longer a stumbling block to them, no longer something that must be explained away if God is to have a chance with them, but a proof to which Christ can point and claim, "Show me anything like that apart from me." And it is all a gift!

This "living water" is

- (a) a direct gift of God (verse 10),
- (b) the living, i.e., "true" to type, "eternal," spiritual water (verse 10),
- (c) a spontaneous energy of unfailing eternal grace (verse 14).

The gift of God is Jesus Christ himself. Water, as a symbol of the satisfaction of man's highest physical need, is a frequent metaphor in the Old Testament (compare Psalm 23:2, 36:9, 42:1-2, 65:10; Isaiah 12:3, 44:3, 55:1-2). The absolute necessity of water for life caused it to become a wide-ranging symbol in religious thought. In the Old Testament it is applied to God who is Himself "the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13). Words of true wisdom are described as "refreshing as a bubbling brook" (Proverbs 18:4). That living water is equivalent to "the real water" is seen by the synonymous expressions "the living bread" (John 6:51), "the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48), and "the real bread" (John 6:32). "Living water" is a common expression for flowing or spring water as opposed to rain water, distinct from still water, as of a cistern or well, and likewise for fresh water as compared with brackish water. John interprets this water as "the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive" (7:39). This spiritual gift, like the "real bread" (6:32) brings eternal satisfaction. The gift of God is Christ; the gift of Christ is the Spirit -- that "other Counselor" who "dwells with you and will be in you" (14:16-17). This indwelling Spirit, creative and energizing, not only brings back to the memory of his disciples "words of eternal life," but also becomes in them a self-renewing force constantly ensuring fellowship with Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal (compare 17:3) -- a spring of water welling up to eternal life (compare 7:38).

### *Teacher Helps*

Before getting into a discussion of this lesson, it might be a good idea to discuss God and the Bible. Many students have little or no concept of either. Take some time discussing God's nature, person, and will. Try the exercise of having students complete the sentence "God is \_\_\_\_\_."

Then discuss what the Bible is and what it offers (66 books -- 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament). Again, as with God, try with students the exercise of "The Bible is \_\_\_\_\_." The following (from Gideons International) perhaps will be helpful.

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrims' staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is the grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It should be read slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given in life and opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

The scripture readings are divided into two parts for exploring the idea of "The Living

Water.” The first part, which includes Psalm 104:10-15, was chosen to establish the many uses of water in this world and how much of a necessity water is for us and who gave it to us. Jeremiah 17:7-8 was chosen to make the transfer from physical water to spiritual water. Part II, John 4:4-15, 7:37-39, is the substantive portion that presents Jesus as “The Living Water.”

It is suggested that you do the following in this sequence:

1. Have students participate in the “Set” (see below) during which time they should brainstorm the many uses of water. Make sure they make a decision regarding the comparative importance of water over against bread/food.

2. Read Psalm 104:10-15. Have students extract from this reading the uses here indicated of the uses of water and have them speculate as to who “You” is. Compare these uses of water with what is already on the board from the “Set” and add any that aren’t already listed.

Read Jeremiah 17:7-8. Have students compare these two verses with Psalm 104 and add any uses of water that aren’t already listed. This step will cover the first few questions listed below. It is important, here, that students realize just how necessary water is to us. Do not verify the correctness/incorrectness of answers to the questions. It isn’t important, for example, at this point that students understand who the “blessed” ones are. Answers will be clarified later as understanding develops.

3. Proceed with the reading of the passage in John 4 and discussing the questions. It may be necessary to explain the problem between the Jews and the Samaritans. Before reading John 7:37-39, explain where Jesus is (Feast of Tabernacles) and what is going on. (See the discussion above in the Lesson Summary.)

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from both *The New Living Translation* and from *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. In *The Message*, especially, there are idioms and other English expressions that will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expressions.

Concepts from *The New Living Translation* (Psalm 104:10-15 and Jeremiah 17:7-8) that may give difficulties: water, springs, ravines, gush, drought, quench, quench one’s thirst, cattle.

Concepts from *The Message* (John 4:4-15 and 7:37-39): Galilee, Samaria, Samaritan, Sychar, Jacob, Joseph, draw water, disciples, generosity, bucket, ancestor, livestock, thirsty, thirst, artesian spring, gushing, living water, brim, Spirit, blessed glorified.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with.

(John 4:6b) worn out	(John 4:12c) passed it down . . .
(John 4:9a) taken aback	(John 4:13c) not ever
(John 4:9b) caught dead	(John 7:38c) spill out of the depths of
(John 4:9b) how come . . .	

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them.

## Set

Bring to class a container of water (e.g., a glass of water or a bottle of water). First, have students identify what is in the container. Draw out from students what water is good for. Have them list all the things that water is used for or what water provides. (As students make suggestions write the ideas on a dry erase board and have the interpreter [for lower level students] write the same things in the students' language.) Initiate a discussion of the value of water versus the value of food – discuss which is more important for life. (For example, could they live without water? Could they live without food? Could there even *be* food without water?)

## Scripture Readings

Psalms 104:10-15; Jeremiah 17:7-8; John 4:4-15; John 7:37-39

## Lesson Objectives -- Students will

1. Explore the many ways that water is used in their lives, the lives of animals, and plant life.
2. Contrast hunger/ bread and thirst/ water.
3. Explore the idea that water is perceived as man's highest need.
4. Explore "thirst" in an emotional and psychological sense.
5. Understand what Jesus as the "living water" can mean for their lives.
6. Contrast between physical satisfaction of thirst and the spiritual satisfaction of thirst.
7. Discuss "living water" in contrast with other forms of water.
8. Make applications of the "living water" to their spiritual lives.
9. Explore what it means to "thirst after righteousness."
10. Observe and discuss the misunderstanding of the Samaritan woman.
11. Learn that the Living Water in their lives is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

## Questions

Psalms 104:10-15

1. What are the benefits of water to the earth? (Compare responses to this question to the responses obtained during the "Set." Write any new responses on the board.)
2. Who is the "You" mentioned in vs 10, 13, 14? (Take responses but do not confirm or deny any of the answers.)

Jeremiah 17:7-8

3. What is the advantage of "tree roots reaching deep into the water?" (vs 8)
4. Who (or what) are the "blessed" in verse 7?
5. How are "those who trust in the Lord" blessed? (vs 7)
6. Compare and contrast their being like trees planted along a riverbank? (vs 8)
7. Supposing that the "blessed" are human beings, how are they like trees "planted along a riverbank?"
8. Where are their roots going if not actually into water? (vs 8)
9. What is the result of their roots going deep into the water? (vs 8)
10. What kind of "water" do these people (if they are people) need?

John 4:4-15

verses 4-5-6

11. Where was Jesus? (vs 5)
  12. What time of day was it? (vs 6)
  13. What condition was Jesus in? (vs 6)
- verses 7-8
14. What did he want? (vs 7)
  15. Was Jesus alone or was someone with him? How do you know? (vs 8)
  16. Who came to where Jesus was? (vs 7)
  17. Why did she come there? (vs 8)
  18. What did Jesus ask for? (vs 7)
- verses 9
19. How did the woman feel about Jesus' request? Why?
- verse 10
20. What does Jesus say in verse 10 that he will give her?
  21. What is strange about Jesus' answer to her question?
  22. What does "living water" mean? What kind of water is NOT "living" water?
- verse 11-12
23. Did the woman think his answer was strange? Why? or Why not?
- verses 13-14
24. What does it mean to be "thirsty?" (vs 13)
  25. What is an "artesian spring?" (vs 14)
  26. How does Jesus contrast the water the woman is drawing from the well and the water he will give her? (vs 13-14)
  27. How can a human being "thirst" for something that isn't water? (vs 13-14)
  28. How is it possible that a human being "will never thirst again – not ever?" (vs 13)
  29. How was Jesus' response like Psalm 104:10-15 and Jeremiah 17:8?
- verse 15
30. What was the woman's understanding (or misunderstanding) of Jesus' response?
- John 7:37-39
31. How can we be "thirsty" in any sense besides a physical sense? (vs 37)
  32. Who or what is the Spirit? (vs 38)
  33. What will the Spirit do? (vs 37)

### *Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is "the living water?"
3. How can one "thirst" after righteousness?
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean to you that Jesus is "the Living Water?"

## Lesson 2 BREAD OF LIFE

### *Primary Thought*

Christ as the “Bread of Life” is as necessary to us as our food. In sober fact he is our food, enabling us to meet life’s calls upon us and to keep hale and healthy. So in Christ there is that which feeds, which sustains, which restores spent vigor and exhausted energies, a strength we can appropriate and make our strength, doing and being what apart from him we could not do and be. The one and only requirement Christ stipulates is that we have some appetite for the things he offers. Bring him that, and eagerly he will do the rest. Whatever else we miss, we must have him! And since we have that greatest, we are past hungering and thirsting in the fundamental sense, are happy, and content.

### *Lesson Summary*

**Food** is a substance ingested to maintain life and growth; it can be also, figuratively, a mental stimulus, “food for thought.”

**Bread** is usually a baked and leavened food made of a mixture whose basic constituent is flour or meal; anything for the sustenance of the body where bread is a principle part.

Figuratively,<sup>9</sup> bread is food or sustenance, as in “our daily bread;” “bread” is used to mean “livelihood” or “money” as in “earns his bread” from labor or to “bring home the bread;” to cast one’s “bread upon the waters” means resources are chanced, or charitable deeds are performed, without expectation of return.

**Hunger** is a craving or strong need for food; figuratively, it is any strong or eager desire. Metaphorically, it means to long for or after something other than literal food.

Figuratively, the “hungry” are those who are famished, without food, poor, or are needy. Hunger and famine have been an ever present threat throughout the world at some time or other in the history of man.

A discussion of the value of **bread** physically might result in the following: By eating it we are kept physically healthy, nourished, strong, alert, restored when we lack energy. As spiritual nourishment “the living Bread” will keep us spiritually healthy, spiritually nourished, strong in spirit, alert to the wiles of the world, restored when discouraged, provide spiritual power, and provide a satisfying fullness of life.

Food in Palestine was in many areas as scarce in Bible times as it is now, due to the nature of the soil and shallow cultivation. Palestinian people, never far above the subsistence level, prized their food and dreaded recurrent famines. Whenever possible, festivities included feasting; food played a major part in the happy times accompanying national celebrations (see Leviticus chapter 23). Food was so scarce in Palestine that it was deemed worthy to be sacrificed in worship.

Food was a highly acceptable gift for notables: Jacob to Pharaoh (Genesis 43:11); Jesse to Saul (I Samuel 16:20); David received food from Abigail (I Samuel 25:18) and gifts from Mephibosheth (II Samuel 16:1); as well as many other references of such (II Samuel 17:27-29; I Kings 14:3; II Kings 4:42). Food was given, as well, in emergency situations. The greatest

gift of food mentioned in the Bible is recorded in John 6:31-58 where Jesus symbolized himself as the “living bread.”

Paul defined superlative good will in terms of feeding one’s enemy (Romans 12:20).

Among the many food items mentioned in the Bible is “bread.” “The word *bread* appears 239 times in the NAS Old Testament and 79 times in the NAS New Testament; but the seven Hebrew words which refer to bread, but are not always so translated, appear 384 times in the Old Testament and the three Greek words 108 times in the New Testament.”<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew and Greek words which are translated “bread” in the Bible may refer not only to bread specifically, but to food in general. They are often used to refer to the basic necessities of life. However, the frequency of mention is just one indication that bread (not vegetables and certainly not meat) was the basic food of most people. Several of the words alluded to above are often translated “food.”

Bread in Bible lands consisted of flat, round loaves of coarse bread made from wheat or barley (John 6:8) ground into flour and baked in the open; bread was the minimum for human subsistence (Isaiah 3:1). Although bread is spoken of as a gift of God (Ruth 1:6; Psalm 104:15; Matthew 6:11), man is expected to do his part in earning it (Genesis 3:19; II Thessalonians 3:8, 12). Bread is used in a figurative sense in such phrases as “bread of affliction” (I Kings 22:27) and “bread of tears” (Psalm 80:5). Metaphorically bread is that divine spiritual nourishment, “bread from heaven,” presented in the person of the Son of God as the life and soul of Christians, implying that just as Israel ate the manna in the wilderness to avoid starvation, it is necessary to accept Jesus to make possible full spiritual life (John 6:31-58, especially verse 51-56; hence compared with manna in verse 49, 58; see Psalm 78:24, 25; Proverbs 9:5). Bread is used symbolically in the Lord’s Supper to mean the body of Christ (Matthew 26:26; I Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-24).

The phrase “to eat bread” (or to “break bread”) is significant -- to eat bread with someone established a mutual obligation (Psalm 41:9); “to eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15 NKJV) means to enjoy the privileges of the kingdom. Bread played an important role in Hebrew worship, various kinds of bread being offered with the sacrifices (Leviticus 6:14-18, 19-23, 7:11-14, 23:9-14, 15-21, 23:37). Ordinarily, the bread offered was unleavened, leaven being regarded as a form of corruption (Leviticus 7:12-13, 8:2, 26, 24:5-9). Both the tabernacle and the temple contained the table of shewbread<sup>11</sup> (Exodus 25:30, 35:13, 39:36). As important as bread was to the physical body, the Israelites were reminded that bread is not everything, but feeding on God’s Words is more important (Deuteronomy 8:3); Jesus admonished the devil in the same way (Matthew 4:3-4).

Scripture contains haunting pictures of **hunger**. Isaiah 29:8 uses the image of a hungry person dreaming of eating only to awake hungry again. In Lamentations 4:9, those who fall by the sword are reckoned better off than those who die from hunger. Hunger frequently takes on a theological significance. Exodus 16:3 recounts Israel’s complaint that Moses led them from Egypt to kill them with hunger in the desert. God used this experience of hunger to humble the rebellious people and to teach them to hunger for His word (Deuteronomy 8:3). Hunger was one penalty of disobedience of covenant obligations (Deuteronomy 28:48, 32:24).

The cessation of hunger is frequently associated with God’s salvation. Hannah anticipated God’s reversing the fortunes of the hungry (I Samuel 2:5; compare Luke 6:21, 25). Isaiah promised that those returning from Exile would not be plagued by hunger (49:10). Ezekiel pictured God as providing for the needs of God’s sheep so there would be no hunger (34:29). Part of the blessedness of the redeemed of Revelation 7:16 is the end of their hunger.

The absence of hunger is spoken of as one of the characteristics of the future state of the blessed.

In Matthew 5:6 Jesus spoke of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that is, metaphorically those who earnestly desire to see God's will become a reality. In John 6:35 Jesus promised that anyone who came to Him would not hunger but would be satisfied and would receive spiritual nourishment.

### **Matthew 5:6**

Jesus spoke of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; that is, metaphorically, those who earnestly desire to see God's will become a reality.

The requirement in this beatitude is *not righteousness*, but *hunger and thirst after* righteousness; metaphorically this refers to the striving for rightness which marks true disciples of Christ. It includes hunger for the gift of God, for divine spiritual nourishment, for a full spiritual life, for His Word. The word "hunger" is a strong word meaning intense desire. "Thirst" is perhaps a stronger word: only people in desert lands can properly understand pangs of thirst. If we can imagine the intense hunger of the starving for physical food and the thirst, the craving, of those who desperately need water, then perhaps we can transfer the intensity of these two sensations to an intense craving for this "righteousness" or "justice" which Jesus is talking about. Jesus spoke of "feeding on the Word of God." The one and only requirement Christ stipulates is that we have some appetite for the things he offers – we must feed on him, must absorb his teaching, his character, his mind, his ways; must appropriate the virtue there is in him, till his mind becomes our mind and his ways our ways; till we think somewhat as he would do if he were in our place and can be and do what without him we could not be or do -- and this because his power has passed into us and become our power. As Paul has it, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (verse 56).

"Righteousness" (translated as "God" in *The Message*) means "right living, rightness, moral purity, law abiding, obligations to God and other persons." This "righteousness" reminds one of the Golden Rule – loving one's neighbor as one's self and treating others as we want to be treated – dealing justly with the world around us (Luke 10:25-27). The Lord is the source of all righteousness (Isaiah 45:24; Jeremiah 23:6). Righteousness overcomes sin (Romans 5:17; Ephesians 6:13-14).

There are bread and water for the hunger of the mouth, and there is light for the hunger of the eyes. Why should it be hard for us to believe that there is fulfillment for the hunger and thirst of the soul? Consider hungers and their fulfillment. Some hungers are not filled. Some hungers, when fulfilled run out and must be refilled. Some hungers when fulfilled lead only to satiation. But there are other hungers which, once granted, are renewed in higher demand (i.e., hunger for beauty, for money, etc.) and are again fulfilled through further enhancement. So it is with spiritual hunger and thirst – feeding on the Word of God continually causes us to hunger and thirst for more; our spiritual development and maturity are never-ending.

So, how are we blessed? -- by right living, by God's salvation. Those who hunger after Christ both have hope and receive. This hunger and thirst causes us to keep "asking," "seeking," and "knocking" (Matthew 7:7) -- "For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. The door is opened to everyone who knocks" (verse 8). -- finds joy, a better joy, the sustaining of inner motive, the zest and joy of eternal life. What Christ especially emphasizes is the satisfying fullness of the life he gives to men.

In the following discussion, Jesus asserts that he is the answer to our spiritual hungering and thirsting. Whatever else we miss, we must have him! And since we have that greatest, we are past hungering and thirsting in the fundamental sense, are happy, and content.

### **John 6:22-59**

The setting for this event in which Jesus proclaims that he is the “bread of life” takes place in a synagogue in Capernaum.

The people have followed Jesus from the site of the miraculous feeding of the multitude and found him across the Sea of Galilee in the synagogue. They had looked for him on the shore where they had seen his disciples get in a boat and leave but hadn’t seen him leave with them. Assuming that he had stayed behind, they looked for him the next morning, but he wasn’t there. Then they, too, went in the direction they had seen the disciples go – and found Jesus in Capernaum. It was a mystery to them how he managed to get there. The question of verse 25 about Jesus’ mysterious appearance in Capernaum goes unanswered because now a theological response is at hand. In the synagogue (verses 25-58) Jesus provides a full discourse explaining his person and work. The discourse is propelled forward by inquiries (verses 28, 30, 34, 41, 52). Like the woman needing water (4:7), these people need imperishable food supplying eternal life (verse 27, 4:14). There is a requirement for this food -- faith in Christ (verse 29).

The first thing that Jesus does is to correct the erroneous interpretation (verse 31b) of the Scripture cited (Numbers 11:7-9): (1) contrary to the assumptions of Jesus’ listeners, the bread from heaven was given not by Moses but by the Father; (2) the Father gives the true bread from heaven, and he gives it now; (3) this bread of God is “that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world,” i.e., it gives the life of the age to come, the kingdom of God. If Jesus is making personal claims on the order of Moses, then the crowd demands that he must exceed that of Moses (verse 30-31). But these people were demanding evidence of who Jesus is, evidence so compelling that they could believe. What Jesus underlines is that, though in a very real sense the manna too was a gift direct from God and impossible without his kindness, still what came to men through Moses was not the bread which comes down from heaven -- the bread he is now offering! “What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven; it is my father who gives you the true bread from heaven; and he is offering that to you in me” (verse 32). Compare Exodus 16:4, 15; Psalm 78:24. The true bread they seek is not dependent on Moses (or Judaism); it is whatever God rains upon humans as a gift, and which gives life (verse 33). The Jews here resemble the Samaritan woman inasmuch as they are intrigued -- “Lord, give us/me this bread/water” (verse 34; 4:15). Bread for the stomach is still in the minds of Jesus’ listeners!

This misunderstanding is corrected in verse 32-35, which unveils the truth of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude in verses 1-15: “the bread from heaven” (verse 32) and “the bread of God” (verse 33) are now identified with Jesus himself -- “I am the Bread of Life” (verse 35) -- Jesus is the Bread which gives and sustains “life,” the life of the kingdom of God. “I am the living bread” (verse 51) Jesus bestows on those who “come” to him and who “believe” in him – the synonymous parallelism is unmistakable.

“I am the bread which came down from heaven” (verse 41). Jesus is the bread of life that has mysteriously descended (verses 33, 38). Not this message only, but all that he is in himself gives life and sustains life in such abundance that no unsatisfied desire remains to frustrate the believer. Indeed, the message to the Samaritan woman (4:14) is recalled in the parallelism of verse 35, with its implication, “and I am the water of life.” One who so “comes” and “believes” will “*never* hunger” and “*never, never* thirst” (in the Aramaic the negatives are very strong<sup>12</sup>).

For this use of the symbolism of eating and drinking, compare Isaiah 55:1, of the ultimate salvation through the word of God. The twin themes of hunger and thirst (compare chapters 4 and 6) are now satisfied. However, belief is still the key (verse 36, compare verse 29). The hearers of Jesus have “seen” yet not believed. They had witnessed the miracle, but they did not believe; for they saw nothing beyond loaves and power. To see and not believe is tantamount to a refusal of faith.

Now a new note is struck -- God is sovereign over the ministry of Jesus (verse 38) as well as its results (verses 37, 39, 44). We now see the reason for his “descent,” i.e., for his Incarnation. He is charged to lose none of those given him by the Father but to give them eternal life now and to raise them in the last day. Those whom God calls are effectively called and securely preserved (verses 39-40; compare 10:14-18, 17:6). There are those whom the Father “gives” to Jesus; they are “given,” since “faith is God’s work.” Such are not “cast out” (contrast Matthew 8:12), for Jesus pledges his care for them; it is possible that the image of the shepherd and his flock is in view at this point (compare 10:9-11, 26-30). In other words, the work of Jesus and the gathering of disciples are both a result of God’s perfect will. There is no contradiction between the gift of life now and resurrection in the future. The duality of present and future participation in the kingdom of God is fundamental to the proclamation of Jesus in all four Gospels, to include the Gospel according to John.

From the crowd’s point of view this revelation (“I am the bread that came down from heaven”) is hard to accept, and they murmur and grumble (verses 41-43). “Grumbling” at God and his messengers was characteristic of the Jews in their wilderness wanderings. It is recorded that they grumbled about the water they had to drink (Exodus 15:24), about their lack of bread (Exodus 16:2) and water (Exodus 17:3), about their hardships in the desert (Numbers 11:1), about the difficulties in occupying the promised land (Numbers 14:1-3), and even against the manna (Numbers 11:4-6). The psalmist, singling out the last item, saw it as a rejection of the voice of the Lord, i.e., of God himself (Psalm 78:20); so here the grumbling against the message of Jesus is a rejection of Jesus himself. The Exodus narrative records that the Jews not only *grumbled at* God and his servants for their hardships, but also *fought against* them (e.g., Exodus 17:2, against Moses; Numbers 20:3, against the Lord). In like manner, their successors first grumble at Jesus, then in their fury “fight” over his words. In colloquial American English, they were “mad” at him.

The objection voiced is against his claim to be the bread come down from heaven. The feature of “bread” is not at this point contested; it is the claim to have “come down from heaven” that appears impossible, as verses 38 and 41 make clear. Is Jesus not a commonplace citizen of Galilee (compare Mark 6:1-6)? How can he descend from heaven? But Jesus knows that further explanation will not complete what is lacking. The gift of faith and the ability to understand who Christ really is are divine things (verses 44-48). Faith is not merely rational persuasion; it includes the drawing of God (verse 44). To stay in Judaism is death (verse 49); but to consume the bread of life brings life (verses 50-51). The Incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus was and remains the great stumbling block in Christianity.

Jesus replies, in harmony with verses 37 and 39, that only they whom the Father “draws” can come to him; in them the promise of Isaiah 54:13 is fulfilled – they are “taught of God.” This may be interpreted as meaning that the “drawing” by God takes place when man abandons his own judgment and “hears” and “learns” from the Father, and so allows God to speak to him; it doesn’t occur behind man’s decision of faith, but in it. Those who listen to the Father “come” to the Son, since he, and he alone, has seen the Father (1:18). For such, verse 47 contains a word

of promise; to the “grumblers” it is an implicit appeal to receive the word, to believe, and so to gain the life (compare 5:39-40).

The emphasis now falls on eating the bread. Strangely, the term “eat” has not been mentioned since verse 31; it now appears in verses 49, 50, 51 and in each sentence of the next paragraph other than verse 55, where it is also presupposed.

Whereas the Jews of the wilderness generation ate the manna and died in the desert, the bread of heaven which is Jesus has appeared that people may eat and not die; whoever eats it will live forever and so enjoy the eternal life of the kingdom of God (verses 49-50-51). The contrasting statements serve to warn the hearers lest they share the fate of the forefathers and to appeal to them to “eat” and live. The latter alternative is possible on two accounts: (1) the “living bread” has descended from heaven, i.e., he is the Incarnate One who has life in himself for others (compare 5:26); (2) the “bread” is the flesh of the Incarnate One which he is to give on behalf of the life of the world, i.e., he is to die that the world may live.

The “bread” is defined as “flesh” rather than the “body,” almost certainly by reason of John’s insistence that the Word became flesh (1:14). But the conjunction of the terms “give,” “flesh,” and “for the life of” in verse 51 strongly suggests a sacrificial death for the sake of others. We should also recall the Passover context for the feeding of the multitude (6:4): he who is the Living Bread is to die as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world (1:29). It is characteristic of this Gospel, however, that the emphasis in the passage falls not on Christ’s *death for sin* but on his *death for life*: “my flesh . . . for the **life** of the world” (verse 51). The death of the Redeemer is a “lifting up” for the purpose of drawing all men to himself, and so into his eternal glory (12:32).

But a deeper revelation is to come -- the bread to be consumed is Jesus’ flesh offered in sacrifice (verse 51b). Still, the discourse is urged forward through another misunderstanding. How can humans eat his flesh (verse 52)? The explanation in verses 53-58 reinforces this thought and draws on images (flesh and blood) which are sacrificial. If symbolism is still at work (as it likely is), the symbols inevitably suggest the elements of the Lord’s Supper. It is not the sacrament that gives life, but rather salvation is found in the sacrifice behind it and the faith that it evokes (verses 35, 40, 47).

The saying in verse 53 expresses the thought of verse 51 in a negative form, but it advances on the former by paralleling eating the flesh of Jesus with drinking his blood: he who “comes” never hungers, and he who “believes” never thirsts. Coming and believing are replaced by eating and drinking, and the satisfaction of hunger and thirst with possession of life within; for the object of faith is Christ in his sacrificial offering of body and blood for the life of the world.

In verse 54 we are reminded of Matthew 5:6 -- to receive from Christ what he has to give us, really to have experience of his saving power, we must “hunger and thirst” for Him, *we must feed on him* – there is no other word that expresses it with a similar accuracy – must absorb his teaching, his character, his mind, his ways; must appropriate the virtue there is in him, till his mind becomes our mind and his ways our ways; till we think somewhat as he would do if he were in our place and can be and do what without him we could not be or do -- and this because his power has passed into us and become our power. As Paul has it, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (verse 56).

The eating and drinking of Christ’s flesh and blood (which are “true,” verse 55) result in the mutual “remaining” of the believer and Christ and indicates a personal relationship of faith.

His flesh and blood are true because they fulfill the ideal function of food and drink in giving eternal life. We recognize in his crucified body and poured out blood the foundation of our life, that we hang our faith and hope on that body and blood and draw from there our thinking and our willing.

The discourse concludes with a summary statement that harks back to its beginning in verse 31: the bread from heaven is the Christ in his incarnate life and redemptive death, alike Revealer and Redeemer, giving life where death reigned. The saying refers back to verses 32-35 and also gathers up the thought of verses 53-57.

But if the descent of Christ gave difficulty to the crowds (verses 41-42), this deeper teaching causes the disciples to stumble; they too murmur (verse 60). Jesus breaks the impasse by showing that literal flesh is not the key; rather, it is the Spirit who conveys life (verse 63). If the Lord's Supper is still at issue the message is clear: its physical elements "count for nothing" if the Spirit's power is not present. To understand this fully takes more than human minds can grasp (verses 64, 66): Jesus repeats the exhortation given to the crowds in verses 44-47. Penetrating the mysteries of God is also a divine gift (verses 64-65). The deeper realities offend; here some disciples draw back and abandon Christ (verse 66). But Peter knows that the greatest virtue is to continue embracing Jesus no matter where he might lead (verses 68-69).

### *In Summation*

Christ as the "bread of Life" is as necessary to us as our food. In sober fact he is our food, enabling us to meet life's calls upon us and to keep hale and healthy.

A man is physically tired; and because he is tired he is irritable and impossible. But let him have a meal and likely enough, throwing aside his gloom and ill humor, he will become his usual equable self again, kindly and unselfish and companionable. And why? Because the strength that was in the food has passed into him and become his strength, has made a stronger and a better man of him. So in Christ there is that which feeds, which sustains, which restores spent vigor and exhausted energies, a strength we can appropriate and make our strength, doing and being what apart from him we could not do and be.

We cannot carry out in our lives Christ's standards of life apart from the power to live it out that comes from him, a power that springs naturally and of itself from an acceptance of the Christian truths, and from the gratitude and love and willingness of service they inspire. Regular seasons of devotion are required; otherwise we fall out of step with Christ, lose touch with him, and in so doing deny ourselves our necessary meals. We must have the living bread or perish. But then, whosoever wills can have it for the asking. The one and only requirement Christ stipulates is that we have an appetite for the things he offers. Bring him that, and eagerly he will do the rest. But what Christ especially emphasizes here is the satisfying fullness of the life he gives to men. "He that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (verse 35). There is an end to craving and to discontent!

Whatever else we miss, we must have him! And since we have that greatest, we are past hungering and thirsting in the fundamental sense, are happy, and content.

They are offered the bread of life; and they prefer to starve, or to try to satisfy the cravings of their human nature with the dregs the world has to offer!

How rich and generous is God's will for us; how liberal are the gifts he has granted us already, and how majestic are his hopes and plans for us! In this passage, for example, we are told that God's will for us is (a) that we should have the glory of fellowship with Jesus Christ, to whom he gives us; (b) that all the skill and care of Christ should be ours to shepherd us safely

through this dangerous world; and (c) that we should know life at its highest, even here, even now, and later enter into a fullness of it which is indescribable, and which as yet we cannot even imagine.

Other good gifts from God can help us for a little while (verse 49). But the grace of God there is for us in him is inexhaustible, whatever our calls on it may be; and it will last forever (verse 50).

### *Teacher Helps*

This is the second of the “I Am” sayings and is closely related to the first, “The Living Water.” It takes both water and food to sustain our physical life. Jesus makes reference to both hunger and thirst in this lesson even though the subject is the “bread” of life; students need to differentiate between them – which is the more important, are they equal in importance, is one more necessary than the other. There is some reason why Jesus mentions both “hunger and thirst” (John 8:35). Later in the sixth chapter of John, Jesus speaks of “eating my flesh and drinking my blood” (verse 53). There isn’t a specific answer to this, but it would be good for students to speculate about; it is for certain that our nourishment physically is not taken care of until both our hunger and our thirst are satisfied; perhaps Jesus is implying this for our spiritual life.

It is suggested that you proceed in the following way with the lesson and in this sequence.

1. Lead the students into the discussion intended by the “Set.” If the students’ really necessary food is “rice,” then use “rice” in place of Jesus saying “I am the Bread of Life,” substituting rice for bread. This will deepen the understanding of the importance of the food item that Jesus is talking about. In Jesus’ day, bread was their main stay.

2. Read and discuss Matthew 5:6 which illustrates “the best meal” they will ever eat. This may whet their appetite for the rest of the lesson.

3. Read and discuss John 6:22-58. This is the substantive portion of the scripture lesson. As the class reads the early portion of this scripture passage it would be wise to have someone (preferably a student, or you if necessary) tell the story of the manna in the desert; it is described in the Lesson Summary above.

The transfer from physical “bread” to “spiritual bread” may be difficult for some students to make. Even more difficult may be for them to understand the idea of “eating” Jesus’ flesh and blood; Christianity has been accused of cannibalism during the centuries since its inception and may be even yet so accused in some cultures. Think this through well ahead of class time to make sure that you understand it and can be able to explain it to nonbelievers in such a way that they can understand it.

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from Peterson’s *The Message*. There may be concepts in the passages that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. There are idioms and other English expressions that will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expression.

Concepts from *The Message*: Tiberias, Rabbi, perishable food, life, waffled, Scriptures, ancestors, bread from heaven, aligns with, explicitly, whim, bicker, the Father,

solemn, sober truth, manna bread, living Bread, fit, striving for.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with. They are printed in italics in the scripture pamphlet.

(Matthew 5:6) work up a good appetite	(vs 34) jumped at that
(John vs 24) piled into . . .	(vs 39) in a nutshell
(vs 24) headed for . . .	(vs 39) wrap-up of . . .
(vs 26) for free	(vs 40) put them on their feet alive
(vs 27) waste your energy	(vs 44) draws people to . . .
(vs 27) food that sticks with you	(vs 44) putting people together
(vs 28, 29) throw your lot in with . . .	(vs 44) setting them on their feet
(vs 29) gets you in on . . .	(vs 53) give an inch
(vs 30) give us a clue	(vs 57) makes a meal of . . .
(vs 30) what's up	

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

Step 1. Open the discussion of this lesson by asking students what their favorite food is. Write their responses on a dry erase board (or chalkboard) and have the interpreter write the responses on another dry erase board in the students' language (responses will probably be mostly what they like to eat). Then ask students what one food item they (each one personally) really NEED to feel satisfied (what one food item is most important; these responses (which could vary from teenagers to adults depending on the age group) will hopefully be different from the first list and hopefully one item will stand out.

Step 2. Turn the discussion to food/bread being a necessity for the body for sustaining life. What would happen, for example, if they couldn't obtain any food? How long could they go without food? What would happen if they couldn't get water? How long could they go without water? Could they thirst for food? Why not? What is the difference in hungering and thirsting?

Alternative Set: Show a picture of bread (or bring some with you). Have students identify it. Ask what it is for. Then ask students how long they could go without eating bread. (In some cultures this "bread" might be another food – for example, in some countries rice is the main food, the staple in their diet; in other countries it could be another food, but in many countries of the world it will be bread). Proceed with Step 2 above.

### *Scripture Readings*

Matthew 5:6; John 6:22-58

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Discuss the function of physical bread to the body as a necessity for sustaining life.
2. Discuss physical hunger and thirst.
3. Explore and contrast emotional/psychological hunger and thirst.
4. Explore the meaning of physical "life."
5. Discuss what Jesus as the Bread of Life can mean for their lives.
6. Learn what it means to be unable to "live by bread alone."

7. Come to know how to obtain the Bread of Life.
8. Learn that the Bread of Life is necessary for sustaining their spiritual life.
9. Explore the meaning of spiritual “life.”
10. Observe in the scripture the misunderstandings of the Bread of Life concept.
11. Learn that Jesus provides/is the Bread of Life which will sustain their spiritual life.
12. Learn that the Life that Jesus provides is both here-and-now and for eternity.
13. Discuss what it means to “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

## *Questions*

### Matthew 5:6

1. What does it mean to “have a good appetite?” (in a physical sense)
2. Why is it important?
3. Who is God?
4. How can God be “food and drink” for us? (Accept all answers, but don’t confirm or correct any.)
5. How can we have a good appetite for God?
6. Why is having a good appetite for God important?

### John 6:22-58

#### verses 22-24

Explain (or ask someone to explain) what has happened just before verse 22 (the story of Jesus’ miraculous feeding of the multitude).

7. Who (or what) was the crowd looking for?
8. Why do you think they were looking for Jesus?
9. What did they do? Where did they go?

#### verses 25- 28

10. When the crowd had found Jesus, how did he answer the question they had asked in vs 25?
11. What are the benefits of this “food” Jesus is offering? (vs 27b)
12. What is the crowd’s understanding (or misunderstanding) of Jesus’ offer? (vs 28)
13. What does Jesus suggest to them? (vs 27)

#### verses 29-34

14. What is it that his Father is offering them? (vs 32)
15. Who (or what) do you think is this “bread from heaven?” (Do not indicate a right or wrong answer or do not give the answer – play “dumb” if you can; hold your response for question a later question.)
16. What does this “bread” offer to the world?
17. How does the crowd’s response in verse 34 to the offer of the Bread of Life compare to the Samaritan woman’s response to the offer of living water (John 4:15)?

#### verses 35-40

18. Who do you think is the “bread of Life?” (vs 35)
19. What is meant by this “bread of life?”
20. What does it have to do with life?
21. Why does Jesus combine the ideas of “hunger” and “thirst?” (vs 35)
22. Where did Jesus come from? (vs 38)
23. What is required to receive this “bread?” (vs 40)

24. What is the end result of receiving the “bread?” (vs 40b)
  25. What is the connection between Jesus and God? (vs 32, 35, 38, 40)
- verses 41-46
26. What were the Jews bothered about and why? (vs 41-42)
  27. Why did he say “the Father is in charge here?” (vs 44)
  28. How does Jesus “put people together?” (vs 44)
  29. How does Jesus “set people on their feet?” (vs 44)
  30. How are people “taught by God?” (vs 45) What do we “learn” from God?
  31. How do we listen to God the Father? (vs 45)
  32. What are the ways that we can be taught personally by Jesus? (vs 45)
- verses 47-51
33. How do we obtain eternal life? (vs 47)
  34. How is “living bread” different from bread we eat? (vs 49, 50, 51)
- verses 52-58
35. What does it mean to “eat” Jesus’ flesh and blood? (vs 53)
  36. What was it that bothered the Jews about this? (vs 52)
  37. Does something bother you about this? Why?
  38. What is the result of having “a hearty appetite” for this eating and drinking? (vs 54)
  39. How can Jesus’ flesh and blood be real food and real drink? (vs 55)
  40. What is another result of eating Jesus flesh and blood? (vs 56)
  41. What does it mean that you enter into Jesus and he into you?”
  42. What is the result of eating this “bread?” (vs 58)
  43. Think about the physical “bread” that we eat for nourishment – how is this like the “bread of life” that Jesus gives?
  44. What does it mean to “have a hunger” for what Christ has to offer?

### *Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is “the Bread of Life?”
3. How can one “work up a good appetite for God?”
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is “the Bread of Life?”



### Lesson 3

## LIGHT OF THE WORLD

### *Primary Thought*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world; he gives light to the world. He is himself the life, the life-giving power, which is “the light of men” (John 1:4). Whoever follows him does not walk in darkness but can see to find his way. Always our wisdom is to look to him, to absorb his spirit, and to apply that to the circumstances in which we may be. The revelation of the divine nature makes men partakers of that nature, so that fellowship with Christ is a way of life.

### *Lesson Discussion*

**Light**, *noun* (as opposed to **darkness**) is that force, agent, or action in nature which by its operation upon the organs of sight renders objects visible. “Light” is that which penetrates and dispels darkness. It comes from the Greek word *photos* which means “to shine, to light” the darkness, as by a light or a torch. Figuratively, it is used to mean true knowledge of God, spiritual things, moral goodness, and spiritual light as well as knowledge which enlightens the mind, soul or conscience. The word is used also in a figurative sense to denote illumination of the mind, prosperity, and purity. It includes also the idea of holiness and of consequent reward and happiness.

Light is accomplished by the sun, the moon, fire, lamps, and other means.

“Light,” *verb*, means to ignite, provide with light or lighting; brighten with animation, enthusiasm or pleasure; reveal (physically or mentally). The darkness is illuminated or dispelled by light.

Light is necessary in the physical world: without light plants would not grow; light is healing (UV rays, tuberculosis, skin problems); light reveals color. Light exposes what the darkness hides; light is needed to see the correct way to go; light reveals the path (e.g., a flashlight, headlights); it reveals dangers to avoid; it allows us to read signs on the road, etc.; light in the morning helps us to wake up from sleep. Psychologically, light dispels fear of what is in the darkness (real or imagined); mental illumination – revealing, explanatory; light allows us to find something lost; light reveals those things that we could not otherwise see with the naked eye (e.g., with black light); light brings about reflection (mirrors, moon).

To understand “light” one must understand “darkness” which is literally, the absence of light in the physical world.

The absence of light is used in both physical and figurative senses in both the Old and New Testaments.

**Darkness** in the physical sense is mentioned in the Bible as having been existent at the time of the creation (Genesis 1:2-4). Physical “darkness upon the face of the deep” was an ancient way of describing the pre-Creation state (Genesis 1:2) and symbolizes chaos in opposition to God’s orderly creation (Genesis 1:2, 3). Elsewhere darkness, as well as light, is recognized as the creation of God (Isaiah 45:7). But creation of both darkness and light was in the plan of God, for there must be a balance of darkness and light for plant, animal, and human

life and growth.

The presence of God is sometimes described as accompanied by darkness (Exodus 19:16; II Samuel 22:10-12; II Chronicles 6:1; Psalm 18:11, 97:2).

Darkness is a place for evil doers to hide (Job 34:22); however, darkness does not hide one from God (Psalm 139:11-12; Daniel 2:22).

Darkness is frequently associated with supernatural events involving the judgment of God, such as the plagues sent upon Egypt before and during the Exodus (Exodus 10:21-22, 14:19-20); the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 13:9-10; Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29); and as having been a part of the violent disturbance of nature attending Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:45). The day of God's judgment is often described as a day of darkness (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18-20).

Elsewhere darkness forms part of God's punishment on the disobedient (Deuteronomy 28:29; I Samuel 2:9; Job 5:14, 15:30, 20:26; Psalm 107:10; Isaiah 47:5; Jeremiah 13:16; Ezekiel 32:8). In the New Testament, the place of punishment for humans and sinful angels is designated "the outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30; compare II Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 13).

"Darkness" is most often used figuratively in Scripture.

*Darkness is often a symbol of mysterious or inexplicable things* (Psalm 18:11; I Corinthians 4:5); "Dark speeches" (Numbers 12:8) meant unexplained utterances from God to man; the parables of Jesus were called "dark sayings." In present-day English "to be in the dark" means that one doesn't know something.

*Darkness was thought of as a curse.* Thus the Old Testament speaks of death as a land of darkness (Job 10:21-22, 17:13; Psalm 88:6).

*Darkness often has an ethical sense.* Darkness symbolically denotes wickedness and moral depravity (Isaiah 5:20; Matthew 4:16; John 3:19); woe (II Samuel 22:29; Job 18:18; Psalm 88:6); ignorance, especially of God and of God's ways (Psalm 82:5; Isaiah 8:22, 9:2, 42:7; John 3:19, 12:46; Romans 2:19; Acts 26:18; I Thessalonians 5:4; I John 2:9); and the darkness of the mind and soul (Proverbs 2:13; Ecclesiastes 2:14; Isaiah 9:2, 42:7; John 1:5, 3:19, 8:12, 12:35; Romans 13:12; II Corinthians 6:14).

Scripture speaks of ways of darkness (Proverbs 2:13, 4:19), walking in darkness (John 8:12; I John 1:6; compare II Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8), and works of darkness (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:11). In this ethical sense God has no darkness in Himself (I John 1:5). Powers hostile to God can be termed darkness. People thus face a choice of whether to yield allegiance to God or to darkness (Luke 22:53; John 1:5, 3:19; Colossians 1:13; I Thessalonians 5:5). God's deliverance is described as lighting the darkness (Isaiah 9:2, 29:18, 42:7-16; Micah 7:8; I Peter 2:9). Having always identified darkness with evil, the Hebrews thought of God and Christ in terms of light shining in darkness (Psalms 27:1, 119:105; Isaiah 60:1; John 1:4-9).

*Darkness is associated with unhappiness or ruin* (John 8:12, 12:35, 46). Essentially the dark means what shames and soils and drags one down. As light is not only the emblem of happiness but is also itself beneficial, darkness in like manner results in unhappiness and death (John 12:35; I John 1:5, 2:8, 9, 11; compare Job 37:19). Darkness is not only a figurative term for sin itself, but also for the consequences of sin, eternal misery, and damnation (Matthew 4:16, 8:12; Luke 1:79; Acts 26:18; I Thessalonians 5:4; I Peter 2:9; II Peter 2:17; Jude 13) as well as persons in such a state (Ephesians 5:8).

The concept of **light** appears numerous times in both the Old Testament and New Testament and often meant "to be spiritually or intellectually enlightened." Hebrews 10:32

refers to those who are knowledgeable of the saving message of the gospel. The same Greek term is rendered “enlightened” in Hebrews 6:4.

God created physical light (Genesis 1:3-5; Jeremiah 31:35; Revelation 21:23-24, 22:5). In Hebrew Creation epics, as in those of some other nations, like the Egyptians, the formation of the universe was described as the separation of darkness from light, which the Lord called “day” (Genesis 1:5).

However, a careful reading of the Scriptures reveals that the physical entity that we call “light” is actually only the second form of light in the universe, since everywhere the Bible declares that God Himself is Light. In scripture from Genesis 1:3 through Revelation 22:5, light symbolized the presence of God. In their years of wandering Israel relied on God’s “pillar of fire” (Exodus 13:21). When they established their cloth Tabernacle, they attended scrupulously to the burning of the perpetual light (I Samuel 3:3); and throughout their national history, they kept burning the seven-branched lamp stands at the Temple (II Chronicles 4:7) in obedience to Leviticus 6:9. Lamps (lights) were used symbolically in the Old Testament and New Testament. Light depicted life in abundance, divine presence or life’s direction versus death in darkness (compare Psalm 119:105; I John 1:5 with Job 18:5; Proverbs 13:9). In a world so dreary, even humble homes tried to keep a small lamp burning through the night. Symbolically, God was the light of their countenance (Psalm 4:6).

Psalm 27:1 says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation” which meant the light of leadership, showing the “right paths.” It came to mean that God is the source of all mental illumination. We might well trace the enlargement of the idea in scripture and its particular development in Christ’s claim to be the light of the world.

His Word was a light to the path of the faithful (Psalm 19:8, 119:105, 30; Proverbs 6:23). In Psalm 104:2 the psalmist testified of the Lord who “covered himself” in light. Jesus is depicted often in John as the light of the world (John 1:4-5, 7-9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 11:9-10, 12:35-36, 46). Jesus is seen metonymically<sup>13</sup> generally as a light, the author or dispenser of moral and spiritual light, a moral teacher, especially of Jesus as the great Teacher and Savior of the world who brought life and immortality to light in His gospel. Jesus’ disciples are also described as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Such expressions make at least two things abundantly clear. First, the origin of light rests with God. Second, in some sense God Himself is the very essence of light. Such statements do not suppose that God is light and nothing more, but they do stress that God is the ultimate source of all knowing and understanding. Here the emphasis lies upon perception and understanding gained when darkness is dispelled and light revealed.

To a people who for generations had been taught to think of God as light, it was understandable that a Hebrew ascetic<sup>14</sup>, John the Baptist, who himself was a Light (John 5:35), announced One who actually came into the world as light, ready to light every man (John 1:4ff), a role affirmed by Jesus of himself (John 3:19-21, 8:12) and extended to include his faithful witnesses (Matthew 5:14-16). This concept was spread through the Roman world by Paul (Ephesians 5:8) and reiterated by the author of I John 1:5-7, who here unites New Testament symbolism with that of the Old Testament -- “the godless grope in the dark” (I John 2:11).

This last concept becomes even clearer in John 3:19: “People love darkness better than light, because their deeds are evil.” Such statements reveal that the character of light is to reveal and to provide understanding and purity, while the opposite of light or darkness is designed to obscure, to deceive, and to harbor impurity.

A small problem confronts the interpreter who discovers that Jesus said to His disciples

“Ye are the light of the world,” who were to serve, in turn, as lights to their fellowmen (Matthew 5:14; Luke 16:8; John 12:36; II Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15). Yet Jesus is called the Light of the world because of his power of illuminating the mind of man and of acting as a guiding beacon to his followers (Luke 2:32; John 1:4-5, 3:19-20, 8:12, 12:35-36; Revelation 21:23-24). What appears to be a contradiction is not one at all. Does not the moon provide light for the earth just as the sun does? Yet, the actual source of light for the moon is the sun. The moon only reflects the light of the sun. By the same token, Jesus is the source of all light. His disciples become reflectors in a darkened world, transmitting through their lives the true light of the eternal Son of God. True Christians were referred to as “sons of light” (Luke 16:8; John 12:36) and as “children of light” (I Thessalonians 5:5). Paul says of the Christians in Ephesus, “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8) meaning that they were enlightened by the Lord.

When Judas Maccabaeus cleansed the Temple in 165 B.C., where for three years to a day sacrifices had been offered to the Olympian Zeus, the worship of Yahwah was inaugurated anew, and the Feast of Hanukkah (Dedication) has been celebrated annually ever since. Josephus says that it was called “Lights” from the custom of illuminating the houses throughout the 8-day celebration.<sup>15</sup> The use of lights in festivals was common in the various cults of the Hellenized world, especially those honoring Dionysus and Apollo.

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

The first chapter of the Gospel according to John is the prologue to the remainder of the book -- John’s directive to the reader as to how the entire Gospel should be read and understood. In this introduction divinity and humanity, preexistence and incarnation, revelation and sacrifice are each discussed.

The initial allusion to Genesis 1 in John 1:1 is obvious. John begins by introducing Jesus as the Word (Greek *logos*). Here he builds on much contemporary Jewish thought where the Word of God took on personal creative attributes (Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6, 9). John implies a personal identity between the Logos and God. “And the Word was God” (verse 1). The Gospel is wholly *concerned* with Jesus; the prologue is wholly *taken up* with him. John prepares readers for the story by describing the Son of God in terms that rivet the attention of his readers, and so encourages them to read the story for themselves. The remarkable feature of this presentation is that it employs categories universally known, possessing universal appeal, which would attract and have attracted people of all cultures the world over.

The entry of the *Logos* (the Word) into the world (the incarnation) is described as light shining in darkness (verse 5). “The life was the light of men.” The Word is Mediator not only in the act of creation, but in its continuance. Hence “life” and “light” include the life and light which come to man in *both* creation and *new* creation. The “light” of the Logos shone in the primal darkness at creation and continued amidst the darkness of fallen mankind; it shone with greater brilliance in the glory of the Incarnate One; and it shines on in the era of the Resurrection, which is the time of the Holy Spirit.

These two figures (life and light) are closely associated in Old Testament thought. At the creation the Word of God called light into being that there might be life in the world (Genesis 1:3). So also the psalmist sings, “With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:9). Just as all life proceeds from God, so the possibility and the faculty of vision come from him. “The light of men” means the light which shines for men to give them the means of recognizing the giver of life.

So far the prologue is concerned with the relation of the Word to the world. In the verses following verse 5, the Word is set forth as the Revealer of God in history; these abstractions take on a clearer outline until we recognize the leaders in the life and death struggle between light and darkness. Even though John the Baptist's testimony was clear (verses 6-9), still Jesus experienced rejection (verses 10-11). But there is more. The darkness is hostile. There is enmity. John 1:5 says that the "darkness has not overcome (the light)." The Greek term translated as "overcome" means "seize with hostile intent."<sup>16</sup> The hostility of the darkness points to the cross. The power of darkness will not prevail.

John indicates that the light has its followers. Jesus has the disciples (verses 12, 13). Even though his own people spurned his message, those who did receive him obtained power to become God's children. Verses 12-13 anticipate the story of Nicodemus (3:21) in which this rebirth is explored. The climax is reached in verse 14 when the divine revelation is announced as the incarnation of the Son of God. Light and darkness are conceived as opponents.

A careful reading of the book of I John shows that there will be a powerful transformation of those who embrace this light -- "Child of God," "rebirth," and "born of God" were commonplace names describing disciples (I John 3:1, 9, 4:4, 7, 12-13). In the upper room Jesus will draw out the implications: this power will come about through the Spirit who will quicken each believer (14:15-31).

### **Feast of Tabernacles**

We find Jesus still at the festival setting of Tabernacles. (See the discussion of the Feast of Tabernacles in Lesson 1 for a more complete description of the festival.) As 7:37-38 had immediate reference to the water-drawing ceremony of the festival, and showed Jesus as fulfilling all that it signified of Israel's experience of and hope for the salvation of God, so 8:12 has immediate reference to the joyous celebration each night in the light of the lamps, with all that it suggested of Israel's experiences of the shining of God upon them for their deliverance and hope of future salvation. The discourse of 7:14-39, where Jesus announced in the latter part of those verses that he was the "living water," focused on one symbolic element: the everlasting temple water of Zechariah. Now Jesus employs a second ritual theme: everlasting light. Zechariah also predicted that light would shine forth perpetually from the temple in the "day of the Lord" (Zechariah 14:6-7). This too was associated with Moses and the wilderness tabernacles.

As with the water-drawing ceremony, the celebration in the light of the lamps will have been associated with recollection of the nation's experience at the Exodus and the hope for a second Exodus. In the wilderness wanderings, the presence of the Lord with his people was manifested in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night – which saved them from would-be destroyers (Exodus 14:19-25) and guided them through the wilderness to the promised land (Exodus 13:21-22). It is linked with the Old Testament faith in the Lord as the Light of his people (Psalm 27:1), which for the Jew suggested not so much the being of God as his saving activity, but a *Yahweh in action*. Psalm 44:3 gives a remarkable expression of this concept, and it was ever before the eyes of the Israelites in the representations of the visible manifestation of God, both for revelation (Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 26-28) and for salvation (Habakkuk 3:3-4). God's "shining" for their salvation at the Exodus encouraged prayers for the like "shining" of his face in the predicaments of the faithful (e.g., Psalm 80:1-7, 14-19), and was matched by their expectation of that same light shining for their salvation in the coming kingdom of God (e.g., Isaiah 60:19-22). Zechariah 14:5b-7 is especially important here, for the description of the

continual light of “that day” is immediately followed by that of the living waters that are to flow from Jerusalem, a passage read at Tabernacles and one of those assumed by the saying of 7:37-39.

The light ceremonies of the temple were enjoyed by Jerusalem’s pilgrims. Four enormous candlesticks were lit each night illuminating the brilliant temple limestone. Jesus is in the area of the temple treasury (8:20), which was in the Court of the Women and was the location of the festival lamp stands! It is beneath these ritual lights of Tabernacles that Jesus announced “I am the light of the world.” This festival background for 8:12 indicates the starting point for its understanding.

### **John 8:12-20**

When the original setting of 8:12 is seen in the Feast of Tabernacles, it is understood why the imagery of “following” the Light is employed instead of *receiving* it, or *walking in* it, or the like; this is what Israel did in the wilderness! The people followed the Light as it led from the land of slavery through the perilous wilderness to the promised land.

“Light” is a frequent metaphor for Jesus in the Gospel of John (1:5, 3:19, 12:46; I John 1:5). As light, Jesus discloses the person of God for us, illumines life and gives us meaning and purpose, and also exposes sin, judging those who dwell in darkness. These are persistent themes in the fourth Gospel. Here the Tabernacles pilgrims recognized something authoritative in Jesus’ words but demand real proof of what he was saying (8:13-19). (This question was posed in chapter 5 at another festival.) The reply of Jesus in verse 14 is unexpected: his testimony concerning himself is valid, because he knows, whereas his opponents do not know, his origin and his destiny, which are, of course, in God, from whom he comes and to whom he goes (compare 13:3), who moreover is *with him* (verse 16). The testimony of Jesus therefore is grounded in his unity with the Father, from whom his revelation is derived. This has the consequence of identifying the revelation of God with the (self-)testimony of Jesus.

Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus does not judge; that is not the purpose of his ministry as Revealer and Redeemer (3:17), but it forms an inevitable consequence of it by reason of the resistance to it of man (3:19, compare also 9:39). “Even if I do judge” of verse 16 should be compared with “Even if I do bear testimony concerning myself” of verse 14: the testimony and the judgment of Jesus are alike rooted in God. Hence his judgment is “authentic,” as manifesting the good-pleasure of the Father, just as his testimony reveals the word of the Father.

Jesus’ listeners had picked up on Jesus speaking of “His Father” and misunderstood His meaning. The response in verse 19, “Where is your father?” expresses another “Johannine misunderstanding.” They perhaps are thinking of another man they could question (“We can’t see him and we haven’t got his evidence!”). Jesus responds that if they have seen *him*, they have seen the Father -- a response he uses several times and on several occasions! It’s almost as if he is saying, “How many times must I say this?” Since they are incapable of recognizing in Jesus the one sent of God, it might be assumed that they know neither him nor the Father. It would appear that when men shut themselves off from Jesus’ witness it is a sign that God has shut himself off from them. The moral implication is brought out more fully in I John 1:5-7 (compare 9:5, 12:35, 46).

In the next chapter (9:1-41) Jesus brings light to a blind man. We are still at the Tabernacles setting and Jesus is still affirming that he is “the light of the world” (9:5, compare 8:12). Here the light of Jesus is confirmed as the blind man gains his vision. But those who live in darkness without this light (the Jewish opponents) cannot see. In the end, the Pharisees are

described as blind since they do not possess the spiritual vision or the light of Christ. The story is symbolic then of spiritual vision and blindness complete with their attendant dispositions (compare the similar blindness motif in Mark 8:14-30).

### **John 3:16-21**

In the third chapter of John, Jesus discusses with Nicodemus what is required for entering the kingdom of God. Later in the chapter, in further discussion, Jesus explains how this gift of spiritual birth offered to him might be obtained. Belief in the Son gains eternal life (verses 15, 16, 18). Disbelief gains judgment and condemnation (verses 18, 19, 36). This sums up the worldview characteristic of John's Gospel; there is no equivocation here – one is either attracted to or repulsed by the light (verses 19-21); one pursues either truth or evil. Yet the coming of the Son was not inspired by a desire to condemn – it stemmed from love (verse 16). But judgment was an inevitable result. Light brings exposure (verse 20); it reveals who we really are.

Verse 16 provides a summary of the Gospel: it originates in the love of God for a disobedient world, it centers in the giving of the only Son to and for the world, and its end is that people may not be lost but live under the saving sovereignty of God. The giving of the only Son clearly embraces both incarnation and vicarious death; it is the entire mission of the Son that is in view. Here alone in John's Gospel the love of God for the rebellious world is stated to be the reason for the incarnation and death of Christ.

If the purpose of the mission of the Son is that people may live and not be lost, the possibility of both destinies is clearly implied, and God in his love stands behind both. This dual possibility is expounded in verses 17-21.

The positive purpose of the mission is unambiguously stated in verse 17: it is that the world be saved. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God were directed to the salvation of all humanity, not to a segment of it. But since this salvation is found in the Son (verse 15), and so through faith's acknowledgment of the Revealer and his redemption (verse 16), the coming of the Son for *salvation* can be turned into the occasion of *judgment*, and that possibility is present for all who hear the Gospel (verse 18).

The process is described in verses 19-21. Here the key term is "judgment," and it is used in its twofold sense of separation and condemnation. The Redeemer has come into the world as Light in a dark place, clearly to bring the "light" of salvation. But before that Light men separate themselves; they either approach it or move away from it. The former move into the light of salvation, the latter depart from it into deeper darkness. This is a different image from that of judgment as separation of sheep from goats (Matthew 25:31-33), but it sets forth the same fundamental reality -- humankind dividing before the representative of God.

The striking difference in John's picture is its relation to the present situation of humankind: the separation is taking place now, and its results are felt in the present. But the tragedy of the separation is also underscored: God's great saving act has become a means of judgment through the perverted reaction of people. What causes the wrong decisions? "Men loved the darkness more than the light because their deeds were evil." They who love darkness hate the light. Their deeds express their perversity; hence, they keep far from the Light to avoid exposure. Conversely the believer, here defined as "he who does the truth," i.e., acts in accordance with the truth, comes to the Light, for his acts have been achieved through the grace of God in Christ, and he would acknowledge it before God and the world. In short, in the decision of faith or unbelief it becomes apparent what man really is and what he always was.

## **I John 1:5b-7**

To declare that “God is light” (verse 5) means that he by nature is holy. Elsewhere the term *light* may mean life or salvation, but here the stress is on morality (Genesis 1: Psalm 27:1; Micah 7:8-9). “Intellectually, light is truth . . . Morally, light is purity . . . ”<sup>17</sup>

John gives the practical, ethical implications of the doctrinal declaration *God is light* (1:5). Deceivers (2:18) had heretical ideas about the natures of God and man, denying the reality of sin or at least its effects on one’s relation to God. In 1:6-2:2 each verse (except 2:2) contains a conditional clause followed by an explication of consequences, either positive or negative. Three false claims (1:6, 8, 10) are answered by three contrasting genuine truths (1:7, 9, 2:1-2) giving correctives and provisions.

The first false claim (1:6) is to have fellowship with God while continuing to “walk” (live) in “darkness” (sin). This claim separates ethics from faith. John’s response is two-fold: we lie and we do not live (practice) the truth. Truth is the revelation about God’s nature as light. We contradict the truth by words and by deeds. The corrective (1:7) is to walk continuously in conformity with God’s nature (truth, holiness) just as he *is* in the light. His activity is always consistent with his nature. Two results follow: fellowship with other believers based on fellowship with the Godhead (verse 3) and continuous cleansing – not just forgiveness – from the stain of sin by the blood of Christ. The noun *sin* (translated from the Greek term meaning ‘missing the mark’) refers to either sin we unconsciously commit while in the light or our sinful nature; blood recalls the Old Testament atoning sacrifice (Leviticus 16), which was fulfilled at the cross.

### *Summary Statement*

Light realized as a priceless good suggested not only illumination and revelation, but also security and joy. These various aspects may be illustrated from the Old Testament -- “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1); “In thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:9); “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2). But the term inevitably took on an oral connotation in Israel and elsewhere. “The children of the light” (Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8b), who bear “the armor of light” (Romans 13:12), and in whom is found the “fruit of light” (Ephesians 5:9) are those who “walk in the light” in the sense of showing a life and conduct that accord with the gospel.

The picture harmonizes perfectly with the call of Jesus to “follow” him as disciples, but makes plain its application to salvation and eternal life: following Jesus, the Light of the World gives to the believer assurance of avoiding the perils and snares of the darkness and the promise of possessing “the light of life,” i.e., liberation from the realm of death for life in the kingdom of light. Since Jesus is the Light of life (John 1:4), the promise carries the reality now, in anticipation of its fullness in the glory of the kingdom to be revealed (compare 11:25).

The central problem of man’s salvation is always that somehow the darkness of his mind must be broken through so that he can begin to see things as they really are – God as He really is, himself as he really is. The saving revelation must be such that at one and the same time it shows man the truth and makes it possible for him to be sincere with it. The problem of salvation, i.e., of bringing men to walk in the light, is further solved by confronting them with the results of walking in darkness. Darkness brings uncertainty, frustration, futility, purposelessness.

### *Teacher Helps*

This lesson covers the third of the elements in our lives that are absolutely necessary for

physical living and even more essential for spiritual living (water, bread, and now light). It is important that students make the transfer from physical light as God-given, as essential for all life on earth, and now its place and necessity for their spiritual life.

In this lesson there are six scripture passages divided into three parts -- Part I consists of Psalm 27:1 and Psalm 119:105; Part II, John 1:1-5, 8:12-16, 19, and John 3:16-21, is the substantive portion of the scripture; Part III, I John 1:5-7.

It is suggested that you do the following and in this sequence:

1. Have students participate in the “Set” (see below) which will instill in their minds the concept of “light,” the concept of “darkness,” and why light is absolutely essential in our physical world.

2. Have students read and discuss Part I. This section of the scripture is preparatory to the primary passages and is meant to introduce the concept of light in a sense other than physical.

3. Follow with the reading and discussing of the Part II scriptures which are selected to establish the origins of Jesus, Jesus as the “Light of the World,” and the effect that the Light will have on their lives in relation to the Christian community.

Before reading the selection from John 8:12-16, go over the Feast of Tabernacles relative to the ceremonies surrounding light and how Jesus’ announcement fits into that setting. This is explained in the Lesson Summary above. Remind them of what the Feast means, refreshing their memories from Lesson 1.

4. Complete the lesson with the reading of Part III. I John 1:5b-7 will be a summary for the lesson – this should be a good lead-in for the subjective questions in that the passage points out the nature of God as well as what it means to live in “the Light.” I John 2:9-11 and Ephesians 5:8-9, if needed and time permits, would be good companion scriptures for Part III in that they reinforce the idea of “walking/living in the Light.”

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from both *The New Living Translation* and from *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. In *The Message*, especially, there are idioms and other English expressions that will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expression – both are recommended.

Concepts from the *The New Living Translation* (Psalm 27:1 and John 1:1-5) that may give difficulties: the Word, God, Lord, life, light, darkness, salvation, tremble.

Concepts from the *The Message*: beam of light, the world’s light, life, light, darkness, Pharisees, narrowness of experience, largeness of experience, the Father, God’s law, acquitted, God-light, streamed, addicted, God-work, purge, Son of God, illusion.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with. They are from Psalm 119, both Gospel of John scripture passages, and from I John.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (John 8, vs 14) you can depend on . . .   | (I John, vs 5) not a trace of . . .    |
| (John 8, vs 19) so-called . . .           | (I John, vs 6) lying through our teeth |
| (John 3, vs 17) put the world right again | (I John, vs 6) living what we claim    |
| (John 3, vs 19) one-of-a-kind             | (I John, vs 7) walk in the light       |

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

1. Open the lesson with a discussion of a light bulb using a picture (or the real thing). Ask questions such as “What is it?” “What is it for?” “What does it provide for us?” etc. Turn to a discussion of sunlight (perhaps using a picture) – draw out from students the reasons why we have to have light. Why is light necessary for life? Turn to a discussion of darkness – which do we like better, light or darkness? Why?

2. An alternative approach would be to have two lamps, one with a burned out bulb and the other one operative (or pictures of two, one burned out and one operative); the pictures should clearly show that one is working. Ask questions such as “What is the difference between these two bulbs?” (one isn’t working, etc.) “Why isn’t one working?” “What is the benefit to us of the bulb that isn’t working?” “What are other forms of light?” (e.g., the sun, the moon, fire, etc.). Follow up with the questions above.

From either of the above, ask questions that will arrive at the necessity and benefits of light in our lives.

Proceed from each of these two options into the lesson.

### *Scripture Readings*

Psalm 27:1; Psalm 119:105; John 1:1-5; John 8:12-16, 19; John 3:16-21; I John 1:5b-7

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Explore how light functions in our physical world.
2. Explore light as a necessity for life.
3. Discuss the contrasts between physical light and physical darkness.
4. Explore “being in the dark” psychologically.
5. Explore the problems that come from physical darkness.
6. Discuss what it means to live psychologically in the “light” and in the “darkness.”
7. Learn that Jesus is the Light of the world.
8. Learn the meaning of “light” in a spiritual sense.
9. Learn how to obtain the Light of the world.
10. Learn what Jesus as the Light of the world can mean for their lives.
11. Learn what it means to live spiritually in the “light” and in the “darkness.”
12. Learn that the “light” is both here-and-now and for eternity in their lives.
13. Learn that the “light” in their lives is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

### *Questions*

#### Part I --

Psalm 27:1; Psalm 119:105

1. Who is “the Lord?”
2. What does he offer?
3. What effect does this offer have on our lives?
4. How can someone’s words be like a beam of light?

#### Part II

John 1:1-5

(Accept all answers without agreeing or disagreeing with them.)

5. Who or what is “the Word?” (vs 1)
6. Where did he come from? (vs 2, 3)
7. What does “life” mean? (vs 4)
8. How does “life” give “light?” (vs 4)
9. What is the benefit of the light? (vs 4, 5)

John 8:12-16, 19

Explain the setting for this discourse.

verses 12-13

10. What does Jesus claim to be? (vs 12)
11. How could he be the “world’s light?”
12. How would you feel if you had been in the crowd and heard this declaration?
13. How did Jesus’ listeners feel about it? (vs 13)

verses 14-16

14. How did Jesus answer their skepticism? (vs 14)
15. Where did Jesus say he had come from? (vs 14, 16)

verse 19

16. What does Jesus say the Father is?

John 3:16-21

verses 16-19

17. What is the result of God’s love for the world? (vs 16)

verses 20-21

18. What does it mean to be “in the dark?”
19. Why do people choose “darkness” rather than “light?”
20. Why do people choose the “light?”

Part III

I John 1:5b-7

21. What is the characteristic of God? (vs 5)
22. What is the benefit of “walking in the light?” (vs 6-7)

### *Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is “the Light of the World?”
3. How can one “live in the Light?”
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is “the Light of the World?”



## Lesson 4 THE GOOD SHEPHERD

### *Primary Thought*

Jesus with determination chose to give up his life for us, all of it, holding back nothing of it for himself and his own interests. Because he knows us so thoroughly, and sees how helpless we are without him he devotes his whole life to us day by day, and finally throws it away in a supreme act of that constant self-sacrifice. His heart goes out to those who need him,

It is through Christ that we gain what matters to us the most; much of it cannot be had at all apart from him. He is the door that leads to it. What he himself exemplifies are (a) safety from prowling and marauding dangers, (b) a full life, and (c) all we need to keep us fit and healthy spiritually. Christ is constantly claiming that he can and does give us what the world with all its misleading and seductive promises, cannot give. It is through Christ one enters into and enjoys the peace which passes all understanding – when others are flurried and harassed and careworn. It is through Christ one gains that joy of the Lord that is our strength. It is through Christ that one attains to life that is life indeed.

### *Lesson Summary*

A **shepherd** is one who tends sheep. A shepherd in the western world, as we know him, is hardly a good example of the kind of shepherd that Jesus was talking about. The picture of a shepherd as painted by Jesus is unhappily blurred and spoiled for us by our Western way of shepherding. Sheep are allowed to graze within fenced in fields, and when herding is needed skilled sheepdogs are used. In New Zealand sheep are often herded from the air by helicopters or on the ground by all-terrain vehicles.

But to understand Jesus' discussion of the Good Shepherd, we must understand the shepherd of the Eastern world -- then as well as now. A shepherd was the most patient of men. The relationship between an Eastern shepherd and his flock is intimate, affectionate, and personal.

In Jesus' time, the shepherd remained with the sheep and was the leader of the sheep, going out before them. Characteristics of the good shepherd included faithfulness, even to a willingness to lay down his life for the sheep; tenderness, which prompted him to carry the weak lambs in his arms (Isaiah 40:11) and to lead gently those that were with young; binding up the broken, strengthening the sick; diligence, which sought out, in dark and cloudy weather, sheep grazing on too high places, and brought them to folds and good watering places; and wisdom which made people turn to him for advice. Shepherds guarded their flocks at night whether in the open (Luke 2:8) or in sheepfolds (Zephaniah. 2:6) where they counted the sheep as they entered (Jeremiah 33:13). The integrity of the shepherd is reflected in Psalm 78:70-72.

An Eastern sheepfold was an area surrounded by high and strong stone walls, and with a formidable door, no mere flimsy wooden fence, but a much more massive thing, designed for protection.

**Sheep** in earliest Biblical times were important members of the quartette of domestic animals: the *Bovidae* (including both sheep and goats; the ass-donkey group; the cattle (also of the *Bovidae*); and the camel. Sheep were domesticated much earlier than the camel. Poor indeed was the family which did not own at least one lamb or sheep (II Samuel 12:3); and “very rich” in sheep were Patriarchs like Abraham (Genesis 13:2). Sheep were very important – a staple -- to the people of Jesus’ day, as the following illustrates.

In Bible times the sheep cared for by shepherds represented wealth. Uses of sheep are manifold. They provided (1) food (I Samuel 14:32) -- milk to drink (Isaiah 7:21-22), meat, and the great amount of fat in the tail; (2) clothing (Job 31:20) -- hides made into leather for tent coverings (Exodus 26:14) and for rough clothing both in the whole skin, worn as a cloak by shepherds and wanderers (Hebrews 11:37), and in cut wool, which after being cleaned and spun on hand spindles, was woven into garments for the entire family (Proverbs 31:13, 19, 21; Ezekiel 34:3); and (3) for oil. (4) The horns were used for drinking and unguent flasks (I Samuel 16:1) and for the sacred Shophar (or horn) which was used to sound alarms and to signal attacks (Joshua 6:5), herald the accession of kings (II Samuel 15:10; I Kings 1:34; II Kings 9:13), and to call Israel to worship (Psalms 98:6, 150:3; Joshua 6:4). Furthermore, (5) sheep were used for the major offerings in the sacrificial system (Exodus 20:24) -- for offerings sacrificed to God (Exodus 12:3-19), as burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:10, 9:3, 23:12), as guilt offerings (Leviticus 5:15), and as peace offerings (Leviticus 22:21). Sheep and wool was often a medium for the payment of debts and of tribute, as with Mesha, the sheepmaster King of Moab, and King Jehoram of Israel (I Kings 3:4). Fine wool was bought in large markets as at Tyre (Ezekiel 27:18).

The traits of sheep, as depicted in the Bible, are affection for the shepherd, whose voice they know (John 10:2-5) – a characteristic lacking in camels; meekness, submission (Isaiah 53:7); helplessness (Jeremiah 11:19; Micah 5:8) in the presence of enemies (Ezekiel 34:5b) -- lions and bears (I Samuel 34:3; Amos 3:12; Micah 5:8), wolves (Matthew 10:16; John 10:12), snakes, jackals. They are apt to fall into pits (Matthew 12:11) and to suffer under faithless or careless shepherds (Ezekiel 34:2-4; Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34) and unscrupulous hirelings (John 10:13).

“Sheep” are often used in the New Testament figuratively to mean those (human beings) who came under the watch of someone as sheep under a shepherd (Matthew 10:6, 15:24, 26:31; Mark 14:27; John 10:7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17; Hebrews 13:20). Sheep, on account of their simplicity, mildness, inoffensiveness, patience and obedience, are used as emblems of believers in Christ (John 10:15, 16, 26, 27; Matthew 25:32, 33; Hebrews 13:20). Lost or straying sheep represent unconverted persons wandering in sin and error (Matthew 10:6, 15:24; John 10:26, 27; I Peter 2:25; Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34).

The Old Testament is rich in pastoral symbolism. Shepherds came to designate not only persons who herded sheep but also kings (II Samuel 5:2) and God Himself (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11-15). God is often described as the shepherd of Israel (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 78:52-53) and similarly, the patriarchs, Moses, and David were shepherds. In the Ezekiel passage the divine care for the sheep of the flock follows a description of false shepherds, and in Jeremiah 23:1-4 good shepherds are contrasted with those who “destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for” (verse 1b). Later prophets referred to Israel’s leaders as shepherds (Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34). Leadership in Israel meant shepherding, and thus impious Israelite kings were called false shepherds (Jeremiah 10:21, 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:1-31).

Shepherds were among the first to visit Jesus at His birth (Luke 2:8-20). Some New Testament references used a shepherd and the sheep to illustrate Christ's relationship to His followers who referred to Him as "our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20). Paul likened the church and its leaders to a flock with shepherds (Acts 20:28).

Jesus spoke of Himself metaphorically as "the Good Shepherd" who knew His sheep and would lay down His life for them (John 10:7-18), who watches over and provides for the welfare of the Church, His flock (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27 quoted from Zechariah 13:7; John 10:2-3, 11, 12, 13, 16; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25); of the Messiah in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24).

### **Psalm 23**

Psalm 23 reveals shepherd ways. "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need" expresses man's gratitude for God's mercies. The Lord is shepherd, guide, and host.

As shepherd, he provides provision, refreshment, and security. He certainly knew "the green meadows." He knew how to walk at the head of the flock, leading them – not following them. He knew the "still waters" of wells, pools, quiet rivulets, or sheltered sand bars.

As guide, God assures clear leading in right paths, companionship, protection, and support. One frequent use of David's sling would be to aim beyond a straying sheep, scaring it back to the flock. The "paths of righteousness" were age-old sheep-walks. "The valley of the shadow," which called for extra shepherding, was the deep rock-cleft wadi where serpents lurked. The sheep felt the touch of the shepherd's hooked staff, lifting them over perilous stones. The familiar stout, short rod "rodded" them into the stone-walled fold at nightfall. The professional guide's "name" or reputation was the traveler's only guarantee of protection and safe arrival, as it was the guide's main claim to employment.

As host, God assures us of welcome at his rich table, of abundance, attendance, and unending hospitality. The shepherd was able to "prepare tables" in safe grassy spots, in the presence of the sheep's hereditary enemies – venomous snakes which bit the faces of unsuspecting sheep. Hence the necessity of having their injured heads "anointed with oil" or butter. An example of the "cup" which ran over is a stone trough placed beside the well from which the shepherd dipped water to fill the "cup."

The "living in the house of the Lord" reflects the return to the village after the summer grazing period, when families prepare to go up to the House of God, in mended garments and new-made shoes, to thank Him for His "Goodness and unfailing love" and to entreat him to let these blessings follow the family forever. The Psalm's last word, "forever," does not suggest (or deny) immortality, but that the welcome and feasting will not be withdrawn while life lasts.

From Psalm 23 and from Psalm 78:70-72 we see the characteristics and the integrity of the good shepherd: faithfulness, even to a willingness to lay down his life for the sheep; tenderness, which prompted him to carry the lambs in his arms and to lead gently those that were with young; binding up the broken, strengthening the sick; diligence, which sought out, in dark and cloudy weather, sheep grazing on too high places, and brought them to folds and good watering places; and wisdom which made people turn to him for advice.<sup>18</sup>

### **Matthew 18:12-14**

The Father's love for his children is discussed in these verses. They portray the shepherd as valuing one individual sheep from among many -- another characteristic of the "good shepherd." The one sheep may be a believer who is carrying a heavy burden or a nonbeliever whom the Father saves or even a Christian who has drifted into sin and whom the Father seeks to

restore. The situation is extremely grave; restoration is no certainty (verse 13a, “and *if* he finds it . . .”). It is urgent that believers be arms of God’s love to the erring. But, the focus is on the good shepherd who cares for all, even one.

### **John 10:1-18:**

These verses consist primarily of a discourse on the Shepherd and his Flock. A shepherd is the most patient of men. The relationship between a shepherd and his flock is intimate, affectionate, and personal. And that of course was what was in the mind of Christ when he portrayed himself as the Good Shepherd. The real, the Good, shepherd can be recognized at once by certain facts about him: (a) that he makes no sneaky entrance, but uses the door; (b) that the gatekeeper knows him, and so opens to him; and (c) the most convincing proof of all, that the shy sheep that would be thrown into panic by a stranger, or at best would treat him with indifference, hearing the shepherd’s voice, come hurrying to him, docile and eager. As sheep start and turn their heads, and come running when they hear one whom they know and trust, so when Christ’s voice really breaks through to us, we do thrill to it and respond.

The chapter starts with a parable (verse 1-5) and then shifts to Jesus’ application to himself.

In these verses (1-5) we have a general description of a sheepfold, with door and gatekeeper, enclosing the sheep, intruders climbing the wall to steal, and the shepherd, who is recognized by the gatekeeper, and whose voice is known to the sheep as he calls them by name and leads them out for pasturage. The parable in essence depicts a shepherd (unlike the thief) as one who has an established relationship with the sheep – he knows them, and they recognize him, and so they follow him as he leads them out to pasture, whereas they will run away from a stranger. The assumptions of the picture are reasonably clear. The sheep are kept at night in a fold, either one erected in the open country or in a yard surrounded by a wall adjacent to a house. It is possible that several flocks share the one fold. There is probably one gatekeeper and several shepherds each of whom is known by the gatekeeper. The shepherd arrives in the morning and gathers his own sheep, calling to them individually, and leads them out to pasture. Other shepherds gather their flocks and lead them out. The Eastern shepherd, unlike the shepherd of the Western tradition, is indispensable to the flock in that he leads them (and they follow him) rather than leaving the sheep to themselves.

The parable itself discusses the legitimate leaders of the sheep, those who have authorized access to the flock, in contrast to thieves, who must steal clandestinely into the fold. Jesus suggests that there may still be false leaders of God’s people whose intentions are malevolent. Two criteria set apart fraudulent leaders. First, their entry into authority is wrong (verse 1). Sheepfolds were often protective stone fences with one access gate. If the gatekeeper (verse 3) has not ordained the shepherd’s entry, he (the shepherd) is to be feared, not followed. Here Jesus indicates that he alone has true authority because he has obtained the gatekeeper’s invitation. Second, the false leader’s voice cannot be recognized. The intimacy between shepherd and sheep is a well-known Palestinian phenomenon. Sheep can even bear personal names! Here Jesus shows that he alone knows and is known by the sheep. In John this is a central feature of discipleship, discerning Jesus’ voice and abiding in him.

As in other discourses, the failure of the listeners to understand Jesus’ meaning (verse 6) leads him to explain himself more fully (compare 3:9-21, 7:35-53).

Initially Jesus affirms that he is the way (“the door/gate,” verses 7, 9) through which one finds salvation or pasture. “The gate” may be an allusion to words in Psalm 118:20, a Psalm quoted messianically several times in the Gospels.

The change in the figure from shepherd to door (verse 9) would be easier to understand if we might think of the Eastern shepherd as sometimes lying in the narrow entrance to the fold and the shepherd’s body forming a barrier to intruders, whether thieves or wild beasts.

This is an advance over the parable wherein the shepherd is distinguished from the gatekeeper and the gate. Now we learn that Jesus distributes not simply access to leadership, but life itself. Jesus is the Door/Gate to the life of the kingdom of God, which is given to those who come to the Father through him. Note that now in the interpretation Jesus assumes a new sovereignty over the fold. The sheepfold is designed to keep out those who would harm the sheep (verse 10), and Jesus is their guardian. He refuses access to many, including those like the Pharisees. These leaders destroy, but God sent Christ so that those who believe might not be destroyed (3:16, 6:39, 17:12). When Jesus brings us to the Father he calls himself a Gate, when he takes care of us, a Shepherd. There is a parallel with John 14:6, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”

But the meaning points to a future situation, when the under shepherds will derive their authority to care for the flock from the chief shepherd. First, they must be safe through him. Then with his commission they will be free to guide the flock and find rich pasture for the sheep. Unlike the intruders who avoid the door, they will be listened to by the sheep, for like their chief, they are free from self-interest and greed, and seek life in its fullest for those under their care.

In verses 11 and 14 Christ claims to be the good shepherd, and that upon three grounds. First, because he lays down his life for the sheep (verse 11). This every day, and all the days, for the whole life of a shepherd, with the many other possibilities that it contains, must be completely sacrificed to meet the wants of the dependent, needy, hungry, foolish creatures that have been put into his keeping. Further, a good shepherd has intimate knowledge of each of his flock (verse 14). To others the sheep may be practically indistinguishable. But he knows them at a glance, their characters and idiosyncrasies; can pick them out at once from a mass of other sheep among which they have mingled. This one, and this one, and that one, he claims, is mine. But Christ says with confidence, “I know my own.” And that is what supremely matters. And the next best is also true, that they know him (verse 14): know that they have about them a watchful and unselfish care which they have proved day after day and never found to fail; know that they are not alone, left to make such shift as they can, but are in the keeping of one whom they can absolutely trust. So close and intimate is this relationship between Christ and his own that he compares it to that which exists between the Father and himself, than which nothing can be more intimate or close. And because he knows us so thoroughly, and sees how helpless we are without him, he devotes his whole life to us day by day, and finally throws it away in a supreme act of that constant self-sacrifice. Again, being the good shepherd, his heart goes out to other sheep who need him, proved to be his by their very needs and by his power to meet and satisfy these needs; to men and women not actually his as yet, but scattered over the gentile world, who, when they hear his voice, will heed it and will follow. Them too he will gather in, and lead, and tend.

Was it not planned for us by the huge liberality of God? Yet nothing is more certain than that it is through Christ that we gain what matters to us the most; and that much of it cannot be had at all apart from him. He is the door that leads to it. What he himself exemplifies here (verse 9) are (a) safety from prowling and marauding dangers; (b) a full life (they will go in and

out); and (c) all we need to keep us fit and healthy (and find green pastures). But Christ throughout the gospels is constantly claiming that he can and does give us what the world with all its misleading and seductive promises, cannot give; nor can anything else. It is through Christ one enters into and enjoys the peace which passes all understanding – when others are flurried and harassed and careworn. It is through Christ one gains that joy of the Lord that is our strength. It is through Christ that one attains to life that is life indeed. So he himself promises. And the apostles are entirely sure that through him they have come upon innumerable glories, which without him were as inaccessible and distant as the stars. All of which is summed up in that triumphant shout of Paul, “How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord” (I Corinthians 15:57, NLT) – a door that opens on how much and without which we would be left poor and empty-handed!

In verses 11-18 the superiority of Jesus’ work is given. In verses 11 and 14 Jesus now proclaims himself to be the Good Shepherd. In Mark’s account of Jesus’ miraculous feeding, Jesus is evidently using this same pastoral motif for himself (Mark 6:30-44, especially verse 34). Jesus is the shepherd in relation to the flock. He is the model shepherd because he is essentially good and, since he is mindful of his own, he will risk his life for the sheep in defending them against wild animals and thieves, whereas the person hired to watch the sheep will run from such dangers (verses 14-15).

The goodness of the true shepherd is now set out in opposition to the indifference of the hireling. Jesus states three aspects of his mission in relation to the flock. He establishes a community of understanding and purpose between himself and his disciples after the likeness of his unity of will with the Father (compare 1:1, 18, 6:57, 15:9, 17:11, 21-23). He will bring into his flock those who are not within the fold of Judaism (compare 6:37, 11:52, 12:32). He means of his own free will to lay down his life, not in futile self-sacrifice, but in a victorious act of obedience to the Father’s command.

Not only is his devotion to the sheep such that he is willing to die for them while others flee from danger (verses 11-13, 17), but he knows them deeply – so deeply that in verse 15 an appropriate analogy for this knowledge is Jesus’ relationship to his Father. As Jesus is in the Father, so the disciple is in Christ (compare 14:20, 24). “The word ‘know’ (verse 14) in Greek relates to the idea of ‘seeing,’ with a view to grasping the nature of an object; whereas in the Hebrew thought ‘knowledge’ means ‘experiencing’ something. Therefore, knowledge of God means entering into a relationship with God, which is what Jesus does with us.”<sup>19</sup>

Jesus elaborates verses 17-18 on the theme of the Shepherd’s death (in verses 11 and 15) and makes two points:

(1) the Father’s love for the Son is linked with the Son’s death for the world. The mutual love of the Father and Son thus was seen in a deed of love for the world, in which the Father in love willed to save all and the Son in love freely gave his all.

(2) Jesus lays down his life in order to take it again. Here two thoughts coalesce: the unity of the death and resurrection of the Son for the salvation of the world, and the attribution of the resurrection to the Son.

Is the death of the shepherd something tragic – beyond his control? Not at all. His power enables him voluntarily to die and regain his life (verse 18). Elsewhere in the N.T. God raises up Jesus (Acts 2:24; Romans 4:24; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 11:19; I Peter 1:21). But in the book of John, the Father and the Son possess the same powers (verses 28-30). The Son controls the hour of death entirely (2:4, 7:6, 8, 8:20).

If we consider the characteristics of Jesus as spiritual shepherd, the following might be responses. Jesus provides leadership, he provides a life free from . . . , he provides “spiritual food” that will keep us “fit” and “healthy” (e.g., the “water of life.” and the “bread of life”), he Cares for us, he Is patient with our weaknesses, he Protects us FROM the darkness and the evil ones, he Protects us IN the darkness, he is faithful, caring, tender, intimate, knows us individually, and he makes us feel secure by giving us courage and knowing that he is there.

If the concept of shepherd as “leader,” as exemplified by Jesus as Good Shepherd, is applied to contemporary times, the characteristics of present day good shepherds might be the following: Contemporary leaders who are Good Shepherds care about those who work for them (or those who depend on them); they provide for and protect those whom they lead; they will stick out their neck for those whom they lead; they are patient with the weaknesses of those whom they lead; they have the best interests of (the classroom, company, family, etc.) at heart; they are free from self interest and greed; they make the work place healthy, peaceful, comfortable, safe; they know each person intimately and personally; they lead rather than “driving and pushing;” and they keep themselves abreast of opportunities for growth for themselves as well as for those whom they lead.

### *Teacher Helps*

This, the fourth of the “I Am” sayings of Jesus, has a concept that much of the world cannot identify with; if our students can identify with shepherding it will probably be the western style wherein there may be no shepherd at all, where a dog keeps the sheep in order, and if herding takes place it is from behind via an all-terrain vehicle or from above by a helicopter. Furthermore, the idea may be completely foreign to those who have lived in cities all their lives. Therefore, the concept of the “shepherd” may be a difficult one to get across. The “Set” will be very important for this purpose. The Lesson Summary contains a description of sheep as well as that of a shepherd. Much of the characteristics of the shepherd can be gleaned from the scripture passages.

The scripture is divided into two parts – Part I, Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14 were chosen in order to introduce students to the concept of the “shepherd.” From these verses, students should be able to glean the characteristics of a good shepherd before being introduced to Jesus as the Good Shepherd for their spiritual lives. Part II, John 10:1-18, will bring the idea of Jesus as Shepherd into their lives. It is suggested that you do the following in this sequence:

1. Have students participate in the “Set” (see below) which will instill in their minds the idea of “shepherd.”

2. Have them read Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14. Discuss with them in detail the characteristics of a shepherd. It is important that they understand the concept of “shepherd” thoroughly before moving on to the scripture and ensuing discussion of Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” for their lives. From the reading of the scripture, obtain from students the characteristics of a shepherd. Use the dry erase board (or chalkboard) to list these suggestions, listing them both in English and have the interpreter list them in the students’ native language. Keep this visual in front of them throughout the lesson, adding ideas as they come up.

3. Read and discuss John 10:1-18. The questions below are broken into short passages of a few verses each. It is better to deal with short passages and the ideas represented than to read the entire passage before dealing with the questions.

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from both *The New Living Translation* and from *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. In *The Message*, especially, there are idioms and other English expressions that will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms.

Concepts from the *New Living Translation* (Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14) that may give difficulties: shepherd, heavenly Father, Lord, meadows, rod, staff, feast, anointing, house of the Lord, rejoice, renews, pursue, unfailing love, dark valley of death.

Concepts from *The Message*: sheep pen, sheep rustler, explicit, pasture, eternal life, sacrifice (verb), hired man, ravaged, flock, life, shepherd, sheep stealers, thief, Father, explicit.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with. They are all from the Book of John and set in italics in the scripture leaflet.

(verse 1) set this before you as plainly as I can	(verse 13) don't matter
(verse 1) up to no good	(verse 15) in the same way
(verse 9) goes through me	(verse 15) put . . . before
(verse 12) runs for it	(verse 18) my own free will
(verse 13) in it for the money	(verse 18) have the right

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

Using a picture of a flock of sheep, ask students what they know about sheep – for example, what are the characteristics of sheep, etc. Then ask students who takes care of sheep and what this person is called. If students are not well acquainted with sheep and shepherds, this may not be carried very far, but the discussion is intended to fix in their minds the idea of “sheep” and “shepherd.”

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Explore/discuss the role of the shepherd.
2. Explore the nature/characteristics of sheep.
3. Explore how the sheep are dependent on the shepherd.
4. Discuss the shepherd as leader of the sheep.
5. Discuss characteristics of present day good shepherds/“leaders.”
6. Learn that they are dependent on Jesus just as the sheep are dependent on the shepherd.
7. Learn the spiritual role of Jesus as the “gate” to the sheepfold.
8. Explore the characteristics of Jesus as spiritual shepherd.
9. explore how God fits into this scenario of Leader.

## *Scripture Readings*

Psalm 23; Matthew 18:12-14; John 10:1-18

### *Questions*

Part I --

Psalm 23

1. What is a “shepherd?” (vs 1)
2. Who is “the Lord?” (vs 1)
3. From these verses, what are the things that sheep need? (List these in English on a dry erase board; for lower level students, the interpreter should also list them in the students’ native language. Go on with the following question if needed.)
4. What does “green meadows” imply? (vs 2)
5. . . . “peaceful streams?” (vs 2)
6. . . . “right paths?” (vs 3)
7. . . . “the dark valley of death?” (vs 4)
8. . . . “close beside me?” (vs 4)
9. . . . “a feast?” (vs 5)
10. . . . “anointing my head with oil?” (vs 5)
11. . . . “cup overflows?” (vs 5)
12. . . . “your goodness and unfailing love?” (vs 6)
13. What is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep?

Matthew 18:12-14

14. What are the characteristics of the shepherd portrayed here?
15. What does this say about the value of the one sheep?
16. What does this say about the value of the shepherd?

Part II --

John 10:1-18

verses 1-6

17. Compare and contrast the sheep rustler and the shepherd? (vs 1 and 2)
18. What is the outcome for the sheep? Why?

verses 7-10

19. How does this compare with the shepherd in Matthew 18:12-14 and in Psalm 23?
20. What is the characteristic of the shepherd in verses 9 and 10?
21. Who do you think IS this shepherd? (vs 7)

verses 11-18

22. What are the characteristics of the Good Shepherd? (vs 9, 10, 11)
23. What is the basis for Jesus’ claim to be the Good Shepherd? (vs 14, 18)
24. How are WE like sheep?
25. What are the characteristics of the “bad” shepherd? (vs 8, 12, 13, 10, 12, 13)
26. How can we recognize the bad shepherd from the good shepherd? (vs 12,13)
27. What is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep? (vs 3, 4, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17)
28. What does it mean that Jesus will lay down his life for the sheep? (vs 17, 18)
29. In verse 14, how is this like (or unlike) a pet that we have at home?
30. Why is it important is it that we have a Good Shepherd in our lives?
31. Who is this “good shepherd?”

32. How do we become one of Jesus' "sheep?"
33. What should be the characteristics of today's leaders if we consider the Good Shepherd as a leader and the characteristics of the Good Shepherd? (Write these on the board.)
34. Do you know someone who is a leader and bears these characteristics? Tell us about this person and why you say "yes."

*Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is "the Good Shepherd?"
3. How can one trust in "Jesus, the Good Shepherd?"
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is "the Good Shepherd?"

## Lesson 5 THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

### *Primary Thought*

The greatest gift of God's saving sovereignty is *life eternal* under that sovereignty and entry upon it through *resurrection*. In this present life Christ has been for untold multitudes "the resurrection and the life." They are resurrected (delivered from sin) to new life in Christ: through him and in him the spiritually dead are raised up out of the sleep of death, become alive, grow sensitive, active, purposeful, endowed with powers they did not have before – they have a new lease on life! Jesus has given us through his resurrection a new Life during life, so that we may lead this new life in the practice of the spirit of love, and eternal Life after life.

### *Lesson Summary*

The terms **resurrection** and **resuscitation** are often used as synonyms, probably because the idea of "resurrection" as being "raised from the dead" is not a very meaningful definition for our current rationalistic world. The two words, however, differ significantly.

*Resuscitate* (the verb) means to revive from an unconscious state or apparent death; revive, restore. Much of the research on dying would suggest *resuscitate* rather than *resurrect*. To *resurrect* (verb) means to rise or raise from the dead. The word comes from the *Latin*, *re*, again + *surrect*, to rise). *Resurrection*, the noun, is used to mean rising (or being raised) from the dead, as in Christ's being raised from the dead.

*Resurrect* can also mean to revive the practice, use, or memory of something. revive after disuse, inactivity, or decay. This usage of *resurrect* suggests *resuscitate*.

Figuratively, Jesus, known as the Resurrection, is the author of Resurrection (John 11:25). The word also refers to the future resurrection (John 11:24). Those who are Christians, during their lifetime, are resurrected from sin to a newness of life – literally, to a new Life during life.

In its simplest sense, **life** refers to existence, as opposed to non-existence, or death. The Bible does not divide human life into physical, intellectual, and spiritual compartments, as we tend to do, but views it as a unity, the totality of activities and experiences of an individual or a community. To be sure, we read of soul and spirit, but these are to be understood as the principle of life and personal identity, not unlike that in animals. When the soul or spirit "leave," a man cannot be said to continue to exist in a disembodied form. Thus, the soul and spirit, as well as the body, are mortal and the present life is life unto death. The source of all life is God, whose very nature is life. To speak of him as the "living God" is to distinguish him from dumb idols which have no life of their own and to acknowledge that he not only gives life to all things but that he is providentially active in guiding and sustaining his creation.

In the Old Testament life was thought of as the gift of God, who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7; Job 12:9-10; Psalm 36:6; Acts 17:28; compare Psalm 36:9). Life was maintained by God (Psalm 27:1, 66:9), and a long life was a satisfying gift (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:33; Psalm 91:16; Proverbs 3:1-

2). Life was full of uncertainty (Job 14:1-2; Psalm 39:5-6, 89:47-48, 90:3-6; Isaiah. 38:12; James 4:13-15; I Peter 1:24); it was often like a shadow (I Chronicles 29:15); it passed swifter than a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6) or hurrying messengers (Job 9:25). There were grave concerns about life (Job 7:1; Ecclesiastes 6:12). The early Hebrews believed that the life of the flesh was in the blood (Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23). This identification of life with blood was the basis of the religious rites in which blood, considered sacred because it belonged to God, was sacrificed on the altar for atonement (Leviticus 17:14).

There is a life which is higher than the mere physical existence, a life nourished on obedience to the word of God. In the New Testament the word "life" usually had this meaning – a spiritual meaning (Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 3:3). Jesus came that we might possess this life which is life in its truest sense. He said that life was more than meat (Matthew 6:25), and that it was of more value than the whole world (Matthew 16:26). He regarded each human life as precious, and devoted much of his ministry to healing maimed lives, yet he made light of too much concern for the physical aspects of life (Matthew 6:25). In the Fourth Gospel "life" is a major word used for the real or spiritual life lived in fellowship with God, now and hereafter. This life was given by God (John 5:26), and was in Christ: "in him was life" (1:4); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6). Christ came to give this life to those who believe in him (20:31). To pass "out of death into life" (5:24), out of the sin and evil of man's unregenerate nature into eternal life, one must be "born again" (3:3). Eternal life (John 3:14-16, 6:27, 54, 10:28, 17:2-3; Romans 2:6-7, 6:23; I John 1:2, 2:25; Jude 21; Revelation 2:7, 21:6) can begin now through faith in Christ (3:36, 17:3) and continue throughout the future. The New Testament Epistles teach that "he that has the Son has life" (I John 5:12). To obey Christ's commandment of love is to pass "from death to life" (I John 3:14). "The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6) and results in the right mode of living (Luke 1:75; Romans 12:18, 14:7-8; Philippians 1:21-22).

As a consequence of Jesus' redemptive activity, our lives are transformed by faith from lives of rebellion and pride to lives of grateful surrender to his will. In contrast to natural human life, which ends at death, this new, true life is indestructible. In fact, the blessings we now enjoy as reborn men are but an installment of the life which is to come. The continuation of this new life is set forth not in terms of the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul, but in terms of the doctrine of personal bodily resurrection, based on the resurrection of Jesus. We do not know the nature of that "spiritual body" which shall live forever in the presence of God, but we are assured that our heavenly existence will be fully personal.

### **John 11:1-44**

John has chosen the miracle story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead because it epitomizes Christ's mission and fate. With superb dramatic form the Lazarus story sums up Jesus' career. It is the ultimate sign. Jesus, the source of life (10:28; 11:25) now gives life to one man. But even this ultimate revelation is condemned, leaving Jesus judged as worthy of death (11:50).

The village of Bethany, two miles east of Jerusalem, was the regular residence of Jesus while he was in Judea (compare Mark 11:11, 14:3). While Lazarus is not known in the other Gospels, Luke does refer to the sisters Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). The profile of the two sisters in Luke (the compulsive Martha, the contemplative Mary) is paralleled in John (verse 20, 12:2-3).

As the chapter opens, Jesus was in the Jordan Valley (John 10:40); his whereabouts must

have been known to his friends since Mary and Martha are able to contact him. Jesus' response to Lazarus' illness (verse 4) is similar to his explanation of the blind man's infirmity in 9:3. Sometimes crises serve divine purposes so that God may be glorified when they are resolved.

That Jesus does not respond at once (verse 6) in no way disparages his love for the family (verse 5). There are problems with a return to the mountains of Judea which Jesus and the disciples fully realize (verses 8, 16). Threats of death have been known for over a year (5:18, 7:25), and some have even tried to kill Jesus already (8:59, 10:31). But the Lord feels the pressing need to depart. His time is short and, just as with the hours of daylight for the traveler, each hour must be used to maximum benefit (9:10; compare 12:35-36). The spiritual light now present is even more valuable than the hours of daylight. Jesus is the light of the world (8:12), and while he is present and able to dispel darkness his work must progress. A paradoxical exchange is thus at hand; Jesus chooses to risk death in Judea in order to save a man from death. He indeed is the good shepherd who is willing to lay down his own life for the life of his sheep (10:15). The task at hand is the revival of Lazarus who is now dead (verses 11-14); the disciples again misunderstand.

It is a tribute to John's interest in historical detail that he mentions how long Lazarus has been dead (verses 17, 39) and the exact location of Bethany. "Because the ancient world did not have precise methods to monitor death or coma, most rabbis held theories about the impossibility of resuscitation after three or four days of death."<sup>20</sup> This makes one point clear: Lazarus was fully dead by anyone's standards and the miracle (verses 43-44) involved resurrection, not resuscitation.

When Jesus enters the hill country it is clear that the customary mourning is under way (verses 18-19). Although Martha is the first to greet Jesus on the road (verse 20), Mary will come later (verses 31-32); here we have another opportunity to compare the two sisters. Both women express the same words, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (verses 21, 32). Jesus is the Lord of life (verses 25-26), but Martha despairs. Her hope was in a healing miracle because resurrection was so far beyond her comprehension (verses 26-27). While Mary is overcome (verse 35, compare 12:3; Luke 10:39), Martha pursues a conversation. Martha's "even now" in verse 22 implies faith that even now in death Jesus may be able to do something. Jesus told Martha "Your brother will rise again" (verse 23). She responded that she knew that he would rise again in the resurrection at the last day (verse 24). But is her only comfort in the future resurrection? The ironic misunderstanding (verses 23-24) allows Jesus to elevate his meaning. These words evoked from Jesus the supreme announcement of his many "I Am" sayings -- "I am the resurrection and the life" (verse 25). Christ gave to Martha the august saying which has been recited at innumerable funerals to poor souls stunned and agonized, lowering their dead ones into the dull, senseless earth; and hearing it, their heads went up, and their hearts rallied. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (verses 25-26). The resurrection life is a present experience. Eternal life begins now for the person who trusts in Christ (verses 25-26). The horror of death is gone (verse 26; compare 3:16-21). When pressed Martha cannot affirm Jesus' powers to this extent (verse 26b). Jesus is her Lord; knowledge of his powerful abilities will come with time.

One unique feature of this story is the way in which Jesus expresses his emotions over Lazarus' death (verses 33, 35, 38; compare Luke 19:41). He does not approach suffering and death dispassionately. He feels the pain. He knows tragedy and has feelings. In this case these emerge out of his love for his friend Lazarus (verse 36).

Lazarus was buried in a typical first-century stone tomb. (Compare Jesus' tomb, 20:1; Mark 15:36). Since these were designed for multiple burials there would be no difficulty reopening it (verse 39) if sufficient help was available. We are given a confirmation that Lazarus is dead (verse 39), this time in graphic terms. But this does not deter Jesus. As his feeding miracle demonstrated that he was the bread of life (6:35), and as his healing of the blind illustrated that he was the light of the world (8:12), so now he will prove that he is the resurrection and the life (verse 25).

All that Jesus does has one aim: to promote the glory of God (verse 40). His audible prayer heard here (verses 41-42, compare 12:27) serves this purpose. Jesus is no miracle worker with simple powerful feats at his disposal. His deeds are signs which promote belief. They reveal something of God's presence at work and they illumine Christ as God's divine agent.

Burial cloths further confirm Lazarus' death (verse 44) and provide another parallel to Jesus' burial (19:39-40, 20:5-7). The unusual reference to a face cloth appears only here and in 20:7. One interesting difference, however, is that Lazarus requires aid with his bindings – Jesus' grave clothes are noticeably left behind.

Jesus' assertions -- "I am the Resurrection" and "I am the Life" -- indicate that the greatest gift of God's saving sovereignty is precisely *life eternal* under that sovereignty and entry upon it through *resurrection*. The power to initiate it resides in Jesus ("the Resurrection") and to grant it in its fullness ("the Life"). The plain meaning of the first clause in verse 25 is a promise of the future resurrection of the believer through Christ the Resurrection. The second clause advances on this: "whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." The force of "lives (verb)" is that of a living person who believes, so defined in the light of "even though he dies." Verse 26 appears to affirm that *everyone who has the life of the kingdom of God* and believes on Jesus shall never die.

John 3:15-16, 36 bears this out: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God were directed to the salvation of all humanity. This salvation is found in the Son (verse 15), whose coming stemmed from love, and through faith's acknowledgment of the Revealer and his redemption (verse 16), the coming of the Son for *salvation*.

Here alone in John's Gospel (verse 16) the love of God for the rebellious world is stated to be the reason for the incarnation and death of Christ. Salvation originates in the love of God for a disobedient world, it centers in the giving of the only Son to and for the world, and its end is that people may not be lost but live under the saving sovereignty of God. The giving of the only Son clearly embraces both incarnation and vicarious death; it is the entire mission of the Son that is in view.

Paul in Romans 6:23 uses the analogy of being a "slave" – first to sin and then to God – to illustrate how one is resurrected (delivered from sin) to new life in Christ: one has to work for sin and receives death as its wages, whereas God gives eternal life as a gift, made possible in Christ Jesus our Lord, for it is through his work that the believer is justified as a sheer gift of grace.

Even in this present life Christ has been for untold multitudes "the resurrection and the life." Through him and in him dead souls can and do rise up out of the sleep of death, become alive, grow sensitive, active, purposeful, endowed with powers they did not have before. That is a claim made confidently everywhere in the New Testament. Paul says to the Ephesians, "And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even

when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5). In that sense it has been proved beyond contradiction that “he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” The only key to the mystery is Christ. When men believe in him, this happens, without him, it does not.

A close parallel to the thought of the above is in II Corinthians 5:14-15: “One man died on behalf of all, hence all died; and he died for all in order that men should no longer live to themselves . . . .” The NLT renders the latter clause, “. . . will no longer live *to please themselves.*” According to Paul, these men are the spiritually dead who have come to life through the risen Christ, “new creatures living in the new creation” (verse 17). Paul is saying that Jesus has given us new life through his resurrection so that we may lead this new life in the practice of the spirit of love. Paul’s understanding is identical with that in John 11:25 and 5:24 -- the thought that Jesus provides resurrection not only in terms of eternity but in the present age. The revelation to Martha thus is an assurance of resurrection *to* the kingdom of God in its consummation through him who is the Resurrection, and of life *in* the kingdom of God in the present time through him who is the Life. Both aspects of the “life” are rooted in the understanding of Jesus as the Mediator of the divine sovereignty in the present and in the future, whose mediatorial work in earthly ministry reaches its climax in his death and exaltation to the throne of God, whereby the sovereignty of God is established in redemptive power for all humanity and the Spirit of the age to come is released for the world.

### *Teacher Helps*

The meaning within this lesson is two-fold – 1) through Jesus, as the Resurrection, we are given Life during life, a new lease on life so to speak (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5); 2) life eternal after physical death. Normally we think of “resurrection” in the respect of providing eternal life for us, and that is true; however, there is a here-and-now aspect that is of equal importance. Be sure that both of these are covered significantly in the lesson.

The scripture readings are rather lengthy for this lesson. There may be some difficulty in reading all the scripture and dealing with the questions. All the scripture is important in that it all “hangs” together relative to the meaning. Therefore, it may be necessary to cut back on some of the questions and discussion. The more important of the objective questions are printed in *italics*. That still leaves a good many questions. However much you are able to juggle questions and discussion, it is *crucially important*, however, that the subjective questions be covered.

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from both *The New Living Translation* and *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. In *The Message*, especially, there are idioms and other expressions in English that students will need to understand in order to fully comprehend the scripture. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expression.

Concepts from *The New Living Translation* (John 11:1-44) that may give difficulties: for the glory of God, resurrection, resurrect (v.), console (v.), life, eternal life, Messiah, Son of God, dead, mourners, weep, wailing, indignation, troubled, grave clothes, head cloth, resurrection day, pay their respects, God’s glory, perish, the Teacher, hastily, Father, out loud.

Concepts from *The Message* (John 5:24, 3:15-16, 36, John 20:31, and Ephesians 2:1, 4-5): beam of light, the world's light, life, light, darkness, Pharisees, narrowness of experience, largeness of experience, the Father, God's law, acquitted, God-light, streamed, addicted, God-work, purge, Son of God, illusion, urgent, Messiah, Son of God, align, outsider, mired, stagnant, immense, mercy, incredible, embraced, sin-dead, eternal life, alive, pension, real life.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with. They are from Psalm 119, the Gospel of John scripture passages, and from I John.

- (John 5, vs 24) take a giant step
- (John 3, vs 15) look up to him
- (John 3, vs 36) to get in on everything
- (John 3, vs 36) be in the dark

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

Ask students what they know about being raised from the dead. Ask them if they have ever known of anyone being raised from the dead? What would happen if someone announced to the world that so-and-so, who was known to be dead, was now alive? Ask students how they would feel if someone told them that this person had been raised from the dead? What would they tell the messenger? What would have to happen before they would believe it? Would they then believe it? Why or why not? What if they saw it take place? What would be the effect/benefit on the person whose life was restored?

### *Scripture Readings*

John 11:1, 3-7, 11-15, 17-44; John 5:24; John 3:15b-16, 36; John 20:31; Ephesians 2:1, 4-5; Romans 6:23

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Explore the meaning of "life" – physically and figuratively.
2. Explore what it means to be "alive."
3. Explore the meaning of "resurrection" and "resurrect."
4. Learn that Jesus is the spiritual resurrection and the life.
5. Learn that it is through accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior that one is resurrected into new life.
6. Learn that "resurrection" in their present lives brings about a new life, a new perspective.
7. Learn that spiritual resurrection is a here-and-now result of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.
8. Learn that resurrection is a future thing – eternal life – which comes as a result of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.
9. Explore how a crisis serves a purpose in real life.
10. Learn how a crisis served a divine purpose.

## Questions

John 11:1-44

verses 1-7

1. Why didn't Jesus go immediately to Lazarus? (vs 4, 5, 6)
2. *How could Lazarus' sickness be "to the glory of God?"* (vs 4)
3. *How could Jesus receive glory from Lazarus' sickness?* (vs 4)

verses 11-15

4. What do you think it meant that Jesus would "wake him up?" (vs 11)
5. *How would this help the disciples to believe in Jesus?* (vs 14)

verses 17-24

6. What was the situation when Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany? (vs 17)
7. Why do you think Mary and Martha sent for Jesus in the first place?
8. *Put yourself in the sisters' place -- how would you have felt if you had sent word to a dear friend regarding your brother's illness and that friend had delayed arriving?*
9. How did Martha feel about Jesus' delaying? (vs 21)
10. *What did Jesus tell her (Martha)?* (vs 23)
11. *What was Martha's understanding (or misunderstanding) of Jesus' response in verse 23?* (vs 24)

verses 25-29

12. *How could Jesus be "the resurrection and the life?"* (vs 25)
13. *What is required for us to obtain this resurrection and the resulting life?* (vs 26)
14. *What is the result of resurrection in one's life?* (vs 26)

verses 30-44

15. *What was Martha's and Mary's expectation of Jesus?* (vs 21, 32)
16. What was Mary's response to Jesus' coming? (vs 32)
17. Why was Jesus "moved with indignation" and "deeply troubled?" (vs 33)
18. Why did Jesus weep? (vs 35)
19. What was the attitude of the bystanders? (vs 36, 37)
20. *Compare Martha's response in verse 39 with that in verse 24 – what does this tell you about Martha's understanding of Jesus' response in verse 23?*
21. *How would these people see "God's glory" and what did their believing have to do with it?* (vs 40)
22. Why did Jesus pray before raising Lazarus? Why aloud? (vs 41)
23. What was the likely result of the crowd of mourners seeing Lazarus raised from the dead? (vs 44)
24. *How would you have felt if you had witnessed such a thing?*

John 5:24

25. What are the two steps required for receiving this "life?"

John 3:15b-16, 36

26. *What is required to gain real life?* (vs 15)
27. *What was the result of God's great love for the world?* (vs 16)
28. *What did God give to the world? Why?* (vs 16)
29. *What is the result of remaining "in the dark?"* (vs 36)
30. *What is the result of "looking up to" Jesus and being "trusting and expectant?"*

(vs 36)

John 20:31

31. *Who is Jesus?*

32. *What is the result of believing in Him?*

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5; Romans 6:23

33. *What is the result of living in sin? Of receiving God's gift?*

34. *What will this gift mean for our present life?*

### *Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is "the Resurrection and the Life?"
3. How can one experience this resurrection?
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is "the Resurrection and the Life?"

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>ECB, p. 863

## Lesson 6 WAY, TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

### *Primary Thought*

Jesus is the Way because he is the Truth and because the Life of God resides in him. Christ is the Life, the Light of men, who enlightens every one. All truth is God's truth, as all life is God's life; but God's truth and God's life are incarnate in Jesus. It is through Christ that men attain to that life in and with God, to that communion and closeness of fellowship with him which alone enables them to know him better and better, ever more surely, and as he actually is. "I am the Way" accordingly depicts Jesus in his mediatorial role between God and man; as the Truth he is the mediator of the revelation of God, and as the Life he is the mediator of the salvation which is life in God. The character of Christ's relationship with God at this level may be ours. The provision of Jesus that will bring about this relationship is declared to be the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. Christians alone can enjoy the spirit's aid. The Spirit will instruct, defend, empower, and guide the disciple within the world.

### *Lesson Summary*

The word **way** can be defined variously depending on its usage. Literally it means a road, highway, path, or any customary course of travel; an unimpeded opportunity or space to physically advance. "Way" can be thought of as a specified direction, either literally or figuratively. It can have the idea of onward movement toward a destination; advance; proceeding step by step

We find "way" used also as in *gate*; a gate implies going from something into something, "by way of." But the idea of gate can be used figuratively as from death into life.

The word "way" is also used as in *plan/message, course of human conduct*; as in *life style*.

It can mean, figuratively, impetus, progress (driving force)

In the Bible, **way** is a word used to translate various Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture: (1) for *a path, a road* (Genesis 18:16), *a route* (Exodus 13:17, "way of the land of the Philistines;" I Samuel 6:6, 12; Matthew 2:12); (2) for *a human life* ("on my way" Genesis 24:56), *a manner of living* (II Chronicles 20:32; Proverbs 2:8); (3) as a figure of speech, for "*the way everlasting*" to reach God (I Kings 2:2, 6; Job 17:9); "*the way of the Lord*" (Isaiah 40:3) in contrast to "*the evil way*" (Jonah 3:8; Psalm 139:24); *God's plan for a righteous universe* (Genesis 18:19; John 1:23) frequently expressed in the Old Testament and the New Testament (Acts 18:25-26).

In the New Testament Jesus spoke of himself as being not only "the way" but the goal to which that way led: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This saying may have given rise to the earliest name by which the Christians were known – people of "the Way" (compare Acts 9:2, 18:25, 26, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22). That the followers of Jesus should be identified by this term is entirely fitting, since the Master referred to himself as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Hence his followers were known as "people of the way." The

Greek world knew various philosophical ways of life, but it was still waiting for something better than a new way of conduct; it looked expectantly for “the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17), “a new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20) of which Isaiah’s highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8-10) had given a foreglimpse.

**Truth** is the sum total of the reality of the universe of God, and the correspondence of the known facts of existence with that reality. “At the core of Judaism is the conviction that whatever is true is also good and beautiful. Judaism, with an often pragmatic emphasis, insisted that the moral tenets of its teaching were valid because they benefited human society.”<sup>21</sup> Truth-telling was emphasized for example, in the Wisdom Literature (Proverbs 12:19, 17:20). Truth to one’s neighbor and truthful justice toward fellow men were the conditions of true community (Zechariah 8:16). In Zechariah 8:16 the Lord of hosts declared: “These are the things you are to do. Speak the truth to each other and render true and sound judgments in your courts.” “By such prophetic insights Judaism advanced far beyond the utilitarian cultivation of its ethics (be good and truthful because it pays),<sup>22</sup> declaring that truth was the command of God, to love Whom, and to obey Whom, was the primary concern of the righteous man (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Thus natural morality mounted to the heights of an ethical religion. The direction of growth was Godward, even if its roots remained in realistic earth.<sup>23</sup>

In the Old Testament truth is “stability,” “reliability,” (in contrast to “capriciousness”) -- that which can be trusted. The essential idea of truth is not conformity to some external standard but faithfulness or reliability. The Old Testament praises truthfulness and condemns all forms of falsifying (Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 6:17, 8:7, 12:17, 19, 22, 19:5, 9, 30:8). On the most simple level, the Bible uses truth in the general “factual” sense. Truth may designate the actual fact over against appearance, pretence, or assertion. The concept of truth advances from primitive standards of veracity recorded in Genesis 12:11-13, to the point where God is not only a “God of truth” (Isaiah 65:16), One Whose “paths are mercy and truth” (Psalm 25:10), One Whose every work is “done in truth” (Psalm 33:4), One Who desires “truth in the inward parts” of all His creatures (51:6), Whose truth is “a shield and buckler” (91:4), but a Person in whom reality tallies absolutely with truth. In brief, God is Truth.

In the case of God, of course, faithfulness or reliability is not measured by any external standard. God is the standard. God’s truth (faithfulness or reliability) is the truth that is basic for all other truth (Deuteronomy 7:9-10). He maintains covenant and steadfast love. When God is spoken of as the true God or the God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4; II Chronicles 15:3; Isaiah 65:16; Jeremiah 10:10) the idea is that God is reliable. God “keeps truth forever” (Psalm 146:6, NKJV).

The “truth” of God’s commandments grows out of the act of God and His truth (faithfulness or reliability). The Word of God and His Law are not true simply in the sense that they are in accord with science, human nature, or some abstract ethical principle. The great confession given by Ezra after the Jews returned from bondage in Babylon emphasized God’s nature as truth (faithfulness) in what He did in creation, election, redemption, and the giving of the law: “You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and you made known your holy Sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses” (Nehemiah 9:13-14, NRSV).

In the New Testament, divine truth or the faith and practice of the true gospel is called “truth” either as being true in itself and derived from the true God, or as declaring the existence

and will of the one true God, in opposition to the worship of false idols. Hence divine truth, gospel truth, as opposed to heathen and Jewish fables (John 1:14, 17; “you shall know the truth,” and it shall bring freedom, John 8:32; everyone who loves divine truth, John 16:13, 18:37; Romans 1:18, 25). Therefore, the Lord Jesus is called the truth, meaning truth incarnate, the teacher of divine truth (John 14:6). “The Spirit of truth” means one who declares or reveals divine truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). “They that have known the truth” means those who know the truth, are disciples of Christ (I Timothy 4:3).

In I and II Timothy, truth is correct knowledge or doctrine. Certain individuals had departed from proper doctrine. Some “forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (I Timothy 4:3, NRSV). Some have “swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place” (II Timothy 2:18, NRSV).

The New Testament also praises truthfulness and condemns all forms of falsifying (I Corinthians 5:8; Ephesians 4:15, 25; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:9; I Timothy 4:2; James 3:14; II Peter 2:2; I John 2:21; Revelation 22:15). When Jesus asked, “Who touched my garments?” the woman who had been healed through touching Jesus’ garments “fell down before him, and told him all the truth” (Mark 5:32-33).

The most important uses of the word “truth” are to be found in the writings of Paul and John, although other writers find various aspects important. Paul’s acceptance of the Old Testament concept of truth is seen in Romans 3:1-7. The truth of God is described in the words “faithfulness” (3:3) and “righteousness” (3:5). In 3:4, Paul declared, “Let God be proved true, and every man a liar” (NRSV).

In discussions of the relationship of Christians to truth (I Timothy 3:15; II John 1-4; III John 1, 8), we find the same Old Testament emphasis: “Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:8, NRSV). Truth and sincerity are associated (John 8:40, 45, 46), and both are opposed to malice and evil. Truth is not simply a matter of propositional accuracy. Paul and others spoke of truth as something that is to be obeyed (Romans 1:18, 25, 2:8; II Corinthians 13:8; Galatians 5:7; II Thessalonians 2:10, 12, 13; James 3:14; Titus 1:14; Hebrews 10:26; I Peter 1:22); the truth of God as being revealed not so much in the law as in Christ (Romans 15:8-9; I Timothy 2:4, 7; James 1:18; II Peter 1:12; I John 2:20-21); God’s kingdom has become manifested (Romans 1:1-6, 16:25-26; II Corinthians 4:6). The truth and the gospel are related in the phrase “the truth of the gospel” (John 17:17; II Corinthians 4:2; Galatians 2:5, 14; II Timothy 2:25). One hears and believes the truth and is in Christ (Ephesians 1:13).

In the New Testament truth is represented, especially in John, in the life and personality of Jesus, who, in spite of his silence in the face of Pilate’s question, “What is truth?” (John 18:38a), was the incarnation of truth. He was not only “full of grace and truth,” but he *was* “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He was at one and the same time the goal of man’s perfection (“the life”), the path by which it was attained (“the way”), and the reality (“the truth”) which nourished that life. To communicate truth to his followers was his purpose; they were to know the truth, and the truth would make them free (8:32). Jesus revealed that the ideal atmosphere of the worship of God, the Spirit, was to be “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Lying and the devil were one (John 8:44). The “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13) was the Comforter, whom Jesus promised to send to his disciples after his death. But the world would not receive the Spirit of truth, because the world neither saw nor knew him, as Christ had taught his followers to know

him. Christ called himself the “true vine,” and his faithful the “branches” of that true vine (John 15:1, 5). When the Spirit of Truth came he would lead the faithful into the totality of truth: “he will show you things to come” (John 16:13).

## **John 14:1-17, 25-31**

### *Teacher Helps*

Of equal importance in this lesson are the three concepts – Way, Truth, Life. Often we give more emphasis on “the way” than we do the other two. But just what does each mean? The “set” is aimed at all three. Be sure to cover all three concepts as the class proceeds with the lesson. Refer to Lesson 5 for a discussion of the **Life**.

The scripture reading is divided into two parts: Part I, The two passages – Matthew 7:13-14 and Isaiah 35:8-10; and Part II, John 14:1-15, John 8:31-32, and John 14:16-17, 26-27.

It is suggested that you do the following and in this sequence.

1. Have students participate in the “Set.” It has a very important function in the lesson since it is from the “Set” students realize how important it is to be able to depend on someone to give them “true” knowledge and direction, what the result of this “truth” is, and how their life, perhaps, can depend on it.

2. Read and discuss the passages in Part I. They are intended to illustrate that there are two ways that we can take in life and that the better one provides a fuller life. If you will look up Matthew 7:13-14 in the NIV you will discover that these are the verses about the “narrow gate” and the “wide gate.”

3. Read and discuss the passages in Part II. This consists of the remainder of the scripture and is the substantive portion of the lesson. The passage from I John focuses on the “truth,” what it is, and what the result is. John 8:31-32 is inserted about two-thirds of the way into the John 14 passage for a purpose – it sums up the result of what was read just preceding these two verses, John 14:15. The latter verses of John 14 discuss the sending of the Holy Spirit and all that He brings. A good way to sum up the Part II message is that our Goal is to God: the Way is the gate that leads in, the Truth is the message that instructs relative to the way, and result is “Life.”

The scripture selections for this lesson are taken from both *The New Living Translation* and from *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with, an especially large number in *The Message*. In *The Message*, especially, there are idioms and other English expressions that will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expression.

Concepts from *The New Living Translation* (John 14:1-15, 16-17, 26-27) that may give difficulties: troubled, way, truth, life, the Father, works, counselor.

Concepts from *The Message* (Matthew 7:13-14, Isaiah 35:8-10, John 8:31-32): road, truth, life, Holy Spirit, short cuts, surefire, easy going, way, vigorous, Holy Road, exclusively, rebellious, redeemed, unfading, ransomed, halos, encircling, scurry, fools, rude, disciples, truth.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with. They are from Matthew 7:13-14, Isaiah 35:8-10, and John

8:31-32. They are shown in italics in the scripture pamphlet.

(Matthew 7, vs 13) market is flooded

(Matthew 7, vs 13) don't fall for that stuff!

(John 8, vs 31) stick with . . .

(John 8, vs 31) living out . . .

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

If you wanted to go somewhere you had never been before, what would you do? (possible responses – study a map; ask someone how to get there) Suppose someone gave you wrong directions? Did you ever get lost when you were trying to go somewhere? (Yes, tell us about it). Did someone ever give you wrong directions for going somewhere? (Yes – tell us about it. How did you feel about that?)

Suppose that person didn't really know how to get there but gave you directions that he "thought" were correct but were not correct (guessed at it)? Or suppose someone gave you "wrong" directions on purpose?! How would you feel about that person?

What would be the "true" way? What would be the result of following the "true" way (desired destination – life).

### *Scripture Readings*

Matthew 7:13-14; Isaiah 35:8-10; John 14:1-15; John 8:31-32; John 14:16-17, 26-27

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Explore the concept of "way" in their lives.
2. Explore the concept of "truth."
3. Explore the concept of "life."
4. Learn that Jesus is the "gate" from death to life.
5. Learn that Jesus is the "road" that leads to and through this gate.
6. Learn that union with Christ is the one way to God.
7. Learn that Jesus is the truth -- the message of salvation, the ultimate truth for life.
8. Explore what Jesus -- as the Way, Truth, and Life -- provides for the lives of human beings.
9. Learn that Jesus provides Life that leads to eternal life.
10. Learn that they must reach out for the Life that is the gift of God and accept it on faith.
11. Learn that God provides the Holy Spirit to be a teacher and reminder of the "way" to salvation (instructs, defends, empowers, guides, convicts, convinces, converts).
12. Learn that a transformed life is the result of a life nourished on obedience to the Word of God as represented by Jesus.

### *Questions*

Part I --

Matthew 7:13-14 and Isaiah 35:8-10

1. What are the two ways identified for us to reach God?

2. What are the characteristics of the world's "way" to life – God's way?
3. What are the characteristics of the road upon which God's people walk?
4. Comparing Matthew 7:13-14 with Isaiah 3:8-10, which seems the better way?

Part II --

John 14:1-15

verses 1-5

5. What does Jesus give as the reason for trusting him? (vs 1) How do you know that?
6. What is this "way" that Thomas is talking about in verse 5?

verses 6-11

7. What did Jesus say to Thomas? (vs 6)
8. And what does that have to do with God? (vs 6b)
9. What is Phillip's understanding (misunderstanding) of what Jesus said? (vs 8)
10. Jesus has pointed out for the third time the answer to Phillip's question (verses 1, 7, and now 9) – what is it?
11. So, what is the relationship between Jesus and God? (vs 10-11)
12. And on what basis are the disciples to "believe?" (vs 11)

verses 12-15

13. What is the benefit of believing in Jesus? (vs 13)
14. What is his last admonition? (vs 15)

John 8:31-32

15. What is the benefit of the "truth" in Jesus?
16. What is this "truth?"

John 14:16-17, 26-27

verses 16-17

17. Who will God send to be with us?

verses 26-27

18. What will the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, provide?
19. How is this related to Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

*Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, the Life?"
3. What is the result of Jesus being "the Way, the Truth, the Life?"
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, the Life?"

## Lesson 7 THE VINE

### *Primary Thought*

Continued dependence upon Christ is the condition not only for fruitful service, but even for continued life. He knows that without him we could do, not something fairly good though insufficient, but just nothing at all. It is the loving nurture of God that causes us to flourish and glorify him. We acquire confidence in Jesus' love for us because it is modeled on God's love for him. Christ's legacy to his people includes peace, fullness of joy, and his own joy at that. Remaining in Jesus' love means rejoicing in its reality, depending on its support, doing nothing to grieve it, but on the contrary engaging in that which delights Him. It connotes continuing to live in association or in union with him.

### *Lesson Summary*

A **vine** is a slender-stemmed plant that trails or climbs by means of tendrils clasping a support. In the Old Testament several kinds of vines are mentioned, but the Biblical vine *par excellence* is the grape.

From the earliest known times, Palestine was a vine-growing region, as indicated by numerous wine-presses found in and around early centers of civilization. In addition to wine, the vine supplied the ancients with sugar and honey, which they obtained by boiling the juice of the grape to a thick "grape-honey."

**Branches** are young tender shoots growing from the vine; as they grow they become full of leaves or a layer of leaves and, in the case of the grape vine, bear grapes. Branches that become broken and separated from the vine will not bear fruit (John 15:2, 4-6; Ezekiel 15:2, 17:6, 7).

To prepare a vineyard, stones were cleared from an area and used to construct a wall or terrace around the plot. The vine-stocks were usually allowed to grow along the ground, although they were sometimes elevated several inches off the ground by sticks. Care of a vineyard included plowing or harrowing the ground and clearing it of weeds, pruning dead and fruitless branches, and guarding against wild animals such as jackals and foxes. For this latter purpose a watchman was stationed in a tower or high summer house which afforded him a view of a large area of the vineyard. This structure also provided shelter for the workmen at their meals and a suitable place to keep the tools. Adjacent to the vineyard was a winepress.

Metaphorically, Jesus calls Himself the true vine (John 15:1, 4, 5) since a spreading and fruitful vine is the emblem of prosperity and blessings (compare Ezekiel 17:6, 19:10; Psalms 80:8-10, 128:3).

### **John 15:1-17**

This is the last of the "I am" sayings of the Gospel according to John. We see in chapters thirteen through sixteen that Jesus now is talking in private with the disciples, knowing that this will be the last opportunity that he will have before his death. In chapter 14, he declared himself to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" in verse 27 of that chapter, in response to their voiced

anxiety, he promised the disciples that he would leave them “with peace of mind and heart” which will be found in the Spirit. Christ in spirit will indwell them (and us). Jesus’ new metaphor in chapter 15 affirms this again. The results of this indwelling is fruitbearing in the form of new obedience and love (Galatians 5:22-23). This leads into chapter 15 where he tells them that for them to have this “peace of mind and heart” they must remain in him, be completely dependent on him, as branches are dependent upon the vine.

Jesus is very up-front about announcing that “I am the true Vine” (verse 1); but the Father as the Vinedresser (verse 1) stands in the background throughout. The vinedresser (or gardener) gives his whole life to the vines, tending them, feeding them, and coaxing them toward fruitfulness. This latter feature is understandable since the redemptive action of the Son is always that of Mediator, through whom God speaks his Word and does his Works, and the relation of the Son to the believer, which is the chief theme of the passage, is both patterned on that of the Father and the Son and is the means of relating the believer to the Father.

In the Old Testament and in Judaism Israel is frequently represented as a vine or a vineyard transplanted from Egypt (Psalm 80:8-11) and brought to fertile soil (Ezekiel 7:1-6; compare Hosea 10:1-2; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1-5, 17:1-21, 19:10-15; Psalm 80:8-18). Enemies may trample the vineyard (Jeremiah 12:10-11) but God tends it carefully and looks for fruit (Isaiah 5:1-7). The vineyard may be the preeminent biblical symbol of the locus of God’s activity, his nurture, and his expectations (compare Matthew 21:33-46).

It is striking that in every instance when Israel in its historical life is depicted in the Old Testament as a vine or vineyard, the nation is set under the judgment of God for its corruption, sometimes explicitly for its failure to produce good fruit (e.g., Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21). The parable of Jesus in Mark 12:1-11 has a different point, but it is in harmony with these representations of judgment. Given this, why is Jesus the *true* Vine? Jesus is the *true* Vine in contract with whatever (or whoever) also claims to be the Vine. It seems likely that the description of Jesus as the *true* Vine is primarily intended to contrast with the failure of the vine Israel to fulfill its calling to be fruitful for God. Now in John chapter 14 that the Vine is *Jesus*, not the Church, is intentional; the Lord is viewed in his representative capacity, the Son of God-Son of Man, who dies and was raised that in union with him a renewed people of God might come into being and bring forth fruit for God. Jesus is the true Vine, not the trunk over against the branches; the latter are *in him* as part of the plant. The image is feasible prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus, in terms of fellowship and discipleship, but its full meaning is possible only on the basis of the Easter event and the sending of the Holy Spirit. So understood, it is remarkably similar to the figure of Christ as the Body that includes the Church.

Jesus says that he is the *true* vine – this means the genuine vine, i.e., the vine which corresponds perfectly to its name – just as he is the Truth, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Life, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Living Water, and the Resurrection. In all these roles he fulfills what it means to be *truly* what he claims to be.

To “remain” in Jesus has a deeper significance than simply to continue to believe in him, although it includes that; it connotes continuing to live in association or in union with him. Abiding or remaining in Christ is a prerequisite Christian experience. It is the origin of fruitful living. “And I in you” may be viewed as the main clause of a conditional sentence: “*If* you remain in me, I shall remain in you;” but the emphasis in the passage is on *Jesus*, the Vine, hence it is more likely that a note of encouragement is intended here, “and be assured, I am remaining in union with you.” Initially, Christ dwells in us (verses 4, 5); but this is no tribute to our merit, for our acceptability as vessels – our cleanliness – is his accomplishment (verse 3). In

the divine relationship grace is the source and support of faith. On this condition alone fruitbearing is possible, as the image of a branch broken from a vine vividly illustrates. Just as branches are barren when they are unattached to the vine (verse 4), the possibility of separation from the vine is a real and dreadful prospect (verses 2, 6) -- they are thrown away, become withered, are collected and used as firewood. The picture is realistic and depicts what happens on the farm; it is not applied to the judgment of Hell, rather it vividly portrays the uselessness of such as do not remain in the Vine and their rejection by the Vinedresser. (See the discussion below of Galatians 8:35, 37-39.)

The application is clear: to “remain” in Christ is to become fruitful, but “without me you can do nothing” (verse 5b). Starting with “apart from me, you can do nothing,” it is on the basis of that frank recognition of our utter helplessness apart from him that Christ enters into his covenant with us, gives us his tremendous promises, and makes his honoring claims upon us. He knows that without him we could do, not something fairly good though insufficient, but just nothing at all. “I am the vine, you are the branches.” The vine does and must do everything for them. It is the vine that draws the sap from the earth; the vine that passes it to the needy branches; the vine that enables them even to hold on, in order that they may get more. “But I,” says Christ, in essence, “can make you green and living things, heavy with fruitfulness, laden with usefulness toward God and man.”

If we are to ask what fruitbearing signifies, the broad answer is “every demonstration of vitality of faith,” to which, we may add, according to verses 9-17, “reciprocal love above all belongs,” and to which, again, we may add, in the light of verse 16, “an effective mission in bringing to Christ men and women in repentance and faith.”

There should be outer evidence of Christ’s indwelling. Note how carefully the passage balances our mutual participation with God. Our effort is necessary. The statement echoes that of Jesus relating to his own dependence on his Father and his helplessness without him (5:19, 30); this is even more plainly applicable to the believer in relation to the Redeemer; apart from Christ “nothing,” in Christ “much fruit.” For instance we must devote ourselves to Jesus’ words and be obedient (verses 7, 10). But on the other hand it is also the nurture of God that causes us to flourish and glorify him (verse 8). Jesus describes God as a vinedresser who prunes with skill knowing the benefits that will accrue to the branch in later seasons.

The results of this reciprocal abiding are given in 15:7-17: (1) *prayer with confidence*. Jesus mentions twice the certainty that comes with prayer joined to spiritual union (verses 7, 16, compare 14:12-14). Prayer is answered because he who abides in Christ will ask for nothing that is not in accord with the will of Christ and in His name (compare 14:14); (2) the *glorification of the Father* through our fruitfulness in character and service (verse 8); (3) *Assurance*. We acquire confidence in Jesus’ love for us because it is modeled on God’s love for him (15:9-10, 17:26). Assurance is closely related to our knowledge of Christ’s love (see Romans 8:35-39); (4) *Joy*. This is not mere happiness, but a deeper tranquility that is free from worry about the affairs of living and that knows that God’s purposes are good (15:11, 16:20-24, 17:13); (5) *A new community*. Throughout the discourse Jesus exhorts his followers to love one another (13:34, 15:12, 17, 17:21; see I John 2:7-11). As his love for us is modeled on God’s divine love for him (15:9), now our love for one another should be modeled on his love and sacrifice (verses 13, 17). Christ-like love should be the hallmark of the church (see especially 17:20-26; I John). This is the difference that Christ makes. “For it is God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ “ (II Corinthians 4:6). The splendor and joy of it!

Verses 7-10 draw out and illustrate the meaning of “remaining” in Jesus. If in verses 1-6 the emphasis is on faith that trusts in Christ, opens life to Christ, and remains in union with Christ, verse 7 emphasizes remaining in the words of Christ, i.e., the revelation that he brought. Such a believer is assured that his prayers will be answered, for his prayers will be dominated by the desire for the service of the kingdom of God. In such fruitbearing the Father is glorified in the believer (verse 8), as he is in the Son in his redemptive work (12:23, 28, 31-32, 17:1), and by so doing the believer becomes a true follower of his Lord (a “disciple”). To “remain” in Jesus is also to remain in his *love*, just as Jesus throughout his life remained in the Father’s love (verses 9-10). This must mean primarily remaining in the love that Jesus has for his disciples – rejoicing in its reality, depending on its support, doing nothing to grieve it, but on the contrary engaging in that which delights the Lover. Not surprisingly, then, to “remain” in Jesus further entails *keeping the commands* of Jesus, as he kept his Father’s commands and remained in his love. In this Gospel the obedience of Jesus to his Father is frequently mentioned (e.g., 4:34, 6:38, 8:29, 55), and that obedience reaches its climax in his yielding his life for the salvation of mankind (10:17-18, 12:27-28, 14:31).

The commands of Christ (verse 12) laid on those who would remain in his love (verse 10) are comprehended in the one command to love one another. In it the call to love God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), recited daily by the Jews and associated by Jesus with the command to love one’s neighbor (Leviticus 19:18; compare Mark 12:29-31), is contained, for the fulfillment of this command, in the condition of remaining in the love of the Son and of showing authentic love to God (see I John 4:11-12, 20-21). The addition “as I have loved you” is important; it includes the manifestation of Christ’s love in his death for others, and so reveals the standard of love that should be maintained among believers; it further hints of the motive of such love (again as perceived in I John 4:19), and its source in the redemptive love that frees us from restrictive love of self. Such a relationship of love leads to joy to the uttermost (verse 11). Jesus experienced it, even when facing the dread hour of sacrifice; he revealed these things to his disciples that they might have the same joy in fullest measure; they, too, are to know it as they walk in the same path as he (12:24-26).

In verse 13-14 we see that the giving of one’s life for one’s friends is the greatest measure of benevolent human love. The disciples are declared to be his friends by virtue of his love for them manifest in his death on their behalf (verse 13) and their obedience to him. That Jesus “no longer” calls the disciples servants allows us to infer a new relationship in the light of his revelation to them and his death for them. The mark of difference between a servant and a friend is precisely the confidence which is extended to the latter; so far as Jesus and his disciples are concerned this is especially manifest in the Upper Room discourses, wherein he made known to them what he had heard from the Father.

This privilege bestowed on the disciples (verse 16) was not on account of their worth but through electing grace. As always in the Bible, the election was for a purpose: “I set you aside that you should go forth and yield fruit . . .” While the general scope of fruitbearing, noted in verse 5, is understood here, the use of “I have set you aside” and “that you should go forth” suggests that the sending of the disciples on mission is primary here; to this end assurance is given that prayer in the name of Jesus (as they engage in seeking fruit for the Lord’s glory) will be answered by the Father.

Jesus ends with verse 17 as he began it in verse 12 with the reiterated command for mutual love, and so brings the discourse on the Vine to its conclusion. The injunction to love is the first and last word of Christ to his friends.

The remarkable summary of Jesus' offer and expectations appears in verses 14-17. What especially stands out is his offer of friendship. In Christ, disciples have unparalleled access to God. True friendship is always hallmarked by complete candor, honesty, and transparency between persons. Jesus has become that sort of friend because he has unveiled himself fully (verse 15). Moreover this is not a casual thing passed out indiscriminately. Christ has chosen us to be his friends (verse 16)! The indwelling of Christ and his love are thoroughly individual and personal in these chapters. But Jesus' seriousness cannot be missed. If he has offered this qualitative relationship to us, we must extend it to one another (verse 17).

### **Galatians 5:22-23**

The nine attributes of the "fruit" are found in these verses and are clearly the production of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. They come as a composite whole, not as individual items which some have and others do not.

Three sets are discernible in the list. The first, "love, joy, peace" (verse 22, "affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity" MSG) reflects the resultant attitude of one who has been endowed with the Spirit of God who is identified as love (I John 4:8), who brings complete satisfaction (John 3:29), who is declared to bring "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14), and who is identified as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The second set reflects how a Spirit-led individual will conduct interpersonal relationships, "patience, kindness, goodness," (verse 22, "a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people" MSG).

The third set seems to focus primarily on a person's inner life when under the control of the Spirit, "faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," (verses 22-23, "involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely" MSG).

### **Romans 8:28-39**

In case believers experience anxiety regarding their attachment to Jesus, Paul assures his readers in these verses that nothing can separate them (as branches can be cut off) from the vine – that God gives us victory in remaining attached to the vine.

Paul assures his readers that all that happens to them is in the sovereign hand of God who in everything "works for the good of those who love him" (verse 28). He assures Christian readers that the sufferings and troubles they undergo are not absurdities that have somehow crept into the flow of things beyond God's power. They have their place in the sovereign process of salvation, as God is faithful.

God is in control of things; for God is for us, and (like Abraham, Genesis 22:12, 16; compare Isaiah 53:12) did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, and together with his Son will "graciously give us all things." As God has done the difficult thing in giving his Son for sinners, how much more will he do the easier thing and graciously give us the fullness of salvation (see 5:9-10), as well as a share in all things (see I Corinthians 3:21-23). Paul assures his readers that no one can condemn them, for the entire divine family works in unity on their behalf: it is God who justifies (verse 33); Christ Jesus, who died and was raised, "is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (verse 34); and we have already seen that "the Spirit himself intercedes for us" (verse 26). We are more than conquerors through him who loved us

(verse 37). Paul assures his readers that there is nothing that can separate them from the love of Christ, “the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verse 39).

There is a heartening message for any day, but especially for ours, when tremendous problems that refuse to wait are crowding in upon us and demanding a solution. These problems come upon us because we, the branches, think that we could bear fruit of ourselves. And we cannot, and never will be able to. “But the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,” try how it may.

The allegory of the vine and the branches is the most complete expression of the mystical union between Christ and the Christian in this Gospel. It combines the thought which Paul expressed in the figure of the body and its members with the peculiar emphasis which John lays on love as the chief mark of this inward fellowship. Continued dependence upon Christ is the condition not only for fruitful service, but even for continued life.

So it is in our individual lives. It is so difficult to work out our ideals. We see them; we long to achieve them; but they elude our clutching hands. Against the tremendous background of the promises, what Christ has effected in us looks meager and insignificant. May it not be that the branch has become detached from the vine, and hangs loose and limp and withering? Life is rushed and hustled; and in the jostle of competing interests always tugging at our sleeve and attracting our attention, spiritual things can easily get overlooked and lost. Seasons of devotion are shortened or crowded out, God’s Word is not seriously or regularly studied, and the like. “But the Branch cannot bear fruit of itself.” The vine does cause the branch to bear. And Christ wants us to bear. For after all, we are the branches, and apart from the branches, the vine can have no harvest. It should affect us deeply to know that Christ has trustfully committed his cause, in our day and generation, so largely to our keeping. The vine bears through its branches. And Christ’s cause, if it is to spread, must spread through us. Moreover, it is not for these first disciples alone that our Lord speaks in verse 16, in which he returns to this metaphor, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.” In measure that is true of every Christian.

### *Teacher Helps*

This is the final lesson of the seven “I Am” sayings of Jesus, using concepts that are translated into our spiritual lives that are so meaningful that they are crucial. Therefore, during the discussion of this final lesson there needs to be a reviewing of the other six, a “pulling together” of all the lessons, a summing up. Students should realize that all of the sayings fit together and how they fit together. Spend some time doing this. It is suggested that you proceed in the following way.

1. Present the “Set” and allow students to participate. This is an especially important step in order to establish the thought that the branches are *totally* dependent on the trunk (the vine) and the root system. You should get responses such as “plants need light, water, nourishment, good soil to survive, grow, and produce fruit/vegetables, etc. A likely question would be “How are these needs provided?”

2. Proceed with the reading of each scripture passage and the discussion of each. A good discussion to pursue somewhere during this discussion is what God, the gardener, provides for us spiritually. Possible answers might include the following: he provides the spiritual nourishment that causes us to flourish; makes sure the soil in which we live is appropriate, provides fertilizer (nourishment), prunes, pulls out the weeds, waters, provides the vine – Jesus.

3. Continue with the discussion of the fruits of the spirit, and finally the passage from

Romans.

The important aspect of this lesson is that we are totally dependent on Jesus for everything just as the branches AND THE FRUIT are dependent on the vine, the stalk, the root system, and the gardener (God). God is the one who provides the water, the nourishment, and the light, through Jesus, to provide all that we need. Added to this, then, is the fruit that will be produced through our being dependent on Jesus. And, finally, the selection from Romans assures us that we can be victorious.

The scripture selections “hang” together, and they are not long. They come from both *The New Living Translation* and from *The Message*. There may be concepts in each that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. In *The Message*, especially, there are a good many idioms and other English expressions that students must understand in order to comprehend the reading. Deal with the idioms as you would in English class, using drills to help them incorporate these idioms into their understanding and usage of English. Do not “teach” these concepts and idioms, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the scripture. Of course, you will need to be able to explain the meaning of the idioms either by definition or by a synonymous expression.

Concepts from *The New Living Translation* (John 15:1-17) that may give difficulties: vine, branch, prunes, bear, fruitfulness, severed, wither, disciples, confides, gardener, true, produce (v.), apart, useless, overflow, joined, glory, remain.

Concepts from *The Message* (Galatians 5:22-23a and Romans 8:35, 37-39): orchard, affection, exuberance, serenity, compassion, conviction, permeate, loyal, marshal, embracing, hard times, homelessness, bullying, backstabbing, faze, angelic, demonic, thinkable/unthinkable, embraced, Scripture, convinced, basic holiness, commitment, condition, God’s chosen, presence.

The following are idioms and other expressions from *The Message* which certainly will need to be dealt with.

(Galatians, vs 22) to stick with	(Romans, vs 37) tangle with
(Galatians, vs 22) sense of . . .	(Romans, vs 37) messing with
(Galatians, vs 22) find ourselves involved in	(Romans, vs 37) sticking up for . . .
(Galatians, vs 22) force our way in life	(Romans, vs 37) drive a wedge between . . .
(Romans, vs 35) with . . . on our side	(Romans, vs 38) There is no way!
(Romans, vs 35) put . . . on line	(Romans, vs 39) nothing can get between us . . .
(Romans, vs 35, 39) embrace . . .	

As you prepare for this lesson and teach it, keep in mind the objectives of the lesson (below) and attempt to satisfy all of them. Of especial importance are the *subjective questions*.

### *Set*

Using a diagram/picture of a tree with its root system and the branches, draw out from students what the various parts of the tree are, what is required for the tree to live and grow, where the tree gets its nourishment, where the branches get their nourishment, how the branches help the trunk and the roots – in general, what is required for plant life to grow and survive. What would we assume about the tree if the branches withered and had no leaves on them? What would happen to the branches if the roots die?

Discuss this also in relation to the tree being a fruit tree. What is required for fruit to

grow? What might we think about the tree if no fruit grew on it? What would happen to a branch if it was cut off? Ask questions that will draw out from students that the branches are totally dependent on the root system and the trunk for their nourishment.

### *Scripture Readings*

John 15:1-17; Galatians 5:22-23a; Romans 8:35, 37-39

### *Lesson Objectives* -- Students will

1. Explore the needs of plants to survive, grow, and produce fruit/vegetables, and how these needs are provided.
2. Explore the function of the vine (trunk, stalk) relative to the branches and to the fruit.
3. Explore the function of the roots of a plant relative to the vine, the branches, and the fruit.
4. Learn that they are totally dependent on Jesus just as the branches are dependent on the vine for nourishment.
5. Explore the benefits to human lives of Jesus being the “vine.”
6. Learn that Jesus is our life line to God (our means of access to God).
7. Learn that God as the gardener provides the nourishment that causes us to flourish.
8. Learn that the origin of fruitful living is our abiding in Christ.
9. Learn that to be attached to Jesus, as the branches are to the vine, is to “live fruitfully.”
10. Learn that the indwelling Holy Spirit provides fruitfulness.
11. Come to know the fruits of the Spirit.
12. Learn that to abide in Jesus means to pray with confidence, assurance, and joy.
13. Learn that Jesus offers friendship to the believer.

### *Questions*

John 15:1-17

verses 1-8

1. What does Jesus say that he is? (vs 1, 5)
2. Who is Jesus’ Father? (vs 1, 8)
3. What is the role of his Father? (vs 2)
4. What are the responsibilities of this gardener? (what does the gardener do?) (vs 2)
5. What does a gardener provide for plants in a garden?
6. What is the relationship between the branches and the vine? (vs 4, 5, 7)
7. How are the branches totally dependent on the vine? (vs 5, 7)
8. How are both the branches and the vine totally dependent on the gardener?
9. What must the branches do? (vs 2, 7)
10. What does fruitfulness mean? (vs 3, 5, 8)
11. What is required for being fruitful? (vs 5, 8)
12. Why are branches not fruitful? (vs 4, 6)
13. What happens to branches that are not fruitful? (vs 2, 6)
14. What does it mean to “remain” in Jesus and he is us? (vs 5)

verses 9-14

15. What does God, the gardener, provide for us spiritually?

16. What is the result (benefit) of loving and obeying Jesus? (vs 10, 11)
17. What is the result of “remaining” in Jesus? (vs 10, 11)
18. How is Jesus totally dependent on the Father? (vs 9, 10)
19. What is the indication of “great love?” (vs 13)
20. How does this remind you of the Good Shepherd?
21. What is a “friend?”

verses 15-17

22. What is the difference between friends and servants? (vs 14, 15)
23. Would you rather be a friend of Jesus or a servant to Jesus? Why?
24. What did Jesus promise in verse 16?
25. What did he command us to do? (vs 17)

Galatians 5:22-23a

This scripture passage outlines the Fruits of the Spirit. Several of the concepts among the “fruits” may not be understood by even the best of English speakers. Take each separately and discuss it, letting students have the first opportunity to define and describe. Then add to the discussion as seems appropriate.

26. What is “God’s Way?” (vs 22)
27. What are the gifts that he brings into our lives? (vs 22)
28. How are these “gifts” like fruitfulness?
29. How do we obtain these “gifts?”
30. If they are “gifts,” then how are we responsible for the fruitfulness?

Romans 8:35, 37-39

31. What does this say about the relationship between us and God? (vs 35)
32. How does the love of Jesus for us affect our lives? (vs 37, 38)
33. If we are committed to Jesus, how strongly are we “attached” to him? (vs 39)

### *Subjective Questions*

1. What does this passage say about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is “the True Vine?”
3. What is the result of being “connected” to Jesus as a branch is connected to the vine?
4. What does this passage say about God?
5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is “the True Vine?”
6. What does the love of Jesus mean to you?



## END NOTES

### Lesson 1

- <sup>1</sup> Wadis = a rocky waterway in the near East and North Africa that is dry except in the rainy season when it becomes a raging torrent.
- <sup>2</sup> HBD, p. 804.
- <sup>3</sup> Laver = a large basin made of copper or bronze used by priests for ceremonial cleansing in the ancient tabernacle and the temple before worship. When Solomon's Temple was being built, lavers were made from copper and bronze mirrors donated by women. See Exodus 30:17-21, 38:8, 40:7; I Kings 7:30, 38, 40.
- <sup>4</sup> HBD, p. 304.
- <sup>5</sup> Metaphor or simile = A *Metaphor* is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance -- For example, "... They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch." (Matthew 15:14). A *Simile* is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared using *like* or *as* -- For example, "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that is thrown into the water and gathers fish of every kind." (Matthew 13:47).
- <sup>6</sup> Josephus says, regarding traveling from Judea to Galilee, "It was absolutely necessary for those who would go quickly to pass through that country (Samaria), for by that road you may, in three days, go from Galilee to Jerusalem." *Vita*, 269/59.
- <sup>7</sup> "Johannine misunderstanding." = *Johannine* is a word that refers to John, the writer of the Gospel bearing his name. A "Johannine misunderstanding" is unique to the Gospel of John and refers to events when Jesus' questioners/listeners took literally something Jesus said; the misunderstanding propels the discourse forward leading Jesus to further self-revelations. For example, the Samaritan woman at the well (4:15), his listeners when he said "I am the Bread of life" (6:34), Martha when Jesus told her "Your brother will rise again" (11:24), and Thomas and Phillip when Jesus spoke to of the way and his Father (John 14:4, 7). There are other occasions of Johannine misunderstandings in John, but these are the ones pertinent to the seven "I Am" sayings. WBC, p. 92.
- <sup>8</sup> The description of the Feast of Tabernacles is adapted from ECB, pp. 856-58; IB, Volume 7, pp. 588-9; HBD, pp. 190, 709-710.

### Lesson 2

- <sup>9</sup> Figuratively = metaphorical, not literal.
- <sup>10</sup> HoBD, p. 209.
- <sup>11</sup> Shewbread = the term used for the 12 loaves of consecrated unleavened bread placed on a table in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple (Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9). HBD, p. 676.
- <sup>12</sup> WBC, p. 96.

### Lesson 3

<sup>13</sup> Metonymically = a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated e.g., “lands belonging *to the crown*”).

<sup>14</sup> Ascetic = A person who foregoes all comforts and luxuries, especially for religious reasons. John the Baptist was a Nazarite -- one who was pledged to deny himself the luxuries of society and human comforts to demonstrate his love for God; he is thought by some scholars to have been an Essene, a sect of devout Jews who practiced ritual cleansing as a means of affecting great purity by means of immersing the body in water. John is described in Matthew (3:4) and Mark (1:6) as having “clothes made of camel’s hair,” he had a “leather belt around his waist,” and his food was “locusts and wild honey.”

<sup>15</sup> I Maccabaeus 4:52.

<sup>16</sup> ECB, p. 847.

<sup>17</sup> LOF, p. 76.

#### Lesson 4

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from IB, p. 377 and HBD, pp. 674-5.

<sup>19</sup> WBC, p. 170.

#### Lesson: 5

<sup>20</sup> ECB, p. 863.

#### Lesson 6

<sup>21</sup> HBD, p. 600.

<sup>22</sup> HBD, p. 600.

<sup>23</sup> HBD, p. 600.

<sup>24</sup> The concept of *Paraclete* (from the Greek *parakletos*) is unique to John and expresses the Spirit’s strengthening, equipping role. A *Paraclete* was a judicial advocate (compare Matthew 10:16-20). ECB, p. 869.

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APPENDIX A

PROGRAM EVALUATION



Evaluation  
 BIBLE STUDY: THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR  
 2004

Using the following sliding scale format, answer each question by marking the appropriate place on the scale. Feel free to make comments.

Please indicate the level class you were working with.

Beginner 1	Beginner 2	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate	Advanced
1	2	3	4	5

**Part I:** Please respond to Questions 1 through 7 regarding THE PRINTED MATERIALS.

1. In general, what is your over-all evaluation of this Bible Study Curriculum?

Poor	Good						Excellent			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

2. How well achieved was the *over all goal* throughout the curriculum?

*Goal Statement:* To allow every student to meet Jesus personally through the introductions that Jesus makes of himself, showing how the identity of Jesus impacts our identity, and the implication of intimacy in each example.

Not achieved	Partly achieved				Well achieved					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

3. How well was the *Bible Study theme* carried out throughout the lessons?

*Theme:* “The All-Sufficient Savior” deals with the seven “I Am” sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John and which portray Him as indispensable in our lives.

Not well	Fairly well				Well carried out					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

4. How well were the *over-all objectives* carried out throughout the lessons?

*Objectives:* Students will

1. meet Jesus through the scripture readings.
2. learn why Jesus came to earth.
3. learn how Jesus perceived Himself and His mission.
7. learn how Jesus made a difference in the lives of those He touched.
8. learn how a relationship with Jesus can make a difference in their own lives.
9. learn concepts relating to Christianity and how to apply them in their own lives.
10. learn the different ways in which they can develop and maintain a relationship with Jesus.
11. learn that Jesus as Life leads to eternal life.
12. learn that they are totally dependent on Christ for life.
13. come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and follow Him.
14. grow through these introductions of Jesus.

Not achieved			Partly achieved				Well achieved			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

5. How helpful to you were the *Lesson Summaries*?

Not helpful			Somewhat helpful				Quite helpful			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

6. How helpful to you were the *Teacher Helps*?

Not helpful			Somewhat helpful				Quite helpful			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

7. How well were the *objectives for each lesson* covered in the lesson materials?

Not much			Partly covered				Well covered			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**Part II:** Please respond to items #8 through #12 regarding the use of THE BIBLE STUDIES IN YOUR CLASS.

8. Did you attempt to use *the discussion format*? (If “yes,” or “sometimes,” or anything but “no,” please respond to Items #9 and #10. If “no,” proceed to Item #11.)

No				Sometimes						Yes	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

9. How well did students participate in class discussions?									
Some students participated			Most of the class participated				All students participated		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. How well did your interpreter handle the discussion format?									
Not well				Fairly well				Quite well	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. How well achieved were the objectives of each lesson?

Not much				Partly achieved				Well achieved	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

12. How well did the content of the lessons fit into the time provided daily?

I often ran out of time			I usually covered the whole lesson				I was able to cover each lesson		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

COMMENTS



APPENDIX B

Lesson 1

**The Living Water**



# The Living Water

## <sup>1</sup>Psalm 104:10-15

<sup>10</sup>You make the springs pour water into ravines, so streams gush down from the mountains.

<sup>11</sup>They provide water for all the animals, and the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

<sup>12</sup>The birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees.

<sup>13</sup>You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labor.

<sup>14</sup>You cause grass to grow for the cattle. You cause plants to grow for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth – <sup>15</sup>wine to make them glad, olive oil as lotion for their skin, and bread to give them strength.

## <sup>1</sup>Jeremiah 17:7-8

<sup>7</sup> . . . Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. <sup>8</sup>They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.

## <sup>2</sup>John 4:4-15

<sup>4</sup>To get there [Galilee], he had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, *worn out* by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

<sup>7</sup>A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman, *taken aback*, asked, "*How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?*" (Jews in those days *wouldn't be caught dead* talking to Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

<sup>11</sup>The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water?'" <sup>12</sup>Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock and *passed it down* to us?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst – *not ever*. <sup>14</sup>The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

<sup>15</sup>The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

## <sup>2</sup>John 7:37-39a

<sup>37</sup> . . . Jesus . . . cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Rivers of living water will brim and *spill out of the depths* of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says." <sup>39</sup>(He said this in regard to the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were about to receive . . . )

<sup>1</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc: Wheaton, IL, 1996

<sup>2</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002



APPENDIX C

Lesson 2

**The Bread of Life**



# The Bread of Life

## Matthew 5:6

“You’re blessed when you’ve *worked up a good appetite for God*. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.”

## John 6:22-58

<sup>22</sup>The next day the crowd that was left behind realized that there had been only one boat, and that Jesus had not gotten into it with his disciples. They had seen them go off without him. <sup>23</sup>By now boats from Tiberias had pulled up near where they had eaten the bread blessed by the Master. <sup>24</sup>So when the crowd realized he was gone and wasn’t coming back, they *piled into* the Tiberias boats and *headed for* Capernaum, looking for Jesus.

<sup>25</sup>When they found him back across the sea, they said, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, “You’ve come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs – and *for free*.”

<sup>27</sup>“Don’t *waste your energy* striving for perishable food like that. Work for the *food that sticks with you*, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.”

<sup>28</sup>To that they said, “Well, what do we do then to *get in on* God’s works?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus said, “*Throw your lot in with* the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment *gets you in on* God’s works.”

<sup>30</sup>They waffled: “Why don’t you *give us a clue* about who you are, just a hint of what’s going on? When we see *what’s up*, we’ll commit ourselves. Show us what you can do. <sup>31</sup>Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”

<sup>32</sup>Jesus responded, “The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the real bread. <sup>33</sup>The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>They *jumped at* that: “Master, give us this bread, now and forever!”

<sup>35</sup>Jesus said, “I am the bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. <sup>36</sup>I have told you this explicitly because even though you have seen me in action, you don’t really believe me. <sup>37</sup>Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don’t let go. <sup>38</sup>I came down from heaven not to follow my own whim but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me.

<sup>39</sup>“This, *in a nutshell*, is that will: that everything handed over to me by the Father be completed – not a single detail missed – and at the *wrap-up of time* I have everything and everyone put together, upright and whole. <sup>40</sup>This is what my Father wants: that anyone who sees the Son and trusts who he is and what he does and then aligns with him will enter real life, eternal life. My part is to *put them on their feet* alive and whole at the completion of time.”

<sup>41</sup>At this, because he said, “I am the Bread that came down from heaven,” the Jews started arguing over him: <sup>42</sup>“Isn’t this the son of Joseph? Don’t we know his father? Don’t we know his mother? How can he now say ‘I came down out of heaven’ and expect anyone to believe him?”

<sup>43</sup>Jesus said, “Don’t bicker among yourselves over me. You’re not in charge here. <sup>44</sup>The Father who sent me is in charge. He *draws people* to me – that’s the only way you’ll ever come. Only then do I do my work, *putting people together, setting them on their feet*, ready for the End. <sup>45</sup>This is what the prophets meant when they wrote, ‘And then they will all be personally taught by God.’ Anyone who has spent any time at all listening to the Father, really listening and therefore learning, comes to me to be taught personally – to see it with his own eyes, hear it with his own ears, from me, since I have it firsthand from the Father. <sup>46</sup>No one has seen the Father except the One who has his Being alongside the Father – and you can see *me*.

<sup>47</sup>“I’m telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life, eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the Bread of Life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the desert and died. <sup>50</sup>But now here is Bread that truly comes down out of heaven. Anyone eating this Bread will not die, ever. <sup>51</sup>I am the Bread – living Bread! –

who came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this Bread will live – and forever! The Bread that I present to the world so that it can eat and live is myself, this flesh-and-blood self.”

<sup>52</sup>At this, the Jews started fighting among themselves. “How can this man serve up his flesh for a meal?”

<sup>53</sup>But Jesus didn’t *give an inch*. “Only insofar as you eat and drink flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, do you have life within you. <sup>54</sup>The one who brings a hearty appetite to this eating and drinking has eternal life and will be fit and ready for the Final Day. <sup>55</sup>My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup>By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. <sup>57</sup>In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who *makes a meal of me* lives because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the Bread from heaven. Your ancestors ate bread, and later died. Whoever eats this Bread will live always.”

From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002

APPENDIX D

Lesson 3

**The Light of the World**



# The Light of the World

## <sup>1</sup>Psalm 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation – so why should I be afraid? The Lord protects me from danger – so why should I tremble?

## <sup>2</sup>Psalm 119:105

By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path.

## <sup>1</sup>John 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. <sup>4</sup>Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. <sup>5</sup>The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

## <sup>2</sup>John 8:12-16, 19

<sup>12</sup>Jesus once again addressed them: "I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."

<sup>13</sup>The Pharisees objected. "All we have is your word on this. We need more than this to go on."

<sup>14</sup>Jesus replied, "You're right that you have only my word. But you *can depend on it* being true. I know where I've come from and where I go next. You don't know where I'm from or where I'm headed. <sup>15</sup>You decide according to what you can see and touch. I don't make judgments like that. <sup>16</sup>But even if I did, my judgments would be true because I wouldn't make it out of the narrowness of my experience but in the largeness of the one who sent me, the Father."

<sup>19</sup>They said, "Where is this *so-called* Father of yours?"

Jesus said, "You're looking right at me and you don't see me. How do you expect to see the Father? If you knew me, you would at the same time know the Father."

## <sup>2</sup>John 3:16-21

<sup>16</sup>"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. <sup>17</sup>God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to *put the world right again*. <sup>18</sup>Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? <sup>19</sup>Because of that person's failure to believe in the *one-of-a-kind* Son of God when introduced to him.

<sup>20</sup>"This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. <sup>21</sup>But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."

## <sup>2</sup>I John 1:5b-7

<sup>5</sup> . . . God is light, pure light; there's *not a trace of* darkness in him.

<sup>6</sup>If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we're obviously *lying through our teeth* – we're not *living what we claim*. <sup>7</sup>But if we *walk in the light*, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God's Son, purges all our sin.

<sup>1</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc: Wheaton, IL, 1996

<sup>2</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H.. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002



APPENDIX E

Lesson 4

**The Good Shepherd**



# The Good Shepherd

## <sup>1</sup>Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

<sup>2</sup>He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams;

<sup>3</sup>He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

<sup>4</sup>Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

<sup>6</sup>Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

## <sup>1</sup>Matthew 18:12-14

<sup>12</sup>“If a shepherd has one hundred sheep, and one wanders away and is lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others and go out into the hills to search for the lost one? <sup>13</sup>And if he finds it, he will surely rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn’t wander away! <sup>14</sup>In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish.”

## <sup>2</sup>John 10:1-18

<sup>1</sup>“Let me *set this before* you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s *up to no good* – a sheep rustler! <sup>2</sup>The shepherd walks right up to the gate. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. <sup>5</sup>They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound

of it.”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about.

<sup>7</sup>So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All those others are *up to no good* – sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the Gate. Anyone who *goes through me* will be cared for – will freely go in and out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

<sup>11</sup>“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. <sup>12</sup>A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and *runs for it*, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. <sup>13</sup>He’s only *in it for the money*. The sheep *don’t matter* to him.

<sup>14</sup>“I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. <sup>15</sup>*In the same way*, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I *put* the sheep *before myself*, sacrificing myself if necessary. <sup>16</sup>You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They’ll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. <sup>17</sup>This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me. I lay it down of *my own free will*. I *have the right* to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father.”

<sup>1</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc, Wheaton, IL, 1996

<sup>2</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002



APPENDIX F

Lesson 5

**Resurrection and the Life**



# The Resurrection and the Life

## **<sup>1</sup>John 11:1, 3-7, 11-15, 17-44**

<sup>1</sup>A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. . . . <sup>3</sup>So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, the one you love is very sick.”

<sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard about it, he said, “Lazarus’ sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this.” <sup>5</sup>Although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>he stayed where he was for the next two days and did not go to them. <sup>7</sup>Finally after two days, he said to his disciples, “Let’s go to Judea again.” . . .

<sup>11</sup>Then he said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup>The disciples said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, that means he is getting better!” <sup>13</sup>They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was having a good night’s rest, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

<sup>14</sup>Then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>And for your sake, I am glad I wasn’t there, because this will give you another opportunity to believe in me. Come, let’s go see him.” . . .

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. <sup>18</sup>Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup>and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. <sup>20</sup>When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup>Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup>“Yes,” Martha said, “when everyone else rises, on resurrection day.”

<sup>25</sup>Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. <sup>26</sup>They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?”

<sup>27</sup>“Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.” <sup>28</sup>Then she left him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, “The Teacher is here and wants to see you.” <sup>29</sup>So

Mary immediately went to him.

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. <sup>31</sup>When the people who were at the house trying to console Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus' grave to weep. So they followed her there. <sup>32</sup>When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. <sup>34</sup>"Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Then Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him." <sup>37</sup>But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Why couldn't he keep Lazarus from dying?"

<sup>38</sup>And again Jesus was deeply troubled. Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. <sup>39</sup>"Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days."

<sup>40</sup>Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?" <sup>41</sup>So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup>You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me." <sup>43</sup>Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

### **<sup>2</sup>John 5:24**

"It's urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has *taken a giant step* from the world of the dead to the world of the living."

### **<sup>2</sup>John 3:15b-16, 36**

<sup>15</sup>"Everyone who *looks up to him* [the Son of Man], trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing

in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life." . . .

<sup>36</sup>" . . . Whoever accepts and trusts the Son *gets in on* everything, life complete and forever! And that is also why the person who avoids and distrusts the Son is *in the dark* and doesn't see life. All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that."

### **<sup>2</sup>John 20:31**

These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

### **<sup>2</sup>Ephesians 2:1, 4-5**

<sup>1</sup>It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. . . . <sup>4</sup>Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. <sup>5</sup>He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ.

### **<sup>2</sup>Romans 6:23**

Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is *real* life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.

<sup>1</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc, Wheaton, IL, 1996

<sup>2</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002

APPENDIX G

Lesson 6

**The Way, the Truth, the Life**



# The Way, the Truth, and the Life

## <sup>1</sup>Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup>“Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The *market is flooded* with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. *Don’t fall for that stuff*, even though crowds of people do. <sup>14</sup>The way to life – to God! – is vigorous and requires total attention.”

## <sup>1</sup>Isaiah 35:8-10

<sup>8</sup>There will be a highway called the Holy Road. No one rude or rebellious is permitted on this road. It’s for God’s people exclusively – impossible to get lost on this road. Not even fools can get lost on it. <sup>9</sup>No lions on this road, no dangerous wild animals – nothing and no one dangerous or threatening. Only the redeemed will walk on it. <sup>10</sup>The people God has ransomed will [walk] on this road. They’ll sing as they make their way home . . . , unfading halos of joy encircling their heads, welcomed home with gifts of joy and gladness as all sorrows and signs scurry into the night.”

## <sup>2</sup>John 14:1-15

<sup>1</sup>“Don’t be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me [Jesus]. <sup>2</sup>There are many rooms in my Father’s home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. <sup>3</sup>When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. <sup>4</sup>And you know where I am going and how to get there.”

<sup>5</sup>“No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We haven’t any idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known who I am, then you would have known who my Father is. From now on you know him and have seen him!”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus replied, “Philip, don’t you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking to see him? <sup>10</sup>Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. <sup>11</sup>Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of what you have seen me do.

<sup>12</sup>“The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. <sup>13</sup>You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. <sup>14</sup>Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!

<sup>15</sup>“If you love me, obey my commandments.”

## <sup>1</sup>John 8:31-32

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus turned to the Jews who had claimed to believe in him, “If you *stick with this, living out* what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. <sup>32</sup>Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.”

## <sup>2</sup>John 14:16-17, 26-27

<sup>16</sup>“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. <sup>17</sup>He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.” . . .

<sup>26</sup>“But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative – and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit – he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you. <sup>27</sup>I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn’t like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”

<sup>1</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002

<sup>2</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc, Wheaton, IL, 1996



APPENDIX H

Lesson 7

**The True Vine**



# The Vine

## <sup>1</sup>John 15:1-17

<sup>1</sup>“I am the True Vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. <sup>3</sup>You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. <sup>4</sup>Remain mine, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

<sup>5</sup>“Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. <sup>7</sup>But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! <sup>8</sup>My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.

<sup>9</sup>“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! <sup>12</sup>I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you. <sup>13</sup>And here is how to measure it – the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you obey me.

<sup>15</sup>“I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. <sup>16</sup>You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. <sup>17</sup>I command you to love each other.”

## <sup>2</sup>Galatians 5:22-23a

<sup>22</sup> . . . What happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard –

things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to *stick with* things, a *sense of* compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We *find ourselves involved* in loyal commitments, not needing to *force our way in* life, <sup>23</sup>able to marshal and direct our energies wisely . . .

## <sup>2</sup>Romans 8:35, 37-39

<sup>35</sup> . . . With *God on our side* . . . how can we lose? If God didn’t hesitate to *put everything on the line* for us, *embracing our condition* and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us? . . . <sup>37</sup>And who would dare *tangle with* God by *messing with* one of God’s chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us – who was raised to life for us! – is in the presence of God at this very moment *sticking up* for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to *drive a wedge between* us and Christ’s love for us? <sup>38</sup>*There is no way!* Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture. . . . None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. <sup>39</sup>I’m absolutely convinced that nothing – nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable -- absolutely *nothing can get between* us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has *embraced* us.

<sup>1</sup>From: *New Living Translation*. Tyndale Publishing, Inc, Wheaton, IL, 1996

<sup>2</sup>From: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress Publishing Group: Colorado Springs, CO, 2002

