

**MINI BIBLE COLLEGE**

**STUDY BOOKLET TWENTY-FOUR**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**  
**VERSE BY VERSE**  
**(Chapters 4-7)**

**Chapter One**  
**“Living Water”**

In his prologue, John told us he was going to tell us that when people responded to Jesus properly they were born again. John did this allegorically in Chapter Two, and this was obviously his objective in Chapter Three when he described that extraordinary interview Jesus had with Rabbi Nicodemus.

In Chapter Four, John tells us about an interview Jesus had with a woman in Samaria. This chapter begins by telling us that Jesus was going to travel from Jerusalem to Galilee. When the Scriptures give us geographical details, there is usually a reason. If you have been to the Holy Land, you know that would mean He was going to travel the whole length of Israel. To travel from Jerusalem to Galilee, you must go through Samaria.

Because there was bitter prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans, when they traveled to Galilee, Orthodox Jews would travel many extra kilometers to bypass Samaria. We are being told here that when Jesus was traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee, He did not take the bypass around Samaria. He went right through Samaria. That is significant because it means Jesus was showing His disciples something about prejudice.

Jesus traveled to the heart of Samaria. He was in what is called today the city of Shechem, where Jacob's well is located. He apparently sends the apostles to a nearby village for food. He

refused their food when they returned. He seems to be freeing Himself of them because He wants to have a private interview with a Samaritan woman.

We could learn a lot about interviewing techniques if we study the interview Jesus had with this Samaritan woman. First of all, observe that Jesus was very dedicated to this interview. The word, “dedicate” literally means, “to lay down” or “to lay aside for a specific purpose.” Jesus laid aside the prejudices of His Jewish culture, and He laid aside His own comfort for the purpose of this interview. We read that it was noon and He was weary. It was more than likely very hot.

He was also devoted to the one He was interviewing. He demonstrated that devotion when He decided to interview this person alone. When we are interviewing people, we should realize that people share the secret matters of their hearts when we meet with them alone. There are times when it is very important to be alone with the person we are interviewing.

As we look over the shoulder of Jesus, during this interview, we should also observe His discernment. To interview literally means, “to look between”. Jesus really does “look between” and listen between the words with great discernment as He interviews this woman.

Jesus comes to the well to draw water. He's thirsty; she's thirsty. He is not talking to a distinguished Rabbi now, so He does not use a term like “born again”. I am convinced that He is saying

the same thing to this Samaritan woman that He said to the Rabbi, but He does not express it the same way. He describes the new birth experience for this Samaritan woman in figurative language she can understand.

When He asks her for a drink, He initiates their conversation by placing Himself under obligation to her. Since Jewish men did not speak to a Samaritan, especially a Samaritan woman, particularly a woman with her reputation, this was a complete break with the culture and the intense prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans. He focuses the conversation on her thirst. He addresses the reality that she is going to have to come back to this well again and again to quench her thirst.

In effect, He is asking her, “How would you like to have one drink that would quench your thirst for the rest of your life?” I have often wondered if the woman might have been an alcoholic. If you were an alcoholic, would not this be a good metaphor for the new birth: “One drink and your thirst is quenched for the rest of your life?”

When she understands what He is saying, she says, “Give me this drink that will quench my thirst for the rest of my life.” At that point Jesus says, “Go, call your husband.” She replies, “I have no husband.” He then says to her (if I can paraphrase His answer), “You are absolutely right! You have had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband, is he?”

Now, why did Jesus bring that up? Once again, we run into

the same issue we saw in the interview Jesus had with Zacchaeus, which is repentance (Luke 19:8,9). Without repentance, she cannot have this one drink, this Living Water that is going to quench her thirst for the rest of her life.

As we consider the interviewing technique of Jesus, we see that, in addition to the other things I have pointed out, as an interviewer, Jesus was direct. By the time Jesus got to the place where He was direct with this woman, as He confronted her with the issue of her domestic life, He had already communicated His unconditional love and acceptance of her. If you and I communicate unconditional acceptance to the person we are interviewing, when we get to the point where we need to be direct, we will discover that they will accept our directness.

As an interviewer, Jesus is not only direct. He is directive. Jesus was not a non-directive interviewer. Observe how directive Jesus was in His interview with this woman. He directed her to her problem, which was sin. He directed her to her solution, which was Living Water. At the appropriate time He directed her to her Savior. Toward the end of the interview she says, "I know that one day the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us everything." Jesus responds, "I that speak unto you am He." (4:26)

With those words, Jesus was obviously directing this Samaritan woman to her Messiah, and He was clearly making the claim that He is the Messiah. This claim of Jesus underscores John's systematic argument - which can be traced through his Gospel - that

Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. In that context, Jesus also says to her, "If you knew the Gift of God, and Who it is Who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you Living Water."

When you pray, if you are talking to God, for what should you ask an Almighty, Omnipotent God? Jesus is clearly telling this woman that He is the Messiah and, if she knew and believed that, she would ask Him for eternal life, for salvation, for the Living Water, for that one drink that would quench her thirst for the rest of her life.

When He told her to call her husband and was directing her to her sin and the necessity for repentance, she did what people often do when you confront them with their sin and their need of repentance. She asked a difficult and controversial theological question. She essentially asked: "You Jews believe that Jerusalem is where God has His headquarters, but we Samaritans believe God must be worshipped out here on Mount Gerazim. Now what is your position on that issue?" That is like saying, "I have always wondered, who is really right? The Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists or the Catholics - I mean - I am so confused!" Have you ever had people raise difficult questions when they do not want to face the hard reality of their sin and their need for repentance?

When she raised these issues, observe, as Jesus continued to be directive, that He directed her beyond the religious institutions of her day. Jesus essentially said to her, "God is a Spirit. Nobody has God in a box. You Samaritans do not have God out here on Mount

Gerazim; we Jews do not have God in Jerusalem. God is a Spirit and those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth can worship Him in Spirit and in truth, anywhere!" When He spoke those words to her, Jesus directed this Samaritan woman beyond institutional religion to the God Who is a Spirit.

One of the most beautiful things about this interview is told in the symbolic sign language of John. As I pointed out earlier in my introduction to this Gospel, we should always look for the deeper meaning when we read the writings of the Apostle John. John is using symbolic language here when he writes about this woman's water pot.

When she comes to the interview, her water pot is a symbol of her thirst and, of course, her thirst is for more than merely water. The fact that she has had five husbands and is living with a man who is not her husband, suggests a deeper kind of thirst. She marvels at the beginning of the interview that Jesus has no water pot. Since the water pot is a symbol of thirst, or need, then you might say that, Jesus is being profiled in this interview as a Man without a water pot - a Man Who does not have the thirst that profiles this woman and her need of salvation.

The most beautiful passage in this interview is where we read: "The woman left her water pot and went her way into the city and said to the men, 'Come and see a Man.'" (28,29)

When the woman had been born again, Jesus directed her to her ministry. The fact that, when she went into the city, she went to

the men is significant. What men? Well obviously, men she knew. She probably knew a lot of men in the city. Since women did not associate freely with men in that Samaritan culture, I think this observation of John is implying that she was a prostitute. She goes to the men in Samaria and essentially says, "Come, see a real Man. Come see a Man who told me everything I ever did. He opened the thoughts of my heart. He spoke to my heart. Come and see such a Man."

We read that the men came. They listened to Jesus because of the saying of the woman. But then later, after they had met Him they said, "Now we believe, not because of the saying of the woman. We have heard Him ourselves and we know that this is the Savior of the world, the Messiah." (42) In his inspired record of this interview, John is telling us again what he told us he was going to tell us. When people properly responded to Jesus, they were born again. This chapter describes the new birth of a Samaritan woman and the men she reached in the city of Samaria.

The interview of Jesus recorded in this chapter is a profile of life's two greatest experiences: being born again yourself and being the instrument through which other people are born again. Jesus described for this woman these two greatest experiences in life allegorically. He essentially said: "Woman, if you will take this one drink, Living Water will not only quench your thirst, but it will become in you a spring of water from which other people will come and drink."

In other words, “You will not only be born again and quench your own thirst for life. You will become a spring, a source, to which other people will come to quench their thirsts and be born again.” All of that happens to this woman. Once she experiences the new birth herself, she goes all over Samaria and reaches men for Christ.

As you summarize this long interview, which including the response to the interview, takes up forty-two verses, ask those questions with which we are approaching the Gospel of John. Who is Jesus? In this interview, Jesus is Living Water. Thirst is one of our basic needs as human beings. Jesus is the living water that can quench our thirst.

And what is faith, in this interview? We have an answer to what faith is when Jesus says to this woman, "If you knew Who you were talking to, if you knew the Gift of God, Oh, what you would ask Him for! Faith is realizing when you ask God for something you are addressing the King of the universe, Who has infinite resources and unlimited power. This interview gives us another answer to the question, “What is faith?” every time we drink a glass of water. We believe a glass of water we hold in our hand will quench our thirst. We demonstrate our faith in that reality when we actually drink that glass of water. In like fashion, many believe Jesus can quench their thirst but they never - by faith - drink the Living Water.

When Jesus tells the woman to call her husband if she really wants this Living Water, we have one more answer to John’s

question about what faith is. The faith issue of repentance must be faced. In all the interviews of Jesus, recorded by John and the authors of the other Gospels, there is no such thing as saving faith without repentance. As we saw in the interviews Jesus had with Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler, Jesus prescribed repentance before He announced that salvation had been experienced (Luke 18:18-23; 19:8,9).

Then as we read John’s account of this interview we should ask, “What is life?” Life is experiencing those two great experiences, of being born again ourselves and then becoming instruments through which other people are born again. Life could also be getting rid of our “water pots.” (John 4:28) We all have our thirsts or needs. However, the Good News here is that, when we are born again, we leave our “water pots” – our old ways of quenching our thirst - when our life thirsts are quenched, and we become vessels from which others drink and are born again.

Have you had your thirst quenched? Have you believed that Jesus can quench your thirst but you have never by faith taken that drink of the Living Water? If you have not experienced this great joy, repent of your sin, leave your old “water pots” behind and accept Jesus as your Living Water. My prayer is that if you have been born again and He is your Spring of Living Water, you will experience this second joy when you share the Good News with others, even with those who are looked down on by your culture and society.

## **Chapter Two**

### **“In His Harvest”**

I now want to look at verses that describe the way this interview with the women of Samaria is responded to by Jesus and by the apostles (John 4:27-42). Beginning at verse 27, we read: "And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with the woman; yet no one said, 'What do You seek?' or 'Why are You talking with her?' The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 'Come, see a Man Who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

“In the meantime His disciples urged Him saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’ Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’”

When the disciples returned, they were amazed that He was speaking with a woman, especially this particular Samaritan woman, and yet nobody dared ask Him, "What are you doing?" or "Why are you speaking with her?" We have here an example of the fact that, when Jesus interviewed people like Nicodemus and this woman, He had perfect discernment.

Compare the discernment of Jesus and the discernment of the apostles. What did the apostles see? They saw a Samaritan woman, an ignorant woman, and they saw a woman of questionable reputation, or a sinful woman. But what did Jesus see? Jesus saw a thirsty woman; Jesus saw a woman who was ready to receive the experience of the new birth. Jesus saw a woman who could reach all of Samaria for Him after He had passed through Samaria.

When the apostles urged Jesus to eat, He made these great statements, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." The apostles took Jesus literally and thought someone had brought Him food. Jesus

followed up with yet another great statement: "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to finish His work."

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is a Man with a mission, and He is a Man who knows what that mission is. Observe how often He will make reference to the works the Father wants Him to do. He will say: "I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no man can work." (9:4) Here He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent me, and to finish His work." (4:34)

When He concludes three years of public ministry, He prays to the Father: "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the works You have given Me to do." (17:4) When He has accomplished our salvation on the cross, His last words are a great cry of triumph: "It is finished!" (19:30)

These mission statements of our Lord should challenge us to finish, each and every day, all the works God assigns us. The most profound statement Jesus made about the dynamics of the ministry of evangelism that He committed to us as His disciples, is found in the verses that follow His dynamic interview with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well when He passed through Samaria.

### **Sowing and Reaping**

Our study of the Gospel of John has now brought us to the place where Jesus has finished His interview with the woman in Samaria, who has been born again as a result of that interview. What we have before us is a great statement about the ministry toward which

the Lord wants to direct all of us (4:35-42). Jesus directed the Samaritan woman into that ministry and He then apprenticed the apostles by sharing with them a vision of the miracle that brought the Samaritan woman to the Living Water.

Like most people in their cultural setting, these men who traveled with Jesus, were more than likely agrarian to the degree that they raised enough vegetables to feed their families. In that sense they were all farmers. This means that these men clearly and easily understood when Jesus used metaphors like the farmer planting seeds in different kinds of soils in His Parable of the Sower. They easily understood when Jesus spoke of weeds in their garden in His Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

They had apparently been talking about the fact that, in four months it was going to be harvest time, and how important it was for them to be home in time for that harvest. I am convinced that Jesus is making reference to their conversation along those lines when He, in essence, says to them, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, 'Lift up your eyes and look at the fields. For they are already white (over ripe) and just waiting for some servant of the Lord to come along and harvest them.'"

This is the context of one of the great exhortations of Jesus: "Lift up your eyes and (then) look on the fields." What motivated Him to say this? He had just had the interview with the Samaritan woman. When Jesus and the apostles met that woman at the well in Samaria, all

that the apostles saw, was a sinful, Samaritan woman. Jesus is saying essentially, "Lift up your eyes before you look at people like her. God will give you discernment if you look up before you look at people. This is especially true when you are looking down on people. See people as God sees them." That is the essence of what Jesus was saying here in these magnificent verses of Scripture.

Jeremiah gave us one reason why we simply must do this when he stated that, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He then asked, "Who can know it?" He answers his own question by telling us emphatically that only God knows the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9,10).

I have been a pastor since 1956. I had not been a pastor very long before I agreed with Jeremiah - that I did not know my own heart or the hearts of my people. In my ignorance, I had frequently said, "You will never meet people you cannot love if you understand them." It was not long before I met some people I thought I understood very well, but found very difficult to love. I am so grateful that in my early years as a pastor, Jesus taught me to lift up my eyes before I look at people. I made the great discovery, that if we will look up before we look around, we will see people like that Samaritan woman the way Jesus saw her rather than the way she was seen by the apostles.

Some may ask the question, "Does Jesus look with love upon sinners who commit horrible crimes and do us great harm?" The answer to that question comes wrapped in one beautiful Bible word:

"mercy". This word is found 366 times in the Bible, once for every day of the year plus an extra day for a leap year.

What is mercy? Mercy is the unconditional love of God. Mercy is the attribute of God that withholds from us what we deserve. The grace of God is the attribute of God that gives and provides, and even lavishes upon us, all kinds of blessings we do not deserve. The grace of God is the work of God within you, without you. The grace of God is the love of God being given to you. The word "mercy" is the biblical word that describes the way God withholds from us what we do deserve. Mercy describes for us how God loves. Mercy is simply the biblical word that tells us the love of God is unconditional.

Jesus reminded us that, "God makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45) He was simply reminding us of the fact that God loves unconditionally. David writes that the goodness and mercy (unconditional love) of God actually pursued him all the days of his life (Psalm 23:6).

I once heard a judge, who had been a judge for more than five decades, say, that most of the people who came before his court were not interested in justice because they were guilty - and they knew they were guilty. They were therefore interested in mercy. The last time I heard the preaching of a great pastor who had modeled the ministry for me, he was eighty-one years old. His opening statement was, "I am now very old, and as I prepare myself to be with my Lord, I am only interested in one concept: the mercy of God!"



There would be no salvation for any of us if it were not for the mercy of God. We should therefore thank God for His mercy and for the blessed reality that God looks upon sinners with unconditional love. So, if you and I lift up our eyes before we look at people, we will never look at anybody that we cannot love if we are in union with Christ and with God's love.

This great exhortation we hear from Jesus is His response to the new birth experience of the Samaritan woman. In so many words, Jesus is saying to His apostles, "You are always talking about harvest. Do you not realize it is harvest every day? Lift up your eyes, then look at people and you will see that people are like over ripe fruit, more than ready to be harvested."

As this woman was thirsty and more than ready for the Living Water, there are many people today who are ready and waiting for some servant of Christ to harvest them. If we will simply lift up our eyes before we look at people, we will discover that these words of Jesus are as dynamically true today as they were beside that well in Samaria two thousand years ago.

I wonder if anybody has ever believed because of your word of testimony about what Christ has come to mean to you? Have you found the Living Water? Has He quenched your thirst? If He has, remember, it is His plan that your drink of Living Water should become, in you, a spring of water from which other people might be able to come and drink. Does anyone believe because you no longer need your "water pots"?

Also make this observation: after the men of Samaria came to Christ because of the word of the woman, they said: "Now we believe, not because of what you said. We have heard Him for ourselves and we know (this is a word that means to know by experience and by relationship) that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the World."

When we have the privilege of reaping, it is so very important that we lead people to Christ and not to ourselves. Our objective must be that they are able to say that it is no longer a matter of our word of witness. We should pray diligently that we will hear them say the essence of what these men of Samaria said to this woman: We have heard Him ourselves, and we know (by relationship) that this is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world and our personal Savior.

What these men of Samaria said also enforces the systematic argument of the Apostle John in this Gospel. Remember that John's purpose for writing this Gospel is to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. John wants us to believe his systematic argument, because our believing his argument opens the door to Living Water - eternal life for us (20:30,31).

Jesus also teaches: "He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. According to Jesus, when we have the experience of being the vehicle through which somebody else discovers life's two greatest experiences, we receive wages. Those wages may not be paid to us in money, but there are wages! These are the most rewarding wages a human being can ever receive: Knowing that our life counted

for something; knowing it eternally mattered to that person we passed on the way, that before we looked at them, we looked up; that we were to them the human agent of the two greatest experiences of life, is the most rewarding and fulfilling wage we could possibly earn in this world.

How do you feel about the person who led you to Christ? How do people whom you have led to Christ feel about you? Think about that for a minute and see if you do not find meaning in these words, "He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life." How can you impact the quality of your eternity by the way you spend this life span? One way is, "He who wins souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

In Luke chapter 16, the Lord said that it is possible for us to make friends, who will be waiting for us, in everlasting habitations, in the eternal state. According to Jesus, these friends will welcome us into the eternal state and say, "We would not be here in these everlasting habitations if it were not for the fact that you were the human agent of our salvation." That is certainly giving purpose and meaning and definition and direction to a human life, is it not? What could you possibly do that could bring more purpose and meaning into your life and into the lives of others than to share the Good News that they can receive God's mercy and grace?

When the Apostle Paul thanked the Philippians for supporting his ministry, which was leading hundreds of Gentiles to Christ, he told his favorite church that he did not desire their gifts, but he desired that fruit might abound to their account in the eternal state. That is what

Jesus was teaching, in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, when He gave His profound parable of the unjust steward. We cannot take our money with us, but we can buy shares in heaven, according to Jesus and Paul.

Jesus then tells us that when these wages are received and the fruit is gathered for eternity, both the one who sows and the one who reaps will rejoice together: For in this ministry of leading people to the Living Water, it is true that one sows and another reaps.

As you reflect on this metaphor, ask yourself this question: Who led you to Christ? Who led you to faith? You may think of one person. But really, was it one person, one radio program you listened to, or one gospel tract you read, or was it a whole succession of persons, who planted seeds, who sowed the truth of the Gospel in your life, long before the servant of the Lord who reaped your salvation, came into your life?

Could it be that God used a parent, a grandmother, grandfather, friend, neighbor, Sunday-School teacher or a godly pastor to sow the Word of God in your life? If you think about it, you may realize that all kinds of people planted seeds in your heart until one day somebody came along and brought your faith to a verdict. That person reaped your salvation. The person we think of as the soul winner, or the disciple maker, is the reaper in this teaching of Jesus.

Every time someone "leads a person to the Lord" as we put it, or has this reaping experience, that person should realize this: one sows and another reaps. Jesus was training these disciples to become reapers, but He said, "I am sending you to reap that on which you have

not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

When you have the joy of reaping, when you have the joy of bringing someone to faith, what a wonderful thing it is to be the human agency of the new birth! Perhaps you are a pastor, an evangelist, a teacher or a believer presenting the Gospel to people one on one. Your greatest experience in life is your own experience of the new birth. When you present the Gospel to somebody, whether it is one at a time or in a group setting, and they are born again, for you that is the second greatest experience in life.

But, remember this: any time you reap, somebody else probably sowed. The Apostle Paul writes that in eternity we will know as completely as God now knows us (I Corinthians 13:12). When we know, even as God now knows us, we will learn that many people sowed that we might reap. When we reap, others have labored and we are entering into the labors of a long procession of the faithful sowing of faithful witnesses who sowed that we might experience the joy of reaping.

In summary, in this interview and the response to the interview, do you see the answers to the key questions that unlock the truth of this Gospel for us? Once again, those questions are: "Who is Jesus? What is Faith? What is Life?"

Who is Jesus? He is the Living Water. Jesus is the Christ, Who speaks to your heart. He is the Messiah.

What is faith? Faith is repentance, as in "Go call your husband." Like these men of Samaria and the apostles when they first met Jesus, faith means to come and meet Jesus. Faith is asking: "If you know Who you are talking to when you pray, for what should you ask Him?" Faith is leaving your water pot, the symbol of your thirst, and substituting the Living Water of Christ for the symptoms of your thirst.

What is life? Life is having your thirst quenched. Life is Living Water. Life is those two great experiences: your own personal experience of the new birth and then being the human agent through whom others are born again.

### **Believing Is Seeing**

The fourth chapter of the Gospel of John concludes with the story of another sign, or miraculous evidence, that continues the line of reasoning of the Apostle John. Jesus continued His journey from Judea to Galilee after His fruitful ministry in Samaria through the woman He met at Jacob's well. He returns to Cana in Galilee, where He turned the water into wine. Since Nazareth is not far from Cana, this means He is returning home. He had left Galilee because a "prophet has no honor in his home country" (Mark 6:4). The miracle at Cana was declared to be His first sign, and as He returns He will now perform the second sign or miracle recorded by the Apostle John.

There is a man in Capernaum who is a nobleman - literally a king's man - who has a son with a terrible fever that has brought him

to the point of death. This distraught father leaves the bedside of his dying son and travels the twenty miles to Cana, because he has heard that Jesus is there. This father is a beautiful example of another answer to that question, “What is faith?”

He knew where to go when he had a problem. He went to Jesus when he had a problem he could not solve. He was serious about going to Jesus with his problem. He left the bedside of a dying son to go to Jesus with his problem. What would it take to get you and me to leave a dying child? He was very serious about going to Jesus with his problem. He left the deathbed of his dying son because he believed that Jesus represented the only hope of his dying son.

He was convinced that he had to persuade Jesus to come to Capernaum to personally minister healing to his little boy. However, he really becomes an example of faith when he has his interview with Jesus. It seems cold and harsh when Jesus exclaims, “You will not believe unless you see signs and miracles.” The original language helps us to understand that these words were not directed to this father personally but to his class of noble people. The word is plural as in all of you, or you all.

Jesus tests the faith of this father when He pronounces: “Go your way. Your son lives!” The father does not protest or insist that Jesus come home with him. He simply does what Jesus told him to do. A secular view of faith is that “Seeing is believing.” The spirit of this approach to faith is “I will believe it when I see it.” The Bible

consistently teaches that believing is (leading us to) seeing. David announces: “I would have fainted if I had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” (Psalm 27:13)

This father knew where to go when he had a problem. He went to Jesus with his problem. He was serious about going to Jesus with his problem. He believed what he saw when he went to Jesus with his problem. When he was on his way home - in obedience to what Jesus told him to do - he saw what he believed when he went to Jesus. Servants met him and told him, “Your son lives!” These were the very words of Jesus to this father. He then believed with his entire household.

Do you know where to go when you have a problem? Do you go to Jesus when you have a problem you cannot solve? Are you serious about going to Jesus with your problem? Do you believe what you see when you go to Jesus with your problem? If you do, like this father you will see what you believe when you go to Jesus with the problems you cannot solve. Seeing is not believing. Believing is (leading us to) seeing. Like David and like this father, believe to see the goodness of the Lord in your experience of life.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **“The Man at the Pool”**

As our study of the Gospel of John brings us to Chapter Five, we see again the same thing we saw in the first four chapters of this Gospel. It almost sounds redundant, but the theme in each chapter of the Gospel of John is presented consistently and beautifully. Remember again that in the prologue, he told us that when people responded properly to Jesus Christ, they were born again. John's going to tell us that again as we begin reading Chapter Five.

This chapter begins by telling us that when Jesus went into Jerusalem He had to pass by a heart-wrenching place called “The Pool of Bethesda.” We read that around the porches of this pool lay a great multitude of weak people. They were suffering from every kind of sickness. These hopeless and helpless sick people had a belief that may have been a superstition. They lay on the porches around the Pool of Bethesda because they believed that if the water rippled, an angel was moving the water and when that happened, the first one in the pool would be healed. This sudden movement in the water was caused by the springs that supplied water to this pool.

The religious people also walked by that pool every time they went to worship. Jesus could not walk on by the Pool of Bethesda. He simply had to stop there. Jesus moved among this great multitude of weak people until He found a man who could have been there longer than anyone else and who was probably the weakest one there.

This man had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. However, every time the water rippled, he had no one to help him into the water. Somebody always got in the pool before him. He simply could not be the first one to get into the pool. He tells Jesus, "I have no man to help me."

It is sad to think that he had no friend or relative who cared enough to help him. Jesus finds this man and He asks him what we might think is a strange question. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be well?” Now, the man might have said, “What does it look like? I have been here for thirty-eight years. Of course I want to be well!” But he did not say those things.

Health professionals find this question to be very much in order because there are people who do not want to get well. They would not know what to do if they got well. Their whole life seems to center around the reality that they are sick. There are hypochondriacs with a martyr complex who clearly want to be sick. They seem to find their identity as persons in their illnesses.

Why do people like to talk about their operations? Why do we love to give an “organ recital” organ by organ? It is called “a martyr complex.” So, it was a very proper question when Jesus asked, "Do you want to be well?"

When Jesus heals the man, he has a bedroll he has been lying on. It is the Sabbath day. The Jews were not permitted to carry a burden on the Sabbath day. But Jesus essentially says to this man,

"Pick up your bedroll, put it over your shoulder and go charging down the street, right in front of the Temple."

This begins a dialog Jesus has with the religious establishment that continues and is recorded through the ninth chapter of the Gospel of John. This dialogue between Jesus and the religious establishment is important because the Holy Spirit devotes five chapters of inspired Scripture to record the content of that dialog for us. Make the observation that Jesus initiated this dialog when He told this man to pick up his bedroll and carry it down the street in violation of the Sabbath law. He was not violating the laws written by Moses, but the hundreds of laws the Pharisees and scribes had added to the Sabbath laws of Moses.

The fact that the man had been lying on a bedroll, sick, for thirty-eight years and is now well enough to walk down the street in front of the Temple does not appear to be important to those religious leaders. Having been in bed or in a wheelchair since the early 1980s, I would think they would have said, "Look at that! That's the man from the Pool of Bethesda! Why, he is like part of the landscape, he has been there so long. Look at him! He is well! He is walking! How wonderful!"

But they did not say that. Their response was, "You are breaking a rule! You are carrying your bedroll on the Sabbath!" They wanted to know who told him to carry his bedroll. He told them that the One Who healed him, had told him to carry his bedroll.

That locked Jesus into this hostile dialogue, which He obviously wanted, with these religious leaders.

I would like to give you an assignment that gets us to the heart of this Gospel: As you read John's record of this dialog, get a pen and notebook and write down everything Jesus claims about Himself. Every time Jesus makes a claim about who He is, what He is, or what He is doing here, in this dialog, write that down.

According to C.S. Lewis, the great professor of Renaissance literature, when you get to the end of Chapter Eight, and you reflect on what you have written, you will only have three choices: You can call Jesus a liar, you can be kind and call Him a lunatic, or you can call Him Lord and fall down and worship Him. Those are the only choices He is going to give you by the time you have made a list of all the claims He is going to make about Himself in this dialog.

Jesus is obviously baiting the religious establishment into this dialogue. He is getting ready to make these claims and He begins His claims with a miracle that authenticates His claims. The miracle itself is a beautiful story that takes us to that deeper level of truth in the Gospel of John.

In the Revelation, John tells us in the first chapter that the churches are like seven golden candlesticks and in the midst of these seven golden candlesticks he sees One Who is like the Son of Man. He sees Christ in the midst of these candlesticks. In that beautiful Jewish sign language, John is telling us that Jesus can be found today in the midst of all His churches. Matthew records that when Christ is

born, wise men come and ask the question, "Where is He?" John answers their question in the Revelation. At least one answer to that question of the wise men is that Jesus Christ is in the midst of His churches.

John is giving us another beautiful allegory when he describes that great multitude of weak people around the Pool of Bethesda. Someone has said that this great multitude of weak people is a good picture of the church. We think there is strength in numbers. In some parts of the world, we get excited because we have a lot of people attending evangelical churches today.

However, when you get a great multitude of weak people together, that is not a church; that is a good description of a hospital! A hospital could be called "a great multitude of weak people." Do we think we have strength because we have a lot of weakness? If that is the application here, then as you see Jesus moving among that great multitude of weak people, you should see Christ in the midst of His churches.

That is where Christ is today and that is where He would like to find you. As you see Christ finding this impotent man, who has been there at the pool of Bethesda longer than anyone else, and who is the weakest of them all, may I suggest a personal application? Are you part of a great multitude of weak people? Are you, perhaps, the weakest one of them all? Have you been weak longer than anyone else and are you sick and tired of being weak? Well then, the application of this story is addressed specifically to you. The risen,

living, healing Jesus Christ is in the midst of His churches today and He is looking for you. When Jesus finds you He wants to ask you, "Are you sick and tired of being weak? Do you want to be well?"

I have often wondered why Jesus did not heal everybody at the Pool of Bethesda. There is no question about the fact that He could have healed everybody around that pool. Why did He not look out over that great multitude of weak people and say, "Be healed! Pick up your bedrolls and charge down the street in front of the Temple?" That really would have impressed the religious establishment! Why did Jesus only heal this one man? I am convinced that the answer to that question is that this man had given up on the Pool of Bethesda. He realized there was no hope for him in the Pool of Bethesda.

I am convinced that those poor, misguided people actually believed in a superstition when they believed that the first one in the Pool would be healed. This Pool of Bethesda pictures allegorically the places people look for healing, that will never give them the wellness or wholeness they are seeking. They are trying to find healing and abundant or eternal life in so many places and in so many ways. Those places and their means of healing are very often "Pools of Bethesda".

As Jesus therefore moves among weak and hopeless people today, He is looking for the people who have realized that their "Pools of Bethesda" are not going to make them well. Drugs are not going to make them whole. Alcohol is not going to give them eternal

life. They are not going to find wholeness or wellness in people; they are not going to find the elusive something they are seeking in having affairs or sin, and they are not going to find wholeness in money, success, prestige, status, or power.

When people have tried all of their “Pools of Bethesda” and know they are never going to find eternal life in those places, they are ready for Jesus. Jesus likes to move among weak people until He finds the weakest one. Then He likes to ask that weak person, “Do you know it is possible for My strength to be made perfect through your weakness? If you will only turn to Me, and trust in Me, I can make you whole!” That truth, which is also beautifully described by the Apostle Paul, is what is pictured for us in the healing of this weak man at the Pool of Bethesda.

This man’s story is also a picture of what it means to be born again. See yourself in this impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. You may be physically weak. Perhaps you are weak spiritually. It may be that in your weakness you can find the strength of Jesus Christ. Give up on your “Pools of Bethesda” and turn to Jesus. Say to Him, "Yes, I want to be whole. I want You to make me well.

## **Chapter Four**

### **“Liar, Lunatic or Lord?”**

“You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." (5:39,40)

That is the way Jesus begins His dialogue with these religious leaders. The healing of the man at the Pool was what we might call a strategic healing because it was the catalyst that established the forum in which Jesus presented Himself to the spiritual leaders of the Jews.

As I have observed, we would think the religious establishment would have been ecstatic about the fact that he is able to walk. But they did not look at it that way. When they saw him carrying his bedroll, they said, "Hey, mister, you are breaking a law! This shows us how far they were from the Apostle Paul called, “the spirit of the law.” Jesus healed this man the way He healed him, because at this point in His ministry, Jesus obviously wanted to become locked in a dialogue with the religious leaders.

We learned in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus teaches by way of sermons, discourses and parables. Much of His finest teaching is given in the context of dialogue. He teaches by way of His interviews with people and His three years of continuous dialogue with the apostles.

Jesus also teaches us in His hostile dialogue with the religious



establishment. Especially in chapters five through eight of his Gospel, John gives us his accurate summary of this long dialogue between Jesus and the religious establishment. The setting of the dialogue changes at times. It revolves around miracles Jesus performs – the man at the pool, the feeding of the multitude, the spiritual healing of the woman taken in adultery, the man who was born blind – which is the way chapters five through nine begin.

As you list the claims of Jesus in Chapter Five, you will discover that Jesus was essentially claiming: All judgment has been committed to Me. I am the Son, and God My Father is not going to judge anybody at the last day. He has turned all that over to Me. I am going to judge everybody. Jesus will also claim that He can do all the works the Father can do.

He relates attributes of the Father to Himself. You see, if you were to claim to be God, a question we might ask you is this: "Oh, so you are God? Well, let me ask you something. Can you create? God creates; can you create?" Jesus will make the claim that He is the Creator. We would say, "Well now, God is eternal. God always was. He is now, He always was, and He always will be. Are you eternal?"

At the end of this hostile dialogue they will turn to Jesus and say, "Why, you are not yet fifty years old and you act as if you knew Abraham." Jesus will respond, "Before Abraham was, I am." We then read that they picked up rocks to stone Him for blasphemy.

There was no question in the minds of these religious leaders who heard these claims of Jesus as to what He was claiming.

They did not say, "Well, You could not possibly be all of those things You claim, but You are a wonderful man." They could not do that. They either wanted to stone Him, or we read that when He finished making all these claims, "Many believed on Him." Jesus turned to those who believed on Him and in essence said, "Now continue in My word and become My disciples indeed. Then you will know the Truth and the Truth will make you free. And when the Son, Who is the Truth, makes you free, you will be free indeed." Some attempted to stone Him, and some called Him "Lord," followed Him and became His disciples indeed.

I have asked you to make a list of all of the claims of Jesus in these chapters of the Gospel of John. Now reflect on the claims of Christ you have recorded. After you consider these claims of Jesus I believe you will discover that you only have those three choices I told you C. S. Lewis outlined for us. Then, be intellectually honest enough to call Jesus a liar, a lunatic or your Savior, Lord, and your God.

After stating these claims in Chapter Five, since they had inferred that there was no evidence that proved Jesus was Who He claimed to be, He essentially says to them, "You do not really lack evidence for believing these things." Jesus told them at one point in that hostile dialogue, "Your problem is not essentially intellectual; it is moral and a matter of your will or of what you deliberately choose.

What Jesus really said to them was this: "If you really wanted to believe My claims, there is plenty of evidence. For example, John the Baptist, whom you revere, said the most wonderful things about Me." They all acknowledged that John the Baptist was a prophet. Jesus said, "John bore witness of Me." We saw that in the record of John the Baptist.

Then Jesus said, "You have the works that I have done." Jesus did many miraculous works. At the end of Chapter Two, we read that He performed many miracles in Jerusalem and some people believed because He performed those miracles. Jesus now reminds these religious leaders of those miracles when He says, "You have My miracles. I have healed this man here at the Pool of Bethesda. My works prove My claims."

Then Jesus said, "You have the witness of the Father Himself at My baptism. When I was baptized, the Father Himself spoke and said, 'This is My beloved Son.' You have the witness of God the Father."

Then He made reference to the Scriptures and gave us two verses the English devotional writer Oswald Chambers says are the key that unlocks the truth of the whole Bible for us. In essence, Jesus said to these people, who were Bible experts, "You search the Scripture because you think that by becoming a Bible expert you are going to have eternal life." Then He gave us that key to the whole Bible. He said, "They (the Scriptures) are they which testify of Me, and you will not come unto Me that you might have life."

A revised translation puts it this way: "You search and investigate and pore over the Scriptures diligently because you suppose that you have eternal life through them. But these very Scriptures testify about Me, and still you are not willing, but refuse to come to Me so that you might have life." The original Greek text here actually suggests something like this: "You do not come to Me because you will, not to come." What Jesus is saying is this: the issue is not intellectual; the issue is moral and the issue is that you are making the deliberate choice not to come.

In the early sixties I was conducting a discussion for a group of law students at a law school in Florida. I was having a heated debate with one of those law students. At one point, instead of arguing, which I had been doing for quite some time, I felt led to say to him, "Well, the issue here is not really intellectual, it is actually moral and one of choice. The question really is, do you want to accept the moral consequences of believing in Christ and following Christ?"

I could sense from the response of the other students that I had broken through to the real issue in some way. Afterwards, several of them came up to me and said, "That was the whole point. We all know he has a mistress. His life style was the real issue. The issue was not all those theological and philosophical arguments he was getting you into. When you made the point that the issue is not intellectual, but his moral choices, you were addressing the real issue."

I learned that from this dialogue Jesus had with these religious leaders. That is what Jesus was doing when He said to them, "You do not lack evidence. The truth is, you do not want to come to Me. That is why you do not come to Me." In Jewish law, only two witnesses were required to prove something. Jesus gave them five infallible witnesses. He said, "If you want evidence, you have plenty of evidence. You do not come to Me for eternal life because you do not want to come to Me."

Jesus also asked the religious leaders a profound question: "How can you believe while you are always looking for each other's approval and care not for the approval that comes from God?" I think He was saying to them, "You are playing a worldly, secular game and that game is seeking one another's approval. It never even seems to occur to you to seek the approval that comes from God, or to ask, 'How does God feel about who I am and what I am doing?'" The essence of His question was, "If you are living your lives on the horizontal level, seeking one another's approval, how can you profess to believe in God? You are not even interested in the vertical, in the up-look, or considering whether or not you are pleasing God."

In Chapter Five, John really answers that question, "Who is Jesus?" Remember that, at the beginning of my commentary on this Gospel of John, I challenged you to answer three questions in every chapter of this Gospel. John certainly answers the first one of those questions, "Who is Jesus?" when he records for us the claims of Jesus about Himself in this dialog which begins in Chapter Five. His

answers to that first question are awesome in this chapter. He is: The Son Who is one with His Father God, is loved by His Father, and can do all the works the Father can do. The Son Who will judge everyone. He is the Son, Who has been sent by His Father God to raise the dead and give eternal life to those He chooses. He is the Healer of the weakest of the weak. Scripture is all about Him and we must come to Him to receive eternal life. He is actually claiming that He is eternal.

The second question I challenged you to answer all the way through this Gospel is the question, "What is faith?" That question is also answered for us here. Faith is not primarily intellectual. Faith is essentially moral and a matter of deliberate choice, according to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John.

Then, what about that third question, "What is life?" in Chapter Five? The answer to that question takes us back, of course, to the man who has been healed at the Pool of Bethesda. Life is wholeness. Life is wellness. Jesus tells us that life is being born again; life is coming to Christ, exchanging your weakness and sickness for His wellness and wholeness, being related to Him and knowing that you have His approval. These are the answers of Jesus to that question, "What is life?" in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Five

### “The Parable of the Missionary Vision of Jesus”

Chapter Six begins with a miracle, the feeding of the five thousand. We considered that miracle when we surveyed the Synoptic Gospels. Therefore, we will not consider it in depth here. But, following the miracle where Jesus feeds five thousand hungry men and their families, perhaps twenty thousand people, He gives a great discourse. This discourse is also part of His hostile dialogue with the religious leaders. This is called "The Bread of Life Discourse."

In the Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus claims that He is the Bread of Life. In Chapter Four Jesus dogmatically claimed that He was Living Water as He addressed one of the basic needs of man, which is thirst. Jesus said, "I am the Living Water that can quench your thirst forever." Of course when Jesus said that, He was picturing the new birth and the eternal life John so very much wants us to experience.

In what is considered His most difficult discourse to understand, Jesus addresses another basic need of man - hunger. Jesus essentially says, "I can satisfy your hunger for the rest of your life." In the context of that claim, He gives His Bread of Life Discourse. When He finished this discourse, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no

more." Jesus then turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?"

This is where we find, in the words of Peter, one of the most insightful answers to the question, "What is faith?" When Jesus asked the apostles if they were also going to leave Him, Peter said essentially, "Where are we going to go? You have the words of life." Peter did not understand this difficult discourse, but by faith he chose to continue to follow.

At the end of the Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus said, "Unless you drink My blood and eat My flesh, you do not have eternal life." Some thought He was teaching cannibalism. That is why so many walked away. I am sure that discourse went over Peter's head like a flock of flying birds. Peter did not understand what Jesus was saying. But, this is where we get a good answer to that question, "What is faith?" Sometimes, faith is believing when we do not understand.

Isaiah told us that God does not think like a man, or act like a man. Therefore, we should not expect to understand God, according to Isaiah. (Isaiah 55) However, Isaiah goes on to tell us that the Word of God will bring about an alignment and agreement of our thoughts and God's thoughts. That was why Isaiah preached the Word of God and that is why we should preach the Word of God, and read and study the Word of God.

However, as we come to God through the Word of God, we should not always expect to understand everything we read about

God, because God is not a man and God is infinitely different from man. Since Jesus was the greatest revelation of God this world has received, we should not be surprised to read that there were times when illiterate fishermen did not understand Jesus.

Consider the wisdom of Solomon when Solomon asked in Proverbs chapter twenty, verse twenty-four, "If a man's goings are of the Lord, how can that man always expect to understand the way he is going?" If God does not act like a man or think like a man and we are going His way and seeking His will for our lives, we should not always expect to understand the way we are going when we are being led by our God.

Peter shows great wisdom when he responds to the Bread of Life Discourse of Jesus by essentially saying, "I do not understand what You are saying, but I believe in you and I am following You, anyway."

Jesus not only gave us a picture of the new birth when He talked about Living Water and Living Bread, He gave us beautiful answers to the question, "What is faith?" As I have observed, every time you drink a glass of water, you have a picture of what faith is. Imagine that you are dying of thirst. You hold in your hand a glass of water that you believe can quench your thirst and save your life. How are you going to demonstrate the reality that you really believe that water can quench your thirst and save your life? You demonstrate your faith when you drink that water.

Jesus is saying, "I am the Living Water and you have a thirst

for life. I am the Living Bread and you have a hunger for real, eternal, abundant life. How are you going to demonstrate the reality that you believe I can quench your life thirst and satisfy your hunger for life? How are you going to bring Me into an alignment with your life that will make it possible for Me to quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger? Well, just as you drink the water to demonstrate the reality that you believe a glass of water can quench your thirst, you must appropriate Me, you must receive Me, you must believe in Me and become properly related to Me. You must come and follow Me."

This is what Jesus was saying in the most difficult part of His Bread of Life Discourse when He spoke of drinking His blood and eating His flesh. When He used those two metaphors, He was essentially teaching: "All that was accomplished by My death and all that My death can mean to you, you must drink; you must really believe, you must appropriate. You must receive into your life experience all that God wants to give you through My death, which is represented by My blood, and symbolized by the wine of the communion service I will establish hours before I die on My cross. You symbolize and express your faith in all that My death means to you when you drink the wine of the communion service."

The other great reality about Jesus was the life He lived. Jesus lived a fantastic life here on earth, and while He lived that life He was showing us truth and giving us grace to apply the truth He modeled and taught. He was showing us and enabling us to live life

as God intended us to live life. The life of Christ displayed in the Gospels is an exhibition of eternal life. Eternal life is essentially a quality of life and it is a quantity of life.

When Jesus says, "You must eat My flesh," He is giving us another illustration about faith. He tells us here in this discourse, "I am the Living Bread and you are hungry. How can you take bread when you are hungry and relate to that bread in such a way that the bread satisfies your hunger? You eat the bread; you appropriate the bread; you receive the bread.

My life, the life that I am living here for thirty-three years, is showing you how to satisfy your hunger for life. My life is showing you how My Father God intended you should live your life. You must properly respond to My life. You must appropriate My life. You must symbolically demonstrate your faith in My Life and all that My Life can mean to you when you eat the bread of the communion service.

In other words, you must eat My flesh (as represented by the bread) and drink My blood (as represented by the wine or the cup) or you do not have eternal life." Jesus is not teaching here that eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Lord's Table will give us eternal life. He is teaching that believing in what the bread and wine represent, will give us eternal life. When Peter writes that baptism saves us, he means that what we profess to believe when we are baptized saves us (I Peter 3:21).

However, Peter and His other disciples did not understand

what I have just explained. We read that many of the disciples of Jesus went away and no longer followed Him because their idea of faith was this: "I only believe what I understand." Remember there was a difference between a disciple and an apostle. Disciples were followers, but the apostles were disciples Jesus commissioned to be apostles or His special messengers.

Many disciples turned away from Jesus at this point but all of His apostles followed Peter's lead here and followed Jesus, even though they did not understand this discourse of Jesus. Peter had the gift of an exemplary faith when he said, "I do not understand but I believe anyway."

When we reach the point where we do not understand, we must build the bridge of faith from what we do understand to what we do not understand. Sometimes we walk in the light by sight, but sometimes we must walk in the dark, by faith.

Even though it is called "The Bread of Life Discourse" this discourse is not primarily about bread. There is a sense in which the discourse is actually about meaningful work. Observe the context of the discourse. Jesus resumed His hostile dialogue with these leaders about their work. Jesus said some very hard things to them. He said to them, "Your work is meaningless, and what is more, you have the wrong motives for your meaningless work."

They responded, "Well then, what is meaningful work? What is the work of God?" Jesus said, "You believe in Me and I will show you what meaningful work is." Then they essentially responded,

"What do You do all day? "If You are the One who can tell us about meaningful work, what do You do all day?"

In this Bread of Life Discourse Jesus eloquently gave us His philosophy of ministry. Jesus told them about His work, and what He said is profound. I would like to paraphrase and summarize the essence of what Jesus said: "This is what I do: as I move through this world, when God the Father tells Me to speak words, I speak them. I speak what My Father tells Me to speak. Some people reject My words. They are not tuned to God and they do not hear My words at all. But when I speak these same words the Father tells Me to speak, the people who are being drawn to the Father by the Holy Spirit, discover that those words are Spirit and those words are Life. These people come to God when they hear those words. That is what I do all day."

Jesus was telling those people and you and me about something very exciting. He will tell us the same thing in the Upper Room Discourse later on in the Gospel of John. It is possible to be a vehicle through which God does His work. God's work is the most meaningful work you or I could ever possibly do. That does not mean everybody is called to be a preacher or a missionary. However, I think this does mean that whatever you do, you should be doing it because you believe that is the work God has given you to do.

God may have placed you in the business world or in a profession. He may have made you a homemaker and a mother, which means God has called you to be a man maker, a people maker,

a home maker and a memory maker. God may have called you to be a mechanic. Wherever you are, you should have the conviction that you are where you have been called by God to be, that you might do the work of God that God has assigned to you.

God wants us where the need is. One way God gets us out where the people are who need Christ is to arrange things in such a way that we must earn a living to support a family. That forces us to go out and be placed next to the people who need eternal life and need to have faith in Jesus. That is the meaningful work Jesus talked about in the Bread of Life Discourse.

Based on my own personal experience in working with many men over many decades, I think one of the great plagues of our day is boredom. I am amazed at the number of men who are bored, men whom I would think would be very fulfilled because they seem to be doing very exciting work. However, as I get to know them I find that so many are bored with what they are doing.

I came across this quote several years ago and it expresses what I have heard a lot of men say. An eighty-eight year old English politician wrote these words in his diary a long time ago: "Looking back, at the age of eighty-eight, over the fifty-seven years of my political life in England, knowing what I deemed best of results, and meditating on the history of Britain and the world since 1914, I see clearly that I achieved practically nothing. The world today and the history of the human anthill during the last fifty-seven years would be exactly the same as it is if I had played ping-pong instead of

sitting on committees and writing books and memoranda. I have, therefore, to make the rather ignominious confession to myself and to anyone who may read this, that I must have, in a long life, ground through between one hundred fifty and two hundred thousand hours of perfectly meaningless work."

When Jesus came to save us, He came to save us from many things. One of the things He came to save us from was the agonizing boredom of "perfectly meaningless work." I do not believe anyone who understands Who Jesus is, what faith is, and what eternal life is, will have for an epitaph: "My entire working life, my fifty-seven year career was simply a matter of perfectly meaningless work."

In my opinion, our Lord Jesus Christ does not want us to have an epitaph like that at the age of eighty-eight. That is why He has given us the Bread of Life Discourse. At the very heart and soul of the Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus is really talking about perfectly meaningful work.

## **Chapter Six**

### **"The Teaching of God"**

John continues to record the hostile dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders in the seventh chapter of this Gospel. The dialogue breaks off at times, but then it resumes in a new setting.

When it resumes, we read that Jesus makes another dogmatic claim: "I am a Teacher come from God. My teaching is not My teaching. It is the teaching of the Father." In other words, He is making this claim: "I am not merely a self-proclaimed Rabbi. My teaching is God's teaching." This son of a carpenter from Nazareth was claiming that His teaching was the Holy, inspired Word of God.

Of course, the religious leaders challenged that claim. In so many words, the spirit of their response was, "How do we know that? We have only Your word for that!" This is a question facing us today. We claim that the Bible is the Word of God. There are many people who say, "How do we know that claim is true? How do we know it is not only the opinions of people who lived two thousand years ago? How do we really know the Bible is the inspired Word of God?"

Satan essentially asked the same question in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis: "Has God said? Has God really said anything? Well, if He has, it is not true." That is the oldest trick the devil has ever played and he is playing that trick in our day, all day long, every day. Satan challenges this issue: Is the Bible really the Word of God? When they challenged Jesus on this point, as we learned in Chapter Five, Jesus essentially said, "The proposition you must accept is that faith is not primarily intellectual. Faith is actually primarily a choice you must make, or a moral decision."

Jesus essentially put it this way: "If any man will come to My teachings with the will to do the will of God, asking God to help him



do the will of God as the will of God is revealed in My teachings, in the doing of My teachings, the knowing will come that My teachings are in reality the very Word of God."

In other words, Jesus said, "The only people who are qualified to express an opinion on the inspiration of My teachings are the people who have come to My teachings with the desire and the commitment to do the will of God and say, 'God, I want to do what is right.'"

Unlike that law student I referenced above, and the Samaritan woman, who present an intellectual smoke screen, to avoid the moral consequences of faith, Jesus tells these leaders they must come to His teaching in this spirit: "I really do want to do what is right, as I find the right way to live in the teachings of Jesus." I have personally discovered that if we will approach the whole Bible the way Jesus challenged us to approach His teachings, we will make the same discovery about the whole Bible that Jesus invited us to make about His teachings.

Jesus said, "If you sincerely come to My teachings with the desire and commitment to apply and live out the truth you find in My teachings, then, as you apply and live the truth you find in My teachings, you will experience the intellectual affirmation that My teachings are the teaching of God."

For example, imagine that you and your spouse went to see your pastor because your marriage is a sterile vacuum, because both of you entered into your marriage for what you could get from one

another. Neither one of you is giving anything and neither one of you is receiving anything.

Now imagine you go to your pastor and your godly pastor says, "You know, Jesus said 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' What He meant by that is there is more happiness in giving than in getting." The pastor addresses you as the husband: "If you are living with your wife for what you can receive from her, then she is not receiving anything from you." The pastor then addresses the wife: "If you are living with your husband for what you can receive from him, then he is not receiving anything from you."

The pastor then explains that, when two people like that meet at the end of the day, they are on a collision course, because they both want to get, and neither one is even thinking about giving. The pastor then challenges the couple to imagine the opposite. Suppose a couple applies the pastor's counsel, and, while that man is coming home from work, he is thinking about his wife. While the wife is coming home from work or doing her work at home, she is thinking about what she can do for her husband. He is thinking about the reality that she has been working hard too and he needs to express his appreciation and offer to help her in any way that he can. Perhaps he is thinking, "I am going to do something very special for her no matter how tired I am."

And suppose she is thinking, "That poor man. He has to work hard all day. He is out there working hard to support me, and his family. He needs to be home to rest and have a good meal."

When they meet at the end of the day, she insists that they have a quiet evening at home, and he insists that they go out and do something she likes to do. Arguments like that do not break up marriages. That is a beautiful kind of argument to have.

As a pastor, I have had couples come back to me and say, "You know, pastor, that one thought has revolutionized our relationship - to be others-centered instead of self-centered. It is amazing how much life we have in our marriage now because of that one teaching." I have said to them, "Well, there are five hundred teachings of Jesus, so I have four hundred and ninety-nine more just like that one!"

Jesus told us how we can prove His teachings come from God and that His teachings are the Word of God (7:17). We are instructed by Jesus to come to His teachings with the will to apply His teachings. In other words, Jesus is saying: You will not prove that My teaching is the teaching of God with an intellectual approach to My Teaching. The intellectual has always said, "When you reach my mind, you will move my will. Convince me intellectually and I will commit my will and make the right moral choices." Jesus essentially says, "No. It is the other way around. Make the deliberate choice to apply the truth Jesus teaches, and the intellectual proof will follow the commitment of your will. If any man wills to do God's will, as God's will is revealed through My teachings, when he does, he will know whether My teachings are of God or of man."

The Apostle Paul writes that all Scripture is given to us from God by inspiration (II Timothy 3:16). Peter tells us what inspiration is when he writes that holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21). In the spirit of this teaching of Jesus that tells us how to approach His teachings, I see two definitions of what we call the inspiration of the Scripture. Both of these definitions are absolutely true and valid, but, in my opinion, one of them is more mature than the other. The first statement about the inspiration of the Scripture is this: "The Bible is true because the Bible is inspired." This view of inspiration says, "Whatever the Bible says is true because the Bible is inspired. When I read in the Scripture that it is more blessed to give than to receive, I believe that proposition is true because the Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it."

The second view of inspiration is this: "The Bible is inspired because the Bible is true." This view of the inspiration of Scripture has two foundations. The first foundation is that I believe the Scripture is inspired. Therefore, whatever the Bible says is true because the Bible says it. This view of Scripture agrees with the first view. However, this second view of Scripture goes a step farther than the first view. The person who holds this second view of inspiration can say, "I believe it is more blessed to give than it is to receive because the Bible says it is, and because I experienced a dynamic and positive revolution in my marriage relationship when I applied this beautiful truth to my marriage."

These two philosophies of Scripture could also be stated this way: the first view is saying, “It is true because the Bible says it.” The second view is saying, “It is true, that is why the Bible says it.” Both of these views of Scripture agree with the proposition, “The Bible says it, I believe it and that settles it.” However, the person who holds the second view can speak with greater conviction about the inspiration of the Scriptures and holds the more mature view of inspiration.

In the seventeenth chapter of John, in the seventeenth verse, Jesus says, while He is praying, “...Thy Word is truth.” When you place that profound verse next to the seventeenth verse of John Chapter Seven, you arrive at an approach to Scripture that is Christ-like because this is the way Jesus instructed us, and showed us by His example how to approach Scripture. Based on these two Scriptures, we should come to the Scripture looking for truth. The priority issue is not the literary form in which that truth is found. We should always look for truth when we read the Bible because God’s Word is truth. However, before we discover that truth, we should make the commitment in our hearts, that we are going to apply the truth we are seeking, once the Holy Spirit reveals that truth to us.

According to the writings of the Apostles Paul and John, we cannot discern the truth in the Scriptures unless the Holy Spirit is teaching us. Many Scriptures tell us that we cannot apply the truth of the Scriptures without the help of the One “Who is working in us to will and to do” all the truth that is found in the inspired Word of God.

(John 17:17; 7:17; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 1 John 2:20, 27; Philippians 2:13)

There are some other passages in the seventh chapter of this Gospel that I must address. The chapter begins with the earthly brothers of Jesus telling Him what His agenda and schedule should be. Sadly, they do not believe at this time. They actually believe their brother is out of His mind (Mark 3:21). One of them, James, will believe after His resurrection and become one of the strongest leaders in the church we read about in the Book of Acts.

They suggest that He attend the Feast of the Tabernacles, which is being celebrated in Jerusalem, perform miracles there and receive recognition and acclaim from the multitudes who will be there. He responds by telling them that His mission and agenda are not to seek that kind of acclamation from the people of this world. He implies that He will not attend the Feast, however, after they leave, Jesus does attend and preach to large crowds there. Jesus claims in the next chapter that He always does what pleases the Father (8:29). He obviously cannot do what pleases the Father and then please His earthly brothers, or secular people, and neither can we.

At the feast, He makes the claim that He is a Teacher sent from God, and that His teaching is the teaching of God. We also read: “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘out of his heart

will flow rivers of water.” Then the Apostle John adds his commentary that He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, Who had not yet been given (7:37-39).

This feast was celebrated for a week and the liturgy included thanking God for the water that was supernaturally provided from a rock in the wilderness. Water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam and poured out as an offering to God while all the people recited, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3) On the last day of the Feast, the liturgy ended with all the people marching around the altar seven times, symbolizing the victory at Jericho when the entire nation marched around Jericho seven times.

Jesus chose that moment to preach His great sermon about the Holy Spirit. He was essentially preaching that if anyone was thirsty for water from the wells of salvation, they should come to Him, because He is the Savior of the world. This sermon presents a metaphor that is a sequel to the metaphor He used in His interview with the Samaritan woman. He promised her that one drink of Living Water would become in her a spring from which others would quench their thirsts and be born again. The metaphor is now expanded from a spring to a river.

Some scholars believe that the risen, living Christ is the River of Living Water indwelling and expressing His life through the believer. These two metaphorical references to the Holy Spirit will be better understood later when He tells them about the coming of

the Holy Spirit, Whom He calls the Comforter, or Helper (14:15-17; 16:7-14). John obviously found that to be true. The word Jesus actually used to describe the Holy Spirit was “Paraclete”, which means, “One Who comes along side us and attaches Himself to us, for the purpose of assisting us.”

As the hostility with the religious authorities increases, Temple soldiers are commissioned to arrest Jesus. When they return without their Prisoner, their only explanation for their failure to arrest Jesus is, “No man ever spoke like that man!” This gives us some idea of what it must have been like to hear Jesus preach. It may be they heard Jesus preach that powerful message about the Holy Spirit on the last day of the Feast. That is why I am convinced Jesus preached that sermon with great power, and with a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, Jesus is the Teacher sent from God with the teaching of God. He is also the mighty Preacher Who preached as no other man ever preached! Faith is approaching the teaching of Jesus with the will to do the will of God as we apply the truth Jesus teaches. Faith is preceding the intellectual affirmation, which proves the teaching of Jesus is the teaching of God, with the commitment to apply the teaching to our lives. Life is Living Water that quenches our thirst and then becomes a river of Living Water, flowing out of our lives.

Are you still playing intellectual games and saying to Jesus, “Convince my mind and then my moral choices and commitments

will follow?” Are you willing to personally approach the teaching of Jesus looking for truth to apply to your life and in your relationships? Have you personally taken that drink of Living Water that becomes a spring and then a river, flowing out of your life, from which others are having their life-thirst quenched, and are being born again? Do you know Jesus personally as the Teacher come from God and as the Living Water?

I trust that the Gospel of John and our study is introducing you to Jesus the Christ. I invite you to request the next booklet, where we will continue our study with Chapter Eight in this wonderful Gospel of John.