



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**LIFE GROUPS
LARGE PRINT
STUDY GUIDE
MAY 2021**

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Study of John

LARGE PRINT - MAY 2

21

THE TRANSFORMATION OF NEW BIRTH

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 3:1-36

MAY 2, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: TRUE LIFE CHANGE DOES NOT BEGIN BY SIMPLY CHANGING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES OR BEHAVIORS, BUT RATHER WITH A HEART CHANGED BY JESUS CHRIST THROUGH FAITH IN HIM.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: UNLESS A PERSON IS BORN AGAIN, THEY WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WE ARE BORN AGAIN THROUGH THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 How do you typically react to change? Do you enjoy change or does it make you nervous? What does this say about your personality?
- 2 What is the biggest life change you've been through recently? What do you remember most about that experience?
- 3 For Christians, our conversion (when we entered into a personal relationship with Jesus through belief in Him as Savior and Lord) is the biggest change that has taken place in our lives. What are some ways you were changed when you met Christ?

An honest assessment of human nature shows that we have a notoriously fickle relationship with change. Sometimes we crave it; sometimes we loathe it. Regardless of our preferences toward change in general, it is an essential part of becoming and growing as a Christian. This study of John 3 shows us that real change begins and ends with faith in Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 3:1-8.

- What do we learn about Nicodemus in these verses? What was missing in his life, according to Jesus (v. 3)?

- What do you believe Jesus meant about having to be born again to see the kingdom of God?

To be “born again” means to experience a birth from above. Jesus was talking about salvation. *Salvation* is the term for the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of an individual to bring them into the family of God. This happens when a person expresses belief in Jesus’ death and resurrection and accepts His role as Savior and Lord of their lives. Only those who believe in Jesus can be saved from sin (all the ways we disobey God) and enjoy eternal life with Him. Before we’re born again, we may have a clue that something isn’t right, and our lives have to change.

- Read Genesis 3:22-23 from the story of the fall of man and when sin first entered the world. What consequences did Adam and Eve face as a result of their sin?
- What does it mean to be separated from something? Why do you think separation from God was the punishment for the first sin? How does this separation affect us today?
- How have you seen sin distort or twist people’s identities, including your own? Spend a few minutes discussing the impact of sin in our world, creation, and your personal life.

We have all rebelled against God. It started with Adam and Eve (the first humans) in the garden of Eden, when they doubted God’s goodness. And we’ve continued the streak of thinking our ways are better ever since. Thankfully, our spiritual story does not stop with this dark picture of sin. From the beginning of creation, God had a plan to save us by His great grace. The term *grace* refers to the good favor God shows to us by offering us a relationship with Him, through Jesus, even though we are sinful people by nature and don’t deserve it. That grace is the foundation of real life change.

> READ JOHN 3:16-21.

God's mercy, love, and grace bring about change. Mercy is the disposition to act compassionately in response to the plight of others in need. God's love is the John 3:16 kind of love, in which God sacrificed His Son for sinners to have life. Grace describes God's undeserved favor toward all who have sinned against Him. Christ did not die for us when we were worthy of being saved; He died when we were at our absolute worst—broken and hopeless.

- What does it mean to “believe” in Jesus? Why is this so important?
- How does Nicodemus's story help us understand the type of real life change God wants to do in our lives?
- What words from this passage help us understand the manner of God's love for us?
- What affect does God's mercy, love, and grace have on your relationship with Him? What affect can it have on your relationship with others?

God's love made salvation available to the whole world through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus, who paid the price for our sins. But salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ and His death on the cross (3:18). When we believe in Him, we are restored in our relationship with God and no longer separated from Him or under His judgment. The result of this restoration is eternal life, meaning that after our physical death, we will live forever in the presence of God. John was writing about changed lives—the message of Jesus to Nicodemus. Salvation is the work of God internally through the Holy Spirit, which demonstrates itself outwardly in godly living.

- According to Jesus' words in verses 19-21, what is the evidence for true belief?

> READ JOHN 3:22-36.

John the Baptist was baptizing people for repentance. He was making the path clear for the coming of the Messiah. The people's lives then were cluttered with selfishness, sin, and pride—much like they are now. John told them to repent of it. John was removing stumbling blocks of self-righteousness. He was clearing out their hearts of self-justification. He was preparing them for the salvation that comes by casting oneself on the mercy of Christ.

- What do you suppose the argument about purification was all about?
- How are we purified before God today? Why is it necessary for this to happen?

Most likely, the quarrel about purification arose over how one is to be purified of uncleanness and sin. The religious leaders taught that one had to keep the law, and even laws about the law to be pure and undefiled before God. But John taught a different way to be clean: repent and look for the Messiah. The law could not and cannot make one clean before God. It only brings guilt. The only hope is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

- What does John's example teach you about your responsibility as a follower of Christ today?
- What are some of the temptations that make becoming less for Jesus to become more particularly hard for you to do?

Our duty as Christians is not to build our own little kingdoms and reputations. We are to point to Christ just as John the Baptist did. We want people to grow in their faith, and we should be happy when they do so even if we are not as popular as we think we ought to be.

- How did Jesus come “from above”? Why would the truth that Jesus came from heaven give John great relief?

- How does this truth change our lives and our witness today?

Before the world was made, before God spoke and made light, and before anything at all was created—God the Son existed. God the Son existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is eternal. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to teach us truth and to show us the path of righteousness. We are helpless sinners who can only hope to live by the grace of the eternal God. This is why John the Baptist was relieved to see Jesus’ ministry growing. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. In humility, John realized that everyone would be better off going to Jesus instead of himself. It is tempting for us, as self-centered creatures, to think we know better than God. We second-guess His Word. We think we will be happier disobeying His commands. We think we will find more joy living for our glory instead of His. But the reality is that we are all infinitely better off repenting and trusting in Christ. We will find more joy seeking His glory than our own.

APPLICATION

- When God shows His power in a person's life by saving him or her, what changes?
- What things cause you to not trust in God's ability to bring about change in your life?
- What would you say to people who believe God's grace can't provide forgiveness for their sins? Do you ever feel that way yourself?

PRAY

Thank God for the simple truths of His gospel message—that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and restore us to God—and the confidence we can have in our salvation. Pray that in the midst of your roles that encompass family, work, and social contacts, you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news of the gospel by living in obedience to God.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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Study of John

LARGE PRINT - MAY 9

21

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 4:1-54

MAY 9, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: ENGAGING THE LOST IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CHRIST CAN MOVE THEM BEYOND THEIR IMMEDIATE NEEDS TO MEETING THEIR ULTIMATE NEED.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JUST AS CHRIST ENGAGED THE WOMAN IN CONVERSATION, BOTH REVEALING TRUTH AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT HIMSELF, CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS MUST ENGAGE THE LOST WORLD IN PURPOSEFUL CONVERSATIONS TO POINT THEM TO CHRIST.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WHAT JESUS OFFERS TO THOSE WHO COME TO HIM IS MORE SATISFYING THAN LIFE ITSELF.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Can you remember a time when you had a really strange or awkward conversation? What happened?
- 2 What makes a conversation good or bad? Who is your favorite person to sit down and talk to? Why?

We all have favorite people to talk with—it could be a spouse, parent, or friend. Conversations go all sorts of directions, but the best conversations often have an intentional goal—a purpose that seeks to help and improve one or both people. Jesus had this type of conversation with a woman in Samaria.

The conversation transgressed virtually every social custom of Jesus' day, with regard to who Jewish men were permitted to interact with. Yet in the course of the conversation, not only did the Samaritan woman come to believe in Christ, but also the power of her testimony led others to Christ as well.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 4:1-26.

Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem for Galilee, traveling by way of Samaria because it was the shortest route. Some Jews in those days frequently avoided the Samaritan route because they considered the people in the region to be unclean, based on the practice of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles in that region. Rather than go around, Jesus traveled through Samaria.

- Describe the woman Jesus met in this passage. What stands out to you about His interaction with her?

Jesus never did anything by accident. His travel plans were intentional. While some more religious and “observant” Jews would have avoided Samaria, Jesus knew that unclean Samaritans needed the grace of God every bit as much as religious Jews. Jesus initiated the conversation with the woman for one specific reason—to teach her about who He was and what He offers. Jesus could tell she had a spiritual thirst that He alone could satisfy.

- The Samaritan woman and Jesus had two differing concepts of “living water.” What were they, and upon what were they based? What made the living water Jesus described so attractive to the woman?
- What objections did the woman raise in verses 11-12? What did her comments reveal about her understanding of Jesus’ words?

Jesus talked about the water and described living water that gave new life, but the Samaritan woman thought He was referring to running water from a river or stream. The woman wanted living water that would never leave her thirsty so that she would not need to go to the well every day. Her focus was on her immediate physical needs. In our daily habits, we come across people who the world has beaten down and left lonely. They not only have physical needs, but they also have spiritual needs that only Christ can satisfy. Jesus used what started out as a “small talk” conversation to bridge into the truth about Himself. Notice that Jesus always met people where they were and built a bridge to take them to where He was. God sent Jesus to restore us and bring us back to Him; for the woman at the well, this conversation started her process of restoration.

- What did Jesus’ words in verses 17-18 help the woman understand about her spiritual need? What did they help the woman understand about Jesus?

- What do you think it meant to this Samaritan woman that Jesus knew everything about her, yet still loved her?

The woman had been married five times and lived with a man who was not her husband. Jesus knew all about her past. By His request, He invited her to be honest with Him about her situation. The woman was caught in a deeply questionable lifestyle, but the way she was living did not incite Jesus' condemnation. Instead, Jesus called her into a relationship with Him. In His teaching and mission, Jesus alienated far more religious people than people who knew they were sinners. Meeting people where they are without condemnation is the best way to put ourselves in a position where people are willing to hear from us. Jesus understood who this woman was; instead of being shocked and repulsed by her situation, He used it to lead her to find fullness in Him.

> READ JOHN 4:27-42.

- How did the disciples respond when they found Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman? Contrast this with the response the woman had after her conversation with Jesus.

Frequently in the Gospels, the disciples showed an inadequate understanding of Jesus' mission, whereas the Samaritan woman understood the essence of Jesus' mission right away and it drove her to share that mission unashamedly with others. Jesus' revealing her sin to her did not lead to distress, but to repentance. Jesus desires His followers to share His mission in the places He has given them influence, which is exactly what Jesus would tell His disciples to do before He ascended to heaven (Matt 28:18-20). Jesus loved His disciples and this woman in spite of their failings.

- From the example of the woman at the well, what can we learn is a proper response to encountering Jesus?

- What is the connection between the teaching of Jesus and the mission of Jesus?

The teaching of Jesus is not a means to an end with us, but to work through us. Teaching leads to mission and mission leads to teaching. In many churches today we treat discipleship and mission as though they are separate, loosely connected things. Jesus' life shows us that the distinction between these two things is not as clear and defined as we like to make it. The woman heard and told, which led others to consider the claims of Jesus and see that he is the "Savior of the world" (v. 42). As disciples under the authority of Jesus, we call people into similar relationships with Jesus that we have found in Him. Once the teaching and mission of Jesus become the focal point of our lives, we have found God's purpose for our lives.

> READ JOHN 4:43-54.

In the passages leading up this incident, Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding in a Cana, and shared the gospel with both a religious leader and a social outcast. In this passage, Jesus was approached by a man from an entirely different part of the social sphere: a Roman official.

- What would make the official think Jesus could heal his son? What misconceptions did he have about Jesus' power to heal?

When Jesus told the official, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe," He was saying something important. The official believed that Jesus could perform wonders, and that seems to be what His faith was in. He didn't trust Jesus, but only His power. Likewise, many may see the signs and wonders Jesus performed and marvel, but not direct their amazement toward the One performing the wonders.

- Verse 50 says the man believed the word that Jesus spoke. What does that tell us about where he put his faith? How are we called to respond in the same way?

- Why was the time the boy began to improve of significance to the father? How might that fact have affected his faith?

This story doesn't end simply on the good news of the official's son being made well. The entire household put their trust in Jesus! And an important truth is revealed in their faith: the gospel is for everyone who trusts in Him. There is no one who is excluded, no people group, no social class, no one. The gospel is for everyone, and that is the greatest act of compassion God could ever have shown us.

APPLICATION

- In what people or things are you most tempted to look for fulfillment instead of looking to Christ? How can we hold one another accountable to look only to Christ this week?
- How have you grown in your knowledge of Christ recently? What are some ways you have seen Him differently at different moments in your life? Who is someone you could share this with this week?
- How can our church be more intentional in the way we reach people who do not typically go to church?

PRAY

Close your group time in prayer that group members would look only to Christ for fulfillment and purpose and would be bold enough to share the gospel with those who need to hear it.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



Study of John

LARGE PRINT - MAY 16

21

HEALING WITH AUTHORITY

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 5:1-47

MAY 16, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: AS GOD'S SON, JESUS HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DO ALL THAT THE FATHER ASKS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS' POWER AND AUTHORITY COMES FROM HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS' PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE FATHER LED HIM TO THE CROSS.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Has someone ever challenged your position of authority by asking, “What gives you the right to do this?” How did you respond? Have you ever asked that question of someone?
- 2 How do you answer this question about Jesus? What gives Him to the right to do everything He has done and is doing?

Those who have authority have the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. Often, we are grateful for those who have authority because they serve everyone else by casting vision and maintaining order in their organization. Other times we might feel (for a variety of reasons) that authority figures should not have authority to begin with.

In today’s passage, we’ll look at Jesus’ divine authority—an authority that was questioned by the established religious leaders of Jesus’ day. While some were grateful for Jesus’ leadership, cultural influencers and teachers questioned His right to claim the authority of God. Our goal is to understand the nature of Jesus’ authority and to grow in our loving obedience to Him.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 5:1-18.

In this passage, Jesus healed a man who was sick for 38 years. The man had some kind of disability or paralysis. Sick people gathered at the pool of Bethesda because they believed that an angel would sometimes stir up the water of the pool and the first person to enter the water after this occurred would be healed. Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well (v. 6). The man said he did not have anyone to help him get in the pool before someone else got in ahead of him. Then Jesus told him to get up and walk (v. 8), and the man was healed. Then Scripture says this happened on the Sabbath (v. 9). The issue of healing on the Sabbath became the primary source of conflict regarding Jesus’ authority.

- Why did John specifically mention that this event happened on the Sabbath? What were God's people to do on this day?

The Sabbath was intended as a day of rest—it was a gift for man, made by God. On this day, God's people were to do no work, but there were no restrictions in the law about caring for the sick or helping others. The Pharisees had added their own traditions to God's Law, declaring even the tiniest violation a flagrant disregard for the Lord. By healing this man and calling him to walk and carry a mat on the Sabbath, Jesus was declaring His authority, and the Pharisees were enraged. What gave Jesus the right to do what He did?

- Why would Jesus' exercising His authority anger the Jewish leaders? Why did the Jewish leaders not think Jesus had the authority to do what He did?
- What was Jesus' explanation for why He healed the man on the Sabbath? What does this explanation reveal about the Father? How does this truth apply to us today?

Jesus reaffirmed what the Jewish authorities also believed—that the Sabbath rest was built into creation because God created all things in six days, then rested on the seventh. That set the pattern for man to work six days then rest on the Sabbath. But Jesus also showed these theologians what they would have likely agreed to as well: that when the Bible says God rested on the seventh day, it doesn't mean that God ceased being active in the world. Jesus denied that God was some nebulous power who merely propped everything into place and set it in motion. Rather, He was affirming that God is the omnipotent Lord who governs moment by moment everything He makes.

A Jew would have agreed that God was providentially active on earth because a Jew understood that God's domain of authority is infinite, rising over the restrictions men face. Finite, restricted man must practice a Sabbath in recognition that God was ultimately Master of their domain, but God need not. But in verse 17 (and in other places throughout the Gospels), Jesus claimed that what was true for the

Father and the Sabbath was true for Himself: “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” In other words, Jesus declared that He had the authority of the Father to be at work in the world as God led Him to be. Jesus was equal with God.

> READ JOHN 5:19-23.

- What is the nature of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son (v. 19)? Is Jesus capable of acting independently of the Father? Why or why not?
- How is it that Jesus can do what the Father does (v. 20)?

The basis for Jesus’ authority is the Father’s love for Him, manifested through the Father’s nonstop communication to Jesus about all He does. In turn, Jesus demonstrates His love for the Father through perfect obedience, even to the point of death on the cross and the resurrection. So, because God perfectly loves the Jesus the Son, the Son perfectly loves the Father and lives obediently with the authority of the One who loves Him.

> READ JOHN 5:24-47.

- What are some of the claims Jesus made about Himself in these verses?
- What is the difference between the judgment of Jesus and when we pass judgment on someone?

Jesus claimed He had the right of judgment, and then He backed up His claim by saying that His judgment was true and final because it was the very judgment of God. When we judge others, we might make all kinds of mistakes. We might judge based on pride, self-righteousness, or lack of information. But the judgment of God, and therefore Jesus,

is perfectly holy. When we approach Jesus, we should know that He is more than a friend; He is the righteous Judge of all humanity.

- What are some of the witnesses Jesus talked about in these verses that validate who He is? Why do you think so many people, both then and now, don't believe what Jesus said about Himself despite the testimony of witnesses like these?

John the Baptist, His own works, God the Father, and the Scriptures written by Moses all bear witness to who Jesus truly is. But people have always refused to believe Jesus and these testimonies about Him. In these verses, Jesus flipped the question of who He is on its head. Because of these witnesses, it's not Jesus who is on trial; it's really the world, and these witnesses testify against the world that does not believe.

- In these verses, how do you see the difference between knowing information about Jesus and actually believing in and following Him?
- Jesus told the people that if they truly believed in Moses, they would also believe in Him. Why is that true?

Jesus said all the Scriptures, even the Old Testament books that Moses wrote, brought testimony about Him. These people were experts in the writings of Moses, yet somehow missed Jesus. These verses were a warning to make sure that in the midst of their religious study, they didn't miss the faith that all the writings were leading them to.

Because we live in a world where there is so much information available about everything—including the Bible—we might treat reading the Bible like an intellectual or scientific exercise. We can diagnose it, cut it apart, and analyze it, but the point of the Scripture is to reveal to us the character and the will of God. Sitting right at the center of God's character and will is Jesus. These verses are a warning to us still today: Don't mistake knowing about Jesus for believing in and following Jesus.

APPLICATION

- Why can you trust Jesus' authority over your own life?

- In what areas of your life are you not trusting Jesus' authority? What steps do you need to take to submit to His loving leadership?

- Is there a non-Christian in your life who could benefit from understanding Jesus' loving authority? Pray for an opportunity to share with them this week.

PRAY

Give thanks for Jesus' loving obedience to the Father and the authority that gave Him for our good and His glory.

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PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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Study of John

LARGE PRINT - MAY 23

21

PROVISION FOR OUR NEEDS

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 6:1-24

MAY 23, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS MEETS OUR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE ARE OFTEN HESITANT TO BRING OUR NEED BEFORE JESUS, BUT HE IS READY TO RECEIVE US AND GIVE US WHAT WE NEED.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE PROVISION FOR OUR NEED.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What do you think of when you hear the word “needs”?
- 2 Which things would you count as basic needs? Are spiritual needs basic?
- 3 Are spiritual needs more important than physical needs? Why or why not?

The word *need* is a common one, and rightfully so. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the word is always used correctly. For some, needs refer to what is most essential to human survival—food, clothing, and perhaps shelter. For others, the category of needs stretches further into having access to formal education, living in suburban housing, and acquiring the latest technology. Some might describe needs in terms of relationships, romance, and spirituality. So the term *need* might vary in precise meaning from person to person.

For Christians, our belief in the God who made both the material and immaterial creation—physical and spiritual reality—shapes how we define needs. God does not tell us to actively neglect or harm the physical body for the benefit of our soul (or others’ souls). We will see in John 6 that the spiritual and the physical are to coexist with one another. As Jesus demonstrated, the two are more related than we sometimes think.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 6:1-15.

Though Jesus was trying to remove Himself from the crowds for some rest, the crowds beat Him to the place of isolation. Rather than sending them away, Jesus chose this as an opportunity to bolster the faith of His disciples, particularly Philip, and He can do the same for us today.

- When do you remember being like the people in this crowd—away from home and caught with inadequate provisions? What did you do to remedy the situation?
- What was this crowd's motivation for following Jesus (v. 2)? Do you think they were looking for spiritual guidance or just personal benefit? Which was your motivation when you first came to Christ?
- Why did Jesus ask Philip how they could feed all of the people if He already knew how He would feed them? What might you have said if you were Philip in this situation?

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is quite frequently used as a story to talk about world hunger and the Christian response to it. That is an appropriate use of the story, since the story shows Christ's concern for the hungry and reveals how God can take what little we offer and multiply it. However, this story is more than a story about hunger; it is a story for any person who feels that their resources are inadequate to meet the challenges they face. And who has not faced such a situation? Sometimes it feels like we are looking through opposite ends of binoculars at the challenges ahead of us and the resources within us. We look at our challenges and they seem magnified, much larger than they often turn out to be. We look at our resources with those binoculars turned around, and they seem oh so tiny!

Jesus gave the disciples the specific task of finding food for the crowd. He not only taught them to trust Him to provide in ministry, but also to trust Him to provide for their own physical needs in the meantime.

- How much provision did the boy provide and how much was left over? What point was Jesus trying to make by performing this miracle?
- What caused Jesus to withdraw to a mountain by Himself? What was He worried might happen, and why did that worry Him?

- When do you remember God providing for you when you were worried that you wouldn't have enough for your needs?
- What big challenge are you facing in your life right now where it seems like your resources are an insignificant "five loaves and two small fish"?

Jesus showed us that even if all we have is five loaves and two fish, it is enough when it is dedicated to God. God will multiply whatever we offer to Him, and He will make it more than adequate to meet our challenges. But we must do two things: We must offer what we have (What would have happened had the boy withheld his five loaves and two fish?), and we must have faith in what God can do with what we offer Him.

Ultimately, the real problem in this account was not the hunger of the crowd; it was the small faith of the disciples. As we grow with Jesus, we grow to see Him as greater than we ever imagined. We must continue in that process of being amazed by God, or we will always be trying to worship the God of our own imagination.

Verses 14-15 show that we can respond to Jesus in the wrong way, even in declaring the truth about Him (i.e., "the Prophet"). We can misidentify Jesus as primarily a political Savior when in truth He came to save us from something more threatening than Roman oppression, namely the penalty of sin. If we misunderstand the nature of Jesus' ministry as recorded in His first coming, we misunderstand who He is as the Bread of life come into the world.

> READ JOHN 6:16-24.

- Which part of this story do you identify with most strongly at this point in your life (separated from Jesus and feeling like you're on your own; afraid while facing rough waters; the reassurance from Christ to not be afraid)?

- Why do you think the disciples left Jesus behind and went out in the boat? When was the last time you faced a difficult trial?

- Why were the disciples scared (v. 19)?

Jesus often spent time alone to be spiritually renewed. He did this in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry and at various other times during His ministry. (See Matt. 4:1-11; 26:36-46; Mark 1:35-37.) Just before this story, John told us Jesus “withdrew again to a mountain by himself” (6:15). While Jesus was retreating, the disciples left without Him and headed toward Capernaum. Why did they leave without Jesus? Perhaps they didn’t know where He had gone. Perhaps He had told them to go and make some preparations. (Matt. 14:22 indicates that this may have been the case.) We really can’t tell from John’s description. What we do know is that it set the scene for one of Jesus’ greatest signs of who He was—walking on water. This was no ordinary rabbi!

- Why do you think it took the crowd so long to discover that Jesus had left? If you had been part of the crowd, what “detective work” would you have done to find out where Jesus had gone?

Jesus was no ordinary rabbi or just another magic man. The crowd had not yet grasped this. They looked to Jesus as someone who was able to provide for their needs in some magical way. But the crowd did not understand that this Man was a special manifestation of God Himself. Next week, we will see that Jesus sought to redirect their thinking from looking for magical provision for physical needs to provision for the spiritual need that is at the heart of life.

APPLICATION

- What is your biggest concern about the coming week? How can you seek spiritual provision for this situation in Jesus?

- What is the nature of the “stormy waters” you have found yourself in most recently? How would you like Jesus to help you “rise above” these stormy waters?

- How can you point those around you to Jesus as the true Bread of life over the temporary pursuits of the world?

PRAY

Thank God that He provides not only physical provision, but also spiritual provision that lasts forever. Pray that God would use you to point others to Jesus, the Bread of life.

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PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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Study of John

LARGE PRINT - MAY 30

21

THE BREAD OF LIFE

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 6:25-70

MAY 30, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: ONLY JESUS TRULY FULFILLS OUR DESIRE FOR MEANING AND PURPOSE.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: PEOPLE NATURALLY SEEK FULFILLMENT AND MEANING OUTSIDE OF JESUS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE SO THAT WE COULD HAVE FULL SATISFACTION IN GOD.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What are some things the world believes can give satisfaction?
- 2 How have you experienced the reality of being failed by worldly things?

Like us, the people mentioned in John 6 were distracted by things that, at best, satisfy for a short time. In fact, they were generally quite poor, and every day was spent struggling for survival. It is no small wonder that they were drawn to Jesus after He miraculously fed them and provided leftovers. In their eyes, being with Jesus would eliminate their need to work for survival. Yet Jesus was not primarily concerned about their poverty. He was concerned about something much deeper.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 6:25-29.

- What specifically stands out to you about how the crowd sought Jesus?
- Were these people true followers of Jesus? In what ways do we see Jesus working to change their hearts?
- What does it mean that God the Father “placed his seal of approval” on Jesus (v. 27)?

In Jesus’ day, a seal was made of clay, wax, or some other soft, moderately durable substance. A seal on something showed that it was authentic, similar to the way a notary seal or stamp on a document does today.

Jesus was saying that the reason the people should pursue Him for spiritual food was that the Father had authenticated Him for that purpose.

- What are the various possible answers to the people's question in verse 28? What works does God require? What passages of Scripture could you reference to support your answer?

In verse 28, we see that people misunderstood Jesus' statement. When Jesus told them to work for eternal food, the people asked about what work God required of them. The answer is belief in Jesus as God's Son. In the Greek language, the word "believe" means "to rely on" or "to trust." The noun form of the word is translated "faith." Believing involves much more than merely accepting some facts about Jesus. The word "believe" sets a follower apart as a person who places his or her complete trust in Christ. "Believe" also carries the idea of relying on Him to keep His promises and to use His power to accomplish His purpose.

> READ JOHN 6:30-35.

As if Jesus' healing the sick and feeding the thousands weren't miraculous enough, the crowd demanded more signs like the manna in Exodus 16. In Exodus 16, the people grumbled and complained against God about their hunger, forgetting God's power in the exodus from Egypt. In the same way that the Jews of Moses' day disregarded God's signs, the Galileans disregarded Jesus'.

- How does reflecting on God's power and provision in our past help us with faith for the future? How have you experienced this in your own life?
- In verses 31-32, the people revealed their doubt that Jesus was any better than Moses, and Jesus sought to correct them. In what ways is Jesus better than Moses?

Moses stood between God and the Israelites and mediated an old covenant that could not save. Jesus is better than Moses: He stands in the gap between the people and the Lord once and for all, establishing the new covenant that alone saves. (See Heb. 3). The biblical way to study the great people of God in the Old Testament is not merely to draw broad moralizations from their lives but to see how they point us to Jesus and our need for Him.

- Do you think most people would try to fulfill their spiritual hunger if all their physical needs were continually met? Why or why not?

The crowd in verse 34 clearly struggled to understand what Jesus was really talking about. Their treasure was their desire to no longer live in poverty, and Jesus was the means to that end. It's unlikely that people will seek to fill their spiritual hunger when their idols are being fed. "Junk food" may never satisfy, but it certainly keeps us occupied.

> READ JOHN 6:36-59.

- To what or whom did Jesus say the temporal bread from heaven pointed (vv. 32-33,35)? How did He contrast the temporal bread with the "bread of life"?
- What assurances of eternal life did Jesus give in verses 37-40?
- How does Jesus' teaching in this passage encourage us to trust God for our salvation from start to finish—for the origins of our saving faith in Jesus and its ability to endure to the end?

Jesus addressed the crowd's unbelief by telling them forthrightly that they did not believe in Him despite seeing Him firsthand (v. 36). Unless the Father has given people to the Son and drawn them to Him, they

will not come to Jesus and believe in Him. We need more than miracles of manna; we need the miracle of saving faith, which is a gift from God in itself. (See Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29.)

- What does eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood mean? What is the result of eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood?

The first part of this passage seems so strange. It is hard to fathom someone wanting to be eaten by others, let alone promote it as the path to life. But Jesus is speaking metaphorically to a group that should have understood Him, as He had just recently miraculously fed them from a few fish and a few loaves of bread. This group was pursuing Jesus so that He could continue to supply bread for them, but what they needed was Jesus Himself. Eating Jesus' flesh means that we are to fully trust in Him and let Him be the source of sustenance and the source of life in us. This would be a terribly difficult saying for the Jews because they could not see Jesus for who He really was, only for who they wanted Him to be.

> READ JOHN 6:60-71.

- What was the result of Jesus' teaching? Why did people leave? What does that tell you about how they defined their relationship with Him?
- Why did Jesus' true disciples stay? Would it have been easy for them to stay? Why or why not?
- How had faith in Christ changed them? How has it changed you?

Many of Jesus' followers had a difficult time with the words of Jesus on that particular day. But Jesus clarified what He meant: It meant trusting Him, not His provision. It meant desiring Him, not His miracles.

APPLICATION

- The people in today's passage worshiped comfortable lives and tried to follow Jesus, thinking He would fulfill those desires. Are there idols in your life that you may be trying to obtain through Jesus? What steps can you take this week toward removing those idols from your life?
- In what practical ways can we encourage one another to live lives that demonstrate we've made this faith our own?
- What current ministry opportunities are available to you through our church that might give you the chance to share with others that Jesus alone truly satisfies?

PRAY

Close your group time in prayer. Thank God for being all that we need. Pray for the power to believe and experience that Jesus truly satisfies more than anything else in this world.