

# THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

A Bible Study Guide

for

American English Language Training Facilitators

By

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# ***The All-Sufficient Savior***

## ***Introduction***

Seven Bible lessons have been developed in which Jesus interacts with people around Him. The selection and development of these Bible studies are predicated on the idea that it is through a relationship with another person that we get to know that person, he or she gets to know us, and that the relationship develops through frequent visits with that person. Each of these Scripture passages illustrates how Jesus made a difference in the lives of the people who visited with Him. These Scripture passages reveal:

1. Who Jesus is,
2. His mission on earth, and
3. His passion and priorities.

In all the circumstances in which Jesus encountered people He made a difference in their lives. Jesus said that He came to give abundant life to all who welcome Him (John 10:10-11). We truly live when we know His mind, are transformed by His Spirit, and experience the power of His resurrection.

From childhood on we learn to do things for ourselves. While we are learning to do things on our own, we should also learn the meaning of Christ's saying, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV). That is, nothing of eternal value.

Some people never learn that lesson. Some are separated from God forever because they have not learned that they cannot save themselves and that they must enter the "rest" that Jesus offers (Hebrews 4:10). Even believers need to learn to rely less and less on our own resources and more and more on Christ (His Spirit and His word).

God is the author and sustainer of both natural and spiritual life, mortal and immortal. The Scriptures present Jesus as our Savior. An "angel of the Lord" told Joseph that Mary would "give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus [means 'the Lord saves']", because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Jesus save His people from the penalty of sin (He paid that for us), the power of sin (overcome through the power of His Spirit), and the presence of sin (eventually in heaven).

Jesus presents several metaphors of Himself, including the seven "I Am" declarations, that when summed up, present Jesus as "The All-Sufficient Savior."

As the Word of God and the Son of God, Jesus is the perfect revealer of God (John 1:1,14,18; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-19). As such, He speaks with the full authority of the Father (John 8:28;14:24). Even in the self-limitations of His incarnation (Philippians 2:6-7) Jesus demonstrated the divine characteristics of omniscience (e.g., John 13:38) and omnipotence (e.g., John 2:11; 20:30).

Jesus' "I Am" claims recall the language used of Yahweh in the Old Testament – "I Am Who I Am" (Exodus 3:14). In Galilee and Jerusalem Jesus' works and teaching command attention. In Samaria He makes Himself known as the giver of the water of life (while John doesn't technically record an "I Am" statement on this, it is more than implied [John 4:14, Jer. 2:13]) and is hailed as the Savior of the world. In Jerusalem His restoring of sight to the blind man on the Sabbath stirs up controversy. In Galilee multitudes follow and are miraculously fed. His discourse on the bread of life ends in a "hard saying" after which many of his disciples forsake Him, but the twelve confess their belief in Him. A series of controversies in Jerusalem leads the rulers to plot His murder. Jesus declares Himself to be the light of the world, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life.

Jesus declared that believing Him as the "I am" to be a matter of eternal life and death: "You will

die in your sins . . . unless you believe that I am” (John 8:24). The Gospel of John highlights the “I am” sayings. In them, along with the living water and other metaphors, Jesus used concepts that were familiar to, well understood by, and of extreme importance to His listeners to communicate truths about Himself. It is hoped that through these Bible studies and other camp activities students will come to know (or grow in their knowledge of) Jesus as Savior and Lord and begin (or continue) to experience the abundant life that is only available in Him.

## **Theme**

“The All-Sufficient Savior” investigates the “I am” self-descriptive metaphors of Jesus recorded in the *Gospel of John*, emphasizing how these portray Him as essential to life and fulfillment.

## **Goal Statement**

To allow every student to grow in his/her knowledge of who Jesus is and in their awareness of and appreciation for the greatness of His and the Father’s love for them, thereby encouraging them to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord and/or to connect with Him on a deeper, more intimate level.

## **Objectives**

Students will:

1. Learn how Jesus perceived Himself and His mission
2. Learn that salvation cannot be earned but is totally by grace
3. Be encouraged to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord
4. Learn that sanctification (growth in godliness) is also totally by grace (a work of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 3:3)
5. Learn how a growing relationship with Jesus transforms us and brings peace and joy
6. Be encouraged to develop their relationship with Jesus through meditation on God’s word, prayer, Christian fellowship, and obedience
7. Experience, in small groups, inductive Bible study and prayer and be encouraged to continue such personally and in small groups throughout their lives

## **The Lessons**

Lesson 1: **“Living Water”** (John 4:4-15, 7:37-39) – Water is essential for life, and our God-given sense of thirst drives us to water to satisfy that thirst. We also have a God-given spiritual thirst (Psalm 42:1-2) for communion with God that should drive us to God, “the spring of living water” but people so often futilely seek life and satisfaction elsewhere (Jeremiah 2:13-14).

Lesson 2: **“I am the Bread of Life”** (John 6:22-58) – Like water, bread (i.e., food) is essential to life. God provided manna for Israel during their desert wanderings. In John 6 Jesus miraculously feeds a great crowd of 5000 men plus women and children. As the crowd follows Jesus because of the feeding, He rebukes their fleshly pursuit and proclaims that He is the Bread of Life.

Lesson 3: **“I am the Light of the World”** (John 8:12-16, 19) – In ancient Israel God was recognized as the Light of His people. His first creative work was to call forth light in the midst of the primeval darkness. Light is necessary for making God’s creative works visible and life possible. Jesus is the light from God who lights the way for life as the pillar of fire lighted the way for the Israelites in the desert.

Lesson 4: **“I am the Good Shepherd”** and **“I am the Gate”** (John 10:1-18) – Israel was a pastoral people. Sheep and shepherds figured importantly in the lives of the Jews. The Jewish concept of ‘shepherd’ symbolized a royal caretaker of God’s people. God himself was called the “Shepherd of Israel” (Psalm 80:1) and he had given great responsibility to the leaders (“shepherds”) of Israel, which they failed to respect. He denounced these false shepherds and promised to provide the true Shepherd, the Messiah. As “the Gate,” Jesus is the one and only way to salvation and abundant life.

Lesson 5: **“I am the Resurrection and the Life”** (John 11:1-44) – In raising Lazarus, and ultimately in his own resurrection, Jesus powerfully demonstrated his right to make this claim. For Jesus life is an innate characteristic. He is life. All other life, including human, mortal and immortal, is derived from and sustained by him. Of his sheep Jesus says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” (John 10:28) Because of the promise of resurrection, believers have no need to fear death.

Lesson 6: **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”** (John 14:1-27) – Preparing his disciples in anticipation of his soon coming crucifixion, Jesus stresses to them that he is the only way to the Father because he is the truth and the life. He also assures them that he will not leave them as orphans but that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [John 14:17,18,23]) would be with them and in them.

Lesson 7: **“I am the True Vine”** (John 15:1-17) – From the earliest known times, Palestine was a grape growing region. In a land where drinking water was scarce, wine was a staple and part of every meal. The vine is frequently used in the OT as a symbol of Israel. When this imagery is used, Israel is often shown as lacking in some way. Jesus, however, is “the true vine.” Believers are the branches which derive their life and fruitfulness from their union with the vine.



## Lesson Format

Each lesson contains the following, in the following order:

- Principle Thought
- Lesson Concepts: a discussion of the pertinent concepts involved in each lesson and a discussion of the content of the Scripture passages
- Teacher Helps
- Lesson Objectives
- Lesson Guide
- Reference Notes
- Scripture verses in English (in appendix)

The Lesson Concepts are intended to aid teachers by providing a background for and some help in understanding Scripture passages. Since each of Jesus' "I am" metaphors involves a common everyday concept (e.g., bread, water, light, etc.), each Lesson Concepts discusses various aspects of the pertinent concepts. The idea in each lesson is that students should be aided in bridging the gap between the common everyday concept and its spiritual use and application to their lives.

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

The Scripture verses (provided in the appendices) are intended ONLY for those students who are proficient in English. They use the New Living Translation (NLT). This translation was chosen because it uses contemporary English, which will be more readable and more easily comprehended by non-English speaking persons. The Scripture verses are ready for copying for students' use.

Throughout the Lesson Summaries, all Scripture quoted is from the New Living Translation unless indicated otherwise. All other translations are indicated with a code; the reader must refer to the References to identify the translation used.

## Teaching-Learning Strategies

Our teaching approach is to encourage students to think rather than telling them what to think – to arrive at their own answers as much as possible. This starts with the beginning of the lesson (the set) and continues through the reading and discussion of the Scripture passages. "Teaching" to many of us often means lecturing, explaining, and giving answers in order to get information across to our students and to make sure that students know the information we want them to learn. When the goal is to provoke thinking, the teacher is an enabler, a facilitator (rather than a "teacher/explainer"), creating an environment in which students learn. This is usually accomplished by question and discussion strategies. Questions lead from point A to point B in a somewhat logical sequential approach. Thus, students learn through their own contemplation under the teacher's guidance. This is not to say that the teacher should do no explaining; there are times when it is necessary to present information that is not provided in the Scripture passages. But explaining should not be the primary approach. Explain when necessary but keep it to a minimum.

## **The Set**

In the *set*, students discuss the common everyday concept Jesus refers to in his “I am” statements and establish their importance in their lives in order to facilitate transfer to the spiritual meaning and application.

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

You may use the suggested set or devise your own. Students’ responses will determine follow-up questions and discussion. The set should not be prolonged since it is only a preparatory step. The idea is to get students thinking about the theme of the lesson. Then the subject of the Scripture passage can be introduced, being careful not to answer any of the questions intended for the lesson. Following this, the Bible passage(s) will be read and discussed.

## **Reading the Bible Passages**

Except in the case of the most English-proficient students, the Scriptures should be read by the students in the native language and questions asked through the interpreter. Less English-proficient students may be able to *read* the English, but often do not understand it sufficiently or even at all; they are simply *mouth*ing the words. Even the most English-proficient students should read the Scripture passages in their own language, as well as alternately in English, to make sure of their comprehension. Students should not be given copies of the questions. Longer passages should typically be read in sections and questions asked before moving on.

Every lesson has a list of *vocabulary concepts* that may cause students (and teachers) difficulty. While it is important that these words be understood by students, it is not intended for the teacher to make a conscious effort to teach them. The important thing is that teachers understand all the vocabulary items and be able to explain each one as needed. Observe as students answer questions to see if these concepts are understood and, if not, deal with them. Sometimes the apparent inability to answer questions is related to a lack of understanding of a vocabulary item.

## **Questioning Strategies**

There are three kinds of questions: observation (What does the passage say?), interpretation (What does the passage mean?), and application (How will I respond to this truth?).

### **Observation Questions (What does it say?)**

These are at the literal level (no inferences or speculations). There are right and wrong answers based directly on the passage read. Observation questions help the students clearly comprehend what the passage says. They often begin with the words who, what, when, where, why, and how. Help students identify key words or phrases and themes. Observing what a passage actually says is essential foundation to correctly understanding and rightly responding to it. Be sure all students understand answers given.

### **Interpretation Questions (What does it mean?)**

With interpretation questions we are seeking the original meaning intended by the divine and human authors. They may require some teacher provided background context (historical, cultural, literary [Biblical context], linguistic). The meaning of any passage is conditioned (often determined) by its context. But limit such comments to only what is essential context for understanding the meaning of the passage. Do not lecture or preach a sermon. Interpretation questions are often thought-provoking questions: Why do you think...? Is there a lesson to learn here, a promise to trust, a command to obey, or a warning to heed? Typical questions for this series include:

- What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?
- What does it mean to *you* that Jesus is...?
- What is the result of being...?
- What can we learn about God?

Vigorously resist the urge to correct answers even when you know they're wrong. This is a time for students to discover on their own and to gradually come around to better understanding as they continue the practice of Bible reading and study. Perhaps, from a totally wrong answer, ask the same question of another student: "Interesting answer, Mike. Bill, what do you think about [the same question]?" or, "Mary, can you add anything to what Mike said?" Let the students help one another. It is beneficial for students to discuss answers among themselves and to share different viewpoints, but do not allow a student to put down another student's response. If after discussion among themselves, the thinking of the entire class is still way off and it is a crucial teaching, such as belief that salvation is earned by good works, you might point them to a clarifying passage (such as, in this case, Ephesians 2:8-10 or Titus 3:5) for further discussion.

### **Application Questions (What is my response to God's Word?)**

With application questions we are asking each student how he or she will respond to God's word. "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." (James 1:23-24)

Perhaps a student's application will be to worship (praise or thanksgiving); trust a promise; confess a fault; change an attitude, belief, value, or practice; or obey a command. Give adequate time for reflection and comment on all questions. Give every opportunity for each student to share understanding, feelings, and needs. It is important to pray and think during lesson preparation about each question and possible responses. Be flexible and adapt to each level of comprehension. Be prepared for surprises; sometimes students come up with answers that we are not expecting. Accept all answers. Draw out students who are reluctant, but do not pressure. Students will respond when they are ready. Be patient. You are only the sewer. God brings about the harvest.

## ***Use of an Interpreter***

The interpreter can be of great assistance with less English proficient students in achieving the objectives of the Bible lessons. The interpreter will need to be able to translate the study questions into the students' language in order that less English proficient students can comprehend them. The interpreter will need also to be able to translate what you, the teacher, say to the class. Therefore, share with the interpreter well ahead of time a copy of each Bible study lesson so that he/she can become acquainted with the Scripture in both English and the native language, can understand the intent of the lesson, and be able to interpret your questions and comments to students and their comments to you. It is important that you and the interpreter have a thorough understanding of what will take place in the class. You should make clear to the interpreter what your expectations for him/her are and what your approach will be. You will have to rely in most cases on the interpreter in order to know how well students are understanding the material.

With students who speak little or no English it may be necessary to primarily use the lecture method and attempt to intermix questions. It is still essential that students be encouraged to think about and apply God's word.

Experience has shown that strictly using the discussion method is less than successful with classes when you must depend totally on the interpreter. Discussion of thought-provoking questions requires not only a trained and intuitive discussion leader but also an interpreter equally qualified in discussion techniques. It is also difficult for the interpreter to pass to the teacher the non-verbal aspects of the conversation. Another consideration with interpretation is the amount of time that is consumed with the back and forth situation.

## ***Class Structure***

This approach to Bible study is planned for two hours daily and is intended for small groups of students. The teacher should **begin the class with prayer** for them and for God to bless the lesson. Then the teacher will then introduce the lesson, say a few words regarding the context of the passage being studied, and ask someone to read in the students' native language the first portion of Scripture to be discussed. The teacher asks observation, interpretation, and application questions and guides discussion; then moves on to the next set of verses. Students may also ask questions, and the discussion may suggest other questions for the teacher to ask. Stick to the passage under consideration and bring in other Scriptures only when absolutely necessary for background or clarification. For example, if discussing John 3:14, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up," it is OK to turn to Numbers 21:4-9 for the referenced story if the students are unfamiliar with it.

Avoid yes-no questions. If you do ask questions that require a simple *yes* or *no*, be sure to follow up by asking a reason for their answer.

Allow time at the end of class for prayer requests and prayer. Depending on the spiritual maturity of the class and of the interpreter, another or several might pray.

## ***Teacher Preparation***

Each teacher should prepare for each lesson by:

1. Praying for wisdom and comprehension
2. Reading the Lesson Concepts
3. Carefully studying each Bible passage and relating the Scripture to the lesson objectives
4. Reviewing the questions and tweaking them a bit to their personal style and comfort

Each lesson has its own set of Teacher Helps and suggestions. Teachers may want to pursue other Bible references and thoughts in addition to what is given with each lesson. Teachers should have a good understanding of the Bible lesson and its objectives before teaching the class. A good Bible dictionary and/or commentary will provide helpful information on vocabulary items and concepts in the lessons.

## ***Evaluation***

Following the seven lesson plans there is an evaluation form (Appendix A) that each teacher should complete and return to the program director or to the Bible Study coordinator before returning home. This evaluation provides necessary information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson format and how it can be improved.

# ***Lessons***

# 1. THE LIVING WATER

## **Scripture**

Psalm 42:1-2; Psalm 104:10-17, 24-26; Jeremiah 2:12-13; 17:7-8; John 4:4-15, 25-29, 39-42 ; John 7:37-39

## **Primary Thought**

Just as God provides water for our physical needs, He also provides his Spirit for our spiritual needs. The Holy Spirit is like a perennial and inexhaustible spring of water--a peace that passes understanding, a joy deeper and more real than any other joy, an abundant life, a power that can meet every call upon it. In short a clear, clean, cool and refreshing perpetual fountain.

## **Lesson Concepts**

**Water** is a colorless, transparent molecule of oxygen and hydrogen that in liquid form covers 70% of the earth's surface. It is found in seas, rivers, lakes, ponds, springs, and rain. It also exists as a solid (ice) and as a gas (vapor and/or steam).

**Water** is absolutely essential for most forms of life. Humans must consume water frequently to prevent dehydration and organ failure (water is needed to flush toxins from our bodies). Water is refreshing – a cool drink, a cool or warm shower, a moist breeze in hot weather.

**Water** is used for cleaning our clothes and our bodies, for sanitation, for removing contaminants. Water is combined with other ingredients to form a myriad of products that we use daily.

**Spiritual water (the Holy Spirit [John 7:39])** is absolutely essential for spiritual life. We must drink of this water continually to refresh our souls and to enjoy healthy spiritual growth.

Spiritual water is the “living water” of which Jesus spoke. **Living water** is a picture of the water of running streams and fountains, as opposed to stagnant cisterns, pools, or marshes. (See Genesis 26:19; Zechariah 14:8; John 4:10, 11, 7:38; Revelation 7:17.) It denotes the enlivening, refreshing, and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit in His presence in the hearts of believers (John 4:10, 14, compare 6:35; Revelation 21:6; 22:1, 17) and in energizing spiritual gifts (John 7:38; compare 7:39). In connection with this “living water,” Jesus speaks of “thirst.” Physical “thirst” is an intense desire for water. Especially those who live in desert lands can appreciate the meaning of “thirst.” Figuratively, to thirst means to desire ardently.

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

### **a. Water as a Material Resource/Necessity**

Water is necessary for life. Water was a crucial element in God's gift of the Promised Land to Israel (Deuteronomy 8:7). Palestine contains several natural sources of water: rain, springs, wells, and a few short, perennial streams (wadis<sup>1</sup>). The average annual rainfall in Palestine is about 25 inches, all of which normally falls between November and April. During the dry months of May to October people use cisterns and pools for water storage.

Adequate *sources of water* determined the sites of early settlement in the Near East (as it did in the settlement of America). Archaeology has revealed that water determined settlement on such strategic

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

“Water is mentioned more frequently in Scripture than any other natural resource.”<sup>2</sup> For example, in the story of Hagar (Genesis 21:14, 19), during Israel’s desert wanderings (Exodus 15:25, 17:1, 6, Numbers 20:2), in God’s law for sanitation (Leviticus 6:28; 15), in David’s battle near Bethlehem (I Chronicles 11:17), in Elijah’s time (I Kings 17:7-10), in the healing of Naaman (II Kings 5:10, 12, 14), for watering flocks of sheep (Genesis 29:2, 7), for plant and animal life (Job 8:11; Ps 104:11, 14-15), in the washing of dust off another’s feet as an act of gracious hospitality (Genesis 18:4, 24:32; Luke 7:38, 44; John 13:4-6), and during Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:28),). Water was even bought by migrant peoples, as Moses vainly attempted from Sihon, King of Heshbon (Deuteronomy 2:28).

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

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

## **b. Water as a Symbol**

Water is frequently used symbolically of God’s blessings. The laver-sea in Israel’s temple, made of bronze and filled with water, ostensibly has a counterpart in the “sea of glass” in God’s heavenly temple (Rev. 4:6). This laver-sea “had the reflective qualities of a mirror (and, in fact, was originally *made* of mirrors: Exodus 38:8). Anyone gazing into the laver-sea could not but help to catch the reflection *both* of himself *and* of the sky above. Thus, with its unique reflective qualities, the laver-sea effectively conveyed the symbolism of sinful mankind contemplating itself against the backdrop of the awesome heavens of God which stand between Him and us. Bronze, incidentally, symbolizes judgment (cf. the brazen altar), and thus emphasizes the dire nature of this reflective comparison.... Man is [thereby] forced to appreciate his flawed character and God’s perfect character and is... put into the proper frame of mind to receive His gracious help.” (<http://ichthys.com/Jewish-tabernacle.htm>)



Water often symbolized spiritual refreshment (Ps 23:2; I Samuel 35:6-7, 41:18; Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:38) and eternal life (John 4:14; Revelation 7:21:6, 22:1). Pilate used water ceremonially at the trial of Jesus to symbolically cleanse himself from guilt in the condemning of a just man (Matthew 27:24).

Washings figured prominently as a symbol of purification in the consecration of priests (Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 16:24; Numbers 8:7). Baptism in water as symbolic of the washing away of sin was widely practiced among the Essenes and other Jewish sects and provided a background for John's baptizing activity and for Christian baptism (Matthew 3:6, 11, 13-19; Acts 8:36). The divine sonship of Jesus was manifested at his baptism by John in the Jordan (Matthew 3:16).

Water symbolized the fleeting quality of life (Job 11:16; Ps 58:7). Ezekiel used water as a symbol of renewal in the age to come (47:1-12).

### c. **Water Used as a Metaphor or Simile**

The Bible contains dozens of metaphorical usages of water. For example, as a metaphor<sup>5</sup> or simile for fear (Joshua 7:5), death (2 Samuel 14:14), evil (Job 15:16), blessings from the Lord's anointed (Ps 72:6), marital fidelity (Proverbs 5:15-16), the knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9), God's blessings (Isaiah 58:11), God's voice (Ezekiel 43:2), God's wrath (Hosea 5:10), and justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24). "Mighty floodwaters" metaphorically described Assyria's overflowing of Judah (Isaiah 8:7-8).

With the Samaritan woman at the Sychar well, Jesus used "living water" as a metaphor for the eternal life which springs up within the redeemed (John 4:14).

The "cup of water" given in Christ's name describes Christian charity (Mark 9:41; compare Matthew 25:35). Jesus washed the dust from the feet of his disciples as a metaphor for cleansing from sin and an example of humility and selfless service (John 13:4-17). Paul used watering as a metaphor for discipling: "I planted, Apollos watered" (1 Corinthians 3:6, NIV). The great voice of one like unto the Son of Man (Revelation 1:15) "thundered like mighty ocean waves."

### ***Bible Passages***

**John 4:1-15, 25-29, 39-42:** In verses 1-6, Jesus and his disciples have withdrawn from Judea to Galilee, presumably to avoid a conflict which could lead to a premature end to his ministry. He "had to go through Samaria" [the region, not just the city]. "The necessity lay in Jesus' mission, not in geography... Jews often avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and traveling on the east side." (NIVSB, John 4:4 in loc; see vs. 32, 34) The Samaritans were a mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Gentiles brought into the land by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:24-41). The Samaritans nevertheless viewed themselves as true Israel, as heirs of the promises of God to Israel, and their version of the Pentateuch as the original one, direct from Moses. The Samaritans rejected all other Old Testament writings except for their Pentateuch, which significantly favored Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem as God's chosen place for worship. "The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim c. 400 B.C., which the Jews destroyed c. 128 B.C. Both actions, of course, increased the hostility between the two groups." (NIVSB, John 4:20, in loc)

The arrival at Jacob's well (verses 5-6) set the stage for the meeting of Jesus with the woman of Sychar, in Samaria, and the ensuing conversation (verses 7-15), which is striking on several counts. First, people normally (though not always) drew water at the end of the day rather than in the heat of midday (the sixth hour = noon) (see Genesis 24:11). The enmity between Jews and Samaritans explains the woman's

words in verse 9. Since the Jews held that all Samaritans were “unclean,” a Jew would become ceremonially unclean if he used a drinking vessel handled by a Samaritan. Moreover, few Jewish rabbis would initiate open conversations with a woman as Jesus does (see vs. 16, 27).

This section (verses 7-10), like the next, introduces an “earthly” subject and, through the questions of the woman, leads to a spiritual message. Jesus’ request for a drink of water is rebuffed (verse 9), but He issues a challenge to the woman: if she knew who Jesus was, she would see that He is the supplier of living water (verse 10). That this is a “gift of God” (v. 10) emphasizes God’s grace through Christ. Jesus gives life and gives it freely.

The woman’s response (that Jesus cannot supply water because He has no access to the well) derives from her misunderstanding<sup>7</sup> of Jesus’ claim. She understands this as a slight (verse 12) upon the gift of the patriarch who dug the well centuries before. Jesus replies that the water of which she is thinking can relieve only bodily thirst, and then explains that He is referring to a spiritual gift “welling up to eternal life.” (v. 14) “Welling up” is a vigorous expression, “with a meaning like ‘leaping up.’ Jesus was speaking of vigorous, abundant life (cf. 10:10)” (NIVSB, v.14 in loc). “Whoever drinks the water” He gives “will never thirst.” John does not suggest that the believer does not continue to thirst for communion with God, but that with God’s Spirit dwelling in his innermost being, he has an inexhaustible well within Him.

Verse 15 shows that the woman has not yet grasped the spiritual meaning. But that she eventually gets it is clear from vs. 28-29 and 39-42. “Leaving her water jar” (v.28) suggests the woman’s physical thirst was overwhelmed by a deeper spiritual thirst, her longing “Could this be the Christ” (v.29). No doubt, by the time Jesus departed Sychar after a two-day stay, she was in full agreement with her fellow citizens who testified “we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

### **John 7:37-39 -- Background information on the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths)**

The Feast of Tabernacles (or “Booths” or “Ingathering,” *Sukkoth*), started the 15th of the 7th month, *Tishri* (September-October), five days after the Day of Atonement, and lasted a full eight days (Leviticus 23:34-36). This autumn festival (Deuteronomy 16:13-17), at the grape vintage and final harvest of olives and fruits, commemorating the end of the harvest field labor (Leviticus 23:39), was important as the beginning of the new civil year. Three aspects of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness were commemorated during the Feast of Tabernacles:

- 1) the great acts of God involving water -- the parting of the sea (Exodus 14:21), the provision of water for the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 15:22-25, 27; Numbers 20:2-12), and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17);
- 2) the great acts of God involving light – God guided the Israelites through the wilderness by means of a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day (Exodus 13:21-22) and saved them from their enemies by the same means (Exodus 14:19-25); and
- 3) tents -- remembering Israel’s tent life during their wanderings (Leviticus 23:42). Families erected booths (tents) or huts on roofs or roads and lived in them during the festival.

Every Jewish male was obligated to attend the ceremonies sometime during the course of the eight days of worship and sacrifice (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16).

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

At the break of day priests processed from the temple to the pool of Siloam. There they filled a golden pitcher with water and carried it back to the temple. On approaching the Watergate on the south side of the inner court the Shophar was sounded three times – joyous blasts which were explicitly related to

Isaiah 12:3, “*With joy* you will draw water from the wells of salvation (NIV).” The priests bearing the water then processed around the altar, watched by the pilgrims, while the temple choir sang Ps 113-118. When the opening words of Ps 118 were reached, “Give thanks to the Lord,” every man and boy shook in his right hand a bunch of willow and myrtle tied with palms and held aloft citrus fruit in his left hand, a sign of the harvest gathered in, and the cry “Give thanks to the Lord” was repeated three times. The same thing happened at the cry “O Lord, save us!” (Ps 118:25). Since all this took place at the time of the daily offering, the water was offered to God in connection with the daily drink-offering of wine. A chosen priest mounted the altar on which stood two silver bowls, one for the reception of the drink-offering and the other for the water. When the priest had poured the wine and the water into their respective bowls, they were then poured out as offerings to God. The crowd then called out, “Lift up your hand!” The demand was made as a sign that the rite was properly fulfilled. Accordingly, the priest raised his hand aloft to show that He had faithfully discharged his duty.

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

It is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus reiterates His claim to be the source of “living water.” John’s recounting of this event (7:37-39) builds on the symbolic ceremonies conducted at the temple. Both water and light (involved in the Feast of Tabernacles) played a ceremonial role based on prophecies in Zechariah of things to come. It is in this context that Jesus announces that He is the source of “living water” (7:38) and later that He is the “light of the world” (8:12-20). The discourses that follow pick up prior themes (Jesus’ authority and origin) and add to the judicial evidence for Jesus’ case which John has been accumulating. Just as the Sabbath (chapter 5) and Passover (chapter 6) provided opportunities for Jesus to reveal who He is, the Tabernacle becomes a place where Jesus unveils Himself in Jewish imagery.

In the setting of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37-39) Jesus sweeps up this symbolism and announces that He is the source of true drink. It is virtually certain that the passage assumes the rite of water-drawing that took place on each of the days of the festival. The sayings of verses 37-39 is an outstanding example of a characteristic of the Gospel of John, in that a saying or episode embodies memory of the great deeds of God in the past and anticipation of the saving acts of God in the future, both united in an affirmation of their fulfillment in Jesus in the here and now. John 6:35, “I am the Bread of life...,” forms a close parallel, alike in form and content, to 7:37-39, but without the high drama which the context of the festival bestows on the latter. Jesus’ use of the Tabernacles setting certainly ties in with these memories.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a reminder of the water given to the fathers from the rock in the desert in their time of need. On each of the seven days of the festival a full golden pitcher was carried in procession to the temple. But on the last and great day that rite was dispensed with; now they were celebrating entrance into Canaan with its springs and water courses. It was at this point, “the last and greatest day of the festival...,” (NIV) (“the final and climactic day...” NLT) that Christ promised, not merely in symbolism, but in reality, a living water, abundant, satisfying, overflowing. Certainly, if Jesus “stood and

shouted to the crowds” at the moment when the priest at the altar had lifted up his hand to signify the completion of the rite, the effect of the cry on the multitude would have been as a thunderclap from Heaven. Everybody would have known whose cry it was, and its significance, namely that everything embodied in that rite of past experience of salvation, present prayer, and future hope was available and offered through Jesus. John’s description of the effect of the cry upon the crowd and upon the temple police (verses 40-52) included all emotions--joy, consternation, turmoil, anger, confusion, fear. These verses illustrate all of these emotions--from the joy of those who said He was the Messiah and/or a prophet, to the expressed anger of the leading priests and the Pharisees, to the fear expressed by the temple guards, to the confusion of those who questioned Jesus’ origins in the light of his claiming to be the Messiah.

Nevertheless, the message is clear. Jesus is the source of living water for the world. What He offers is (1) the relieving of our own thirst, of our intense craving for connection with God, forgiveness, peace and more; and (2) that through Him we shall be a conduit of blessing to others. And it is all a gift!

To summarize, the gift of God is Jesus Christ Himself. Water, as a symbol of the satisfaction of man’s highest physical need, is a frequent metaphor in Scripture (compare Psalm 23:2, 36:9, 42:1-2, 65:10; Isaiah 12:3, 44:3, 55:1-2). It is particularly applied to God, who is “the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13). “Living water” is a common expression for flowing or spring water in contrast to rain water and to the still water of a cistern or well. It also implies fresh water rather than brackish. John interprets this water as “the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were later to receive” (7:39, NIV). This spiritual gift, like the “true bread” (6:32) brings eternal satisfaction. The gift of God is Christ; the gift of Christ is the Spirit, “another Counselor” Who “lives with you now and later will be in you” (14:16-17). This indwelling Spirit, creative and energizing, not only brings back to the memory of his disciples “words of eternal life,” but also becomes in them a self-renewing force constantly ensuring fellowship with Jesus Christ, Whom to know is life eternal (compare 17:3), a spring of water welling up to eternal life (compare 7:38).

## **Teacher Helps**

The Scripture readings are divided into two parts for exploring the idea of Jesus as “The Living Water.” The first part, which includes Ps 104:10-17, 24-26 establishes the importance of water in this world and who gave it to us. Jeremiah 17:7-8 makes the transition from physical water to spiritual water. The second part, John 4:4-15, 27-28, 39-42; 7:37-39 presents Jesus as “The Living Water.”

In the Scripture selections for this lesson there may be concepts that students are unfamiliar with, especially students reading the English. Do not “teach” these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty understanding the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty:

1. Psalm 104:10-17, 24-26 and Jeremiah 17:7-8 -- water, springs, ravines, gush, drought, quench, quench one’s thirst, cattle.
2. John 4:4-15 and 7:37-39 -- well (*noun*), Samaria, Samaritan, Sychar, Jacob, Joseph, parcel of ground, draw water, disciples, bucket, ancestor, cattle, thirsty, thirst, living water, Spirit, wearily, eternal life, perpetual spring.

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

## Lesson Objectives

Students will

1. Discuss why water is important
2. Understand what Jesus as the “living water” can mean for their lives
3. Contrast the satisfaction of physical thirst and spiritual thirst
4. Explore what it means to “thirst after righteousness”
5. Learn that the Living Water in their lives is eternal life and the indwelling Holy Spirit

## Lesson Guide

To begin this first lesson of the series, have students introduce themselves and say something about themselves (hobby, home town, etc.). Then, in to get a sense of each student’s biblical understanding and perspectives, have them write out in their native language answers to basic worldview questions:

1. You are a unique human being. What is a human being?
2. What is your purpose in life?
3. What is your destiny after this life?
4. What is wrong with the world?
5. What is the solution?

Give the questions orally through the interpreter and have the interpreter, later in the day, write an English translation for you of the written answers. A discussion of these questions with the interpreter outside of class might also be fruitful. To introduce this activity, you might ask a student, “Who are you?” When they give you their name, say, “I didn’t ask for your name. If you had a different name, would you be a different person?” “No.” “Well then, apart from your name, who are you?” After their answer and maybe a follow-up question to that, point out that sometimes the most basic and most important questions in life are the hardest to answer. These include questions such as, “Who am I? What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose in life? Is there a God? If so, does He care about me?” Tell them that these are some of the questions that the Bible addresses and that it would be helpful to you (i.e., you the teacher) in leading discussions to have an idea of what they currently think about some of these questions.

**Suggested set:** Bring to class a container of water (e.g., a glass of water or a bottle of water). First, have students identify what is in the container. Ask them why water is important. Write their ideas on a dry erase board in English and, for lower level students, have the interpreter write the same things in their language.

**Introduce the program and lesson:** “In this series of lessons we will be considering the person and claims of the most influential person in world history and the central character of the Bible, Jesus Christ. We will focus on his self-descriptions as the Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, and more. Today we will consider his self-description as the Living Water.

**Say:** To begin with, let’s consider a passage about physical water.

**Say** that **Psalm 104:10-17, 24-26** is a hymn of praise to the Creator. Read it and ask the following discussion questions:

1. What is the ultimate source of water? Vs. 10,13,14, 24
2. What are some benefits and uses of water? (Write on the board any new responses beyond the Set)

**Read Jeremiah 17:7-8**

3. Who is the “blessed” person in v.7?
4. To what is the person who trusts in the Lord compared? A tree planted by the water (v.8)
5. What is true about a tree whose roots reach deep into water (v.8)?
  - a. its leaves stay green (full of life) even in hot weather
  - b. continues to bear fruit even in times of drought
6. How is the person who trusts in the Lord like a tree planted along a riverbank?
  - a. he or she endures with peace and joy even in the midst of trials
7. Do you know anyone who is like this? Tell us about him/her

**Say:** Let’s look at another passage from Jeremiah for a description of the water people need.

**Read Jeremiah 2:12-13**

8. Who or what is described here as “the spring of living water?” “the Lord” (v.12)
9. What is the lesson in v.13?

With this Old Testament background, let’s meet with Jesus.

**Read John 4:4-6**

10. Where was Jesus? (vs. 5)
11. What time of day was it? Noon (“sixth hour”) (vs. 6)
12. In what condition was Jesus? (vs. 6)

**Read John 4:7-8**

13. Was Jesus alone or was someone with Him? How do you know? (vs. 8)
14. Who else came to the well? (vs. 7)
15. Why did she come? (v. 7)
16. What did Jesus ask her for? (vs. 7)

**Read John 4:9**

17. How did the woman feel about Jesus’ request? Why? (It may be necessary to explain the hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans.)

**Read John 4:10-15**

18. In v.10, what are the two things that Jesus tells the woman she is not aware of?
19. What does Jesus say in He would like to give her? (v. 10)
  - Notice that Jesus says she is the one who should be asking Him for a drink
  - In the physical world what might “living water” be? Flowing water as in a stream or spring (v. 15)
  - What kind of water (in the physical world) would NOT be “living water”? Well or cistern water or stagnant pools
  - What does Jesus mean here by “living water” (v. 10)? Eternal life (v. 14)
20. From vs. 11-12, how does the woman understand Jesus’ offer?

21. How does Jesus contrast the water the woman is drawing from the well and the water He will give her? (vs. 13-14)
22. What does it mean to be “thirsty?” (vs. 13)
23. Have you ever been “thirsty” for (intensely crave) something that isn’t water? (vs. 13-14)
  - Review Jeremiah 2:12-13
  - Read Psalm 42:1-2
24. How can a person’s thirst can be “taken away altogether?” (vs. 13)
  - Physically it can’t, but relationally with God or, for example, with one’s spouse, once established, the satisfying relationship may be continually present.
25. From v.15, does it appear the woman now understands Jesus?

#### **Read John 4:25-29**

26. What did woman forget when she returned to town? (v. 28) Her water jar.
  - Why is that significant? Having met the Messiah, perhaps she recognized and began to satisfy a spiritual thirst so much greater than her physical thirst that she forgot that.

#### **Read John 4:39-42**

27. After two days with Jesus, what do they think of Him? (v. 42) He is “the Savior of the world.”
28. Does the world need a Savior? Why?
29. Do you need a Savior? Why?

**Read John 7:37-39** – Mention that this is the eighth [possibly 7<sup>th</sup>] and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles each morning of which a procession of white-robed priests followed by the people walked from the Temple to the spring of Siloam from which one priest drew water in a golden pitcher, then returned to the Temple where he poured out the water as an offering to God in remembrance of God’s bringing water from a rock during Israel’s desert wanderings. As they re-entered the Temple gates they chanted the words of the prophet, “with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.” It is not certain that this ceremony was made on the eighth day, but there can be no doubt that the following words of the Lord had reference to it.

30. What does John tell us the living water refers to? God’s Spirit (v. 38)
31. How can a person receive this living water/God’s Sprit? Believe (trust in) Jesus (v. 37)
32. What results from drinking the living water (believing in Jesus)? (v. 38) Quenching of our thirst for God and blessing to others (“will flow from within him”)

#### **Response**

33. **Say:** No Bible study is complete without a **personal response** to God. There may be a command to obey, a promise to claim, something to thank God for, something to praise God for, a new truth to believe, a recognized failure to confess, an invitation to receive (“If you have not yet drunk of the Living Water, trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, I encourage you to do that.”) **Invite students to share** their personal response to God’s word. Take **prayer requests** and pray for the students, etc.

## 2. BREAD OF LIFE

### **Scripture**

Matthew 5:6; John 6:22-58

### **Primary Thought**

Christ as the “Bread of Life” sustains, restores, and strengthens us so that we can become more like Him and accomplish His will in our lives. The one and only requirement Christ stipulates is that we come to Him in faith. He eagerly waits to help us. As we rest in Him we have His peace regardless of our surrounding environment.

### **Lesson Concepts**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Food was a highly acceptable gift for notables: Jacob to Pharaoh (Genesis 43:11); Jesse to Saul (I Samuel 16:20); David received food from Abigail (I Samuel 25:18) and gifts from Mephibosheth (I Samuel 16:1); as well as many other references of such (I Samuel 17:27-29; I Kings 14:3; II Kings 4:42). Food was given, as well, in emergency situations (Leviticus 25:35, I Timothy 5:3). The greatest gift of food mentioned in the Bible is recorded in John 6:31-58 where Jesus symbolized Himself as the “living bread.” Paul defined superlative good will in terms of feeding one’s enemy (Romans 12:20).



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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Bible Passages**

### **Matthew 5:6**

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

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

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

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

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

The setting for this event in which Jesus proclaims that He is the "bread of life" takes place in a synagogue in Capernaum. The people have followed Jesus from the site of the miraculous feeding of the multitude and found Him across the Sea of Galilee in the synagogue. They had looked for Him on the shore where they had seen his disciples get in a boat and leave but hadn't seen Him leave with them. Assuming that He had stayed behind, they looked for Him the next morning, but He wasn't there. Then they, too, went in the direction they had seen the disciples go – and found Jesus in Capernaum. It was a mystery to them how He managed to get there. The question of verse 25 about Jesus' mysterious appearance in Capernaum goes unanswered because now a theological response is at hand. In the

synagogue (John 6:25-58) Jesus provides a full discourse explaining his person and work. The discourse is propelled forward by inquiries (John 6:28, 30, 34, 41, 52). Like the woman needing water (4:7), these people need imperishable food supplying eternal life (John 6: 27; 4:14). There is a requirement for this food -- faith in Christ (John 6:29).

The first thing that Jesus does is to correct the erroneous interpretation (John 6:31b) of the Scripture cited (Numbers 11:7-9):

1. The bread from Heaven was given not by Moses but by the Father
2. The Father gives the true bread from Heaven, and He gives it now
3. This bread of God is "that which comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world" (verse 33) -- i.e., it gives the life of the age to come, the kingdom of God

If Jesus is making personal claims on the order of Moses, then the crowd demands that He must exceed that of Moses (John 6:30-31). But these people were demanding evidence of who Jesus is, evidence so compelling that they could believe. What Jesus underlines is that, though in a very real sense the manna too was a gift direct from God and impossible without His kindness, still what came to men through Moses was not the bread which comes down from Heaven -- the bread He is now offering! "What Moses gave you was not the bread from Heaven; but it is My Father who gives you true bread from Heaven;" (John 6:32, NIV). Compare Exodus 16:4, 15; Psalm 78:24. The true bread they seek is not dependent on Moses (or Judaism); it is whatever God rains upon humans as a gift, and which gives life (John 6:33). The Jews here resemble the Samaritan woman inasmuch as they are intrigued -- "Lord, give us/me this bread/water" (John 6:34; 4:15). Bread for the stomach is still in the minds of Jesus' listeners!

This misunderstanding is corrected in 6:32-35, which unveils the truth of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude in verses John 6:1-15: "the bread from Heaven" (John 6:32) and "the bread of God" (John 6:33) are now identified with Jesus Himself -- "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35) -- Jesus is the Bread which gives and sustains "life," the life of the kingdom of God. "I am the living bread" (John 6:51) Jesus bestows on those who "come" to Him and who "believe" in Him -- the synonymous parallelism is unmistakable.

In the sentence "I am the bread from Heaven" (John 6:41), Jesus identifies Himself as the bread of life that has mysteriously descended (John 6:33, 38). Not this message only, but all that He is gives life and sustains life in such abundance that no unsatisfied desire remains to frustrate the believer. Indeed, the message to the Samaritan woman (John 4:14) is recalled in the parallelism of John 6:35, with its implication, "and I am the water of life." One who so "comes" and "believes" will "*never* hunger" and "*never* thirst" (John 6:35, NIV); (in the Aramaic the negatives are very strong<sup>12</sup>). For this use of the symbolism of eating and drinking compare Isaiah 55:1 -- of the ultimate salvation through the word of God. The twin themes of hunger and thirst (compare John 4; 6) are now satisfied. However, belief is still the key (John 6:36, compare John 6:29). The hearers of Jesus have *seen* yet not believed. They had witnessed the miracle, but they did not believe; for they saw nothing beyond loaves and power. To see and not believe is tantamount to a refusal of faith.

Now a new note is struck -- God is sovereign over the ministry of Jesus (John 6:38) as well as its results (John 6:37, 39, 44). We now see the reason for his descent, i.e., for his Incarnation. He is charged to lose none of those given Him by the Father but to give them eternal life now and to raise them in the last day. Those whom God calls respond and are securely preserved (John 6:39-40; compare John 10:14-18; 17:6). There are those whom the Father "gives" to Jesus; they are "given," since "faith is God's work." Such are not "cast out" (contrast Matthew 8:12), for Jesus pledges His care for them; it is possible that the image of the shepherd and his flock is in view at this point (compare John 10:9-11, 26-30). In other words, the work of Jesus and the gathering of disciples are both a result of God's perfect will. There is no

contradiction between the gift of life now and resurrection in the future. The duality of present and future participation in the kingdom of God is fundamental to the proclamation of Jesus in all four Gospels.

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

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

Jesus replies, in harmony with verses 37 and 39, that only they whom the Father "draws" can come to Him; in them the promise of Isaiah 54:13 is fulfilled – they are "taught of God." This may be interpreted as meaning that the "drawing" by God takes place when man abandons his own judgment and "hears" and "learns" from the Father, and so allows God to speak to him; it doesn't occur behind man's decision of faith, but in it. Those who listen to the Father "come" to the Son, since He, and He alone, has seen the Father (1:18). For such, verse 47 contains a word of promise; to the "grumblers" it is an implicit appeal to receive the word, to believe, and so to gain the life (compare John 5:39-40).

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

Whereas the Jews of the wilderness generation ate the manna and died in the desert, the bread of heaven, which is Jesus, has appeared that people may eat and not die; whoever eats it will live forever and so enjoy the eternal life of the kingdom of God (John 6:49-50-51). The contrasting statements warn the hearers lest they share the fate of the forefathers and to appeal to them to eat and live. The latter alternative is possible on two accounts:

1. The "living bread" has descended from heaven, i.e., He is the Incarnate One who has life in Himself for others (compare 5:26);
2. The "bread" is the flesh of the Incarnate One which He is to give on behalf of the life of the world, i.e., He is to die that the world may live.

The "bread" is defined as "flesh" rather than the "body," almost certainly by reason of John's insistence that the Word became flesh (John 1:14). But the conjunction of the terms "give," "flesh," and "for the life of" in verse 51 strongly suggests a sacrificial death for the sake of others. We should also recall the Passover context for the feeding of the multitude (John 6:4): He who is the Living Bread is to die as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world (John 1:29). It is characteristic of this Gospel, however, that the emphasis in the passage falls not on Christ's *death for sin* but on his *death for life*: "My flesh... so the world

may live" (verse 51). The death of the Redeemer is a "lifting up" for the purpose of drawing all men to Himself, and so into his eternal glory (John 12:32).

But a deeper revelation is to come -- the bread to be consumed is Jesus' flesh offered in sacrifice (John 6:51b). Still, the discourse is urged forward through another misunderstanding. How can humans eat his flesh (verse 52)? The explanation in verses 53-58 reinforces this thought and draws on images (flesh and blood) which are sacrificial. If symbolism is still at work (as it likely is), the symbols inevitably suggest the elements of the Lord's Supper. It is not the sacrament that gives life, but rather salvation is found in the sacrifice behind it and the faith that it evokes (verses 35, 40, 47).

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

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

The eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood (which are "true," verse 55) result in the mutual "remaining" of the believer in Christ and indicates a personal relationship of faith. His flesh and blood are true because they fulfill the ideal function of food and drink in giving eternal life. We recognize in his crucified body and poured out blood the foundation of our life, that we hang our faith and hope on that body and blood and draw from there our thinking and our willing.

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

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

## Summary

Christ as the "bread of Life" is as necessary to us as food. He provides the spiritual energy to meet life's calls upon us. A man is physically tired; and because he is tired he is irritable and impossible. But let him have a meal and likely enough, throwing aside his gloom and ill humor, he will become his usual equable self again, kindly and unselfish and companionable. Why? Because the strength that was in the food has passed into him and become his strength, has made a stronger and a better man of him. So in Christ there is that which feeds, which sustains, which restores spent vigor and exhausted energies, a

strength we can appropriate and make our strength, doing and being what apart from Him we could not do and be.

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

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

Others, when offered the bread of life, prefer to starve or to try to satisfy the cravings of their human nature with the dregs the world has to offer!

How rich and generous is God's will for us; how liberal are the gifts He has granted us already, and how majestic are His hopes and plans for us! In this passage, for example, we are told that God's will for us is that:

1. We should have the glory of fellowship with Jesus Christ, to Whom He gives us
2. We have all the skill and care of Christ should be ours to shepherd us safely through this dangerous world
3. We should know life at its highest, even here, even now, and later enter into a fullness of it which is indescribable, and which as yet we cannot even imagine

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

## ***Teacher Helps***

This "I am" saying of Jesus is closely related to his self-description as "The Living Water." It takes both water and food to sustain our physical life. Jesus makes reference to both hunger and thirst in this lesson even though the subject is the "bread" of life; students need to differentiate between them – which is the more important, are they equal in importance, is one more necessary than the other. There is some reason why Jesus mentions both "hunger and thirst" (John 8:35). Jesus speaks of "eating My flesh and drinking My blood" (John 6:53). There isn't a specific answer to this, but it would be good for students to speculate about; it is for certain that our nourishment physically is not taken care of until both our hunger and our thirst are satisfied; perhaps Jesus is implying this for our spiritual life.

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

1. Lead the students into the discussion intended by the set. If the students' necessary food is rice (as in Asia), then use rice in place of Jesus saying "I am the Bread of Life," substituting rice for bread. This will deepen the understanding of the importance of the food item that Jesus is talking about. In Jesus' day, bread was their main stay.

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

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

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

There may be concepts in the Scripture passages that students are not acquainted with, especially students reading the English. These concepts and other English expressions will need to be explained to those students reading the English. Do not teach these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty -- hungry, thirsty, justice, shore, disciples, Tiberius, blessed, Capernaum, miraculous, perishable, eternal life, Son of Man, God the Father, ancestors, manna, Moses, bread from Heaven, bread of life, the Father, Scriptures, flesh.

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

## Lesson Objectives

Students will

1. Discuss the function of physical bread to the body as a necessity for sustaining life.
2. Discuss physical hunger and thirst.
3. Explore and contrast emotional/psychological hunger and thirst.
4. Explore the meaning of physical “life.”
5. Discuss what Jesus as the Bread of Life can mean for their lives.
6. Learn what it means to be unable to “live by bread alone.”
7. Come to know how to obtain the Bread of Life.
8. Learn that the Bread of Life is necessary for sustaining their spiritual life.
9. Explore the meaning of spiritual “life.”
10. Observe in the Scripture the misunderstandings of the Bread of Life concept.
11. Learn that Jesus provides/is the Bread of Life which will sustain their spiritual life.
12. Learn that the Life that Jesus provides is both here-and-now and for eternity.
13. Discuss what it means to “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

## Lesson Guide

### Suggested Set

Show a picture of bread (or bring some bread with you). Have students identify it. Ask what it is for. Then ask students how long they could survive without food. In some cultures, “bread” might be another food – for example, in some countries rice is the main food, the staple in their diet; in other countries it could be another food, but in many countries of the world it will be bread. Proceed with Step 2 above. Ask students to share about it if they have ever been very hungry.

Turn the discussion to food/bread being a necessity for the body for sustaining life. What would happen, for example, if they couldn’t obtain any food? How long could they go without food? What would happen if they couldn’t get water? How long could they go without water?

**Read Matthew 5:6**

1. What is meant here by “righteousness?”
2. How might God satisfy those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness? (Accept all answers, but don’t confirm or comment.)

**Turn to John 6:22-58**

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

**Read John 6:22-24**

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

**Read John 6:25-28**

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

**Read John 6:29-34**

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

**Read John 6:35-40**

16. **Who** is the “bread of Life?” (vs. 35)
17. **What** is meant by this “bread of life?”
18. What does it have to do with life?
19. Why does Jesus combine the ideas of “hunger” and “thirst?” (vs. 35)
20. Where did Jesus come from? (vs. 38)
21. What is required to receive this “bread?” (vs. 40)
22. What is the end result of receiving the “bread?” (vs. 40b)
23. What is the connection between Jesus and God? (vs. 32, 35, 38, 40)

**Read John 6:41-46**

24. What were the Jews bothered about? Why? (vs. 41-42)
25. How are people “taught by God?” (vs. 45)
26. What do we “learn” from God?
27. What are the ways that we can be taught personally by Jesus? (vs. 45)

**Read John 6: 47-51**

28. How do we obtain eternal life? (vs. 47)
29. How is “living bread” different from bread we eat? (vs. 49, 50, 51)

**Read John 6: 52-58**

30. What does it mean to “eat” Jesus’ flesh and “drink” his blood? (vs. 53)
31. What was it that bothered the Jews about this? (vs. 52)
32. Does something bother you about this? What? Why?



33. How can Jesus' flesh and blood be "true" food and "true" drink? (vs. 55)
34. What is another result of eating Jesus' flesh and blood? (vs. 56)
35. What is the result of eating this "bread?" (vs. 58)
36. Think about the physical "bread" that we eat for nourishment – how is this like the "bread of life" that Jesus gives?
37. What does it mean to "hunger" for what Christ has to offer?

**Response**

38. What does it mean *to you* personally that Jesus is "the Bread of Life?"

## 3. LIGHT OF THE WORLD

### Scripture

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

### Primary Thought

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. He is Himself the life, the life-giving power, which is “the light of men.” Whoever follows Him does not walk in darkness but can see to find his way. Always our wisdom is to look to Him, to absorb His spirit, and to apply that to the circumstances in which we may be. The revelation of the divine nature makes men partakers of that nature, so that fellowship with Christ is a way of life.

### Lesson Concepts

**Light**, *noun*, (as opposed to darkness) is that force, agent, or action in nature which by its operation upon the organs of sight renders objects visible. “Light” is that which penetrates and dispels darkness. It comes from the Greek word “*photos*” which means “to shine, to light” the darkness, as by a light or a torch. In the physical world, light is accomplished by the sun, the moon, fire, lamps, and other means.

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

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

Figuratively, “light” is used to mean true knowledge of God, spiritual things, moral goodness, and spiritual light as well as knowledge which enlighten the mind, soul or conscience. The word is used also in a figurative sense to denote illumination of the mind, prosperity, and purity. It includes also the idea of holiness and of consequent reward and happiness.

To understand “light” one must understand “darkness” which is literally, the absence of light in the physical world. The absence of light is used in both physical and figurative senses in both the Old and New Testaments.

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

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

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

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

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

"Darkness" is most often used figuratively in Scripture.

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

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

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

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

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

The concept of **light** appears numerous times in both the Old Testament and New Testament and often meant "to be spiritually or intellectually enlightened." Hebrews 10:32 refers to those who are knowledgeable of the saving message of the gospel. The same Greek term is rendered "enlightened" in Hebrews 6:4.

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

However, a careful reading of the Scriptures reveals that the physical entity that we call "light" is actually only the second form of light in the universe, since everywhere the Bible declares that God Himself is Light. In Scripture from Genesis 1:3 through Revelation 22:5, light symbolized the presence of God. In their years of wandering, Israel relied on God's "pillar of fire" (Exodus 13:21). When they established their

cloth tabernacle, they attended scrupulously to the burning of the perpetual light (I Samuel 3:3); and throughout their national history, they kept burning the seven-branched lamp stands at the temple (II Chronicles 4:7) in obedience to Leviticus 6:9. Lamps (lights) were used symbolically in the Old Testament and New Testament. Light depicted life in abundance, divine presence or life's direction versus death in darkness (compare Psalm 119:105; I John 1:5 with Job 18:5; Proverbs 13:9). In a world so dreary, even humble homes tried to keep a small lamp burning through the night. Symbolically, God was the light of their countenance (Psalm 4:6).

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

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

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

To a people who for generations had been taught to think of God as light, it was understandable that a Hebrew ascetic<sup>14</sup>, John the Baptist, who himself was a light (John 5:35), announced One Who actually came into the world as light, ready to light every man (John 1:4ff), a role affirmed by Jesus of Himself (John 3:19-21, 8:12) and extended to include his faithful witnesses (Matthew 5:14-16). This concept was spread through the Roman world by Paul (Ephesians 5:8) and reiterated by the author of I John 1:5-7, who unites New Testament symbolism with that of the Old Testament -- "they grope in the darkness without a light" (Job 12:25).

This last concept becomes even clearer in John 3:19: "Men love darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil (NIV)." Such statements reveal that the character of light is to reveal and to provide understanding and purity, while the opposite of light or darkness is designed to obscure, to deceive, and to harbor impurity.

A small problem confronts the interpreter who discovers that Jesus said to His disciples "You are the light of the world," who were to serve, in turn, as lights to their fellowmen (Matthew 5:14; Luke 16:8; John 12:36; II Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15). Yet Jesus is called the Light of the world because of his power of illuminating the mind of man and of acting as a guiding beacon to his followers (Luke 2:32; John 1:4-5, 3:19-20, 8:12, 12:35-36; Revelation 21:23-24). What appears to be a contradiction is not one at all. Jesus is the source of all light. His disciples become reflectors (just as the moon as a light reflects the light of the sun) in a darkened world, transmitting through their lives the true light of the eternal Son of God. True Christians were referred to as "sons of light" (Luke 16:8, NKJV; John 12:36) and as "children of light" (I Thessalonians 5:5). Paul says of the Christians in Ephesus, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8, NIV) meaning that they were enlightened by the Lord.

When Judas Maccabeus cleansed the Temple in 165 B.C., where for three years to a day sacrifices had been offered to the Olympian Zeus, the worship of Yahweh was inaugurated anew, and the Feast of Hanukkah (Dedication) has been celebrated annually ever since. Josephus says that it was called "Lights" from the custom of illuminating the houses throughout the eight-day celebration.<sup>15</sup> The use of lights

in festivals was common in the various cults of the Hellenized world, especially those honoring Dionysus and Apollo.

## ***Bible Passages***

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

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

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

The entry of the *Logos* (the Word) into the world (the incarnation) is described as light shining in darkness (verse 5). "The life was the light of men" found in verse 4. The Word is Mediator not only in the act of creation, but in its continuance. Hence "life" and "light" include the life and light which come to man in *both* creation and *new* creation. The "light" of the Logos shone in the primal darkness at creation and continued amidst the darkness of fallen mankind; it shone with greater brilliance in the glory of the Incarnate One; and it shines on in the era of the Resurrection, which is the time of the Holy Spirit.

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

So far the prologue is concerned with the relation of the Word to the world. In the verses following verse 5, the Word is set forth as the Revealer of God in history; these abstractions take on a clearer outline until we recognize the leaders in the life and death struggle between light and darkness. Even though John the Baptist's testimony was clear (verses 6-9), still Jesus experienced rejection (verses 10-11). But there is more. The darkness is hostile. There is enmity. John 1:5 says that the "darkness can never extinguish it [the light]." The hostility of the darkness points to the cross. The power of darkness will not prevail.

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

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

## Feast of Tabernacles

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

As with the water-drawing ceremony, the celebration in the light of the lamps will have been associated with recollection of the nation's experience at the Exodus and the hope for a second Exodus. In the wilderness wanderings, the presence of the Lord with his people was manifested in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night – which saved them from would-be destroyers (Exodus 14:19-25) and guided them through the wilderness to the promised land (Exodus 13:21-22). It is linked with the Old Testament faith in the Lord as the Light of his people (Psalm 27:1), which for the Jew suggested not so much the being of God as his saving activity but a *Yahweh in action*. Psalm 44:3 gives a remarkable expression of this concept, and it was ever before the eyes of the Israelites in the representations of the visible manifestation of God, both for revelation (Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 26-28) and for salvation (Habakkuk 3:3-4). God's "shining" for their salvation at the Exodus encouraged prayers for the like "shining" of his face in the predicaments of the faithful (e.g., Psalm 80:1-7, 14-19), and was matched by their expectation of that same light shining for their salvation in the coming kingdom of God (e.g., Isaiah 60:19-22). Zechariah 14:5b-7 is especially important here, for the description of the continual light of "that day" is immediately followed by that of the living waters that are to flow from Jerusalem, a passage read at Tabernacles and one of those assumed by the saying of 7:37-39.

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

## John 8:12-20

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

"Light" is a frequent metaphor for Jesus in the Gospel of John (1:5, 3:19, 12:46; I John 1:5). As light, Jesus discloses the person of God for us, illumines life and gives us meaning and purpose, and also exposes sin, judging those who dwell in darkness. These are persistent themes in the fourth Gospel. Here the tabernacles pilgrims recognized something authoritative in Jesus' words but demanded real proof of what He was saying (8:13-19). (This question was posed in chapter 5 at another festival.) The reply of Jesus in verse 14 is unexpected: his testimony concerning Himself is valid, because He knows, whereas his opponents do not know, his origin and his destiny, which are, of course, in God, from Whom He comes

and to Whom He goes (compare 13:3), Who moreover is *with Him* (verse 16). The testimony of Jesus therefore is grounded in his unity with the Father from Whom his revelation is derived. This has the consequence of identifying the revelation of God with the (self-) testimony of Jesus.

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

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

In the next chapter (9:1-41) Jesus brings light to a blind man. We are still at the tabernacles setting and Jesus is still affirming that He is “the light of the world” (9:5, compare 8:12). Here the light of Jesus is confirmed as the blind man gains his vision. But those Who live in darkness without this light (the Jewish opponents) cannot see. In the end, the Pharisees are described as blind since they do not possess the spiritual vision or the Light of Christ. The story is symbolic then of spiritual vision and blindness complete with their attendant dispositions (compare the similar blindness motif in Mark 8:14-30).

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

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

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

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

The positive purpose of the mission is unambiguously stated in verse 17: that the world be saved. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God were directed to the salvation of all humanity, not to a segment of it. But since this salvation is found in the Son (verse 15), and so through faith’s

acknowledgment of the Revealer and his redemption (verse 16), the coming of the Son for *salvation* can be turned into the occasion of *judgment*, and that possibility is present for all who hear the Gospel (verse 18).

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

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

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

To declare that “God is light” (verse 5) means that He by nature is holy. Elsewhere the term *light* may mean life or salvation, but here the stress is on morality (Genesis 1: Ps 27:1; Micah 7:8-9). “Intellectually, light is truth...Morally, light is purity...”<sup>16</sup>

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

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

### **Summary**

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



(Ephesians 5:9, NIV) are those who walk in the light in the sense of showing a life and conduct that accord with the gospel.

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

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

## Teacher Helps

This lesson covers the third of the elements in our lives that are absolutely necessary for physical living and even more essential for spiritual living (water, bread, and now light). It is important that students make the transfer from physical light as God-given, as essential for all life on earth, and now its place and necessity for their spiritual life.

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

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

1. Have students participate in the set (see below), which will instill in their minds the concept of “light,” the concept of “darkness,” and why light is absolutely essential in our physical world.
2. Have students read and discuss Part I. This section of the Scripture is preparatory to the primary passages and is meant to introduce the concept of light in a sense other than physical.
3. Follow with the reading and discussing of Part II Scriptures which are selected to establish the origins of Jesus, Jesus as the “Light of the World,” and the effect that the Light will have on their lives in relation to the Christian community.

Before reading the selection from John 8:12-16, review the setting of the Feast of the Tabernacle and how “light” and Jesus’ announcement fit into this setting. This is explained in the Lesson Summary above. Remind them of what the Feast means, refreshing their memories from Lesson

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

In the Scripture selections for this lesson there may be concepts that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. Do not teach these concepts but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty:

Psalms 27:1 and John 1:1-5 -- the Word, God, Lord, life, light, darkness, salvation, tremble, extinguish.

John 8:12-16, 19 -- light of the world, stumbling, Pharisees, false claims, limitations, in every respect.

John 3:16-21 -- perish, eternal life, condemn, Son of God, light from Heaven.

I John 1:5b-7 -- fellowship.

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

## Lesson Objectives

Students will

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

# Lesson Guide

## Suggested Set

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

## Alternate Set

Have two lamps (or two flashlights), one with a burned-out bulb (or expended batteries in the case of one flashlight) and the other one operative (or pictures of two, one burned out and one operative); the pictures should clearly show that one is working. Ask questions such as, “What is the difference between these two bulbs?” (one isn’t working, etc.) “Why isn’t one working?” “What is the benefit to us of the bulb that isn’t working?” “What are other forms of light?” (e.g., the sun, the moon, fire, etc.). Follow up with the questions above.

Read Psalm 27:1;

1. Who is the Lord?
2. What does He offer?

3. What effect should this offer have on our lives?

**Read** Psalm 119:105

4. How can someone's words be like a lamp or a light?

**Read** John 1:1-5

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

5. Who or what is "the Word?" (vs. 1)

6. Where did He come from? (vs. 2, 3)

7. What does "life" mean? (vs. 4)

8. How does "life" give "light?" (vs. 4)

9. What is the benefit of the light? (vs. 4, 5)

**Read** John 8:12-16, 19

Explain the setting for this discourse.

**Read** John 8:12-13

10. What does Jesus claim to be? (vs. 12)

11. How could He be the "light of the world?"

12. How would you feel if you had been in the crowd and heard this declaration?

13. How did Jesus' listeners feel about it? (vs. 13)

**Read** John 8:14-16

14. How did Jesus answer their skepticism? (vs. 14)

15. Where did Jesus say He had come from? (vs. 14, 16)

**Read** John 8:19

16. What (or Who) does Jesus say the Father is?

**Read** John 3:16-19

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

**Read** John 3:20-21

18. What is necessary to obtain eternal life? (vs. 16)

19. Why did God send Jesus into the world? (vs. 17)

20. What does it mean to "hate the light?"

21. Why do people choose to stay away from the light? (vs. 17)

22. Why do people choose the "light?"

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

23. What does this say about God? (vs. 5)

24. What is the benefit of "living in the light?" (vs. 6-7)

**Response**

3. How can one "live in the Light?"

4. What does this passage say about God?

5. What does it mean *to you* that Jesus is "the Light of the World?"

## 4. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

### **Scripture**

Psalms 23; Matthew 18:12-14; John 9:40-10:18

### **Primary Thought**

Jesus voluntarily sacrificed His life for us, holding back nothing out of self-interest. Because He loves us, knows us thoroughly and sees how helpless we are without Him, He cares for us like a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Jesus is the door, the only door, through whom we must enter for salvation and safety. He offers us what the world with all its misleading and seductive promises cannot give: an abundant life of peace, joy, freedom from fear, assurance of provision and of heaven.

### **Lesson Concepts**

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

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

In Jesus' time, the shepherd remained with the sheep and was the leader of the sheep, going out before them. Shepherds guarded their flocks at night whether in the open (Luke 2:8) or in sheepfolds (Zephaniah 2:6) where they counted the sheep as they entered (Jeremiah 33:13). The integrity of a good shepherd is reflected in Psalm 78:70-72.

**Sheep** in earliest Biblical times were important members of the quartette of domestic animals: the *Bovidae* (including both sheep and goats); the ass-donkey group; the cattle (also of the *Bovidae*); and the camel. Sheep were domesticated much earlier than the camel. The family who did not own at least one lamb or sheep was considered poor (I Samuel 12:3); and "very rich" in sheep were patriarchs like Abraham (Genesis 13:2). Sheep were very important -- a staple -- to the people of Jesus' day, as the following illustrates.

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

sheep master-King of Moab, and King Jehoram of Israel (I Kings 3:4). Fine wool was bought in large markets as at Tyre (Ezekiel 27:18).

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

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

Jesus said, “I am **the gate** for the sheep (John 10:7). The scene has shifted from the village to the open field. In the summer, sheep are sometimes kept out in the pasture overnight. The pen used is simply an enclosure made of piled rocks. There is neither roof nor door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and **the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, providing a door** (cf. Bailey 1993:11; Beasley-Murray 1987:169). So when Jesus says he is *the gate for the sheep* (v. 7) he is still using the image of a shepherd, but applying it directly to himself. From this picture of a shepherd sleeping in the entrance we would expect Jesus' role to be the protector of the sheep. Jesus does indeed protect his own (cf. 6:39; 17:12), but the image is developed here in a surprising way. The sheep are to *enter through* Jesus (v. 9), something not true of the shepherd sleeping in the entrance of a summer shelter! So the image is not that of a door as a barrier for protection, but of a door as a passageway.” (*IVP New Testament Commentaries*, in loc)

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

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

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

## ***Bible Passages***

### **Psalm 23**

In Psalm 23 King David expresses joyful trust and confidence in the Lord as his good Shepherd-

King. The fourth verse, focusing on the Shepherd-King's reassuring presence with his people ("I will fear no evil, for you are with me") concludes the shepherd-sheep motif of the first part of the psalm and introduces the direct address prayer ("you") of the last part.

David knew well the roles of both shepherd and king. "He [God] chose his servant David, calling him from the sheep pens. He took David from tending the ewes and lambs and made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants—God's own people, Israel. He cared for them with a true heart and led them with skillful hands." (Psalm 78:70-72)

"Shepherd" was a common metaphor for kings in the Old Testament and throughout the ancient Near East. For the Lord as the shepherd of Israel see, for example, Psalm 28:9; 79:13; Ezekiel 34:11-16.

"I have all that I need" in the first verse is reemphasized in the last verse, "Surely goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life..."

As our Shepherd-King, Jesus provides necessities, rest, peace, strength, guidance and wisdom, safety, companionship, comfort, honor, unfailing love and eternal security.

A good shepherd in David's day knew "the green meadows." He walked at the head of the flock, leading them, not driving them. He knew the "peaceful streams" of wells, pools, quiet rivulets, or sheltered sand bars.

One frequent use of David's sling would be to aim beyond a straying sheep, scaring it back to the flock. The "right paths" were age-old sheep-walks. "The dark valley of death," which called for extra shepherding, was the deep rock-cleft wadi where serpents lurked. The sheep felt the touch of the shepherd's hooked staff lifting them over perilous stones. The familiar stout, short rod "rodded" them into the stone-walled fold at nightfall.

The rod (v.4) was what the shepherd relied on to safeguard both himself and his flock in danger. He also used his rod to discipline and correct any wayward sheep that insisted on wandering away and to examine and count the sheep. In the terminology of the Old Testament, this was referred to as passing "under the rod." (Philip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, in loc)

"The staff [v.4] is essentially a symbol of the concern, the compassion that a shepherd has for his charges. No other single word can better describe its function on behalf of the flock than that it is for their 'comfort.' Whereas the rod conveys the concept of authority, of power, of discipline, of defense against danger, the word 'staff' speaks of all that is longsuffering and kind... The staff is of special comfort to the shepherd himself. In the tough tramps and during the long weary watches with his sheep, he leans on it for support and strength. It becomes to him a most precious comfort and help in his duties.

"There are three areas of sheep management in which the staff plays a most significant role. The first of these lies in drawing sheep together into an intimate relationship... The staff is used by the shepherd to reach out and catch individual sheep, young or old, and draw them close to himself for intimate examination. The staff is very useful this way for the shy and timid sheep normally tend to keep at a distance from the shepherd.

"The staff is also used for guiding sheep... The tip of the long slender stick is laid gently against the animal's side and the pressure applied guides the sheep in the way the owner wants it to go." (Keller, in loc) The curved end of the long staff is also useful in pulling sheep out of perilous situations they tend to get themselves into.

As the shepherd's rod and staff comfort and reassure his sheep, so the word (Scriptures) and Spirit of our Shepherd-King comfort and reassure His sheep.

Verses 4-6 are David's prayer of gratitude for the benevolence of his heavenly Shepherd-King. In verse 5 the Shepherd-King receives David at his table as his vassal king and takes him under his protection. In the ancient Near East, covenants were often concluded with a meal expressive of the bond of friendship (see 41:9; Genesis 31:54; Obadiah 7); in the case of vassal treaties or covenants, the vassal was present of the overlord (see Exodus 24:8-12).

As our Shepherd-King, Christ provides abundant life for us “in the presence of our enemies” (v.5). The enemies of God’s people (Satan and his partners in evil) cannot ultimately harm us (Romans 8:35-39). Our enemies can touch us only so far as God allows for His glory and purposes, and where suffering is involved God comforts his people and gives them grace to endure, even with joy (2 Corinthians 1:3-7; James 1:2-4, 12). It was customary treatment of an honored guest at a banquet to anoint his head with oil (see Luke 7:46).

We are assured of welcome at his rich table, of abundance, attendance, and unending hospitality. The shepherd was able to “prepare a feast” in safe grassy spots, in the presence of the sheep’s hereditary enemies – venomous snakes which bit the faces of unsuspecting sheep, hence the necessity of having their injured heads “anointed with oil” or butter. An example of the “cup” which ran over is a stone trough placed beside the well from which the shepherd dipped water to fill the “cup.” The Psalmist’s last word, “forever,” in the Hebrew suggests “throughout the years.” This word does not suggest (or deny) immortality, but that the welcome and feasting will not be withdrawn while life lasts. Immortality is taught elsewhere in the Old Testament, however (see Psalm 16:11; 17:15; Daniel 12:2) and throughout the New Testament.

From Psalm 23 we see that our heavenly Shepherd-King is good, loving, caring, faithful, tender, wise, and diligent.

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

The Father’s love for his children is discussed in these verses. They portray the shepherd as valuing one individual sheep from among many -- another characteristic of the “good shepherd.” The one sheep may be a believer who is carrying a heavy burden or a nonbeliever whom the Father saves or even a Christian who has drifted into sin and whom the Father seeks to restore. The situation is extremely grave; restoration is no certainty (verse 13a, “and *if* He finds it . . .”). It is urgent that believers be arms of God’s love to the erring. But, the focus is on the good shepherd who cares for all, even one.

#### **John 9:40-10:18**

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

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

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

shepherds gather their flocks and lead them out. The Eastern shepherd, unlike the shepherd of the Western tradition, is indispensable to the flock in that he leads them (and they follow him) rather than leaving the sheep to themselves.

The parable itself discusses the legitimate leaders of the sheep, those who have authorized access to the flock, in contrast to thieves, who must steal clandestinely into the fold. Jesus suggests that there may still be false leaders of God's people whose intentions are malevolent. Two criteria set apart fraudulent leaders. First, their entry into authority is wrong (verse 1). Sheepfolds were often protective stone fences with one access gate. If the gatekeeper (verse 3) has not approved the shepherd's entry, he (the alleged shepherd) is to be feared, not followed. Here Jesus indicates that only those leaders have true authority who enter by the gate at the gatekeeper's invitation. Second, the false leader's voice is not recognized. The intimacy between shepherd and sheep is a well-known Palestinian phenomenon. This is a central feature of discipleship, discerning Jesus' voice and abiding in Him.

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

Initially Jesus affirms that He is the way ("the door/gate," verses 7, 9) through which one finds salvation (or *will find safety*) or pasture. "The gate" may be an allusion to words in Ps 118:20, a psalm quoted messianically several times in the Gospels.

Jesus self-description as "the door/gate" reflects the practice of Eastern shepherds to sometimes lie in the narrow entrance to the fold, his body forming a barrier to intruders, whether thieves or wild beasts.

Now we learn that Jesus distributes not simply access to leadership, but life itself. Jesus is the Door/Gate to the life of the kingdom of God, which is given to those who come to the Father through Him. Note Jesus' sovereignty over the fold. The sheepfold is designed to keep out those who would harm the sheep (verse 10), and Jesus is their guardian. He refuses access to many, including those like the self-serving, haughty Pharisees. These leaders destroy, but God sent true shepherds (Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles, and others) and ultimately Christ so that those who believe might not be destroyed (3:16, 6:39, and 17:12). The true under-shepherds of Christ derive their authority to care for the flock from the Chief Shepherd. Unlike the intruders who avoid the door, they are listened to by the sheep; for, like their chief, they are free from self-interest and greed and seek life in its fullest for those under their care.

In verses 11 and 14 Christ claims to be the good shepherd and that upon three grounds:

1. He lays down his life for the sheep (verse 11). In contrast to the hired hand "who's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep." Every day of a shepherd demands personal sacrifice to meet the needs of the dependent, needy, hungry, foolish creatures that have been placed in his care.
2. A good shepherd has intimate knowledge of each sheep of his flock (verse 14). To others the sheep may be practically indistinguishable. But he knows them at a glance, their characters and idiosyncrasies, and can pick them out at once from a mass of other sheep among which they have mingled. This one, and this one, and that one, he claims, are mine. But Christ says with confidence, "I know My own." And that is what supremely matters.
3. And His sheep know Him (verse 14): know that they are in the keeping of one Whom they can absolutely trust, Who has proven Himself trustworthy day after day without fail; know that they are not alone, left to make such shift as they can.

So intimate is this relationship between Christ and his own that He compares it to His relationship with His Father. And because He loves us, knows us thoroughly, and sees how helpless we are without Him, He cares for us constantly and ultimately dies for us. Being the good shepherd, His heart goes out to



other sheep who need Him, to men and women not actually His yet, but scattered over the gentile world, who, when they hear His voice, will heed it and will follow. Them too He will gather in and lead and tend.

Nothing is more certain than that it is through Christ that we gain what matters most. He is the door that opens to it. What He provides here (verse 9) are safety, access to the Father (they will go in and out) and all we need to stay fit and healthy (and find green pastures). Christ gives us what the world with all its misleading and seductive promises, cannot give. Through Christ alone one enters into and enjoys the peace which passes all understanding – when others are frustrated, harassed, and careworn. Through Christ alone one gains the joy of the Lord that is our strength. Through Christ alone one attains to life that is life indeed.

In contrasting His love to the indifference of the hireling (vs. 11-18), Jesus states three aspects of his shepherding. He establishes a community of understanding and purpose between Himself and his disciples after the likeness of his unity with the Father (compare 1:1, 18, 6:57, 15:9, 17:11, 21-23). “The word *know* (verse 14) in Greek relates to the idea of *seeing*, with a view to grasping the nature of an object; whereas in the Hebrew thought *knowledge* means *experiencing* something. Therefore, knowledge of God means entering into a relationship with God, which Jesus enables for us.”<sup>18</sup> As Jesus is in the Father, so the disciple is in Christ (compare 14:20, 24). Jesus will bring into his flock those who are not yet within the fold of Judaism (compare 6:37, 11:52, 12:32). He means of his own free will to lay down his life, not in futile self-sacrifice, but in a victorious act of submission to the Father’s will.

What does Jesus mean when He says, “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again” (v. 17)? “The Father simply is love (1 John 4:8), and as a part of his very character his love is not contingent on the loveliness of the objects of his love. But it is possible to fall out of “the sphere of His active love” (Hoskyns 1940b:440), which is the condition of the world upon whom God’s wrath abides (3:36). His wrath is his settled opposition toward that which disrupts the harmony of relations between himself and his creatures and which corrupts and destroys those whom he loves. In the case of Christ, his sinless obedience maintains the harmony of relationship between himself and his Father—therefore God’s love remains fulfilled toward him. Jesus refers to this when he says, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (15:10). Such obedience is the expression of love (14:15, 21) and is the condition for intimacy (14:23). Thus, in our passage Jesus would be saying that the Father is able to fulfill his love for the Son because the Son does the Father’s will. In this way... we see both the character of God’s love and the effects of the Son’s love, which is shown in obedience.” (IVP New Testament Commentary, in loc)

Is the death of the shepherd something tragic – beyond his control? Not at all. His power enables Him voluntarily to die and regain his life (verse 18). In this passage, Jesus attributes His resurrection to Himself (v. 17). Elsewhere in the New Testament God raises up Jesus (Acts 2:24; Romans 4:24; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 11:19; 1 Peter 1:21). But in the book of John, the Father and the Son possess the same powers (verses 28-30). The Son controls the hour of death entirely (2:4, 7:6, 8, 8:20).

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

If the concept of shepherd as “leader,” as exemplified by Jesus the Good Shepherd, is applied to contemporary times, the characteristics of present day good shepherds might be the following: they care about those who work for them (or those who depend on them); they provide for and protect those they lead; they will stick out their neck for those they lead; they are patient with the weaknesses of those they lead; they have the best interests of (the classroom, company, family, etc.) at heart; they are free from self-

interest and greed; they make the work place healthy, peaceful, comfortable, safe; they know each person intimately and personally; they lead rather than driving and pushing; and they keep themselves abreast of opportunities for growth for themselves as well as for those they lead.

## ***Teacher Helps***

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

Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14 were chosen for study to introduce students to the concept of the shepherd. From these verses, students should be able to glean the characteristics of a good shepherd before being introduced to Jesus as the Good Shepherd. John 10:1-18, will bring the idea of Jesus as Shepherd into their lives.

In the Scripture selections for this lesson there may be concepts that students are not acquainted with especially students reading the English. Do not teach these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty:

Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14 -- shepherd, heavenly Father, Lord, meadows, rod, staff, feast, anointing, house of the Lord, rejoice, renews, pursue, unfailing love, dark valley of death.

John 10:1-18 -- sneaks, sheepfold, thief, robber, gate keeper, green pastures, good shepherd, hired hand, voluntarily.

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

## ***Lesson Objectives***

Students will

1. Explore the role of the shepherd.
2. Explore the characteristics of sheep.
3. Explore how the sheep are dependent on the shepherd.
4. Discuss characteristics of present day good shepherds/“leaders.”
5. Consider how they are dependent on Jesus, like sheep dependent on a shepherd.
6. Learn the spiritual role of Jesus as the “gate” to the sheepfold.
7. Explore the characteristics of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

# Lesson Guide

## Suggested Set

Show a picture of a flock of sheep and ask students what they know about sheep. Then ask them who takes care of sheep, what this person is called, and what they know about what exactly he does. If students are not well acquainted with sheep and shepherds, this may not be carried very far, but the discussion is intended to fix in their minds the idea of “sheep” and “shepherd.” Have them read Psalm 23 and Matthew 18:12-14.

**Read Psalm 23** – Mention that this was written by King David and that in his day, rulers were called shepherds of those over whom they had authority.

1. Who does David say is his shepherd (v. 1)?
2. Who is “the Lord?” (vs. 1) God
3. Utilizing the metaphor of shepherd and sheep, does David see himself as a happy sheep?
4. From each verse, what specific things does this good shepherd provides for his sheep? List these in English on a dry erase board; for lower level students, the interpreter should also list them in the students’ native language.
5. In v.4, the sheep is comforted by the shepherd’s rod and staff. With what does our Lord, as our Shepherd, comfort us? His word and his Spirit.

## Read Matthew 18:12-14

6. What does this passage suggest about the relationship of a good shepherd to his sheep?

## Read John 9:40 - 10:2

7. To whom is Jesus speaking to here? (9:40) The Pharisees. **Mention** that these particular Pharisees had just thrown out of the synagogue a man born blind whom Jesus had healed, because he gave Jesus the credit.
8. These Pharisees claim to see (v.40). What does Jesus say about them (v.41)? They are spiritually blind and completely unaware of their condition.
9. These Pharisees saw themselves as the spiritual leaders (shepherds) of the people. How good a leader is a blind shepherd?
10. From these verses, what distinguishes a true shepherd from a “thief and a robber”? **Mention:**
  - a. a “sheepfold” is an enclosure with only one entrance. Its walls kept the sheep from wandering and protected them from wild animals and thieves.
  - b. Jesus does not yet explain what “the gate” represents, but he will shortly.

**Read John 10:3 - 6** Say that the “watchman” (10:3) oversees a large fold, where several flocks are kept.

11. What is the relationship like between a good shepherd and his sheep?
12. How do sheep respond to strangers?
13. Did these Pharisees and others who were listening understand what Jesus was trying to teach them (v.6)?

## Read John 10:7-9

14. Jesus says that He is “the gate for the sheep” (vs. 7, 9) [See comments on “the gate” in Lessons Concepts]. That being so, back in verse 2, who is the “shepherd” who enters by the gate? And who are the “thieves and robbers”?

- a. Legitimate “shepherds” are those who enter by the gate, thus those who get their authority from Jesus, who see themselves as His under-shepherds and share His love and concern for His sheep (his people).
  - b. “Thieves and robbers” are those self-promoting leaders who are not authorized by Jesus; they are false teachers who are proud and self-seeking with no genuine love and concern for God’s people.
  - c. When Jesus refers in verse 8 to “all who came before” him as “thieves and robbers,” to whom is He referring? To “false shepherds” like these Pharisees and the chief priests, not to the true Old Testament prophets.
15. Who are represented by the “sheep” in Jesus’ parable? The true people of God.
- a. From Jesus’ parable, are God’s people (“sheep”) able to recognize legitimate shepherds as such and false shepherds as such? How?
16. In verse 9, Jesus says whoever “enters” through him will be “saved” (or “kept safe”). How do we “enter through Him”? John 5:24
17. In verse 9, what does Jesus offer those who come to Him (his sheep)? What does this mean?

**Read John 10:10-18**

18. In verse 10, what reason does Jesus give for His coming from heaven to earth?
19. What does Jesus, THE Good Shepherd, do for His sheep? (vs. 11, 15)
- a. What does it mean that Jesus will lay down his life for the sheep? See 1 Peter 3:18.
20. How are WE like sheep?
21. How do we become one of Jesus’ sheep? Again, John 5:24
22. A shepherd refers to a leader. Do you have to have an official position to be a leader? Why not?
- a. Has someone been a good shepherd for you? Tell us about him/her.
23. To whom in your life can you be a good shepherd: sacrificially love and influence for good? A younger brother or sister?
24. What are some characteristics of good leaders, especially of Jesus, THE Good Shepherd, that we should pray that God will develop in our lives? Write these on the board.

**25. How will you respond to the truths that Jesus is “the Good Shepherd” and “the Gate?”**

- Possible responses: I will

- trust in Jesus as *my* personal Shepherd
- thank Jesus for being a good shepherd to me: dying for me (John 10:11) and providing for me
- ask God to produce in me the love and wisdom to be a good shepherd/leader
- rejoice in the assurance that I need never be fearful regardless of circumstances (Psalm 23:4)
- refuse to worry (or repent of worrying) about my needs (spiritual or physical), trusting my Shepherd to supply them (Psalm 23:1)
- study God’s word to help me discern the voice of the True Shepherd from that of false shepherds

## 5. THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

### Scripture

John 11:1-7, 11-15, 17-44; John 1:4-5; John 3:14-16, 36; John 5:21, 24-26; John 20:31; Romans 6:23  
Ephesians 2:1, 4-7

### Primary Thought

The greatest gift of God is *eternal life*, the ultimate enjoyment of which awaits our *resurrection* (Romans 8:22-25). Jesus said, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life... A time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.” (John 5:24-25) Jesus refers here both to future resurrection (“a time is coming”) and to the present reality that the spiritually dead who trust in him receive eternal life now (“has now come”). He said, “I have come that they [all who believe in him] may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b) The essence of eternal life is a relationship with God. Jesus in prayer said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) God himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, takes up residence in the believer’s innermost being, giving him a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17) and enabling him to grow in godliness (Galatians 5:22-23). There is union with all three persons of the triune God (John 17:3, Matthew 28:20, John 14:18-20, Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 1:30). By our union with Christ in his resurrection (Ephesians 2:6), believers share right now in life that is no longer subject to spiritual death and share in Jesus’ authority at God’s right hand (Ephesians 2:6). As with physical life, spiritual life requires nourishment and exercise for healthy growth. This involves communion with God through prayer, meditation on God’s word, and obedience.

### Lesson Concepts

Jesus is the “Author of Life” (Acts 3:15) and the guarantor of resurrection for all who trust in him. The Triune God is the ultimate source of all life. God alone gives life to and sustains the life of his creatures. We speak of the “living God” to distinguish the true God from idols, which are lifeless. It is through union with Jesus, “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), that believers receive eternal life (John 3:16), share in Christ’s authority at the Father’s right hand (Ephesians 2:6), and have the Holy Spirit’s sealing (Ephesians 1:13) and enabling for godly living (Romans 8:4; 2 Peter 1:3-8). “I have come,” Jesus said, “that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b) The Christian’s possession of the Holy Spirit is both evidence of his present salvation (Rom. 8:14-16) and a pledge and down payment on his future inheritance to be fully possessed at his resurrection or rapture (Romans 8:23-25; Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5).

The first man, Adam, received life directly from God, who “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (NIV) (Genesis 2:7; Job 12:9-10; Psalm 36:6; Acts 17:28; compare Psalm 36:9). Adam and Eve were created in God’s likeness (Genesis 1:26)—social (reflective of God’s triune nature; Genesis 2:18; 3:8), rational, volitional, moral (Hebrews 5:14) and emotional.

God placed in the Garden of Eden “the tree of life” along with “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” God warned Adam that he “must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) If God didn’t want Adam to partake of this tree, why did he place it there in the first place? Adam was to learn to distinguish between good and evil not by participating in evil (disobedience) but by refusing evil and choosing good (obedience). Adam (and Eve)

disobeyed and died (spiritually immediately [alienation from God; Genesis 3:8], and physically eventually). Spiritual death was evident in the corruption of every aspect of Adam's character--the image of God in man was marred (depravity). Adam's descendants (all of us) are born in his likeness (Genesis 5:3), spiritually dead with a fallen, depraved, sinful nature. As David put it, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5; c.f., Rom. 5:12, Eph. 2:1-3). Today, we still bear the image of God (James 3:9), but we also bear the scars of sin. Mentally, morally, socially, and physically, we show the effects of sin.

Jesus regarded each human life as precious, and much of his ministry involved meeting physical as well as spiritual needs. Yet he was critical of excessive concern (worry) over the physical aspects of life to the neglect of the spiritual (Matthew 6:25-33; John 6:26-27).

The good news ("gospel") is that the life that is lost in Adam is restored in Christ. "As in Adam [each of us at birth] all die, so in Christ all [i.e., all who are united with Christ through faith] will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22) "Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-6) The believer receives a new identity and a new godly nature. He is "born of God." (John 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:23) "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). There is the beginning of the restoration of the original image of God in him since he participates "in the divine nature [i.e., is indwelt by the Holy Spirit] and [is enabled to] escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:4) As the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly frees him from his previous earthboundness or as the laws of aerodynamics free us from the law of gravity, so "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature [moral law may tell me what's right, but it doesn't empower me to do right], God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in his flesh [Jesus took upon himself the condemnation we sinners deserve], in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh [self-reliance and rebellion] but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:2-4) "The knowledge of good and evil" [moral discernment and sound judgment] that was lost for humanity through Adam's sin, is restored in Christ (progressively now; completely at our resurrection). "Solid food [deep insights into God's truth and nature] is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil [restoration of moral discernment and sound judgment]." (Hebrews 5:14)

While we receive a new and godly nature when born again, our character (attitudes, affections, motives, values, beliefs) needs to be "transformed by the renewing of" our minds (Romans 12:1-2). This transformation occurs as we abide in Christ (John 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 1:9-11). This involves daily meditation on God's word (Psalm 119:9-11), communion with God in prayer (worship, thankfulness, self-reflection and confession, petitions), commitment to obedience (James 1:19-25), and submission to God's discipline (Heb. 12:5-11). See also Phil. 3:10-15; 2 Peter 1:3-8. As we abide in Christ, our lives are transformed by God's Spirit from lives of rebellion and pride to lives of grateful, joyful commitment to God's will.

Not only does fallen man experience physical death, he also faces judgment. Here again, Jesus is our Savior. "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:27-28)

The word *resurrect* comes from the Latin *re* (again) + *surrect* (to rise). Resurrection, the noun, is used biblically to mean rising (or being raised) from the dead. The Bible tells of at least nine specific instances of persons other than our Lord being physically raised from death: the widow of Zarephath's son raised by Elijah (I Kings 17:17-24), the Shunamite's son raised by Elisha (II Kings 4:20-37), the man tossed

into Elisha's tomb (II Kings 13:21), the widow of Nain's son raised by Jesus (Luke 7:11-16), Jairus' 12-year-old daughter raised by Jesus (Mark 5:35-43), Lazarus raised by Jesus (John 11:1-44), Tabitha (a.k.a. Dorcas) raised by Peter (Acts 9:36-41), Eutychus raised by Paul (Acts 20:7-12), and many saints raised by God upon Jesus' death (Matthew 27:51-53). Common to each of these resurrections is their authentication of a servant of God (prophet, apostle, Jesus) and the fact that those raised died again; they were not yet raised to immortality.

The most important resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus, which is the basis for our hope of resurrection. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:1) Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 53:11-12, Psalm 16:10-11, Acts 2:24-32) and fully authenticated Jesus and his teaching ("The gospel of God...regarding his Son...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead" [Romans 1:1-4]). "The Jews demanded of Jesus, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.'... The temple he had spoken of was his **body**." (John 2:18-21) Note that this was a resurrection of Jesus' **body**. Spiritually, Jesus entered paradise immediately upon his death on the cross as is evident from his telling the believing thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Since Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:14), it is essential that Christians, both for the sake of our personal faith and for our witness to seekers, are "prepared" to convincingly present the biblical and historical evidence for Christ's resurrection (1 Peter 3:15). Some key biblical passages to this end are Mathew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24:1-10, Acts 1:1-3, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Many books and websites on this subject are available for study. Here are a couple of acrostics that highlight key historical points:

F-E-A-T (**F**atal torture, **E**mpy tomb, **A**ppearances, **T**ransformations [disciples, Paul, society—new religion overnight])

H-E A-R-O-S-E (**H**e was dead, **E**mpy tomb, **A**ppearances, **R**eaction of the officials [Roman soldiers, priests, etc.], **O**utlook of the disciples [from hopeless and disillusioned to bold witnesses; many died for their faith in the Resurrection], **S**tart of the church [an historical event implies an historical cause], **E**xpectation of Christ's return [the disciples wouldn't have expected a dead Messiah to return in power and glory]).

The Bible speaks of future resurrection of both the righteous (by faith) and of the wicked. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:2-3; c.f., Revelations 20:4-6, 11-15)

In contrast to natural human life, which ends at death, the new, spiritual life of the believer is indestructible. In fact, the blessings we now enjoy as reborn humans are but an installment of the glorious blessings which are to come (Romans 8:18, Eph. 2:7). The continuation of this new life is set forth not in terms of the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul, but in terms of the doctrine of personal bodily resurrection, based on the resurrection of Jesus. Our resurrected "spiritual" bodies, in which we shall live forever in the presence of God, will be imperishable, glorious, and powerful. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

## **Bible Passages**

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

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

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

As the chapter opens, Jesus was in the Jordan Valley (John 10:40); his whereabouts must have been known to his friends since Mary and Martha are able to contact Him. Jesus' response to Lazarus' illness (verse 4) is similar to his explanation of the blind man's infirmity in 9:3. **Sometimes crises serve divine purposes so that God may be glorified when they are resolved.**

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

It is a tribute to John's interest in historical detail that he mentions how long Lazarus has been dead (verses 17, 39) and the exact location of Bethany. "Because the ancient world did not have precise methods to monitor death or coma, most rabbis held theories about the impossibility of resuscitation after three or four days of death."<sup>19</sup> This makes one point clear: Lazarus was fully dead by anyone's standards and the miracle (verses 43-44) involved resurrection, not resuscitation.

When Jesus enters the hill country the customary mourning is under way (verses 18-19). Although Martha is the first to greet Jesus on the road (verse 20), Mary will come later (verses 31-32); here we have another opportunity to compare the two sisters. Both women express the same words, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (verses 21, 32). Perhaps the sisters had said this to one another often as they awaited Jesus' arrival. Martha seems to have hope and faith for an immediate resurrection "even now" (v.22) in spite of the fact that Lazarus' had already begun to decay (v.39). Mary is overcome with grief and worship (verse 32, compare 12:3). Jesus tells Martha, "Your brother will rise again" (verse 23). She responds that she knows that "he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (verse 24) This evoked from Jesus the supreme announcement of his many "I Am" sayings -- "I am the resurrection and the life" (verse 25). Christ gave to Martha the august saying which has been recited at innumerable funerals to stunned and agonizing family members, lowering their dead ones into the dull, senseless earth; and hearing it, their heads went up, and their hearts rallied. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, even though he dies, will live [resurrection], and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die [rapture of living saints at Christ's return and/or shall never die spiritually]" (verses 25-26, NIV, cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, John 6:50-51,54,58 ). There is no reason for those who trust in Jesus to fear death (verse 26). Jesus was saying more than that he gives resurrection



and life. In some way these are identified with him. He is life (cf. John 14:6; Acts 3:15; Heb. 7:16). (NIVSB in loc.)

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

Lazarus was buried in a typical first-century stone tomb (Compare Jesus' tomb, 20:1; Mark 15:46). Since these were designed for multiple burials there would be no difficulty reopening it (verse 39) if sufficient help was available. We are given a confirmation that Lazarus is dead (verse 39), this time in graphic terms. But this does not deter Jesus. As his feeding miracle demonstrated that He was the bread of life (6:35), and as his healing of the blind illustrated that He was the light of the world (8:12), so now He will prove that He is the resurrection and the life (verse 25).

All that Jesus does has one aim: to promote the glory of God (verse 40). His audible prayer heard here (verses 41-42, compare 12:27) serves this purpose. Jesus' miraculous deeds have a definite purpose—they are signs which promote belief. They reveal God's presence at work, they authenticate Jesus as God's divine agent, the promised Messiah, and they reveal other truths about Jesus.

Jesus' assertions -- "I am the Resurrection" and "I am the Life" -- underscore God's greatest gift: *eternal life* and the promise of *resurrection*. John 3:16, 36 bear this out: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God are grounded in God's love and directed to the salvation of all humanity. Christ's salvation is from sin (Matthew 1:21)—its penalty (exact by Jesus on Calvary), its power (through the Holy Spirit), and its presence (ultimately in heaven after all evil is isolated in hell).

Jesus is "the life," and "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life sets [us] free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering." (Romans 8:2-3) The "law of sin and death" says, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) (both physical death and spiritual death [alienation from God; Isaiah 59:2]) and "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) But as the "new life" of a butterfly frees it from the earthboundness of its previous existence as a caterpillar or as the laws of aerodynamics free one from the downward pull of the law of gravity, so the law of the Spirit of life in Christ frees us from the law of sin and death.

Through the rebirth to new life in Christ, the believer, as he spiritually matures, becomes more loving, sensitive, active, and purposeful (Eph. 2:1,4-5; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4).

## **Teacher Helps**

The focus of this lesson is that through faith in Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, we receive eternal life now (a present possession) and the guarantee of future resurrection. (John 1:13; Romans 8:23-25; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14; 2:1, 4-5). Be sure to cover both aspects of salvation: present reality and future hope.

The Scripture readings are rather lengthy for this lesson. There may be some difficulty in reading all the Scripture and dealing with the questions. All the Scripture is important in that it all "hangs together" relative to the meaning. Therefore, it may be necessary to cut back on some of the questions and discussion. But be sure to cover all of the "Lesson Objectives" (below).

In the Scripture selections for this lesson there may be concepts that students are not acquainted with, especially students reading the English. Do not teach these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears students are having difficulty understanding.

Concepts that may give difficulties:

John 11:1-44 -- for God's glory, resurrection, eternal life, Messiah, Son of God, mourners, grave clothes, resurrection day;

John 5:24 -- eternal life, condemned;

John 3:16, 36 -- "believes in" (a term unique to the New Testament; it means more than "believing that," not mere mental ascent but trusting commitment; you may believe *that* a chair can hold your weight, but you're not believing *in* it until you actually sit on it), perish, God's one and only Son, eternal life, wrath;

John 20:31 -- Messiah, the Son of God;

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 -- rich in mercy, grace, saved;

Romans 6:23 -- wages, Christ Jesus our Lord

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

## ***Lesson Objectives***

Students will

1. Learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.
2. Learn that it is through accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior that one is born of God into new life (eternal life) and receives the Holy Spirit as God's present enabler for growth in godliness and as God's guarantee of future resurrection to glory.
3. Learn that new life in Christ transforms us, especially as we nurture our relationship with God through prayer, meditation on God's word, and obedience.
4. Learn that eternal life is a here-and-now reality for those who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.
5. Explore how God may use crises for his glory and for redemptive purposes.
6. Learn that the certainty of future glorious resurrection enables one to persevere in present trials.

## ***Lesson Guide***

### **Suggested Set**

Ask students what they would think if someone told them that someone they knew and greatly admired, who had recently died, had come to life again. Ask what would have to happen before they would believe it. What if they saw the dead person come back to life? **Tell them, "God's word has much to about new life for the dead (both physical life and spiritual life). That is the focus of this lesson."**

### **Read John 11:1-7**

1. How do Mary and Martha refer to their brother Lazarus when they send word to Jesus? "The one you love." (verse3)
2. What does Jesus say about Lazarus' sickness? Verse 4. "Will not end in death," "for God's glory," "so that God's Son may be glorified."
3. How could Lazarus' sickness be "to the glory of God?"

4. If we trust God, can our trials bring him glory? James 1:2-4
5. What was Jesus' attitude towards Martha, Mary, and Lazarus? Verse 5. Loved them
6. Why didn't Jesus go immediately to Lazarus? (verse 6) He had a different agenda than the sisters.
7. What should be your attitude when God doesn't do what you think He should?

**Read John 11:11-15**

8. What did Jesus mean by saying he would wake Lazarus up? (verse 11) How is sleep an appropriate metaphor for death?
  - a. How would this help the disciples to believe in Jesus? (verse 14)

**Read John 11:17-38**

9. What was the situation when Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany? (verse 17)
10. How did Martha feel about Jesus' delaying? (verse 21)
11. What did Martha think Jesus meant when he told her that her brother would rise again? (verse 23-24)
12. What does Jesus mean when he says he is "the resurrection and the life?" (verse 25)
13. He is the source of life (John 1:4) and the power of resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
14. How can one receive the life Christ offers? (verses 25-26) Believe in Jesus [trust him as Lord and Savior] John 5:24
15. What is the difference between those Jesus refers to in verses 25 and 26? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54

**Read John 11:39-44**

16. What was Martha and Mary's expectation of Jesus? (verses 21, 32)
17. What does Jesus' emotional response to Lazarus' death and to the grief of his family and friends (verses 33, 35, 38) reveal about our Lord?
18. What did the bystanders think concerning Jesus? (verses 36, 37)
19. What is the answer to their question in verse 37?
  - a. Why is it that God sometimes does not do what you think he should?
20. What condition does Jesus state for seeing God's glory? (verse 40) Belief.
  - a. It's often said that seeing is believing. God says believing (what God has already made clear, [e.g., his goodness and power]) leads to seeing. See Mark 9:23, Matthew 13:58.
21. Why did Jesus pray before raising Lazarus? Especially in his incarnation, Jesus limited himself to dependence upon the Father (John 5:19).
22. Why did Jesus pray aloud? (verse 41)
23. What would you have thought or felt if you were one of the mourners who saw their brother or friend raised from the dead? (verse 44)

**Read John 3:14-16, 36**

24. What is required to gain eternal life?
25. What did God's great love for the world move him to do? (verse 16)
26. What is the result of believing in Jesus?
27. What is the result of rejecting Jesus? (verse 36)

**Read John 20:31**

28. Why did John write the gospel that bears his name?

**Read Ephesians 2:1, 4-6; Romans 6:23; 8:11**

29. What is the result of sin (disobedience, rebellion)?
30. What is the result of receiving God's gift?
31. What does this gift mean for our present life?
32. What does this mean beyond our present life (after we die)? Romans 8:11

**Ask, How will you respond to the truth that Jesus is "the Resurrection and the Life?"**

- Possible responses:

- receive Jesus as Lord and Savior
- rest in the assurance that nothing can separate me from God's love and salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14, Romans 8:38-39)
- rejoice in and encourage one another with resurrection truth (Romans 8:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- reject all fear, recognizing the spiritual authority I share as positionally united with Christ in his resurrection (Ephesians 2:6)
- set my affections on things above where my life is hidden in Christ
- seek to grow spiritually through prayer, meditation on God's word and obedience

## 6. THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

### Scripture

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

### Primary Thought

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

### Lesson Concepts

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

We find "way" used also as in *gate*; a gate implies going from something into something, "by way of." But the idea of gate can be used figuratively as from death into life. The word "way" is also used as in *plan/message, course of human conduct*; as in *life style*. It can mean, figuratively, impetus, progress (driving force) In the Bible, the word **way** translates various Hebrew and Greek words with different meanings: (1) for a *path, a road* (Genesis 18:16), a *route* (Exodus 13:17, "way of the land of the Philistines;" Matthew 2:12); (2) for a *human life* ("on my way" Genesis 24:56), a *manner of living* (II Chronicles 20:32; Proverbs 2:8; Job 17:9); "*the way of the Lord*" (Isaiah 40:3, NKJV) in contrast to "*the evil way*" (Jonah 3:8; Psalm 139:24); *God's plan for a righteous universe* (Genesis 18:19; John 1:23) frequently expressed in the Old Testament and the New Testament (Acts 18:25-26).

In the New Testament Jesus spoke of Himself as being not only "the way" but the goal to which that way led: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This saying may have given rise to the earliest name by which the Christians were known – people of "the Way" (compare Acts 9:2, 18:25, 26, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22). That the followers of Jesus should be identified by this term is entirely fitting, since the Master referred to Himself as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Hence his followers were known as "people of the way." The Greek world knew various philosophical ways of life, but it was still waiting for something better than a new way of conduct; it looked expectantly for "the way to be saved" (Acts 16:17, NIV), "a new and life-giving way" (Hebrews 10:20) of which Isaiah's highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8-10) had given a fore glimpse.

**Truth** is that which conforms to what is actually real. Truth-telling was emphasized, for example, in the wisdom literature (Proverbs 12:19, 17:20). Truthfulness to one's neighbor and truthful justice toward

fellow men were the conditions of good community; in Zechariah 8:16 the Lord of hosts declared: "These are the things you are to do. Speak the truth to each other and render true and sound judgments in your courts (NIV)." "By such prophetic insights Judaism advanced far beyond the utilitarian cultivation of its ethics (be good and truthful because it pays), declaring that truth was the command of God, to love Whom and to obey Whom, was the primary concern of the righteous man (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Thus, natural morality mounted to the heights of an ethical religion. The direction of growth was Godward, even if its roots remained in realistic earth."<sup>21</sup>

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

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

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

In the New Testament, divine truth or the faith and practice of the true gospel is called "truth" either as being inherently true and derived from the true God, or as declaring the existence and will of the one true God, in opposition to the worship of false idols. Hence divine truth, gospel truth, as opposed to heathen and Jewish fables (John 1:14, 17; "you will know the truth," and the truth set you free, John 8:32; everyone who loves divine truth, John 16:13, 18:37; Romans 1:18, 25). Therefore, the Lord Jesus is called the truth, meaning truth incarnate, the Teacher of divine truth (John 14:6). "The Spirit of truth (NIV)" means one Who declares or reveals divine truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). "People who know and believe the truth" means those who know the truth and are disciples of Christ (I Timothy 4:3).

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

The New Testament also praises truthfulness and condemns all forms of falsifying (I Corinthians 5:8; Ephesians 4:15, 25; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:9; I Timothy 4:2; James 3:14; II Peter 2:2; I John 2:21; Revelation 22:15). When Jesus asked, "Who touched Me?" the woman who had been healed through touching Jesus' garments "fell at His feet, and...told Him the whole truth" (Mark 5:32-33, NIV).

The most important uses of the word "truth" are to be found in the writings of Paul and John,

although other writers find various aspects important. Paul's acceptance of the Old Testament concept of truth is seen in Romans 3:1-7. The truth of God is described in the words "faithfulness" (3:3, NIV) and "righteousness" (3:5, NIV). In 3:4, Paul declared, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (NIV).

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

In the New Testament truth is represented, especially in John, in the life and personality of Jesus, Who, in spite of His silence in the face of Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38a), was the incarnation of truth. He was not only "full of grace and truth," but He was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He was at one and the same time the goal of man's perfection ("the life"), the path by which it was attained ("the way"), and the reality ("the truth") which nourished that life. To communicate truth to His followers was His purpose; they were to know the truth, and the truth would make them free (8:32). Jesus revealed that the ideal atmosphere of the worship of God, the Spirit, was to be "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Lying is characteristic of the devil (John 8:44). The "Spirit of truth (NIV)" (John 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13) was the Comforter, Whom Jesus promised to send to His disciples after His death. But the world would not receive the Spirit of truth, because the world neither saw nor knew Him, as Christ had taught His followers to know Him. Christ called Himself "the true vine" and His disciples "the branches" of that true vine (John 15:1, 5). When the Spirit of Truth came He would lead the faithful into the totality of truth: "He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

## ***Bible Passages***

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

The chapter starts out with a futurist aspect but quickly changes to a here-and-now thought because of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christ offers both hope for a glorious future and comfort for the present. In John 14 Jesus begins with a mention of His distant return (verse 3) but transitions to the soon coming of the Spirit (verses 23, 28). From the heavenly "dwelling places" of verse 2 Jesus shifts to his disciples as the local of divine indwelling (verse 23).

Jesus tells His disciples that He is going somewhere to prepare a place for them and He will come back and take them to be with Him. He tells them they know the way to the place He is going (verse 4). Thomas replies that they know neither the place nor the way (verse 5). Jesus clarifies that He is "the way and the truth and the life." He does not merely point the way, He IS the way, the only way for lost humanity to reconnect with the Father and to obtain heaven." There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men." (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV) "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Jesus' claim to be "the Truth" reflects back on John's introduction of Christ as the *Logos*, the Word of God made flesh. (John 1:1, 14) On "the *Logos*", the NIV Study Bible says, "Greeks used this term not only of the spoken word but also of the unspoken word, the word still in the mind—the reason. When they

applied it to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. Jews, on the other hand, used it as a way of referring to God.” As Truth incarnate, as the living Word of God, Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God to man. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” (John 1:18) See also Hebrews 1:1-3. Jesus claims, “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30) NIV Study Bible comments on “one”: “The Greek is neuter—‘one thing,’ not ‘one person.’ The two are one in essence or nature, but they are not identical persons.”

Jesus’ claim to be “the Life” also reflects back on John’s introduction of Christ. “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men...The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world...To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born...of God.” (John 1:4, 9, 12, 13)

Jesus tells his disciples that in Him the Father is already present with them. (14:10-11; cf. 8:19, 10:38). Union with Christ is the one way to God and to the Father’s home. The **truth** is the divine reality, the goal of all thought and effort. Christ declares Himself to be the ultimate reality – **truth**. Thus, Jesus is the only way to the Father. Because He and the Father are one (10:30) in the perfect relationship of Father and Son, no other can lead men to God as Father in the way that Jesus can. The way leads through death to life eternal. Jesus is the Life.

The relationship between Jesus and the Father is further unfolded in verses 9-14. Imperfect knowledge of Jesus has blinded the disciples to the true nature of the Father; this blindness will now be removed. Philip now inquires about this Father/Son relationship (14:8) and Jesus makes Himself explicit (verses 9-11). In answer to Philip’s bewilderment and his plea for the all-sufficing vision of God, Jesus declares that the vision of God is granted to those who have had the revelation of the Father in the life of the incarnate Son. The truth is that the works of Jesus are the works of the Father.

It is the Father Himself Who is present in Jesus and this validates both His words and works. Whenever the Father is present He manifests Himself. This pertains to Jesus’ followers as well (verses 12-14), who will be enabled to exhibit similar works. Running through these verses is a theological parallel between the Father’s relation to the Son and the Spirit’s relation to the disciple. As the Father abides in Jesus so, too, the Spirit abides in the believer. Thus, the confidence of Christ can be ours; as the Father was committed to His Son, so Jesus through His Spirit will stand with us in every need (verses 13-14). The point in these verses is not that every prayerful request will be granted, but that the character of Christ’s relationship with God at this level may be ours. But here we must recall Jesus’ consistent subordination to His Father’s will and His desire simply to glorify and please God.

The provision of Jesus that will bring about this relationship is declared to be the indwelling Spirit (verses 15-17), Who now bears two new names: the *Paraclete*<sup>22</sup> (NIV “Counselor,” verse 16) and the Spirit of truth; here Jesus says that Christians alone can enjoy the Spirit’s aid (John 14:17). As Jesus was alien to the world (1:10) so, too, His provision of the Spirit will be unknown and unrecognized to the world. As Jesus was on trial in the world, now His followers have a judicial aid to support them (15:18-27).

The Spirit will instruct, defend, empower, and guide the disciple within the world. Here the emphasis is on revelation. The Spirit will be a teacher (I John 2:27) bringing back to memory the sayings of Jesus (John 14:26). Thus here is practical equipment for the church! But we also have here a confirmation of the production of the Gospel record itself. The Spirit will be a preserving, conservative force in revelation. He will not primarily be creative but will reiterate Jesus’ words. Once again we see the Spirit functioning like Jesus: as Jesus was dependent on the Father (14:10) so the Spirit depends on Christ.

## **Summary**

John’s writings identify Christ with the Truth: “The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, Who is close to the



Father's heart, Who has made Him known" (John 1:17-18 NRSV). In testimony before Pilate, Jesus declared: "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice" (John 18:37 NRSV). God is the truth; and since Christ shares in the truth of God, He is full of grace and truth. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6); He is the True Light (John 1:9) and the true Vine (15:1). In the Gospel of John, the activity of the Holy Spirit is associated with the activity of Jesus in so far as truth is concerned. "When the Advocate comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who comes from the Father, He will testify on My behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27 NRSV).

John emphasized the appropriation of the truth by disciples. In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He prayed: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:17-19 NRSV). Followers of Christ are of "the way," but they are of "the truth" also (John 18:37 NRSV). This knowledge of truth is not simply "head knowledge." It is a matter of receiving Christ (John 1:11-13). This acceptance of Jesus and receiving of the truth is accompanied by walking in the truth or in the light (I John 1:7; II John 3, 4; III John 3, 4). It is in light of this understanding of truth that John can speak of doing the truth (John 3:21; I John 1:6).

## ***Teacher Helps***

Of equal importance in this lesson are the three concepts – Way, Truth, and Life. The "set" is aimed at all three. Be sure to cover all three concepts as the class proceeds with the lesson. Refer to Lesson 5 for a discussion of the **Life**.

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

1. Have students participate in the set. It has a very important function in the lesson since it is from the set students realize how important it is to be able to depend on someone to give them true knowledge and direction, what the result of this truth is, and how their life, perhaps, can depend on it.
2. Read and discuss the passages in Part I. They are intended to illustrate that there are two ways that we can take in life and that the better one provides a fuller life. If you will look up Matthew 7:13-14 in the NIV you will discover that these are the verses about the "narrow gate" and the "wide gate."
3. Read and discuss the passages in Part II. This consists of the remainder of the Scripture and is the substantive portion of the lesson.

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

In the Scripture selections for this lesson there may be concepts that students are not acquainted with. Do not teach these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty:

Matthew 7:13-14 – God’s kingdom, narrow gate, highway to hell, the easy way.

Isaiah 35:8-10 – main road, deserted land, Highway of Holiness, evil-hearted people, God’s ways, lurk, course, the redeemed, ransomed, Jerusalem, everlasting joy, mourning.

John 14:1-15, 16-17, 26-27 -- troubled, way, truth, life, the Father, works, counselor.

John 8:31-32 – disciples, teachings.

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

## **Lesson Objectives**

Students will

1. Explore the concept of “way” in their lives.
2. Explore the concept of “truth.”
3. Explore the concept of “life.”
4. Learn that Jesus is the “gate” from death to life.
5. Learn that Jesus is the “road” that leads to and through this gate.
6. Learn that union with Christ is the one and only way to God.
7. Learn that Jesus is the truth -- the ultimate truth and revealer of such regarding God, salvation and life.
8. Explore what Jesus, as the Way, Truth, and Life, provides for the lives of human beings.
9. Learn that the life Jesus provides is eternal and secure.
10. Learn that they must by faith receive the Life that God offers.
11. Learn that God provides the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us of the way to salvation and godliness (instructs, defends, empowers, guides, convicts, convinces, converts).
12. Learn that a transformed life is the result of a life nourished by communion with God through prayer, meditation on God’s word and obedience.

## **Lesson Guide**

### **Suggested Set**

- Have you ever been lost? If yes, tell us about it.
- Have you ever been given wrong directions as to how to get some place or how to do something? If yes, tell us about it. How did you feel about that? Did they mislead you on purpose or due to their misunderstanding? Are there people who would mislead us on purpose? Why would they?

- Has anyone ever lied to you or about you? Tell us about it. Have you ever lied?
- What is truth? Why is truth important?

**Read John 13:33 – 14:7**

1. Where is Jesus going that his disciples cannot follow him now, but will follow him later? 13:33, 36
2. What command does Jesus give his disciples to obey in his absence?
  - a. "Love one another" (13:34)
  - b. What will be a result of Christians loving one another? 13:35
3. Why does Jesus tell the disciples, especially Peter here, to not be troubled (14:1)? Even though there will be times of failure in our lives (13:38), God remains faithful to his children.
4. What does Jesus say we should do to have peaceful hearts, free from anxiety? 14:2
5. Why is Thomas confused (14:5)? He isn't aware of God's agenda, that Jesus will soon be going to the cross and then ascending to heaven.
6. How does Jesus respond to Thomas' confusion?
  - a. With his great claim that he is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"
  - b. With his declaration that he is the ONLY way to the Father
    - i. Cf. Acts 14:12, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."
      1. Do you believe this?
      2. What about other religions or philosophies that people trust in? "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12)
      3. What is the way that seems right to most people to attain salvation and gain heaven? By living a good life.
      4. Why does that way lead to death? We all fall short of God's standard, which is perfect love (Matthew 5:48; Romans 3:23).
  - c. That to know him is to know the Father as well. (14:6) Jesus brought a full revelation of the Father (cf. John 1:18; 8:19), so that the apostles had real knowledge of him.

**Read John 14:8-11**

7. What is the relationship between Jesus and the Father? There is a perfect and complete sharing of life and intimacy between them (verses 10-11).
  - a. Especially in his humanity, and as an example for us, Jesus fully relied on the Father rather than his own innate resources (verse 10).
8. What reasons does Jesus give the disciples for believing his fantastic claims? His character they've closely observed for three-plus years ("believe me") and his miracles. (verse 11)

**Read John 14:12-15**

9. What is the benefit of believing in Jesus? (verse 13)
10. What is His last admonition? (verse 15)

**Read John 8:31-32**

11. What is the benefit of Jesus' teachings?
12. What is this "truth?"
13. How can "truth" set us free? (verse 32)

**Read John 14:16-17**

14. Whom does God send to be with his children? John 14:26-27
15. What will the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, provide?
16. How is this related to Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

**Read Matthew 7:13-15, Proverbs 14:12 and Isaiah 35:8-10**

17. What are the characteristics of the world's "way" to life? God's way?
18. What are the characteristics of the road upon which God's people walk?
19. Comparing Matthew 7:13-14 with Isaiah 35:8-10, which seems the better way?

**Response**

20. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, the Life?"

# 7. THE TRUE VINE

## Scripture

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

## Primary Thought

Continued dependence upon Christ is the condition for fruitful service. While we can do much without Him, in the final analysis it all adds up to nothing of eternal value. It is connection and communion with God that causes us to flourish and glorify Him. Jesus' love for us is analogous to God's love for Him. Christ's legacy to His people includes peace, fullness of joy, and His own joy at that. Remaining in Jesus' love unwavering submission to His lordship and delightful enjoyment of His presence.

## Lesson Concepts

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

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

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

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

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

## Bible Passages

### John 15:1-17

This is the last of the "I am" sayings of the Gospel according to John. We see in chapters thirteen through sixteen that Jesus now is talking in private with His disciples, knowing that this will be the last opportunity that He will have before His death. In chapter 14, He declared Himself to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" in verse 27 of that chapter, in response to their voiced anxiety, He promised the disciples that He would leave them "with peace of mind and heart" which will be found in the Spirit. Christ in spirit will indwell them (and us). Jesus' new metaphor in chapter 15 affirms this again. The results of this indwelling is the fruit of new obedience and love (Galatians 5:22-23). This leads into chapter 15 where He

tells them that for them to have this “fruitfulness” they must remain in Him, completely depend on Him, as branches are dependent upon the vine.

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

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

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

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

To “remain” in Jesus has a deeper significance than simply to continue to believe in Him, although it includes that; it connotes continuing to live in association or in union with Him. It is the condition for fruitful living. “And I in you” may be viewed as the main clause of a conditional sentence: “*If* you remain in Me, I shall remain in you;” but the emphasis in the passage is on *Jesus*, the Vine, hence it is more likely that a note of encouragement is intended here, “and be assured, I am remaining in union with you.” Initially, Christ dwells in us (verses 4, 5); but this is no tribute to our merit, for our acceptability as vessels – our cleanliness – is his accomplishment (verse 3). In the divine relationship grace is the source and support of faith. On this condition alone fruit bearing is possible, as the image of a branch broken from a vine vividly illustrates. Just as branches are barren when they are unattached to the vine (verse 4), the possibility of separation from the vine is a real and dreadful prospect (verses 2, 6) -- they are thrown away, become withered, are collected and used as firewood. The picture is realistic and depicts what happens on the farm; it is not applied to the judgment of Hell, rather it vividly portrays the uselessness of such as do not remain in the Vine and their rejection by the Vinedresser. (See the discussion below of Romans 8:35, 37-39.)

The application is clear: to “remain” in Christ is to become fruitful, but “apart from Me you can do nothing” (verse 5b). Starting with “apart from Me, you can do nothing,” it is on the basis of that frank recognition of our utter helplessness apart from Him that Christ enters into His covenant with us, gives us His tremendous promises, and makes His honoring claims upon us. “I am the vine, you are the branches.” The Vine does and must do everything for them. It is the vine that draws the sap from the earth; the vine that passes it to the needy branches; the vine that enables them even to hold on, in order that they may get more. “But I,” says Christ, in essence, “can make you green and living things, heavy with fruitfulness, laden with usefulness toward God and man.”

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

There should be outer evidence of Christ’s indwelling. Note how carefully the passage balances our mutual participation with God. Our effort is necessary. The statement echoes that of Jesus relating to His own utter dependence on His Father (5:19, 30); this is even more plainly applicable to the believer in relation to the Redeemer; apart from Christ “nothing,” in Christ “much fruit.” For instance, we must devote ourselves to Jesus’ words and be obedient (verses 7, 10). But on the other hand, it is also the nurture of God that causes us to flourish and glorify Him (verse 8). Jesus describes God as a vinedresser Who prunes with skill knowing the benefits that will accrue to the branch in later seasons.

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

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

The commands of Christ (verse 12) laid on those who would remain in His love (verse 10) are summed up in the one command to love one another. The addition “in the same way that I love you (NIV)” is important; it includes the manifestation of Christ’s love in His death for others, and so reveals the standard of love that should be maintained among believers. It further hints of the motive of such love (again as perceived in I John 4:19), and its source in the redemptive love that frees us from the restrictive love of self. Such a relationship of love leads to uttermost joy (verse 11). Jesus experienced it, even when facing the dread hour of sacrifice. He revealed these things to His disciples that they might have the same joy in fullest measure. They, too, are to know it as they walk in the same path as He (12:24-26).

In verses 13-14 we see that the giving of one’s life for one’s friends is the greatest measure of human love. The disciples are declared to be His friends by virtue of His love for them manifest in His death on their behalf (verse 13) and their obedience to Him. That Jesus “no longer” calls the disciples servants allows us to infer a new relationship in the light of His revelation to them and His death for them. The mark of difference between a servant and a friend is precisely the confidence which is extended to the latter. So far as Jesus and His disciples are concerned, this is especially manifest in the Upper Room discourses, wherein He made known to them what He had heard from the Father. All that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus (16:15; 17:10), and he has passed it all on to His disciples. He has kept nothing hidden (verse 15). There is nothing more to be known about the Father apart from Jesus and his revelation. We do not need to search the world’s religions and philosophies to fill in gaps in Jesus’ revelation. Whatever truths of God that may be present in them, such as the ideal of self-sacrifice (verse 13), are seen to be true solely by their agreement with Jesus.

The relationship between Jesus and his disciples is friendship, love and intimacy, but it is decidedly not a relationship of equals. He is always the Lord. They did not choose him, but he chose them (verse 16; cf. 6:70; 13:18; 15:19). This is not a reference to salvation, but rather to service, since the rest of the verse speaks of being appointed...to go and bear fruit. While the general scope of fruit bearing, noted in verse 5, is understood here, the use of “I chose you” and “to go and bear fruit (NIV)” suggests that the sending of the disciples on mission is primary here. To this end assurance is given that prayer in the name of Jesus (as they engage in seeking fruit for the Lord’s glory) will be answered by the Father. Prayer in Jesus’ name is prayer that is in union with Him and consistent with his character and purposes.

Jesus ends with verse 17 as He began in verse 12 with the reiterated command for mutual love, and so brings the discourse on the Vine to its conclusion. The indwelling of Christ and His love are thoroughly individual and personal in these chapters. But Jesus’ call to extend this love to one another must not be neglected (verses 12, 17).

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

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

Three sets are discernible in the list. The first, “love, joy, peace” (verse 22, “affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity” MSG) reflects the resultant attitude of one who has been endowed with the Spirit of God Who is characterized by love (I John 4:8) and brings complete satisfaction (John 3:29) and peace (John 14:27). The second set reflects how a Spirit-led individual will conduct interpersonal relationships, “patience, kindness, goodness.” The third set seems to focus primarily on a person’s inner life when under the control of the Spirit, “faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (verses 22-23, “involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely” MSG).



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

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

Paul assures his readers that all that happens to them is in the sovereign hand of God Who in everything “works together for the good of those who love God” (verse 28). He assures Christian readers that the sufferings and troubles they undergo are not absurdities that have somehow crept into the flow of things beyond God’s power. They are permitted in the sovereign purposes of our faithful God.

God is in control of things; for God is for us, and (like Abraham, Genesis 22:12, 16; compare Isaiah 53:12) did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, and together with His Son will “graciously give us all things” (verse 32, NIV). As God has done the difficult thing in giving His Son for sinners, how much more will He do the easier thing and graciously give us the fullness of salvation (see 5:9-10), as well as a share in all things (see I Corinthians 3:21-23). Paul assures his readers that no one can condemn them, for the entire divine family works in unity on their behalf: it is God Who justifies (verse 33); Christ Jesus, Who died and was raised, “is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (verse 34); and we have already seen that “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us” (verse 26). We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us (verse 37). Paul assures his readers that there is nothing that can separate them from “the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verse 39, NIV).

## **Summary**

There is a heartening message for any day, but especially for ours, when tremendous problems are crowding in upon us and demanding a solution. These problems bring anxiety and defeat when we branches think we can bear fruit of ourselves. “But the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,” try how it may.

The allegory of the vine and the branches is the most complete expression of the mystical union between Christ and the Christian in John’s Gospel. It combines the thought which Paul expressed in the figure of the body and its members with the emphasis that John lays on love as the chief mark of this union. Continued dependence upon Christ is the condition for a fruitful life and fruitful service.

In our natural resources we live out our ideals. We see them; we long to achieve them; but they elude our clutching hands. Against the background of His lofty promises, what Christ has effected in us often looks meager and insignificant. Perhaps the branch has become detached from the vine and hangs loose and limp and withering? Life is rushed and hustled; and in the jostle of competing interests always tugging at our sleeve and attracting our attention, essential spiritual disciplines can easily get ignored. Seasons of devotion are shortened or crowded out, God’s Word is not seriously or regularly studied, prayer, Christian fellowship, and witnessing get neglected. “But the Branch cannot bear fruit of itself.” The Vine does cause the branch to bear. And Christ wants us to bear. For after all, we are the branches, and apart from the branches, the Vine has no harvest. It should affect us deeply to know that Christ has trustfully committed His cause, in our generation, to our keeping. It is not for these first disciples alone that our Lord speaks in verse 16, “You did not choose Me, I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last.” In measure that is true of every Christian.

## **Teacher Helps**

This is the final lesson of the seven “I Am” sayings of Jesus, using concepts that are meaningful and essential for our spiritual lives. Therefore, during the discussion of this final lesson there should be a reviewing of the other six, a “pulling together” of all the lessons, a summing up. Students should realize that all of the sayings fit together and how they fit together.

The crucial truth of this lesson is that we are totally dependent on Jesus for everything just as the branches AND THE FRUIT are dependent on the vine, the stalk, the root system, and the gardener (God).

God provides the water, the nourishment, and the light, through Jesus, to provide all that we need. Resulting from this is the fruit that is produced through our dependence upon Jesus. The selection from Romans assures us that we can be victorious.

The Scripture selections “hang” together, and they are not long. There may be concepts in the Scripture passages that students are not acquainted with, especially students reading the English. Do not teach these concepts, but deal with them during the discussion if it appears that students are having difficulty with comprehension of the Scripture.

Concepts that may give difficulty:

John 15:1-17 -- vine, branch, prunes, bear, fruitfulness, severed, wither, disciples, confides, gardener, true, produce (*verb*), apart, useless, overflow, joined, glory, remain.

Galatians 5:22-23a – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, conflict.

Romans 8:35, 37-39 – trouble, calamity, persecuted, overwhelming, victory, demons, powers of hell, creation.

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

## ***Lesson Objectives***

Students will:

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

## ***Lesson Guide***

**Suggested Set** This is an important step in order to establish the thought that the branches are totally dependent on the trunk (the vine) and the root system.

Using a diagram/picture of a tree with its root system and the branches, ask students what the various parts of the tree are, what is required for the tree to live and grow, where the tree gets its nourishment, where the branches get their nourishment, how the branches help the trunk and the roots – in general, what is required for plant life to grow and survive. You should get responses such as “plants need

light, water, nourishment, good soil to survive, grow, and produce fruit/vegetables, etc.” Ask, “How are these needs provided?” What would we assume about the tree if the branches withered and had no leaves on them? What would happen to the branches if the roots die?”

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

### **Read John 15:1-8**

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

### **Read John 15:9-14**

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

### **Read John 15:15-17**

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

**Read Galatians 5:22-23a** This Scripture passage outlines the fruit of the Spirit. Several of the concepts among the fruit may not be understood by even the best of English speakers. Take each separately and discuss it, letting students have the first opportunity to define and describe. Then add to the discussion as seems appropriate.

25. What fruit does the Holy Spirit bring into our lives? (verse 22)
26. How are these characteristics like fruitfulness?
27. This fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit, but do we have any responsibility for the fruit? John 15:4-5,10,12,17.

**Read Romans 8:35-39**

28. What does this say about our relationship with God? (verse 35)
29. Does the fact of God's love for us guaranty that we will not experience trials and suffering in this world? (verse 36)
30. What does the love of Jesus guaranty for us? (verse 37, 38)
31. If we are committed to Jesus, how strongly are we attached to Him? (verse 39)

**Response**

32. How will *you* personally respond to the truth that Jesus is "the True Vine?"  
What does the love of Jesus mean to you?

## END NOTES

### Lesson 1

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

### Lesson 2

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

### Lesson 3

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

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

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

<sup>16</sup> LOF, p. 76.

### Lesson 4

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from IB, p. 377 and HBD, pp. 674-5.

<sup>18</sup> WBC, p. 170.

### Lesson 5

<sup>19</sup> ECB, p. 863.

### Lesson 6

<sup>20</sup> HBD, p. 600.

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

<sup>22</sup> The concept of *Paraclete* (from the Greek *parakletos*) is unique to John and expresses the Spirit’s strengthening, equipping role. A *Paraclete* was a judicial advocate (compare Matthew 10:16-20). ECB, p. 869.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Part II: Please respond to items #8 through #12 regarding the use of the Bible studies in your class.**

**8. How much did students participate in class discussions?**

*Poorly*                                      *Well*                                      *Very Well*  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

**9. How well did your interpreter handle the discussion format?**

*Not well*                                      *Fairly well*                                      *Very Well*  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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

*Not well*                                      *Fairly well*                                      *Very Well*  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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

*Not well*                                      *Fairly well*                                      *Very Well*  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

## Appendix B

# Lesson 1 Scriptures: The Living Water

**Psalm 104:10-15:** You make the springs pour water into ravines, so streams gush down from the mountains. They provide water for all the animals, and the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees. You send rain on the mountains from Your heavenly home, and You fill the earth with the fruit of Your labor. You cause grass to grow for the cattle. You cause plants to grow for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth – wine to make them glad, olive oil as lotion for their skin, and bread to give them strength.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8:** Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.

**John 4:4-15:** He [Jesus] had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually He came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give Me a drink." He was alone at the time because His disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are You asking me for a drink?"

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and Who I am, you would ask Me, and I would give you living water." "But sir, You don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this is a very deep well. Where would You get this living water? And besides, are You greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well? How can You offer better water than he and his sons and his cattle enjoyed?" Jesus replied, "People soon become thirsty again after drinking this water. But the water I give them takes away thirst altogether. It becomes a perpetual spring within them, giving them eternal life." Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

## Appendix C

# Lesson 2 Scriptures: The Bread of Life

**Matthew 5:6:** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (New International Version)

**John 6:22-58:** The next morning, back across the lake, crowds began gathering on the shore, waiting to see Jesus. For they knew that He and His disciples had come over together and that the disciples had gone off in their boat, leaving Him behind. Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. When the crowd saw that Jesus wasn't there, nor His disciples, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for Him. When they arrived and found Him, they asked, “Teacher, how did You get here?” Jesus replied, “The truth is, you want to be with Me because I fed you, not because you saw the miraculous sign. But you shouldn't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Son of Man, can give you. For God the Father has sent Me for that very purpose.” They replied, “What does God want us to do?”

Jesus told them, “This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the One He has sent.” They replied, “You must show us a miraculous sign if You want us to believe in You. What will You do for us? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! As the Scriptures say, ‘Moses gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’” Jesus said, “I assure you, Moses didn't give them bread from Heaven. My Father did. And now He offers you the True Bread from Heaven. The true bread of God is the one Who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “give us that bread every day of our lives.”

Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in Me will never thirst. But you haven't believed in Me even though you have seen Me. However, those the Father has given Me will come to Me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from Heaven to do the will of God Who sent Me, not to do what I want. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given Me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day. For it is My Father's will that all who see His Son and believe in Him should have eternal life – that I should raise them at the last day.”

Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because He had said, “I am the bread from Heaven.” They said, “This is Jesus, the son of Joseph. We know His father and mother. How can He say, ‘I came down from Heaven’?” But Jesus replied, “Don't complain about what I said. For people can't come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws them to Me, and at the last day I will raise them from the dead. As it is written in the Scriptures, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to Me. (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, Who was sent from God, have seen Him.)

“I assure you, anyone who believes in Me already has eternal life. Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. However, the bread from Heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. I am the living bread that came down out of Heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is My flesh, offered so the world may live.

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## Appendix D

# Lesson 3 Scriptures: The Light of the World

**Psalm 27:1:** The Lord is my light and my salvation – so why should I be afraid? The Lord protects me from danger – so why should I tremble?

**Psalm 119:105:** Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

**John 1:1-5:** In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God and He was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn't make. Life itself was in Him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

**John 8:12-16, 19:** Jesus said to the people, "I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." The Pharisees replied, "You are making false claims about Yourself!" Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about Myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about Me. You judge Me with all your human limitations, but I am not judging anyone. And if I did, My judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone – I have with Me the Father Who sent Me. "Where is Your father?" they asked. Jesus answered, "Since you don't know Who I am, you don't know Who My Father is. If you knew Me, then you would know My Father, too."

**John 3:16-21 – Jesus speaking:** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. "There is no judgment awaiting those who trust Him. But those who do not trust Him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of God. Their judgment is based on this fact: The Light from Heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness. They stay away from the light for fear their sins will be exposed and they will be punished. But those who do what is right come to the Light gladly, so everyone can see that they are doing what God wants."

**I John 1:5b-7 – Jesus speaking:** ...God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. We are not living in the truth. But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from every sin.

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## APPENDIX E

# Lesson 4 Scriptures: The Good Shepherd

**Psalm 23:** The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams; He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

**Matthew 18:12-14 – Jesus speaking:** “If a shepherd has one hundred sheep, and one wanders away and is lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others and go out into the hills to search for the lost one? And if he finds it, he will surely rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn’t wander away! In the same way, it is not My heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish.”

**John 10:1-18 – Jesus speaking:** “I assure you, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! For a shepherd enters through the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice. They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t recognize his voice.” Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what He meant, so He explained it to them. “I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep,” He said. All others who came before Me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through Me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

**“I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will leave the sheep because they aren’t his and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he is merely hired and has no real concern for the sheep. “I am the good shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me, just as My Father knows Me and I know the Father. And I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice; and there will be one flock with one shepherd. “The Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may have it back again. No one can take My life from Me. I lay down My life voluntarily. For I have the right to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it again. For My Father has given Me this command.”

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## Appendix F

# Lesson 5 Scriptures: The Resurrection and the Life

**John 11:1, 3-7, 11-15, 17-44:** A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha... So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling Him, "Lord, the one You love is very sick." But when Jesus heard about it, He said, "Lazarus' sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this." Although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, He stayed where He was for the next two days and did not go to them. Finally after two days, He said to His disciples, "Let's go to Judea again." ...

Then He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up." The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, that means he is getting better!" They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was having a good night's rest, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. Then He told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I wasn't there, because this will give you another opportunity to believe in Me. Come, let's go see him." . . .

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, He was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give You whatever You ask."

Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again." "Yes," Martha said, "when everyone else rises, on resurrection day." Jesus told her, "**I am the resurrection and the life.** Those who believe in Me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in Me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?" "Yes, Lord," she told Him. "I have always believed You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the One Who has come into the world from God." Then she left Him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." So Mary immediately went to Him.

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

When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, He was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. "Where have you put him?" He asked them. They told Him, "Lord, come and see." Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much He loved him." But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Why couldn't He keep Lazarus from dying?" And again Jesus was deeply troubled. Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because He has been dead for four days."

Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?" So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to Heaven and said, "Father, thank You for hearing Me. You always hear Me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe You sent Me." Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go! I assure you, those who listen to My message and

believe in God Who sent Me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

**John 3:15b-16, 36 – Jesus speaking:** ...Everyone who believes in Me will have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. And all who believe in God’s Son have eternal life. Those who don’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them.

**John 5:24 – Jesus speaking:** I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

**John 20:31:** But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have life.

**Ephesians 2:1, 4-5:** Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins...but God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s special favor that you have been saved!)

**Romans 6:23:** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Appendix G

# Lesson 6 Scriptures: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

**Matthew 7:13-14:** You can enter God's kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it.

**Isaiah 35:8-10:** And a main road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-hearted people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. Lions will not lurk along its course, and there will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will follow it. Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

**John 14:1-15 – Jesus speaking:** “Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in Me. There are many rooms in My Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am. And you know where I am going and how to get there.”

“No, we don't know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We haven't any idea where You are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told Him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. If you had known Who I am, then you would have known Who My Father is. From now on you know Him and have seen Him!”

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” Jesus replied, “Philip, don't you even yet know Who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father! So why are you asking to see Him? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say are not My own, but My Father Who lives in Me does His work through Me. Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. Or at least believe because of what you have seen Me do. “The truth is, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in My Name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. Yes, ask anything in My Name, and I will do it! If you love Me, obey My commandments.”

**John 8:31-32:** Jesus said to the people who believed in Him, “You are truly My disciples if you keep obeying My teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

**John 14:16-17, 26-27 – Jesus speaking:** “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, Who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, Who leads into all truth. But when the Father sends the Counselor as My representative – and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit – He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I Myself have told you. I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

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## Appendix H

# Lesson 7 Scriptures: The Vine

**John 15:1-17 – Jesus speaking:** “I am the True Vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn’t produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. Remain Mine, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from Me. Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. Anyone who parts from Me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you stay joined to Me and My words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to My Father. I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Remain in My love.

“When you obey Me, you remain in My love, just as I obey My Father and remain in His love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you. And here is how to measure it – the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. You are My friends if you obey Me. I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are My friends, since I have told you everything the Father told Me. You didn’t choose Me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using My Name. I command you to love each other.”

**Galatians 5:22-23a:** ...But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

**Romans 8:35, 37-39:** ...Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? ...No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, Who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.

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