

SESSION 7: JESUS THE BREAD AND WATER OF LIFE

7.0 OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this course called *Walking the Good Path*.

In this course, we are trying to discover who Jesus is, not in a religious or churchy way, but as a real person who walked the Good Path of God the Creator, whom He called Father.

From earliest times, the people who followed Jesus became known as ***people of the way*** because they lived and acted in the ways that Jesus lived and acted in relation to God and to others. What Jesus taught and how He lived was all about helping people and showing people how to walk the good path of life with God their Creator and Father. He said, *“I am the Great Spirit’s pathway, the truth about who He really is, and the life of beauty and harmony He offers to all. There is no other guide who can take you to the Father. To know Me is to know My Father”* (John 14:6 FNV).

We are looking at Jesus as described in the Gospel of John (John’s story about Jesus) which is in the Bible and contains stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. It is called the Gospel of John because it was written by John, who was one of the earliest followers of Jesus. The word gospel means good news. For John, the life of Jesus was good news because Jesus showed him how to walk the good path of life. In this course we are looking at what John discovered about Jesus.

During our previous sessions, we discovered Jesus as:

1. The Word – Jesus was sent by God the Creator to us. He is the message of God’s love.
2. The Truth – Jesus spoke the truth and is the Truth. He is trustworthy.
3. The Way – Jesus taught and showed us the way of living in God’s love.
4. The Life – Jesus came from God the Creator to offer fullness of life to all people.
5. The Light – Jesus illuminates the way to fullness of life on the Good Path of God’s love.
6. The Good Shepherd – Like a shepherd, Jesus cares for, provides, and protects those who follow Him.

7.1 REVIEW SESSION 6

In the last session, we learned about Jesus the Good Shepherd who leads us to the good path of life. Like sheep know and respond to the voice of their shepherd, those who know, and trust Jesus follow Him because they know His voice and trust Him.

At the end of last session, you were asked to think about the words and teachings of Jesus and how they were life-giving to the people who met Him. As you have thought about the stories in John's Gospel, what examples of this did you find?

Discussion

- What words or teachings of Jesus do you find particularly meaningful or helpful for yourself?

7.2 HUNGER AND SATISFACTION

Like a shepherd who provides for the physical needs of food and water for the sheep, Jesus provides for the spiritual needs of people. He offers Himself to satisfy their deepest hunger and thirst.

A good shepherd knows that the sheep need and want decent food and fresh water to grow and stay healthy. The sheep depend on the shepherd to lead them to the place of good pasture and water where their hunger and thirst will be satisfied. Jesus does that for us.

Have you ever been so hungry that you found it hard to think of anything, except getting something to eat?

Maybe you have been hungry for something specific like chocolate, ice-cream, or something salty. We all know what it is like when we finally get what we have been hungry for. The problem is that the satisfaction doesn't last. We get hungry again.

Physical hunger for food is one thing, but we also have other higher order hungers that are more difficult to satisfy. For example, the need for acceptance, love, respect, money, security, or a sense of purpose in our lives. We might describe personal fulfillment as a state of being content and satisfied. Sometimes, rather than feeling fulfilled, we feel empty, and we don't know what it is that we are missing.

Exercise:

- *Divide into small groups and discuss your experience of being hungry for food and/or hungry for higher order needs like acceptance, respect, or purpose.*
- *After discussing as a group, name five needs or hungers and write each one on a sticky note.*

Discussion:

- *Have you ever felt really fulfilled and satisfied – content?*
- *What gave you that sense of satisfaction or fulfillment?*
- *Did the satisfaction last or did you become hungry again? Why or why not?*

7.3 JUST BREAD

In the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand (John 6:1-27), a great crowd of people followed Jesus into the countryside to hear His teaching and to be healed of their diseases. At the end of a long day, Jesus wanted to give the people something to eat. They had been with Him all day and had not brought food with them. So, Jesus asked Philip about where to buy bread for the people. Philip was astounded and told Jesus that they didn't have money to buy enough bread for all the people. Andrew said, almost as a joke, that he had found a boy in the crowd who had five small loaves of bread and two fish, but what good was that for so many people!? It was obvious to them that feeding five thousand people was impossible.

Jesus took the five small loaves and two fish. After giving thanks to God the Creator, He broke the loaves and fish into smaller pieces and the disciples distributed the food to all the people. Miraculously, everyone got enough to eat, and there were even twelve baskets of food left over.

The people were amazed. When they realized what Jesus did, they wanted to make Him king. But Jesus left them. The next day, the people were still looking for Him, and when they found Him, it was obvious that they had followed Him because He gave them bread when there was no bread.

Discussion:

- *Why did the people want to make Jesus their king?*
- *Why didn't Jesus want to be their king?*

- *Why didn't Jesus give people the sign they demanded to prove that He came from God the Creator and Father?*

7.4 TRUE BREAD

The people wanted Jesus to provide food for them just like Moses provided food for their ancestors by giving them manna to eat each day. Jesus reminded them that Moses was not the source of the food that their ancestors ate when they were in the wilderness. God the Creator was the source of the manna from heaven, and God the Creator was offering them true bread in Jesus.

Read this part of the story in John 6:26-35 (MSG)

Jesus answered, "You've come looking for Me not because you saw God in My actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs—and for free. Don't waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what He does are guaranteed by God the Father to last." To that they said, "Well, what do we do then to get in on God's works?" Jesus said, "Sign on with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God's works." They waffled: "Why don't You give us a clue about who You are, just a hint of what's going on? When we see what's up, we'll commit ourselves. Show us what You can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus responded, "The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that My Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the real bread. The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world." They jumped at that: "Master, give us this bread, now and forever!" Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with Me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever."

Discussion:

- *What are the differences between the bread that the people were asking for and the true bread that comes from God the Creator through Jesus?*
- *How is hunger for bread different from hunger that is satisfied by Jesus?*
- *How does someone become aligned with Jesus?*

7.5 THIRST QUENCHING WATER

Read the story of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman who was by herself, getting water out of a well (John 4:4-42).

Samaritans were considered impure, low class, and disreputable people by the Jewish community of that day. For Jesus to have a conversation alone with any woman, especially a Samaritan woman with a bad reputation, was considered scandalous. But Jesus treated her with dignity and respect.

Discussion:

- *How do you think the Samaritan woman felt about her encounter with Jesus?*
- *How did she respond to the living water Jesus offered her?*
- *What need or thirst did she have in her life that Jesus met?*
- *What do you think “living water” means?*

7.6 FINDING FULFILLMENT

Hunger and thirst can be felt in different ways. Sometimes we use different words to express the hunger or thirst we feel. A hungry person might talk about being famished or starving. A thirsty person might say they are parched or dehydrated.

Discussion:

What are some of the words we use to express our hunger or thirst for something?

- *List these words or phrases.*
- *Whatever words you use to describe your sense of hunger – what do you look for to satisfy the sense of emptiness or void?*
- *What do you do if/when the sense of emptiness returns?*

Sometimes how we seek to satisfy our hunger or emptiness leads us into addiction because the feeling of contentment or satisfaction does not last. We can end up overeating, binging on the wrong foods, drinking more, or using more, and soon we find ourselves in a cycle that goes around and around.

We don't always pursue bad or wrong things to find satisfaction. The problem is that we pursue things that don't give us lasting satisfaction, hoping they will.

One of the deepest hungers or needs we all have is the need to love and to be loved no matter what. It is a longing to be accepted and respected without judgment. Closely related to this is our deep desire to make sense out of our lives, to have meaning and purpose in life. These are not needs that can be satisfied by food, alcohol, drugs, wealth, entertainment, or other things we might pursue.

Discussion

- *Do you think the desire to love and to be loved is something we hunger for?*
- *What about meaning and purpose in life? – is that something we hunger for? Why or why not?*

7.7 Real Satisfaction

Jesus told the people that He is the Bread of Life, the True Bread that gives life to the world, and that anyone who comes to Him for living bread will never go hungry. Jesus offers real satisfaction, satisfaction that is from Him (John 6:32-35).

The people were excited and responded, ***“from now on give us this bread”*** (John 6:34 FNV).

But when they didn't understand what Jesus meant, they began to criticize and complain about Him. How could Jesus be bread from heaven? After all, they knew where He came from, they knew His family, His mother and father.

Jesus asked the Samaritan woman at the well for a drink of water. They had a conversation about the well, and He told her that everyone who drinks the water from that well will become thirsty again.

However, He offered to give her living water, explaining that anyone who drinks that living water will never thirst again. ***Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*** (John 4:13-14 NIV)

The woman was interested and excited about the possibility. Immediately she responded to Jesus and asked Jesus to give her that water so that she wouldn't ever be thirsty again or have to make the long walk from the village to haul water from the well.

We have been discussing hunger, and that some types of hunger are different than physical hunger.

Discussion

- *The big question is, how do we get satisfaction for the deepest hunger and thirst in our lives?*
- *How does it sustain us (is this even possible)?*

7.8 Wrap up and Assignment

Before our next session, read the stories about Jesus offering Himself as the Bread of Life to the people (John 6:22-51) and Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:6-28).

Assignment:

- *What was the satisfaction Jesus meant when He said that He is the Bread of Life and the Living Water?*
- *How does a person drink the living water or eat the bread of life Jesus offers to become satisfied or fulfilled?*