

1/18/12

Heartstrings

Jesus, The Bread of Life

Lesson: Jesus, The Bread of Life

- **Who is this Jesus?** To begin, let's answer a question:

Question: If you had to explain Jesus in four words or less, how would you explain Him? Share one of your words with those around your table.

But the interesting thing to me is that He often appears as confusing!

A confusing Jesus - a key issue for us: How will we react when God/Jesus is confusing? There will be times in all our lives when Jesus comes across as confusing and we will be tempted to doubt Him – or possibly even give up on Him. How we respond in those times will be crucial to our relationship with Him. Will we still believe or not?

Believe. It's a key work in John. It's used over 100 times!

John 20:30 & 31 "...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name!"

Question: Have you ever experienced a time of confusion about Jesus? A time when He just didn't make sense? How? How did you react?

- **The Feeding of the 5,000** – It's the one miracle found in all the Gospels! The same story is also found in Matthew 14, Mark 6 and Luke 9. But in John it's so expanded!
- **Scene 1: A problem. Verses 1-9**

The exact time this happened: (Verse 4) The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

The Passover – a reminder of deliverance from bondage. Exodus 12.

John 1:29 "The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

- **Scene 2: A miracle. Verses 10-15**

Verse 11 – 13 How much did each get? “As much as they wanted.” There was even some left over.

Verses 14-15 When the people saw the miraculous sign they were impressed. A prophet – Deuteronomy 18:15.

Result: They wanted to make Him King.

- **An interlude.** Verses 16-24: Your assignment sheet for the week.
- **Scene 3: The clincher**

Lesson #1: There’s more to life than mere physical stuff.

“Fill” is a very earthy term, literally meaning they were “satisfied with food as animals with fodder.” First it was about the wow factor; now it’s about having the physical filled.

Question: Think about your recent prayer life. Was it centered around the desire to have God meet the physical aspects of your life or the eternal? Do you learn anything about yourself from your answer?

The question then becomes, “How should my life change next week as a result of this truth?”

Lesson #2: The most important thing you can do is believing.

Question: Has “believing” come easily to you or not? Why do you think believing seems easier to some than it does to others?

Lesson #3: Jesus is the long awaited “Bread of Life”.

Jews were fascinated with the manna miracle.” Judaism understood that there was a storehouse of ‘treasury’ of manna in heaven that had been opened to feed the people during the era of Moses. The Israelites had been fed with ‘bread from heaven.’ This treasury would be reopened with the coming of the Messiah.” Can Jesus reopen the treasury? (6:30-31) Is He claiming that He has recreated the messianic miracle of Moses? (NIV Commentary).

Moses (Exodus 16)

Their hero
The manna miracle
Fed a nation for 40 years
Fed them bread straight from heaven
Provided for their nourishment

Jesus

The Father is the giver
He gives real bread
He gives it for life

The bread of God is not an “it”; it is a person! “He is the manna from God’s treasury for which Israel has been waiting.” (NIV Commentary)

Question: Why in the world would He compare Himself to bread? If Jesus really is the Bread of Life, what does that mean to us?

Question: What are the consequences of not feeding on Him?

Lesson #4: Jesus can be trusted even in the middle of our confusion.

Verse 51 – 57 He makes it even more confusing! “Eat my flesh - Drink my blood”.

1. The crowd thinks only of cannibalism.
2. Jews were expressly forbidden in the OT to drink the blood of anything. (Lev. 17)

What does He mean?

- He’s possibly pointing toward the Last Supper when he shares communion with them. His own body, broken and spilled out, becomes enough for the salvation of the entire world!
- It’s all about a deeply personal relationship with Him! Implies deep intimacy!
Eat: to accept, appropriate, assimilate Him into our lives. We must take him into our lives.

Why would he so specifically seem to be offensive to the Jews? (Remember Phillip: to test him?)

1. To test them – Remember Philip.
2. To test them -

Question: What are some things about Jesus that still offend people today?

Lesson #5: Your response to Jesus will be up to you. Verse 60-66

- Many disciples: “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” “Many turned back and no longer followed Him.”

“Hard” is the Greek word which means not hard to understand but hard to accept. The disciples knew that Jesus was claiming to be the very life of God come down from heaven, but they didn’t like all that implied. The same is true today: “Many a man refuses Christ, not because He puzzles [his] intellect, but because He challenges his life.” (Barclay)

- Peter – speaking for the others. Responds with new insight. Verses 67-69
- Judas –
- Us? There are times when we just have to fall back on what we do know. We go back to the central theme of the gospel of John: believe!

Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.
Only He can cleanse your heart and make you whole.
He’ll give you peace you never knew,
Sweet love and joy and heaven too.
Only Jesus, only He can satisfy.

A S S I G N M E N T S H E E T

Maybe you're like I am when it comes to doing an assignment. I sit down and "tackle" it, determined to get it done as fast as possible. But I want to challenge you to not approach God's Word like that. This is the "living and active Word of God". (Hebrews 4:12). It deserves more than a "check-off" attitude. As you approach your assignments, spend time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to speak into your life and touch you in powerful ways. Ask Him to reveal areas where you need to repent, to surrender, or to change. Ask Him to transform you by His Word. So, get out your notebook and let's go...

Manna in the Old Testament and the New Testament

- Read the story of God giving the manna in Exodus 16:1-36. Read it prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any similarities between you and these people.
- Read again Jesus' words about being our Bread of Life in 6:25-37. Compare the Exodus story with Jesus' words. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your own life and how you need the "manna", the Bread of Life every day. Spend a few minutes in prayer as the Spirit directs.

An interlude in John 6

- We didn't get through all of John chapter 6, so let's pick up some verses that we omitted, the "interlude". It's another amazing miracle! Read the story of Jesus walking on the water in verses 16-24. Try to picture the story as it happened; try to put yourself in the boat and think how you would have felt if you were one of the disciples. What strikes you about the story?
- Matthew describes this story a little more in depth. Read his version in Matthew 14:22-36. Answer these questions to help you remember the story.

According to Matthew, why did Jesus go off by himself? (Verse 23)
(According to John 6:15, why might He have felt like He needed to get away?)

After a busy day of being around people and working a giant miracle, Jesus went off by Himself to pray. What do you usually do after a busy day? Do you make it a priority to get away by yourself for some prayer and renewal? Why or why not?

- Why did Peter begin to sink, according to Matthew 14:30? Can you think of any spiritual lesson in this?
- Write down Jesus' words in Matthew 14:31 so you'll remember it.
- Is there any area in your life right now where you're experiencing little faith? If so, spend some time talking to Jesus about it, asking Him to help you grow in faith and stop doubting.

- Let's go back to John 6. Read 6:57. What does Jesus want you to do with Him? What does it mean for you to "feed" on Him? Will you do that today...and tomorrow...and day after day after day? Let Him become your Bread of Life! Spend some time thanking Him for such a great salvation and for being your Bread.
- Find your memory verse for the week. Let it become a part of your being!
- Study chapter 15 of the Gospel of John so you'll be ready for next week's lesson.