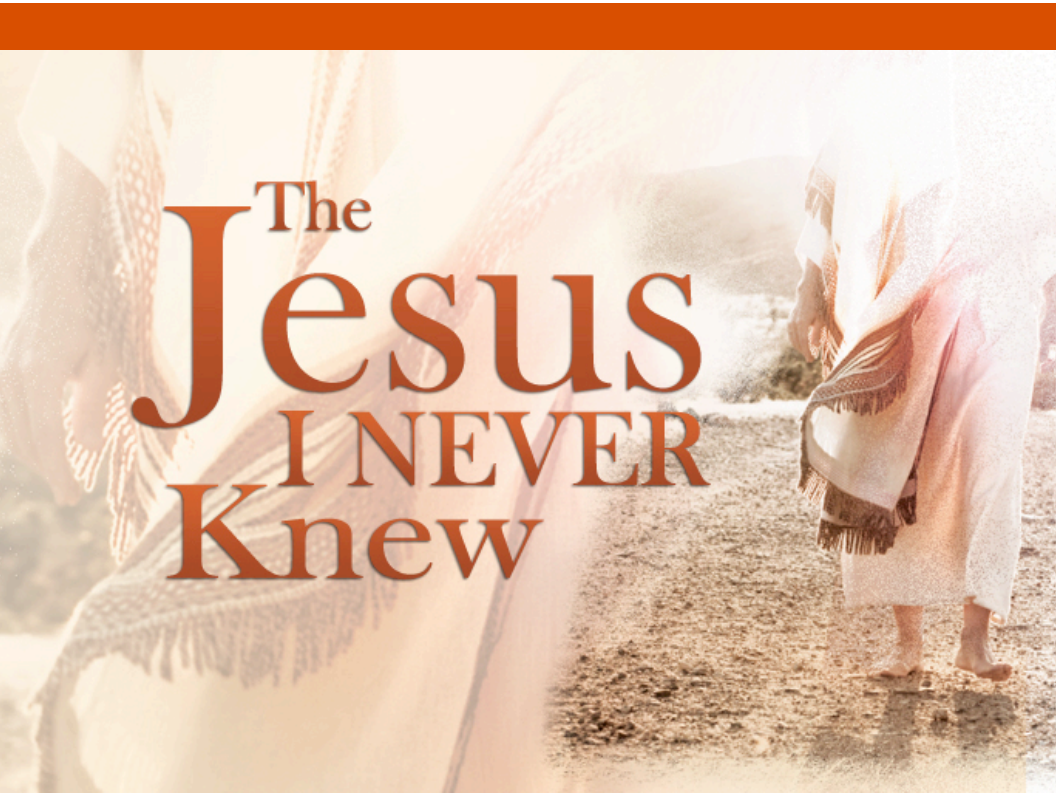


# Weekly Devotional



The  
**Jesus**  
I NEVER  
Knew

September 12 - 16, 2011

# Questions & Prayers

## John 6

1. Why do people follow Jesus today? Why do you follow Him?
2. What misconceptions do people today have that might be similar to those Jesus confronted?
3. How is what Jesus gives to the crowd similar and dissimilar to what the people were requesting? (What contrast does Jesus make between manna and the bread of life?)
4. In what ways do you see verses 53-56 expanding the meaning of John 1:18?
5. From what you see in this chapter, why did Jesus perform miracles?
6. What kind of mental habits do you think could most easily block the words of Jesus in this chapter from coming alive in our minds and hearts?
7. In what ways today do some people find Jesus' words to be offensive?
8. What do you learn about Jesus from this chapter?

**Monday:** Pray for those who call us enemies.

**Tuesday:** Spend some time in confession. In what ways have you failed to love those whom Jesus puts in your path? What might you do about it today?

**Wednesday:** Pray for a developing world country of your choice.

**Thursday:** Pray for the church staff.

**Friday:** Pray for each other in our places of work, our schools, our neighborhoods, etc., that we might have opportunities to share Jesus.



# Monday

## John 6



The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. In John's Gospel it becomes a turning point because at the conclusion of this chapter many will decide to no longer follow Jesus. The feeding takes place as the Passover was drawing near. The Passover celebrated God's protection of His people when He passed through the Land of Egypt killing all the first-born children. The result was that Pharaoh had had enough of fighting with God. He granted release to the Jews from slavery in Egypt and permitted them to travel to the Promised Land (Exodus 11-12). Now Jesus has come to release us from the slavery of sin, enabling us to live freely in His Kingdom. But such release will come on His terms.

John says that a large crowd was following Jesus because of the "miraculous signs that were being performed on the sick." John records only seven miracles in his Gospel (two in this chapter), and he prefers to call them signs. John admits that Jesus did many more miracles, but John does not want to focus on the miracles; he wants to focus on the teaching of who Jesus is and why He came. We, though, often want to focus on the miracles. For John the miracles were meant to develop faith in the disciples. Many, though, look to the miracles as a means to a life without pain. They sought out Jesus to alleviate their felt needs. When Jesus explains that He is calling the disciples to something more than free food—He is calling them to a life of "feeding on Him"—many leave. Two miracles and yet people walk away.

The Scriptures that talk about the End Times and the anti-Christ tell us that the anti-Christ will do many miracles and will deceive many. They will be deceived by displays of miraculous power. Will we be deceived? If we want Jesus more than we want miracles, we will not be deceived. But if we expect Jesus to give us a carefree life, we too stand the chance of being deceived and disappointed.

What do your prayers tell you about what you are seeking—miracles or a deeper relationship with Jesus? Do you also fall into the trap of a "what have you done recently for me" attitude with Jesus?

# Tuesday

John 6:1-21



The word “testing” always rings a harsh cord with us. Jesus was “testing” Philip. God tested Abraham. He leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tested, and sometimes He allows events to occur in our lives to test us. I have never liked tests, and I have always been suspicious of teachers who talked of tests as being “learning opportunities.” But looking back, I see that tests were learning opportunities (mainly because I would cram the night before). God wants us to grow in our trust of Him and in our awareness of Him, and so He allows “tests” to come into our lives. When we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” we are asking that the tests we enter into in our lives be just that—“tests” for growth, not temptations for evil. How do you respond when trials come your way? Do you run, complain, or try to find God in the midst of them? Is your glass half full or half empty? Philip’s was definitely half empty, and Andrew’s was not far behind. The boy with the food, though, probably had a half-full glass. It takes being prayed up, it takes letting Jesus be Jesus, to be open to risk.

Jesus began to distribute the food, but before He did He gave thanks. Recently I read a devotion that asked, “How often when you ask God for something do you say ‘please’?” Grace can become routine, so can our prayers. Often we talk with God in ways we would never allow our children to talk with us. Richard Foster use to challenge people to always say “please” and “thank you” to God because “after all, it is the only gracious thing to do.” Saying “please” and “thank you” helps me remember that I am in a personal relationship with my loving Father and that I am to look up to Him rather than requesting that He be available to serve me.

One point of interest here: The context of this passage leads us to believe that Jesus was trying to get away from the crowds to be with His disciples for a time of teaching. But Jesus is always aware of those who are hurting, His heartbreaks and He responds. Pray today for a heart that sees those who are hurting and the wisdom to know how to respond.



# Wednesday

John 6:22-40

The crowd asks Jesus, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus response is to believe. But belief doesn’t seem to be enough; we want to do something.

When someone gives us a gift, we find ways to give back to them. We are uncomfortable being indebted to anyone. We unfortunately feel the same way with God. So we somehow try to show that we are “worthy” of the gift. We try to earn His love by being “good enough,” believing the right things, going to church, serving, praying, or giving money. In one respect these are appropriate ways to say “thank you,” but all too often we use these things as a means of showing that we are worthy of the gift. We are really saying, “God, I have been good. Answer my prayers and give me more bread.”

When we “earn” our acceptance, we remain in control. “But the work of trusting Christ is not by works, but by faith! Accepting Jesus means giving Him control of every area of life. To believe means to yield our wills, our desires, our plans, our strengths and weaknesses to Christ’s direction and safekeeping.” (Life Application Bible Commentary). It is to feed on Jesus. It is to look to Him for all nourishment, all fulfillment, all sustenance.

I learned early that the definition of faith (Biblical belief) as opposed to intellectual belief could be described this way: Suppose you watched someone cross Niagara Falls on a tight rope wheeling a wheelbarrow. After watching him go back and forth a few times you might believe he could do it again. Faith, though, would be getting in the wheelbarrow.

Jesus is calling us to get in the wheelbarrow, to depend on Him alone. The people responded, “But we know you, you are like us, you are Joseph’s son.” But He was not like them; He had just done two miracles. We also find reasons to excuse our lack of faith—often by pretending we are in the wheelbarrow while in reality we are trying to keep a foot on dry land. We try to do good works and work hard to provide for our security. Where might God today be calling you to get into the wheelbarrow?

# Thursday

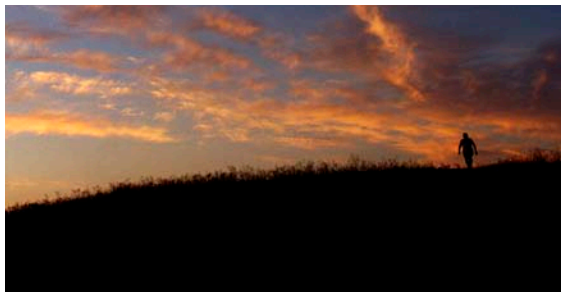
John 6:22-71

John shows us seven signs (miracles) that point to who Jesus is (turning water into wine, feeding 5,000, walking on water, healing a crippled man, a blind man, and an official's son, and raising of Lazarus who had died). He also gives us seven "I AM" statements to elaborate. In verse 35 we discover the first: "I am the Bread of Life." He will also say, "I am the Light of the World (8:12), the Gate for the sheep (10:7), the Good Shepherd (10:11), the Resurrection and the Life (11:25), the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6), and the Vine (15:1)."

These seven "I AM" statements were especially troublesome to the crowd. In them Jesus proclaimed that He Himself was God. When Moses first came face to face with God, it was through the burning bush. God asked Moses to leave his life as a shepherd and return to the land of Egypt where he was wanted to criminal in order to release the Jews who were enslaved there. Moses, who is a little hesitant, says, "The Israelites will ask concerning God, 'What is His name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3) In one sense God was refusing to fit into some neat little box that the Israelites could control or set boundaries on. In another sense He was saying, "I am larger than you could ever imagine or understand."

In John we have in the person of Jesus a visual manifestation of who God is. The seven "I AM" statements expound on who God is. In these seven statements we see the fullness of God for all of life—both the present and in the future. Do you need guidance? He is the Way and the Truth. Do you need the significance? He is the Vine. Do you need care and love? He is the Good Shepherd. Do you need nourishment? He is the Bread of Life.

The response of the crowd was a request for food each morning, just like what Moses gave to the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus response was that He was the One who gave them food and that their request was too earthbound, too small, too materialistic. Are your requests of God too small? Is there something God might be asking you to do?



# Friday

## John 6



Today we often think that people do not respond to Jesus because they do not know who He is. In reality some just do not want to take Him on His terms. Jesus understands this. But when this happens, He does not change the terms. He instead allows people to walk away—and He tells us to do the same.

Some of us do not fully understand His terms or do not like them, but we understand that there is nowhere else to go. We hang in there and God knows our hearts. We blow it, we fail, we do half-way jobs. But we keep hanging on and God keeps loving, forgiving and calling us to something more.

Repeatedly in this chapter Jesus talks of those who are His. His promise is that we need not fear. Our destiny is secure. We are His children in His loving, patient care. We do not fully understand election. Election is not an excuse to not evangelize (Jesus evangelized to all who came across His path; and at the end of His life, He wept over Jerusalem because they did not recognize Him.) Election is not so much a doctrine that says some are out; it is an understanding that I owe everything, including my trust in God, to God. It leads to a life of grateful obedience and security.

There is not much security in our world today. Whether it be the economic situation we are in, the acts of nature, the evil of others, the accidents all around us, or the failure of our own physical beings—life as we know it could change in a heart beat. Isn't it good to know that even in the midst of change God has your back, your front, and your side? He is holding you in His hands and will let nothing remove you from them. Sometimes I believe we fight against that truth. Today bask in it. Do I understand it fully? No. But I do find great comfort in His truth. Today allow Jesus to be your Savior not just from sin but from the uncertainties of life.



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