

The Gospel of John

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Lesson #57

The Journey

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus left Judea after healing the man at the pool of Bethesda in chapter 5 – at the same time destroying the cruel myth of a water stirring angel.
- After healing the man, the Jews get involved and call him before the Sanhedrin to give an account of his act of mercy before a crowd who wanted to kill him.
- Then he went north to the Sea of Galilee, crossed it, and performed many miracles of healing which, as it would today, created a stir and drew a crowd.

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- Then he fed about 20,000 souls with fish and barley loaves which earned him the honor of having a crowd that thought they could force him to be king.
- As a side note about the feeding of the 20,000 – so practical it is that the 12 baskets of leftovers were all bread as fish would not keep more than a day.
- An undetected show of power – “Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” They were going to force him to be king but couldn’t even make him stay where he was. 3

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- He sent his disciples back across the Sea of Galilee without him, and a storm comes up. (no surprise to Jesus)
- Jesus is watching from afar and decides to walk across the Sea of Galilee – his disciples see him and are afraid because they think he is a ghost.
- Peter asks to come to him and can walk on water so long as he trusted Jesus.

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There is huge lesson for us in the account of Peter walking on the water. Walking on water is, to say the least, very unusual. Yet, Peter with the audaciousness of one who thinks all things are possible with God, gets out of the boat and walks on the water! In fact, he gets all the way to Jesus before he notices the wind and begins to sink. Notice the wording, “he begins to sink” – you would not normally begin to sink. Have you ever jumped into a swimming pool and just sort of eased down into the water? No, we go down instantly with a big splash. But Peter “begins to sink”. Odd, don’t you think?

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Peter begins to sink, but it wasn’t because he did not trust Jesus, it was because he got distracted by the storm. You and I are like that. We know Jesus. We are certain we are headed for Heaven, but we are uncertain of the road we have yet to travel. The road can be filled with uncertainty financially, physically, and in our relationships with friends and family. Life in this world is uncertain. If we were asked, we would say, “I trust the Lord in all things”, but sometimes we dread what could happen so much that we get distracted from Jesus and begin to sink.

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Is there anyone in the room who is beginning to sink? If so, then every time you start to notice the storm that is either coming or is already upon you, find a way to force yourself to take your eyes off the storm. Paul said, *“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* This is how mature Christians can stay focused serving the Lord in an uncertain world.

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• John 6:22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

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- Seeking the gift but not the giver – again we see the shallowness of their “faith” – they are one heartbeat from dying as a lost soul and only want food.
- I do realize there are people in our world and Jesus’ world who are and were literally starving to death and in that situation those priorities are understandable.
- This is where modern ministries like World Vision, Convoy of Hope, and Compassion International try to step in with food, medicine, and the gospel.

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- The crowd that came to Capernaum in boats just ate last night so they are in no danger of starvation, but neither are they interested in spiritual things.
- They are seeking the gift instead of the Giver – in verse #26 Jesus says a much.
- A modern-day western world problem – the basics of life are so ubiquitous that a lack thereof does not exist to such an extent as to drive people to Christ.

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- It is a wonderful thing that the basic necessities of life are so abundant, and that starvation is not a “thing” in our country.
- At the same time most of those who provide the necessities to the poor are not organizations who are concerned for their souls.
- The very conditions that might have driven the poor to Christ are mitigated – full bellies, clothes to wear, but empty souls.

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This presents a problem for me – I have no desire for people to be in need and suffer, but there must be some balance between assuaging the needs of the hurting and providing so much help they never see their deepest need. So, what is the right approach? I suppose the right approach when we see needs in others is both – do what we can to mitigate the need while giving a cup of cold water in Jesus’ name.

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- Jesus knew the motives of the crowd, but their lack of interest in him didn't keep him from feeding them.
- John 2:24 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.
- The crowd was looking for someone to meet their needs while Jesus was looking for people who would follow him – and he still is!!

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- John 6:25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.
- These false disciples saw him doing Messiah like healings and miracles, but that didn't move them to seek him – it moved them to seek food.

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- Do you think they knew or at least suspected that he walked across the sea?
- Because if they did, you know what they are going to want next – that's right, they will want to walk on water too.
- There is always a part of the crowd that wants something for themselves – having spiritual power is appealing to those who want a crowd of their own.

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Another False Follower

• Acts 8:17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

• It becomes obvious from the text that Simon didn't want Jesus, he wanted the notoriety that comes with being empowered by Jesus.

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• If you've ever wanted the power that comes with being filled with the Spirit, you should ask yourself a question – why do I want the Spirit's power?

• Do I want his power so I can check off a box on my Christian resume' or do I want it so that Christ will be magnified in me.

• Do I want him, or do I just want his power for the attention that comes with a certain reputation?

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I do think we should want to be filled with the Spirit again and again as often as needed, but if I want him to fill me just so others will notice, I must ask myself, "why?". There is surely a pocket of pride in me if what I want most is not him, but his power.

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The older I get the more I realize just how much I don't know and yet at the same time, in a sense, living the Christian life becomes simpler. Seek to live in such a way that makes Jesus, not me, look bigger and better.

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The crowds wanted the gifts, but not the Giver. They expended effort to follow him, they strategized on how to stay in touch with him because they wanted things from him. The why is simple – they had physical needs for healing and food. They would have said as much. We would all do well to answer this question - why do we follow him and make efforts to stay connected to him? What motivates us to worship and serve him? And perhaps the biggest question of all is "if he never answered a single prayer of ours would we still love and worship him?"

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- In some strange way our love for Jesus, seems to be at least a bit like our love for our kids and grandkids.
- We don't want things from them, we just want them, and that, I believe, is a test of our love for the Lord.
- Are we content with unanswered prayers and unmet needs in our lives when we know the Lord could simply will what we need to us with no effort at all? ²¹

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If God can bring blessing from the broken body of Jesus and glory from something that's obscene as the cross, He can bring blessing from my problems and my pain and my unanswered prayer.

Anne Graham Lotz

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Questions?

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