

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

To Whom Shall We Go?
John 6:41-60, 66-69

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader: You may want to have a loaf of bread as a visual. If you are able to do so you might want to use several different kinds of bread in your display. Many places now have breads from various cultures readily available.

Make a copy of John 6: 68 from the page given at the end of the Worship Time. Cut the strips apart and give a copy to each participant in the Bible Study.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Break Thou the Bread of Life, *The Worship Hymnal* #407; CCLI #128338 Public Domain

Worthy of Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #3; CCLI #82869

Jesus, Lord to Me, *The Worship Hymnal* #300; CCLI #16976

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***To Whom Shall We Go?*****Focal Text**

John 6:41-60, 66-69

Background

John 6—8

Main Idea

Jesus calls us to commit ourselves to him in such a way that we base every aspect of our lives on him.

Question to Explore

Do you believe in Jesus because of what he does for you or because of who he is?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to state the significance for our lives of Jesus as the bread of life and evaluate the extent of our commitment to him.

Gathering together:

Sing or read **Break Thou the Bread of Life**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 407; CCLI # 128338 Public Domain

First thoughts:

Many amazing incidents and truths have been shared by John in Chapter 6 before we come to the passage on which we will focus today. One of the best known and loved is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand who had come to hear him preach and to seek healing. Jesus had hoped to withdraw for a time of teaching His disciples and renewal of His own energy by communing with God. Instead the people saw him set sail across the Sea of Galilee and they followed him around the top of the lake by land. It was nine miles round the top of the lake and they had made the journey as quickly as they could. They arrived hungry and tired and Jesus had compassion on them. Philip pointed out that there was no money to buy bread for so many. Andrew, however, brought to Jesus a boy with five barley loaves and two fish. Barley loaves were the food

of the very poor and the fish were probably very small fish which were pickled. Jesus took the food and in the custom of the father of the Jewish home gave thanks for it. "The Jewish grace He used would be the one that was used in every home: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, who causest to come forth bread from the earth.' So the people ate and were filled" (Barclay, pages 204-205).

The disciples later started across the sea in a boat to Capernaum. Perhaps they were tempted to join the crowd wanting Jesus to be their King and Jesus sent them away. Jesus withdrew to a mountain to be by himself. Then, perhaps five kilometres out on the lake, the disciples encounter Jesus walking on the sea. He comes to the disciples declaring, "It is I, don't be afraid". The next day the crowd found Jesus again. They were extremely interested in the one who had fed them the day before. But their interest was in His power to provide the physical necessities of life. Today's study will help us focus on Jesus' explanation that He is the Bread of Life – all we need to satisfy the hunger of our soul. More important than any physical needs we may have are the spiritual needs we have. Those are needs which only Jesus can satisfy. He is the one to whom we can always go.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

To Whom Shall We Go?

Focal Text

John 6:41-58, 66-69

Background

John 6—8

Main Idea

Jesus calls us to commit ourselves to him in such a way that we base every aspect of our lives on him.

Question to Explore

Do you believe in Jesus because of what he does for you or because of who he is?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to state the significance for our lives of Jesus as the bread of life and evaluate the extent of our commitment to him.

Introduction to your personal study:

Read the background material from John 6-8. The theme “bread of life” is extremely strong. Give special attention to John 6: 25-40 where Jesus tells the people “I am the bread of life”.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Examine the story of the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6: 35-44; Luke 9:12-17 and John 6: 1-13. The feeding of four thousand is recorded in Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8: 1-9.

Focusing on the Meaning:

John 6: 41-42

At this, the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I came down from heaven"?"

Jesus fed five thousand men and the women and children with them. These people were so impressed by this miraculous sign that they began to say ***"Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."*** ***Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king, by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.***

The crowd was impressed with the miracle and ready to name Jesus king. In a crowd that size there would have been many motivations for such an action. Some were just carried away with the excitement. Some longed for an earthly king to defeat the Roman government. Undoubtedly, some hoped that this was the long-hoped for Messiah. Some thought that anyone who was able to produce that much food would be a good person to follow.

So the crowd went to the other side of the lake where the disciples and Jesus had gone the evening before. Jesus tells them ***"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."***

"Though faith based solely on signs is inadequate, it is superior to faith based merely on food. In fact, the latter is not faith at all. The crowd followed Jesus only because they ate 'and were filled.' The word for 'filled' commonly applied to feeding animals. *Gorged* is a fitting translation" (Howard, F. **Bible Book Study Commentary: John (Part 1)**. October, November, December, 1986, Nashville: Convention Press, page 79).

Jesus wanted the people to understand that the food he had to give was not earthly food which would be needed again the following day, but heavenly food which endures to eternal life.

The works oriented Jews asked ***"What must we do to do the works God requires?"*** (Verse 28). Jesus told them to believe in the one sent by God. They, however, wanted a miraculous sign like the manna which Moses had provided in the desert. Jesus

corrected their attributing the manna to Moses and said that God himself had provided the manna and He has now provided that bread in Jesus Himself.

“Signs did not lead the crowds to faith as they should have. They sought food and power, not faith, thus acquiring new hunger rather than eternal life. They needed to look beyond religious institutions like Passover and beyond miracles like the manna in the wilderness (Ex. 16) to God’s new sign – Jesus, the provider of eternal life. Believers partake of the Bread of life through faith and strengthen their faith through partaking of the elements of the Lord’s Supper. As the Bread of life, Jesus came down from heaven and is eternal, in contrast to manna, which perished” (**The Disciple’s Study Bible**. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, page 1327).

In verses 36-47 Jesus tells the people that those who come to him will never go hungry or thirsty. Of course, he was speaking of spiritual hunger and thirst.

The people were unhappy that Jesus was not the one they had wanted. They didn’t understand what he meant by the Bread of Life. All they could see was that he wasn’t promising them material benefits or military leadership. They could only see that he was someone they knew – they even knew his grandparents! **Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I came down from heaven”.**

God always works in ways to respect individual freedom of people. He seeks to draw a favorable response from people, rather than coercing a certain response. These people had seen the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand; at least some had heard him teach and preach; some may have experienced healing from him. But at this moment all they could realize was this was not an amazing leader from afar but a home-town boy whose very ordinary family lived alongside of their own families. Obviously, not all of the crowd would have known Jesus personally, but the sentiment was there. Jesus was not who they hoped he would be. The Jews who were murmuring about him most likely were the leaders of the Capernaum synagogue and those who were of a similar mind.

It is not hard for us to see ourselves or our culture in this event. When God heals, provides for what we need and want, answers our prayers when we remember to pray, we think about him. But for much of the time, we are indifferent to him.

John 6: 42-47

“Stop grumbling among yourselves”, Jesus answered. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets; ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”

Apparently, the people were not openly critical of Jesus – after all, he had fed them just the day before. But there was an undercurrent of discontent, of criticism and Jesus was well aware of it.

Jesus replied that only “they whom the Father ‘draws’ can come to him; in them the promise of Isa 54:13 is fulfilled – they are “taught of God”. ...(we can) interpret the ‘drawing’ by God as taking place when man abandons his own judgment and ‘hears’ and ‘learns’ from the Father, and so allows God to speak to him: The ‘drawing’ by the Father occurs not, as it were, *behind* man’s decision of faith, but in it.

The quoted prophecy relates to the knowledge of God in the last days. They have arrived! Those who listen to the Father ‘come’ to the Son, since he, and he alone, has seen the Father (1:18). For such, v. 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 (cf. 5:39-40)” Beasley-Murray, G. **Word Biblical Commentary: John**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000, page 93).

This passage is difficult for us to understand. Two primary points of view exist. One interprets this passage and John 12:32 ***And I when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*** to mean that Jesus draws all people to Himself, but some are able to resist this drawing since, if the call is truly irresistible, then all must come to Christ and be saved. The word “draw” should indicate the source of the power, not the question of whether the person being drawn independently desires the drawing, or to indicate that the drawing is done irrespective of their wishes.

A second point of view insists that it is God who “takes the initiative and who is in control from start to finish. It is God who draws before man comes; it is he that teaches before man can listen and learn. Unless the Father draws, no one can come. That is the negative side. The positive is: everyone who listens to the Father and learns of him will come. Grace always conquers; it does what it sets out to do” (Hendriksen, W. **New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John**. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1953, 240).

These two points of view can easily become a point of contention in a church. For the purposes of our study, we can emphasize the reality of the drawing of the Father to salvation, but also admit the belief that people have the freedom to choose to follow Him or not. Many of the passages in John emphasize the calling of Jesus to salvation. ***I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life” (John 6:47)***

Verse 47 emphasizes that Jesus came from the Father: He is the only one who has seen the Father.

If these are difficult passages for us to understand, imagine how difficult it was for the people to whom Jesus was speaking to grasp His meaning. We will discover that some disciples found the message too difficult to understand and believe.

“Verses 43-51 are Jesus’ answer to their argument that, since they knew his earthly origin, they knew all about him. He declared that if they would open themselves to God’s way, they would be drawn to Jesus and see God” (Steen, J. Editor. **A Study Guide to John**. Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1973, page 48).

John 6: 48-52

“I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us this flesh to eat?”

We can be both understanding of the Jewish attitude and impatient with it. The Jews knew of the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16). They knew it to be one of the many miracles which God performed on behalf of the Israelite people as they left the slavery of Egypt and traveled to the Promised Land. They were a people whose history was one of God’s miraculous intervention. They awaited the coming of the Messiah with fervent belief that it would occur.

But this teaching of Jesus stretched their ability to believe beyond anything they had experienced before. Jesus says he is the living bread come down from heaven. Unlike manna, or ordinary bread such as the barley bread they had eaten the day before, this bread will allow people to live forever. ***This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world***, Jesus says. From our perspective we know this refers to Jesus’ death – his giving of Himself for the world. But from their perspective, it seemed a strange thing to say. They had eaten the bread He had provided the day before; they hoped he would keep on providing material benefits. Now He is speaking in spiritual terms and they are unable and unwilling to understand.

John 6: 53-59

Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.” He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

“Jesus, the true bread, gave his life so that men may have life. He came from heaven, but his sacrifice was accomplished on earth. Life comes only to those who have Christ living in them – a truth portrayed vividly in the Lord’s Supper. Refusing to see the

symbolic nature of the words, they chose to take them literally – a horrifying thought” (Steen, page 49).

“Jesus meant that people must assimilate Him into their lives. Stressing the value of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (v. 55), Jesus indicated the resultant intimate fellowship (v. 56), which was like He had with the Father (v. 57). Next, he taught in the Capernaum synagogue (vv. 58-59)” (Howard, pages 82-83).

John 6: 60; 66-69

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the twelve.

Simon Peter answer him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy One of God.”

“Jesus had many followers who seemed to be interested only in how He would benefit them materially. Although John referred to them as ‘disciples’, their deserting Jesus indicates that their discipleship was superficial” (Howard, page 83).

“The remaining verses of chapter 6 form an appendix to the discourse, describing how many of Jesus’s hearers, even of those who had hitherto been well disposed to him and had been reckoned among his adherents, were scandalized at his teaching. Although they knew he must be speaking figuratively when he talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, yet such language was more than they could endure. This was not simply because they thought the metaphor outrageous but because the whole tenor of his argument implied a claim to be greater than Moses – to be, in fact, uniquely associated with God. His language was hard to take not merely because it was difficult to grasp but because they found it offensive. The NEB paraphrase tries (with doubtful success) to catch the nuance: ‘This is more than we can stomach! Why listen to such talk?’

But were people who reacted in this way disciples? It is implied that they had been disciples to this point, although they were so no longer. In John 8:31 Jesus tells his hearers how they may be truly his disciples – by remaining in his word. This is precisely what the people mentioned here declined to do. Instead of remaining in his word, they dismissed it as intolerable. They had been disciples in name; they were far from being disciples in truth” (Bruce, F.F. **The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983, page 162).

Perhaps Jesus spoke to his twelve disciples when he was alone with them. “Had they, too found his sayings too hard to take. Were there unspoken misgivings and

resentments in their hearts too because of words which had caused offence to so many others? As John phrases our Lord's question in Greek, he implies that it was not asked in a mood of despair;...'No' is expected. 'You don't want to go away too, do you?' (Bruce, page 164-165).

Peter was often the spokesman of the twelve; he spoke what was uppermost in his mind. When he spoke, he said what he thought. "His reply therefore showed that he had indeed grasped what his Master had tried to make plain to all his hearers – that by believing in him they might have eternal life. Had Jesus just said, 'The words that I have spoken to you – they are spirit, they are life' (verse 63)? Then Peter would accept this as the plain truth; perhaps he had already begun to experience their life-giving properties. If the words of Jesus were words of life, as the words of no other were, how could Peter or any one like-minded ever wish to leave this Master to follow someone else? Others might be disillusioned because Jesus, instead of fulfilling the expected messianic programme and leading a war of national liberation (verse 15), insisted on the spiritual character of his kingdom. But Peter and his companions had begun to prove for themselves that Jesus could supply them with spiritual food which brought much more enduring satisfaction than material bread" (Bruce, page 165).

"Peter's reply on behalf of the Twelve yields three separable assertions:

(1) There's no one else to go to! They who have (truly) seen and (truly) heard Jesus know that there is none beside him (cf. Isa 46:9; Acts 4:12). (2) Jesus speaks words that give to those who receive them the life of the world to come. (3) The early enthusiastic expression of faith and hope has grown to fuller faith and knowledge...; they now really believe and have to know that Jesus is 'the Holy One of God'" (Beasley-Murray, page 97).

This passage is like the account in Mark 8: 27-30 which follows Mark's account of the feeding of the four thousand. We can read Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16: 13-20 and Luke 9: 18-20.

Peter's words ***Lord, to whom shall we go?*** are the words used as the guiding topic for our study. It is not a question, but an affirmation. This is a momentous confession on the lips of Peter ***You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.***"

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Jesus calls us to commit ourselves to him in such a way that we base every aspect of our lives on him. Our study should lead to an understanding of Jesus as the giver of life itself. Many other good gifts come to us, but we do not follow Jesus because of what he does for us, but because of who he is. Our commitment to him is based on an understanding like that of Peter – To whom could we go but to Jesus who has the words of eternal life? He is the Holy One of God.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

To Whom Shall We Go?

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the **Focal Text** in their Bibles. Also, share with them the **Main Idea** to be learned from the Scriptures, and the **Questions to be Explored** by the group.

Focal Text

John 6:41-58, 66-69

Background

John 6—8

Main Idea

Jesus calls us to commit ourselves to him in such a way that we base every aspect of our lives on him.

Question to Explore

Do you believe in Jesus because of what he does for you or because of who he is?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to state the significance for our lives of Jesus as the bread of life and evaluate the extent of our commitment to him.

Connect with Life:

To the leader of the Bible study:

You may want to have a loaf of bread as a visual. If you are able to do so you might want to use several different kinds of bread in your display. Many places now have breads from various cultures readily available.

If you have people in your group from various ethnic groups, ask what bread is called in their country of origin and what it contains and how it is made.

Share with the church: The bread in the story of the feeding of the five thousand told in John 6: 5-13 was a barley loaf. This was the food of the poor people; in fact barley was often the food for the animals of the household.

But bread in every culture is a staple; many meals simply would not be complete without it. It represents the meeting of basic needs. For many, the smell of baking bread represents home and security. Jesus chooses this as one of the descriptive phrases He uses to describe Himself – light of the world, living water, bread of life.

Guide the Study:

Set the scene for today's passage by summarizing John 6: 22-40.

Have someone read John 6: 41-42.

Ask: What made the people begin to grumble about what Jesus was saying? (He said he was the bread that came down from heaven. At least some of the people knew who Jesus was – they knew his father and mother – they identified him as Joseph's son).

Discuss with participation by the group how one would feel in the circumstances in which the people found themselves.

Have someone read John 6: 26-27.

Inquire: What did Jesus say was the motivation of the people for seeking him out? (They were impressed by the feeding of so many people; they wanted more food immediately; they thought he would be able to supply their material needs.)

Comment: Jesus wanted them to understand that the food he had to give was not earthly food which would be needed again the following day, but heavenly food which endures to eternal life.

Have someone read John 6: 42-47 and another person read Isaiah 54: 13.

Ask: What are ways in which you have been drawn and taught by God? (Parental teaching, testimony of a friend, a deep longing for spiritual things, a dream, attending a worship service, a life tragedy – all of these might be mentioned. Watch time here.)

Summarize by saying: God is at work in the circumstances of our coming to salvation – He is drawing and teaching us. We have the freedom to choose to follow Him or not.

Have someone read John 6: 48-52 and another person read Exodus 16: 9-15.

Say: The Israelite people knew the story of the provision of manna in the desert very well. Jesus points out that these people eventually died. He is offering them bread of life which one may eat and not die.

Discuss how hard it would be to understand ***This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?*** Why can't the people understand that he is speaking in spiritual terms?

Have someone read John 6: 53-59.

Ask: Do these words remind you of the Lord's Supper?

Emphasize: Jesus meant that people must assimilate Him into their lives. Stressing the value of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (v. 55), Jesus indicated the resultant intimate fellowship (v. 56), which was like He had with the Father (v. 57).

Have someone read John 6: 66-69.

Inquire: What happened to many of the people who had been following Jesus? (They found these teachings too difficult to understand; they turned back from following Jesus.)

Have someone read John 8:31.

Seek answers from the group: What is the way that we will show our true discipleship? (We will hold to the teachings of Jesus).

Ask: What was the thrilling affirmation given by Peter? (There is no one else to turn to; you have the words of eternal life; we believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.)

Consider how this affirmation is a testimony of the disciples' growing and maturing faith.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Pray together that each one in the group will be like the disciples and grow in faith and in the assurance of the verse: ***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.***

Say the verse together as an affirmation of faith.

Make copies of this verse for each participant from the copy given at the end of the worship time – encourage each person to use this as a meditation during the week.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

To Whom Shall We Go?

John 6:41-58, 66-69

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Learning How to Teach the Bible to Others Session 1

Write the lessons from John 6:5-13 and/or John 6:16-21 in a format which would be appropriate to teach to children 4 and 5 years of age. Tell the lesson you have written to others in the group. Are there children in your scope of influence to whom you might tell this story? These could include children in your home church; children in your neighborhood; your cousins; children you babysit; children for whom you are responsible on a mission trip. Remember that you are growing and learning about your faith and part of that growing and learning is preparing yourself to serve others.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***To Whom Shall We Go?*****John 6:41-58, 66-69****Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

Worthy of Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #3; CCLI #82869**Jesus, Lord to Me**, *The Worship Hymnal* #300; CCLI #16976**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Pray for Christians in Syria who have suffered greatly in the civil war in that country which began in 2011. Pray for peace in Syria where more than 100,000 casualties have occurred.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

A Very Present Help in Time of Trouble
John 6: 16-21
Psalms 46:1

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I, don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

It had been a big day for the disciples. They were with Jesus; it seemed that he wanted time alone on the mountainside with them and with His Father. But a great number of people were able to locate them. The people had followed them; they had walked the nine miles around the upper edge of the Sea of Tiberius. Jesus and the disciples had rowed across.

Jesus saw that the people were tired and hungry. He put aside his own need for rest and sought to feed the people. They were near the home of Philip, one of the disciples, but when Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread for the people to eat, Philip was quick to tell him that it would cost eight months wages to feed such a crowd.

Andrew was sensitive to people's needs – remember that it was Andrew who brought his brother, Simon Peter – to Jesus. He encountered a small boy with a lunch. It was a simple lunch – the barley loaves which poor people ate and some small pickled fish. But he was willing to share his lunch.

Jesus took the lunch, told the disciples to have the people sit down. They did sit down – all five thousand men and the women and children who were with them. Jesus blessed the food – the traditional Jewish blessing that the head of a household would give ***Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, who causest to come forth bread from the earth.***

So impressed were the people with Jesus that they began to say to one another that Jesus must be the Prophet who had come into the world. They wanted to make him a King. Perhaps some of the disciples agreed that that would be a good idea.

Jesus must have calmed the crowd; He must have sent the disciples away. They got in a boat and sailed for Capernaum – their home base for the time being. It was dark. A strong wind came up and the waters were rough. They had rowed three and a half miles – they must have been close to the shore. Perhaps they had always been close to the shoreline – seeking what shelter they might find from the shore.

That's when they saw Jesus walking on the water towards them. They were terrified. Was it the physical exhaustion of the day or the hard rowing in the stormy weather or the unexpected sight of someone walking toward them? Jesus said **"It is I, don't be afraid"**. Their fears were calmed; Jesus got in the boat with them and they went to shore.

This is a favorite story of children and adults. We like the marvelous story of the five thousand and more people being fed when one boy shared his lunch – a very small lunch at that – and Jesus blessed it. We like the story of the frightened disciples in the storm and the fact that Jesus came walking toward them. The words, **"It is I, do not be afraid"** are some of the most comforting words we could ever hope to hear. For all of the high technology of today's movies and video games, it is hard to compare with the drama of these events.

John probably thought a lot about these events in the years between the time he lived them with the disciples and Jesus and when he wrote about them. He must have thought about the fact that Jesus was watching what happened to them as they rowed in the stormy sea. Jesus was still up on the mountainside; He was dispersing the crowd and then communing with the Father. But he was always watching His disciples as well. We can remember this reality. When we are having difficulties, *Jesus is watching*. "Life is lived with the loving eye of Jesus upon us" (Barclay, page 213).

Jesus does not watch with serene and unmoved detachment. He comes to give us aid. When our strength is failing; when the pressures are too great; when we think we cannot go any further, Jesus comes to be with us. He has always been there, of course, but in those times of greatest need, His strength is always our strength. As he did for the disciples he says to us **"It is I, do not be afraid"**. And he gets in the boat with us until we reach the shore.

Jesus watches, He comes, He helps. The Psalmist said many years before the coming of Christ **God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)**. Then Christ came into the world. That refuge and strength became even more available to us.

"It is the wonder of the Christian life that there is nothing we are left to do alone" (213). Peter understood that when he said to Jesus "To whom would we go?" Who, indeed? Jesus brings salvation – life after death, but he brings comfort, strength, and help in the here and now.

"It seemed to John as he remembered it, that as soon as Jesus arrived the keel of the boat grated on the shingle – and they were there. As the Psalmist had it: **"Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven' (Psalm 107:30)**. They were home" (Barclay, page 213). Jesus will bring us home. Modern means of communication makes it possible for us to know of events all around the world each day. We know of war, of natural disaster, of violence and hatred. We can also know of great examples of sacrifice and courage. And we must know in the

midst of all of this information and our own lived daily struggles and tragedies and victories, that Jesus will bring us home. “Somehow in the presence of Jesus the longest journey is short and the hardest battle easier”. (Barclay, page 213).

Wm. Barclay, a Biblical scholar of the last century, said “It is one of the loveliest things in the Fourth Gospel, that John, an old fisherman turned evangelist, found all the wealth of Christ in the memory of a fisherman’s story” (Barclay, page 213).

In the words of the old hymn:

O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land
A weary land, a weary land
O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land
A shelter in the time of storm.

Ira D. Sankey, Vernon J. Charlesworth, CCLI# 42892 Public Domain

*(The writing of William Barclay, **The Daily Study Bible: John** (Part 1). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956, pages 210-213 served as direction for this worship time message).*

Call to Commitment:

Repeat again the words of John 6:68 which were said together at the end of the Bible Study period.

Concluding the Service:

Make a copy of the following page and cut the verses apart and give one to each participant in the Bible Study.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. (John 6:68).

Copy this page and cut the verses apart. Give one to each participant in the Bible Study. The verse will be used again to conclude the Worship Time.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. John 6: 68

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. John 6: 68

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