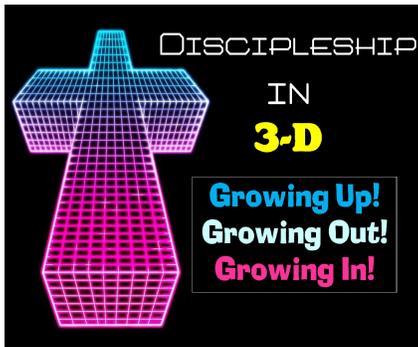


The Year of Discipleship in 3-D

(Further Developing Devoted Followers of Christ)



Welcome! Growing into more fully-devoted followers of Christ, may this time help all: **Grow Upward** into a more mature personal relationship and commitment to Christ Jesus faithful to God's Word!

Grow Outward to neighbor and world around, learning how to love well and to lead in what matters to God - guided by God's Word, by Jesus Himself, and by the Holy Spirit!

And, **Grow Inward** to discover a more contemplative faith, enhanced by both silence and prayer!

The Scripture for Sunday February 13, 2022

[STUDY LESSON 23]

THE GOOD NEWS READING:

John 6:35-59

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. {36} But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. {37} Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; {38} for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. {39} And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. {40} This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

{41} Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." {42} They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" {43} Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. {44} No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. {45} It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. {46} Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. {47} Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. {48} I am the bread of life. {49} Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. {50} This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. {51} I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

{52} The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" {53} So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. {54} Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; {55} for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. {56} Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. {57} Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. {58} This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." {59} He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

DISCUSSION GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS:

1. Open (*or have someone in the group open*) with a prayer inviting the work of the Holy Spirit to open up the hearts and lives of any and all to shape believers into more fully devoted following of Christ.
2. Read (*or have one or more persons read*) the passage printed above (*or from a bible*).
3. What words or phrases caught your attention as you heard this passage read? Put another way, were you to choose to memorize a verse and cherish it from this text, what verse might that be and why? Take note within yourself, what sort of feelings arise in that word, phrase, or verse?

4. BACKGROUND NOTES: An important context for this text is the Feeding of the 5,000 which precedes (*John 6:1-14*) This text serves to interpret that sign, a significant comparison to link to mass feeding, particularly of the Israelites in the wilderness fed by God with the manna. Another sign of God's abundance. Compare the crowd declaring, "Sir, give us this bread always" (*John 6:34*) and the Samaritan woman at the well saying, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." (*John 4:15*) The first predicate nominative in the Gospel appears here in "I AM the bread of life." (*John 6:35*) Bread and water combined set a foundation for Jesus being able to provide for what sustains life.
5. At this initial stage, what might be some possible connections between Jesus as the bread of life, coming to Him one will never hunger, and believing with never thirst?
6. Notice the insertion of believing in these opening verses: "whoever believes in me will never be thirst," "you have seen me and yet do not believe, and "all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life." (*John 6:35, 36, 40*) The form of the word "believe" in John is always a verb (it appears nearly 100 times) and never occurs as a noun (ex. belief, believer). What significance does this have for the disciple of Jesus such as yourself?
7. Once more the Jews (those in opposition to Jesus) complain about the intimate union of Jesus and His Father (*compare 5:18 and 6:42*). Mention of His earthly father and mother is in the present tense. Jesus' humanity and divinity combined. How do you find yourself attempting to comprehend what it is to know Jesus as fully human and fully divine?
8. Ancestry and community are in play here as Jesus references "your ancestors" (*John 6:49*). For those first hearers, relationships definitely looked back in time. But, the question now arises, does it look forward? Jesus speaks of people being drawn by the Father (*John 6:44*). How expanded is your sense of God's family, both being part of the fold and others being in the fold?
9. Powerful sacramental language surfaces in the last ten verses of this passage. How do you understand and experience Jesus "Very truly, I tell you," directive of eating flesh and drinking blood? (*John 6:53*)
10. Are you able to rest in the assurance, as you follow Christ, that "The LORD will provide?" How has that happened for you and/or when was a notable time you sensed that assurance or God's provision?
11. Following (or discipleship) embraces some understanding of Jesus as the Bread of Life, eating and drinking, flesh and blood, true food and true drink, living and eternal life. How are those aspects expressed by Jesus incorporated into your discipleship
12. Spend some time talking or reflecting upon the meal of Holy Communion as an aspect of discipleship. If willing, share (*or personally identify within yourself*) a moment or experience where communion had a meaningful or profound affect on your believing.
13. What is your main discipleship "takeaway" from this text?
14. Can you identify any particular ways your Christian faith and following might be inspired to change in light of this passage from the Bible (and any discussion and/or reflection that may have taken place)?
15. (*Optional*) Read the passage once more. Then, take some time to close (or have someone close) with a prayer.