

6. Water is needed for the very existence of life. What does water do for the body? What does living water do for the soul? What “thirst” has God quenched in you?
7. Just as God supplies for our physical needs, he also provides for our spiritual needs. What spiritual provision has God supplied that evokes a deep sense of gratitude and worship? Why has it touched you so deeply?
8. Those who are the recipients of grace are also the dispensers of grace. How have you extended grace to others? What was the result? How was God glorified? How were you blessed?

John 7:1-52

Lesson 13

For December 28 2008

Dori Sear and Dr. Jerry Nelson

LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on December 28, 2008

Jesus, the Christ

What attracts people to Jesus? While many dismiss him, even despise and immediately reject him, throngs of people are fascinated by him. Some are seeking eternal life. Others are hoping for relief from sickness and disease, relational difficulties, or the sorrow that has come about through sin. Yet they follow at a distance. They are attracted to gifts, but not to the Giver. Sometimes believers get caught up in the same mindset and follow a “health and wealth” prosperity gospel. This “gospel” presents a God who is ready to supply all your needs, *and* wants, *and* desires, yet requires little to no transformation of the heart. In this chapter we will see Jesus as:

- The Great Supplier
- The Great Divider
- The Great Provider

In the first five chapters of the Gospel of John, Jesus reveals himself as the Son of God. We know that he came from the Father and is one with him. He is not simply a great prophet or radical rabbi. He is the Son of God! He used his early ministry to demonstrate his deity in very tangible ways; he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and walked on water. *This* Jesus they believed. Yet late in Chapter 6 something begins to change. Jesus talks of bread for the soul, of eating and drinking his flesh, of close, personal communion with him. This is hard teaching, and his popularity wanes as the people begin to understand that this was not going to be a road of me-centered, comfortable Christianity.

This road was going to be rocky, even painful, and would eventually lead straight to the cross.

The great transition begins here; from phenomenal popularity to outrage and hatred. From hence forth, Jesus will teach about sin, righteousness, and judgment. The lines will be drawn, and many will not want to hear nor will they receive this message of true hope. Instead, they will turn on him, ridicule his teaching, and take his name in vain. Jesus the Supplier now becomes the great Divider, and many will walk away.

Yet countless people will not be deterred. They will not be driven away. Their thirst for God will lead them on a quest for Living Water. Jesus, the great Provider, will satisfy the longing of their souls. For them, as well as for us today, he will triumph over the flesh and provide forgiveness for our sin. Through it we are given new life and hope for the here and now, and great confidence to face death with the assurance of eternal life. Are you drawn or repelled to the hard teachings of the Gospel? What will you do with Jesus?

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

This week's lesson challenges the thoughts and motivations of the heart. Why do we follow Jesus? What do we expect God to do? What happens to our faith when God does not meet our expectations or answer an urgent need right away? Do we desire relationship with God for his good pleasure? Do we enjoy God in spite of difficult circumstances? It is important to think about these questions personally, and on behalf of the people in your group.

Group Preparation

- There is a progression from Jesus the Supplier, to Jesus the Divider, to Jesus the Provider. Many people experience God's blessings in the physical realm and it will be helpful to recount the ways God has supplied in times of need. Be sure to ask "to what end"—what was God's ultimate desire in

meeting physical needs?

- As you discuss questions regarding the divisive nature of the gospel, you may want to take time to pray for relationships that may have been severed.
- As you consider God's great provision, try to focus on the theological truths that change our hearts rather than the many ways God has provided for our physical needs.

Discussion Questions

1. People often want the good life, not the Good News. The "health and wealth" gospel makes false claims about God and undermines the claims of the gospel. Yet people, even believers, follow these false teachers. Doesn't Jesus promise to supply all of our needs? Does Jesus promise to give us back one hundred fold? What happens when it appears that he does not? What are we to believe about him?
2. Define comfortable Christianity. Why is it dangerous? How do we sometimes gauge our spirituality by our blessings?
3. What is the difference between entitlement (God owes me) and genuine faith in his promises?
4. As you consider the ways God has met very tangible, practical needs, why do you think he did so?
5. Have you ever had sharp disagreement with someone over the person and work of Christ? What immediately or ultimately caused them to reject him? Even though you know the truth, were you drawn into their logic/arguments? What made them believable? How did you resist them?