

Holy Things Among Common Things



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 6.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The [Holy] Spirit gives life; the flesh [body] counts for nothing. The words I [Jesus] have spoken to you [Jesus' disciples] are spirit [spiritual] and they are life’ ” (John 6:63, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: In Jesus, all of life, even common things, can become holy.

THROUGHOUT JOHN 6, THE people relate to Jesus according to their physical needs. They are not searching for spiritual food. They want to see more miracles like the feeding of five thousand people. When the people looked at Jesus, they saw a common everyday human like themselves. They did not see Him as Someone who was holy. The people were not able to see the holy among the common.

In John 6, Jesus tries to direct the people's eyes away from common things toward spiritual things. He wants them to have spiritual food for eternal¹ life. Eternal life is not found in miracles and in the things of this world. Eternal life is found by accepting Jesus' claims about Himself. One of the secrets of the devotional life² is to learn to see how Jesus works with the common things of everyday life. We are to sense that He is with us everyday, even though we cannot see, hear, or touch Him.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 14.

¹eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

²devotional life—leading a daily life of prayer and Bible study; spiritual life.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 8

THE MIRACLE OF THE FISH AND LOAVES (John 6:1-13).

What lessons can you learn from John 6:1-13? How does this story speak to your needs? What kind of hope does this story offer? What does it tell you about God?

This story happened around Passover (John 6:4). Passover reminded the Israelites of a time when God worked a wonderful miracle for His people (read Exodus 12). The feeding of five thousand people might not be as exciting



The escape from Egypt reminded the people of God's power. The feeding of the five thousand people also reminded the people of God's power.

as the Exodus³ from Egypt. But it was still a mighty example of God's power for His people, even without their spiritual understanding. John makes it clear that many people who followed Jesus did so just because they had seen a great miracle (John 6:2). They did not realize that Jesus could bring them spiritual freedom.

Jesus still worked for their good. He knew their hearts were still not right. But He helped them anyway. How thankful we can be that our God is like that. What does that tell us about how we should act toward people who have not yet accepted Jesus?

Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves. This was a miracle. But He did not personally deliver the fish and loaves to the people. How was the food passed out and gathered? What lesson does this teach us? John 6:10-12.

Jesus helped meet the people's physical needs. Was that a goal in itself or a method to reach a goal? After all, a few hours later, all those people would be hungry again. What was Jesus doing with this miracle? In what ways are we called to do the same thing?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 9

MIRACLE AT SEA (John 6:16-21).

³Exodus—the escape of the people of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 14:5-31).

Read the story of Jesus walking on the water in John 6:16-21. Contrast⁴ it to the miracle of the fish and the loaves.



“Don’t be afraid! It is I!”

It is interesting that Jesus would do such a powerful miracle, especially after what happened with the crowd of five thousand people. After Jesus fed them, they wanted to make Him their king. But Jesus did not come to be an earthly king. So He left the area.

What would Jesus walking on water make His disciples think and feel?

In this story, Jesus did almost the same thing God did during Moses’ time. Read Exodus 14:20-22. The dis-

ciples knew about God at the Red Sea. So Jesus’ ability to walk on water and to control the sea were powerful examples of His claim to be God. This was something the disciples needed after their disappointment with Jesus for not letting the people make Him king. “The disciples had long hoped for the people to put Jesus on the throne. They could not accept the thought that all this excitement should come to nothing. . . .

“Unbelief was taking hold of the disciples’ minds and hearts. Love of honor had blinded them. They knew that the Pharisees⁵ hated Jesus. They were eager to see Him honored as they thought He should be honored.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 379, 380.

By walking on the water, Jesus helped strengthen the faith of His disciples. But do we always need miracles to make our faith stronger? What things besides miracles have happened in your life that have helped your faith grow?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 10

**BREAD FROM HEAVEN
(John 6:22-35).**

After that stormy night (John 6:16-21), the crowd crossed the lake and found Jesus in the synagogue⁶ of

⁴contrast—show how things are different.

⁵Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s law to be saved.

⁶synagogue—a place of worship for the Jews; “church.”

Capernaum. This is the place where all the preaching and the discussions happen in the rest of John 6.

What connection is there between how Israel survived in the desert and the feeding of the five thousand people earlier in John 6? Exodus 16:33-35; John 6:27-31.

An important theme in John 6 is the Exodus from Egypt. The feeding of five thousand people helped the people remember the first Passover when Moses' people escaped from Egyptian slavery. The storm (John 6:16-21) reminded the disciples of the dangers Moses' people faced at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:5-31). The bread of life is an example of God's care for Moses' people in the desert of Sinai (Exodus 16:1-5). As with Moses' people in the desert, Jesus' listeners wanted miracles they could see or touch. But their faith still remained weak after Jesus gave them those miracles. So



Manna was an example of God's care for the Israelites.

Jesus led their attention away from the manna (bread) Moses' people received in the desert. Jesus wanted His hearers to think about the spiritual bread He had come to offer them.

What point is Jesus making here in John 6:32-35? What is He telling us about Himself? What do these words mean to us? Why does He use the bread as an example?

The important point of Jesus' sermon is that accepting and believing in Him leads to a strong spiritual life both now and "at the last day" (John 6:40; John 5:21). People need food all the time to remain alive. In the same way, we need to always invite Jesus into our daily experience if we wish to keep our spiritual life strong. In the Gospel of John (John 1:12; John 6:47) "believing" is always continuous (John 1:12; John 6:47). Believing must be an important part of our daily experience.

Read John 6:35. How has this promise been shown in your life? If it has not been shown in your life, then ask yourself, Do I believe in Jesus?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 11

**SEEING BUT NOT BELIEVING
(John 6:36-50).**

Why did many people have a hard time accepting Jesus' claims about who He was? John 6:41, 42. How do

the words of the people repeat the words of Nicodemus in John 3:4?

What did many of Jesus' own disciples do when they heard His teachings? John 6:60, 66. Why did they do this?

Throughout John 6, the crowds are interested in Jesus only for their comfort. They want to see more miracles like the feeding of five thousand people. When Jesus refuses to do more of these miracles, they quickly decide that He is a common everyday human like themselves. They do not think of Him as Someone who came down from heaven. They could not see the holiness in His body. Jesus' physical presence became a stumbling block to them.

Like the second generation of Christians,⁷ we think we would be better off knowing Jesus as a living person. We would rather not struggle having a relationship with Someone we cannot see, hear, or touch. But those people who could see, hear, and touch Jesus still did not accept Him as their Savior.

Who really was Jesus? He was much more than just a good man who grew up in Nazareth with Joseph and Mary. No good man would claim to be the Son of God, who came down from heaven. To make such a claim, He would have to be lying, or be what He

claims to be—the Son of God. There is no middle ground. We must accept Him as the Son of God or refuse to accept Him as the Son of God. In John 6:36-50, people were foolish to think Jesus was just a good man. This is not really the way Jesus wants people to think.

It is very important that people know who Jesus really is. He is the perfect example of God. This is a life-and-death matter to all people. To accept Jesus as bread, flesh, and blood is a good example of describing a very close relationship with Jesus. It is almost the same as eating food for strength and energy. This is the only way a Christian can gain the eternal life Jesus promises.



Why do we follow Jesus?

In what ways might we be in danger of failing to see the holy among common things? For example, how might we fail to see the holy in our church, its leaders, or our message?

⁷second generation of Christians—Christians who were not living before Jesus was crucified.

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 12

HOLY THINGS AMONG COMMON THINGS (John 6:51-71).

Read John 6:51-58. What did Jesus mean by saying we must eat His flesh (body) and drink His blood?

In the book of John, examples are often used from everyday life. Some of these examples include bread, water, and light. These examples help us to better understand Jesus' words. Our relationship with Jesus will deepen and grow when we use everyday things to help us understand His words. As the Bread of Life, Jesus brings us a taste of eternal life. This makes physical food and drink seem unimportant.

The body hungers for food, drink, and sunlight. In the same way, the soul hungers for Jesus. If Jesus is not present, humans will do foolish things to fulfill their needs.

What are some of the things people do in order to fill their inner spiritual needs?

When we sit down to eat, we can remember that Jesus gives us rain, life, sunshine, and food. We also can remember that we would have none of these without the cross of Jesus. When we lift up a glass to drink, we can re-

member Jesus, the Water of Life. When we get dressed in the morning, we can think about the robe of Jesus' righteousness (perfect character). One of the keys to a living relationship with Jesus is finding the holy among common things. We can use all the common events⁸ of our lives to remind us of the words and actions of Jesus.

Read again John 6:51-71. Jesus talked about life and living. What has Jesus promised people who eat His flesh and drink His blood? Why is this promise important?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read John 6:16-21; Matthew 14:22-27; and Mark 6:45-52. What is the same about each story? What is different? What point is each story making?

For a better understanding of John 6, read Ellen G. White's comments in *The Desire of Ages*. John 6:1-21 is covered on pages 364–382. Pages 383–394 are about John 6:22-71.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "It is only because he [Jesus] became like us that we can become like him [Jesus]" (*The Cost of Discipleship* [New York; The MacMillan Company, 1959], p. 274). What do you think that means? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

⁸events—things that happen.

2. Why was Jesus' teaching in John 6 so hard for His listeners to accept? What lessons can we learn from Jesus' listeners about how to be disciples of Jesus?

SUMMARY: In John 6, Jesus struggles to explain His mission to people who fail to understand Him. He feeds five thousand people to show He is the One who can bring them the bread of spiritual life. But they want Him to be their King (John 6:14). In quieting the storm, Jesus tried to show His disciples that

He can supply their needs and free them from fear. But they were too fearful and too proud to ask for His help.

At Capernaum Jesus used bread, flesh, and blood as examples to show their need for the spiritual life He offers. Most of the people who heard Him were disgusted with Him and left. These three events teach us the need to "see" the holy among common things. They also show us how to have a living relationship with Jesus, who makes Himself real to us in the things of everyday life.