

Power Team Kids

CHRIST IS ONE OF THE THREE-IN-ONE GOD

CHRIST ALWAYS WAS, IS NOW, AND
ALWAYS WILL BE.

The Word of God tells in many places that Christ was with the Father. There has never been a time when Christ was not. The first five verses in John tell of this. John 1:1-5 says, "The Word (Christ) was in the beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it. Life began by His Life was the Light for men. The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light." The first verse of Genesis tells about when the world was made. But John tells us about the One Who was before the world was made. As there has never been a time when God the Father was not, so there has never been a time when Christ was not.



Word Power!

By

Larry Chkoreff

Power Team For Kids

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Power Team

Kids

Word Power !

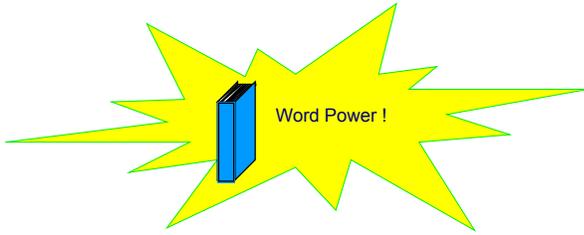
Oh Lord
- please
save those people

Power Team must
rescue the
captives

Ha-I can scare off
that Power Team -
just a bunch of
kids.

Over here you
guys,
the Devil has me!

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1
VERSE of Scripture
John Chapter 1 New Life Version

Christ Lived Before The World Was Made

John 1:1-14 The Word (Christ) was in the beginning. -The Word was with God. The Word was God. ' He was with God in the beginning. He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it. Life began by Him. His Life was the Light for men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light.

Power Lesson

CHRIST IS ONE OF THE THREE-IN-ONE GOD

CHRIST ALWAYS WAS, IS NOW, AND ALWAYS WILL BE.

The Word of God tells in many places that Christ was with the Father. There has never been a time when Christ was not. The first five verses in John tell of this. John 1:1-5 says, "The Word (Christ) was in the beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it. Life began by Him. His Life was the Light for men. The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light." The first verse of Genesis tells about when the world was made. But John tells us about the One Who was before the world was made. As there has never been a time when God the Father was not, so there has never been a time when Christ was not.

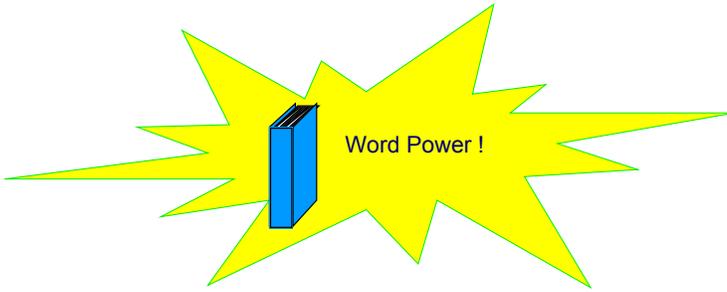
Christ is One of the Three-in-one God. He is the One Who left heaven and lived in human flesh. I Timothy 3:16 says, "It is important to know the secret of God-like living, which is: Christ came to earth as a Man. He was pure in His spirit. He was seen by angels. The nations heard about Him. Men everywhere put their trust in Him. He was taken up into heaven." (Christ was the Lamb of God Who was killed for man like a lamb and given on the altar.) A good man who was full of loving pity and loving-kindness would not have been good enough. Man needed the Lord of heaven, the Christ Who

John The Baptist Tells Of The Coming Of Christ

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came to tell what he knew about the Light so that all men might believe through him. John was not the Light, but he was sent to tell about the Light. 9 This true Light, coming into the world, gives light to every man. He came into the world. The world was made by Him, but it did not know Him. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him. He gave the right and the power to become children of God to those who received Him. He gave this to those who put their trust in His name. 13 These children of God were not born of blood and of flesh and of man's desires, but they were born of God. Christ became human flesh and lived among us. We saw His shining-greatness. This greatness is given only to a much-loved Son from His Father. He was full of loving-favor and truth.

could pay for man's sins with His own blood and set him free. Man needed One Who has always been alive and always will be. (Isaiah 53:6)

Making the world from nothing was the work of Christ. John 1:3 says, "He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it." Colossians 1:16 says, "Christ made everything in the heavens and on the earth. He made everything that is seen and things that are not seen, He made all the powers of heaven. Everything was made by Him and for Him." In Colossians 1:15 it says, "Christ is as God is. God cannot be seen, Christ lived before everything was made." It is true that He entered the human family to live as a man, but this was not the beginning of life for Him. He always was. All things were made by Christ and for Him. Nothing was made that He did not make. That is why Christ is the Head of all things.



2

VERSE of Scripture

John Chapter 1 New Life Version

John 1:1-4 The **Word (Christ) (SON)** was in the beginning. -The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it. Life began by Him.

John 1:12-13 He gave the right and the power to become children of God to those who received Him. He gave this to those who put their trust in His name. 13 These children of God were not born of blood and of flesh and of man's desires, but they were born of God from **His Father (FATHER)**. He was full of loving-favor and truth.

John 1:29-34 The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him. He said, "See! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. I have been

talking about Him. I said One is coming after me Who is more important than I because He lived before I was born.' I did not know who He was, but I have come to baptize with water so the Jews might know about Him.

32 Then John said, "I saw the **Holy Spirit (SPIRIT)** come down on Jesus as a dove from heaven. The Holy Spirit stayed on Him. I did not know Him then But God sent me to baptize with water God said to me, The Holy Spirit will come down and stay on Him. He is the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. I saw this happen. I am now saying that Jesus is the Son of God."

Matthew 3:16-17 When Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened. He saw the Spirit of God coming down and resting on Jesus like a dove. A voice was heard from heaven. It said "This is my much-loved Son. I am very happy with Him".

Power Lesson

God - a Three-In-One God

Notice from these Scriptures in John chapter 1 that it talks about God showing Himself three different ways - **FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT**. This is called the Trinity which stands for three. Sometimes our human minds cannot understand how God can be One, yet still Three. That is because God is so much greater than we are. We need to believe the Bible because it cannot lie.

One thing that can help us understand this is understanding the reason God is a Three-In-One God.

God loves us so much He wanted to make us His children. When we are born into this world, God loves us, but we are not His children yet. He invites us, and we must accept.

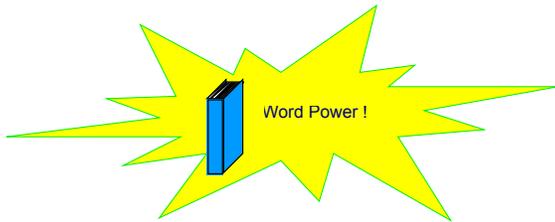
FATHER: To have children a father is needed. Fathers not only cause children to be born, but they take care of them after they are born.

SON: To have children a seed is needed. Just like plants reproduce with seeds, humans need sons and daughters to have more children. 1 Peter 1:23 says that the Word of God is our seed. Jesus the Son is the Word of God.

SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit is God also. He comes to live inside of us after the Father and the Son gives birth to us. Even with our earthly parents, we kind of inherit their spirit. So it is with our heavenly parent God, we cannot really be His children without having His Spirit.

So God is all Three-in-One so that He can be our Father, we can be His children, and we can have a close friendship with Him.

If this were no so, we could not be in His family. If you had a dog, you could love him, but you could not make him just exactly like you and be very, close. You could not talk the same language. In the same way, God wants to be very close to you so He has to make you just like Him. We have to become His children.



3
VERSE of Scripture
John Chapter 2 New Life Version

The Word will do miracles in your life

John 2:1-9 Three days later there was a wedding in the town of Cana in the country of Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and His followers were asked to come to the wedding. When the wine was all gone, the mother of Jesus said to Him "They have no more wine." Jesus said

to her, "Woman, what is that to you and to Me. It is not time for Me to work yet." His mother said to the helpers, "Do whatever he says." Six stone water jars were there. Each one held about one-half barrel of water. These water jars were used in the Jewish worship of washing. Jesus said to the helpers, "Fill the jars with water." They filled them to the top. Then He said, "Take some out and give it to the head man who is caring for the people." They took some to him. The head man tasted the water that had become wine. He did not know where it came from but the helpers who took it to him knew.

John 2:11 This was the first miracle Jesus did. It was done in Cana of Galilee where He showed His power. His followers put their trust in Him.

Power Lesson - How did Jesus do this miracle?

Look at what Jesus did. He did not touch anything but instead He spoke His **Word** to some ordinary people. They obeyed His Word, and God did the miracle.

The Word of God works like a seed. We do not have to be super adult Christians to have miracles.

Jesus used this example in Luke 8, Mark 4, and Matthew 13. He said that when He speaks His Word, it is a seed. Our hearts are the soil. We need to have good hearts so the seed can grow healthy.

So when we let God talk to us by reading His Word (the Bible), we are putting a miracle into action by planting God sized seeds.

But we have to watch out for the Devil

Read the Picture Story in Luke 8: 4-15

Jesus taught about invisible things by telling picture stories. This story tells about a man who scattered seed on four different types of ground so he could grow fruit. The seed is the Word of God and the soil is our hearts.

The Devil stole the seed in the first two places because the people's hearts either did not believe or they were tempted to only believe for a little while, then they gave up.

The third type of ground (or heart) grew some fruit but the weeds choked it out. The weeds are love for money

and things, and all kinds of selfishness. The Devil tempts us to be selfish.

The fourth type of ground (or heart) is the good ground. Jesus said it was a "good and true heart". **Being truthful** is one of the biggest things we can do for God and ourselves. Notice Jesus did not say that the good ground was perfect people, but they were truthful people. This is where the Word of God produced an abundance of fruit. When we make mistakes, we can run as fast as we can to God, and He forgives us; this keeps the seed in the ground.

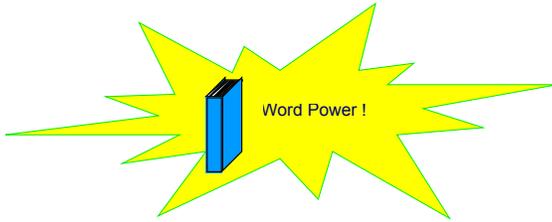
**What kinds of miracles does God want to do
with the seeds of His Word?**

The fruit of the Spirit

There are many different kinds of miracles - but the most important one is making you to be like Jesus. **The fruit of the Spirit** growing inside of you is the one miracle that will make all the other miracles work for you.

The fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5:22-23. It is **love, joy, peace, not giving up, being kind, being good, having faith, being gentle and being the boss over our own desires.**

Are you willing for God to do a miracle through you? It could help you - it could help your family - it could put the Power Team to work to set a prisoner free from Satan.



Born Again ?

Read John 3:1-18

Power Lesson -

This man Nicodemus really got a great lesson from Jesus. Like many of us, Nicodemus had a heart to know more about God but he could not understand certain things. Jesus told him that he needed to be born a second time. What did Jesus mean?

When we are born the first time from our parents, our spirit is not connected to God. This is because our relatives from a long time back, Adam and Eve, did not choose to stay connected to God, and we inherit things from our relatives. Being disconnected from God is called sin. When we are disconnected, we cannot go to heaven, and we cannot enjoy knowing God while we are here on earth.

Jesus gives us the way to solve this problem. He said that there is a way to get your spirit connected back to God. We need to be born again, and then God becomes our Father and we are connected again.

Why did Jesus tell the story about Moses and the snake?

Thousands of years ago, before even Jesus lived, Moses was leading God's people out of Egypt where they were slaves. While they were in the desert after they left Egypt, they began to complain and grumble. They could not understand why they needed the **Word** of God. So Satan attacked them by sending snakes to bite them. The best way to keep Satan from getting us is to stay close to the Word of God and keep it in our hearts and minds all the time.

When they asked God to help He told Moses to form a snake out of brass and hang it on a stick. Whoever would look at this snake would be healed. They did and they were healed. This is called **MERCY**. They did not get what they deserved. They deserved to die, but God gave them a way to live.

Jesus Traded Places With Us

Thousands of years later Jesus came to solve the problem for good. He died on the Cross like a sinner. He never did sin, but He died for our sins because He loved us. So the snake on the stick is a symbol of Jesus on the Cross. Why a snake? Jesus was not a snake, or a sinner, but He took our place as a sinner so we did not need to suffer and go to Hell. He traded places with us. God will give us **mercy** when we think about Jesus trading places with us. We too can be saved and born again.

This is also called MERCY. We deserved to die, but Jesus traded places with us

Remember, Jesus not only died on the Cross, but He defeated Satan by coming back and living again. He is alive today and He can see us right now. He is waiting for us to come to Him and believe.

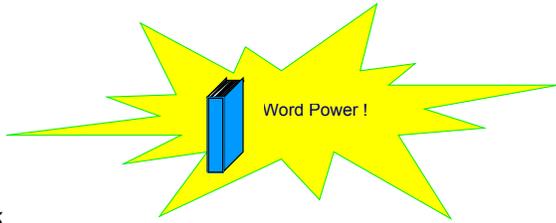
How are we born again?

Like we learned in the last lesson, the Word of God is a seed. I Peter 1:23 says that You have been given a new birth. It was from a seed that cannot die. This new life is from the **Word of God** which lives forever.

1. So when you hear or read the **Word of God**, you can get the seed of God in your heart. When this happens God comes in and invites you to be His child.
2. The next thing is you have to do is tell Jesus that you will trust in Him by making Him your boss, or Lord. On the Cross, Jesus paid a price to buy you, now you belong to Him.
3. The way to make Jesus your Lord is to make the Word of God your Lord. Jesus is the Word; and the Word is Jesus.
4. We go to our boss (or parents) every day and let them tell us what to do. We go to the Word of God every day and let Him tell us what to do.

Does it seem hard to have a boss or obey your parents? Does it seem unfair to go to the Word of God as your boss and obey Him? It will seem easy and wonderful if you know that God just wants to love you and protect you. He will put His Spirit in you so that you can obey easily. He does not want to keep you from having fun, He wants to make your life wonderful.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God's Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.



THE TRUTH. Why is it important?

Read John 3:16-21

Power Lesson - Notice in these Scriptures that God loved the world and all of us so much that He gave His most precious possession to purchase us - His Son Jesus. Then He says that Jesus did not come to make us feel guilty and bad and beat us up, but to save us from the punishment of sin. Jesus then said that not all people would be saved from sin and go to heaven.

Some people think that they do not have to do anything to be saved from sin, that God did it all. That is right. We cannot pay for our own sin, but we must do something also.

What is that?

He said in John 3:19-21 that we must come into the Light and hate darkness. Now those were some fancy words which mean, we must be honest and hate lying. Light means truth or honesty, and darkness means lying. When something is in the light, we can see it real good; we can tell what it really is. But when something is in the dark, we cannot really tell what it is. It is easy to lie in the dark, but in the light everything is open to be seen.

Why is telling the truth so important to God?

Do you remember the lesson about the picture story of the sower planting seeds (Luke 8)? What was the good soil that produced a lot of fruit? It was the honest heart.

Jesus has many names, and one of those names is Truth. He said I am the Truth, the Life and the Way. He is also called Light and Love.

When we trust in the truth we are trusting in Jesus. Some people think that they can make their own life happy by pretending and lying. But if they do this they are not trusting in the Truth and they are not trusting in Jesus. Remember it says in John 3:16 that if you trust in God's Son you will be saved. Well that means that you must trust in the Truth also. The Truth is Jesus and Jesus is the Truth.

When you trust in pretending and lying you are trusting in the world's biggest liar - the Devil! You are giving the Devil power over you.

In John 8:42-45 Jesus told the Pharisees (the proud religious law-keepers) that their father was the devil because they were not honest.

But He told the crowds in John 8:32 if you keep and obey My Word, then you are My followers for sure.

You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Some people always come to church and raise their hand to let Jesus in their hearts, but they never want to give up their pretending and lying. They are not serious about Jesus, but they are just trying to look good to their friends and make themselves feel good.

If we really want to feel good, we will be honest and tell the truth.

The truth gets rid of our sin

1 John 1:8-9 says if we say we have no sin, we lie to ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.

When we make a mistake, God wants us to run to Him fast and tell Him, then He will forgive and remove the sin and make us clean, right away!

If we are not honest with our sin, it will hurt us real bad.

Jesus was killed on the Cross for our sin.

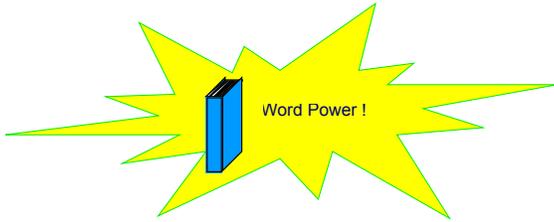
But we need to put our sins on the Cross and Jesus by telling Him about them.

 **Power Action !**

- 1. We need to tell the truth to God**
- 2. We need to tell the truth to our parents**
- 3. We need to tell the truth to our friends**

An honest heart is needed if we want Jesus to help us.

You should go to God and other people to whom you have not been truthful and tell them you are sorry. It may not feel good right away, but God will reward you!



What is Living Water?

Read John 4:1-15

Power Lesson

Jesus loves people and loves to help them. As Jesus was traveling through a place called Samaria He stopped to rest by a well which people used for water to drink. There He met a woman who came there to draw water for her household.

She had not been a very happy woman. Life had been hard for her; she had been married and divorced 5 times. She had been searching for something to satisfy her in her life, but she could not find it.

Jesus was very friendly with her. God (Jesus) is a friend to lonely people who have ruined their lives looking for happiness in all the wrong places. We need to understand that God (Jesus) loves to help people who are hurting. He does not scold them for being bad, but He comes to them to give them what they REALLY NEED.

What did this woman REALLY NEED?

She thought that she was **thirsty** :

(1) **thirsty** for water to drink because it was hot and dry.

(2) **thirsty** for a husband because she was lonely and her life was dry. A woman had no way to pay her bills back then, and her only security was to have a husband or a man friend.

Jesus knew she was really thirsty for the love of God.

(1) He knew she needed normal water from the well.

(2) He knew she also needed **Living Water**. He knew she needed to feel like someone cared about her and loved her for who she was, and would not hurt her. He also knew that she needed real security that a husband could not give to her.

3. She had been looking for love in all the wrong places. Then He compared drinking the well water to finding love in the wrong places. After you had a drink, you get thirsty again. That what it is like when you look for love in all the wrong places.

What are some of ways we can look for love in the wrong places?

Popularity with our friends. Getting a boy or girl friend. Drugs, alcohol, dating, watching too much TV, bad movies. Adults try to find love by using money and being famous. Kids try to show off. Kids try to control other kids to love them.

What is this Living Water?

It is Jesus Himself. In the Bible, the **Word of God** is called water. Water, or Living Water is the **Word of God**, and it is Jesus. The Holy Spirit Who is God living inside of you is also called Living Water. We need both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Living Water never runs dry, it never runs out. It is always there.

This woman had a great change in her life.

Jesus wants us to change to be more like Him so we can be happy. But Jesus knows we cannot change without His power. She changed because she got the Word of God.

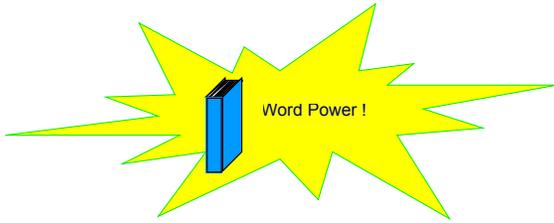
How do you get this Living Water? Do what this woman did.



1. Pray and tell Jesus everything about yourself.
2. Give your whole life to Jesus. Let Him be your best friend so He can love you.
3. Tell others about Him.
4. Live your life in honesty and truth.
5. To go to His Word and find out what He wants you to do every day.

You can depend on Jesus. He will never leave you alone. He will be your security and help. He will be your best friend. He will be there to love you even if you make mistakes, even if you are not very smart, even if you have been bad, He will be there to give you Living Water to change your life.

Are you thirsty for Living Water?



How important is it to obey?

Read John 4:46-54

Power Lesson : Jesus loves to help people who will believe and obey his word. Some people do not think it is very important to obey people who are in authority, like parents, teachers, police, pastors, and yes, even God!

If you could get a look into the invisible world that is all around you where God lives, where angels and demons live, then you would understand how important it is to be very obedient. The invisible world works on obedience and authority.

How did this man In John 4 get his miracle? How was his son healed?

Notice the man begged Jesus to come to his house to heal his son, but Jesus said some strange things to the man. Jesus let the man know that it was not important that He come to his house. He told him what was important was that the man would obey the Word of God, or the Words of Jesus.

So Jesus told the man to go home and his son would be healed. The man TRUSTED in Jesus' Words. Before the man got home he found out that his son was healed. His son was healed at the very time that Jesus spoke the Word and the man trusted the Word. The man got blessed for obeying the Word of God.

The Bible is the Word of God and it is the Words of Jesus.

When you read the Bible today, it is just the same as Jesus talking to this man in the Bible. When you obey what He says, God will work for you and do miracles in your life.

Adults and Kids can both get the wrong idea about obeying authority

They can think that having someone tell you what to do is just no good. They can think that they want to be their own "boss". They can think that they are too smart to obey someone else. They think that it is "sissy" to obey.

But God told us something different. He said in Matthew 20:25-28 that authority was to protect and bless people. Whoever we obey is required to protect us and take care of us. They are not supposed to mistreat you, but they are supposed to bless you.

Also, they should not have to make you obey, but you are supposed to run to them and be quick to obey. Your job is to run hard after your authority and find out what you can do to obey.

Jesus saved us from Hell by obeying His Father God.

Philippians 2:8 After He (Jesus) became a man, He gave up His important place and obeyed by dying on a cross.

God promises blessings for obedience

Hebrews 5:9 And having been made perfect, He (Jesus) planned and made it possible for all those who obey Him to be saved from the punishment of Sin.

Isaiah 1:19 If you are willing and obey, you will eat the best of the land (blessings).

He also warns that we are in danger if we do not get under our proper authority.

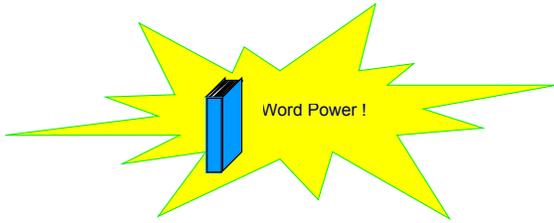
2 Thessalonians 1:8 He will punish those who do not know God and those who do not obey the Good News (Gospel) of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God gives us other people to obey in His place. And when He does, He watches to see what we will do. He will reward us if we obey them.

God gives us parents, teachers, police, and government people to be our authority to protect us and take care of us.

Power Action !

- 1. Apologize to your parents and teachers for not obeying (when you do not).**
- 2. Then find out how you can obey them more.**
- 3. Run to God's Word and find out what He wants you to do. Obey Him!**
- 4. After you do all this, watch out for God's blessings!**



Are there things in your life that you are not good at?

Read John 5:1-9

8
VERSE of Scripture **John Chapter 5:1-9**

Power Lesson : Jesus loves to help people who are weak and helpless

This story takes place before Jesus was known by many people. His miracles were not yet known by many people. The Pool of Bethesda was a place where weak and sick people would stay all day long hoping for a miracle by God. Sometimes people got miracles, sometimes they did not. It seemed to depend on how much help they had for someone to get them into the pool when the angel came.

But Jesus is different. He is not looking for strong people who have a lot of help. He is looking for people who realize that without Him they are weak. He is looking for people who are going to obey His Word no matter what.

Jesus knows that when we hear Him speak, it does not matter how weak we are or if there is no one else to help us. If we obey His Word, His miracles will work for us.

With Jesus it does not matter if you were born, smart or not so smart; or if you were born to good parents or bad parents. With Jesus it does not matter if you were born in a family with a lot of money, or no money.

He does not want us to blame other people for our problems, because if we do we cannot get His help.

He wants you to know, that all you need is Him, His Word, and to obey His Word.

Did you know that the Devil can talk to you? Yes he does. He can whisper in your ear and tell you lies and make you think that it is just your mind talking to you. He can make you think that God does not care about you or love you. He can make you think that just because you made a mistake that God will not forgive you. He can make you think that if you are weak, sick or not very smart, that God will not help you. He can make you think that if you are poor or not good in school, that God cannot help you.

This is a lie. God loves to help weak people!

Why do not all people receive God's help?

God cannot do it by Himself. He needs us to accept His help and to obey His Word. Notice in this story you just read that Jesus asked the man "Would you like

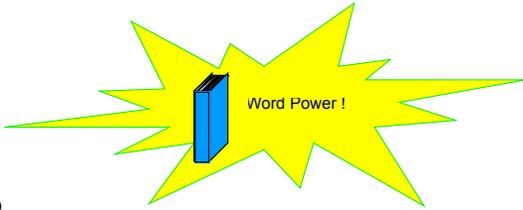
to be healed?". The man told Jesus that no one would help him, so he thought, "Yes I would like to get healed but I am too weak and I have no help". This did not bother Jesus. Jesus just gave the man His Word, He said "Get up, pick up your bed and walk". **The man obeyed the Word of God and he was healed.** When Jesus speaks to you, you do not need anyone else to help you. It does not matter if you are rich or poor, sick or healthy, weak or strong, the Word of God will work for you if you obey it.

You may not feel that you are weak, but problems come to all of us. Jesus wants to help us with our problems; both big problems and small problems.

God told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - I am all you need. I give you My loving favor (grace). My power works best in weak people. (Paul said) I am happy to be weak and have troubles so I can have Christ's power in me. I receive joy when all these things come to me because of Christ. For when I am weak, than I am strong.

 **Power Action !**

- 1. Be honest with God and yourself about your weakness or problems.**
- 2. Run to God's Word every day to hear Him speak to you about His power.**
If you do not read real good yet, then try using a tape player.
Take your Power Lessons home and read them over and over.
- 3. Find out what God wants you to do to obey Him.**
- 4. Keep believing and obeying until God works His power for you.**



God can take your small gift and make it big.

Read John 6:1-13

Power Lesson : Jesus can make something big out of your small gift. This is an amazing story of how Jesus fed more than 5,000 people from five small loaves of bread and two fish that a little boy had. That little bit of food is really not enough to feed 10 people, but it fed more than 5,000 people! God kept making more and more fish and more and more bread.

If you have the question in your mind “how did God do this”, the answer is - He did a miracle. Do you remember the lesson we had about the Word of God being a seed? Well there are other kinds of seeds also.

Giving is a seed. When this young boy gave his bread and fish to Jesus, it became more than bread and fish. It became a seed! **A seed has a miracle inside of it.** Just think about a little tree seed. You plant it in the ground and it knows exactly how much water and minerals to mix together to make a giant tree! In the same way, our small seeds, when we give them to Jesus, can make **BIG THINGS!**

What is Jesus trying to show us about our giving? If that little boy had not given his small amount of food but instead he ate it, then thousands of people would have been hungry, and he would have missed a **BIG BLESSING**. If he had been **SELFISH**, he would not have been **BLESSED**, and he would not have pleased God.

God wants us to be like Him, unselfish. Why? Because He knows we are never happy when we take, but we are only happy when we give. God wants us to be like Him, and He is a **BIG GIVER!** He gave His only Son Jesus so that we could go to Heaven.

When we give we can see God do miracles.

There was plenty left over.

Even after the 5,000 people ate all they wanted, there were 12 baskets full of fish and bread. There were 12 disciples of Jesus. Each one of them gave away a whole lot of food, but they all had enough left over for themselves, more than when they started. Most likely the little boy had a lot left over also; he probably got a very big blessing.

Here is God’s promise: Luke 6:38 -Give and it will be given to you. You will have more than enough. It can be pushed down and shaken together and it will still run over as it is given to you. The way you give to others is the way you will receive in return.

What are some things we can give besides money or food? Friendship, kindness and love are a few things you can give. Giving our time to help someone is another. Sometimes it is good to share our clothes or toys and give them to other people. Some people give away big things like bicycles and cars, even airplanes. But God always give them back more than they gave away.

Sometimes it hurts at first when you give something away, but later it always feels good.

Do you need a miracle? Do you want a friend? Then be a friend to someone. Do you want to feel good, then help someone else feel good. Always look around for something to give and not something to take. Does your family need help with their money? Then help them start giving.

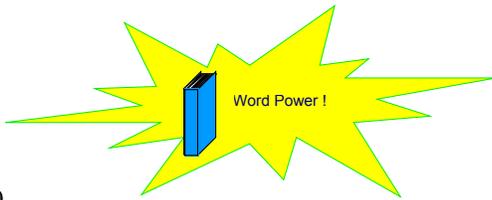
The best reason to give is that it makes God very happy. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says that God loves a cheerful giver. verse 11 says that when you give it makes people give thanks to God. He likes that!

God wants to use us for His miracles. He could do miracles without us, but He wants to partner with us for His work so He can bless us like He blessed His disciples that helped Him feed the 5,000 people.



Things you can do to please God.

1. **Always be unselfish.**
2. **Every day, look for a way to give.**
3. **Make sure you give money to your church.**
4. **Ask God to show you new ways to give.**

**How can you be sure of Jesus and what He said?**

Read John 7:1- 17, & 37-43

Power Lesson :

How do we know for sure that we can trust what the Bible says about Jesus? How do we know for sure that we can trust what Jesus said?

The world is full of all sorts of "religious stuff". Notice in this chapter that Jesus' friends and brothers went up to Jerusalem to a religious feast. Verse 5 says that not even His brothers believed in Him. There are so many religions in this world, how can we know for sure that the Bible and Jesus is true? How do we know for sure that the other religions are wrong? Good question, I am glad you asked!

1. Jesus does not reveal Himself to just anybody. Look at verse 17. He said that if anybody desired to do His will or follow Him, then that person would know if the Words that Jesus spoke were really from God. So we need to make sure that we lay down our lives to follow God, and then God will show us that what Jesus says is true.

2. God gives us the Holy Spirit to live inside of us to make us sure. Look at verse 38-39. Jesus said if you believe, then out of your innermost being will flow "rivers of living water"; in other words the Holy Spirit will come and live inside of you and no one will have to prove that Jesus is real; the Holy Spirit will do that.

3 God gives us Bible prophecies to prove the Bible is true. Look at verse 42 about the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus was to come from David, and from Bethlehem. How did God know to write this down before it happened? We need to be able to trust The Word of God no matter what comes our way!

If there is one thing The Word of God dares to do that no other book in the world does, it is to accurately predict the future.

This proves beyond argument, that only God could have authored the Bible

There are over 300 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in His birth, life death and resurrection, but consider only 17 most prominent ones. The combined probability against these 17 predictions occurring is equal to:

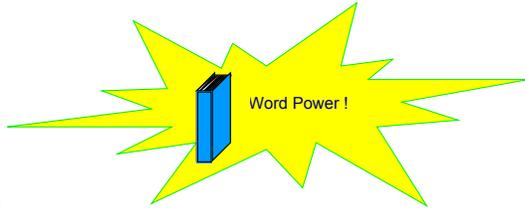
<p style="text-align: center;">1 chance in 480,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 or 480 Billion X 1 Billion X 1 Trillion.</p>
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Concerning the over 300 fulfilled prophecies about Jesus, it is ridiculous to imagine that these prophecies would all be fulfilled by accident by one person. Only one chance in a number followed by 181 zeros! To give you some idea of the size of this immense figure, think of a ball that is packed solidly with electrons (two and a half million billion make a line about one inch long). Now in your mind imagine this ball expanded to the size of the universe - some four billion light-years in diameter (a light-year being the distance that light travels in a year at the speed

of over 186,000 miles per second). Multiply this by 500 quadrillion. Out of this vast container of electrons, remove just **one** electron, and "color" it red and return it to the container, and stir it with the other electrons for a hundred years. Then blindfold a man and send him in to pick it out the first time. Impossible? With the same chance, Jesus the Christ lived and died was resurrected and is now alive according to the Scriptures by "accident"! **WOW!**

**Things you can do to please God.**

- 1. Verse 17: Make sure you have no other desires except for God's will.**
- 2. Believe on Jesus. Believe means to do something to obey Him not just believe in your brain.**
- 3. Look at verses 40 and 41. Are you like the ones who believed, or like the ones who doubted?**

**Why is the Truth so important to God?**

Read John 8:25-47

Power Lesson : **You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free** John 8:32. The interesting thing about these Scriptures is that Jesus was talking to a bunch of people who looked like they were very religious, but He told them that their father was the Devil! **WHY?**

The Devil is the father of lies and the father of those who always lie.

Do you want your father to be the Devil? All you have to do is go around lying and pretending.

Revelation 21:8b ..and all those who tell lies will be put into the lake of fire and sulphur.

Proverb 19:9 A man who tells lies about someone will be punished. He who tells lies will be lost.

If you continue to pretend and tell lies, you will be under a curse, and God will not be able to help you.

Another name for Jesus is TRUTH. John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the **Truth**, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.

Do you want your father to be God? Then always live in the truth. Do no pretend, do not cheat, do not lie.

If you live in the truth, You will be near to God Psalm 145:18 The LORD *is* near all those who call on Him, all those who call on Him in **truth**.

There are some things that we cannot see with our eyes. We cannot see God, the Devil, and we cannot see lies and truth. But God and the Devil do see lies and the truth when it comes out of our mouth. They are both waiting for us to say something. The Devil loves to see us lie because he can have power over us when we lie. God loves to see us be real and tell the truth, because then He can protect us and bless us.

What are some of the ways we can lie.

We can tell a big lie to our parents, friends or teachers. Or we can tell little lies, they are just as bad.

We can cheat in school or take something that does not belong to us.

We can pretend to be someone that we are really not. We can act one way around our friends, and another way around our parents. That is lying. But God sees everything and He knows that pretending to be someone we are not is going to hurt us.

Another kind of lying is lying to yourself. Did you know you can lie to yourself and you can begin to believe it? Sounds funny but it is so true. We need to be real honest with ourselves every day when we pray. That is why it is

very important to read your Bible every day because that helps you be honest with yourself.

What if you have been lying?

Run to Jesus and confess your sin of lying; He will forgive you. Then be honest after that. When you tell the truth about your sin, you are putting your sin on the Cross of Jesus and he takes your sin. 1 John 1:8-9 says If we say that we have no sin, we lie to ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we tell Him (God) our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.

If you trust in lies, then you are trusting in the Devil. If you trust in the truth and honesty, then you are trusting in Jesus.

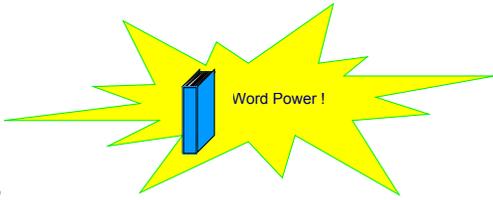
The Devil is sneaky. If he can get you to lie just a little bit you will fall into his trap.



Power Action !

Things you can do to please God.

1. **Don't be like the religious people in John chapter 8, who pretended to be Godly but were really liars.**
2. **Run to God when you sin and tell Him the truth.**
3. **Run to your parents and teachers when you make a mistake and tell them about it. Do not pretend to be real cool around your friends. Be real!**
4. **Read the Bible every day so you can be honest with yourself.**
5. **Read the Bible every day so you can be honest with yourself.**

**Jesus can turn your problems into blessings**Read **John 9:1-7** and **9:25**, and **9:35-38**
(Optional for upper grades, read the entire chapter)

Power Lesson : The Pharisees (called the Religious law keepers) asked Jesus why this man was blind when he was born. They asked if he sinned or his parents sinned; which was it that made him blind, they asked.

Jesus answered them in a funny way, he did not choose either one of their answers; but instead he said that this man's problem was there just so God could show how **He** could do His work in someone who has big problems.

Most people feel like if they have big problems that God does not love them, or they did something wrong to deserve being punished by God.

God does not punish by hurting people. The devil hurts people, but God heals.

Sin does cause problems. Jesus was not telling those people that sin does not cause problems, it does for sure. People have lived without God in sin for thousands of years and that has caused all kinds of sickness, disease, and big problems not only in our bodies and minds, but also in our families, schools and jobs.

When you live your life for Jesus, He may not keep all problems away from you, but He will give you the tools to turn your problems into blessings.

That is what Jesus was telling these people. He was going to show them that His power was much bigger than any problem. When Jesus died on the Cross, He took every problem with Him and paid the price for every single problem. We do not have to pay the price again.

Notice that Jesus gave this man something to do so that the man could obey God's Word. In verse 7 He told him to go wash the mud off his eyes in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed the Words that God spoke, and he was healed. First he was blind, but now he could see!!

What tools do we need to turn our problems into blessings?

- **First we need to read and hear God's Word** from the Bible a lot so that God can give us faith.
- **Next we need to obey God's Word.**
- **Then we need to pray.**
- **Then we need to trust God** to turn our problems into blessings - even if it takes a long, long time. Sometimes God tests us and makes us wait a long time to see if He can trust us.

Sometimes God wants to turn our problems into blessings in a different way than what we want. But His way is always better. We should trust Him.

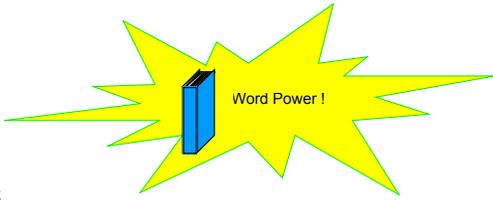
Look again at John 9:35-38. The blind man who was healed bowed down and worshipped Jesus, Who is God. We need to worship Jesus a lot, not only when we come to church, but every day.

We can worship Him by thanking Him, by telling Him how much we trust Him, by singing, by obeying Him or just by telling Him how much we love Him and praising Him.

After this man was healed, he gave his testimony to help other people. He told other people what Jesus did for him. He was not ashamed of Jesus. He was very thankful for Jesus and he did not mind telling people about Him. He even tried to help these other people around him who were giving him a hard time and criticizing him.

**Power Action !****Things you can do to please God.**

1. **Tell God that you trust Him to turn your problems into blessings.**
2. **Read or listen to God's Word every single day.**
3. **Obey God and His Word.**
4. **Worship God.**
5.
 - **Tell others that God is good and wants to help them too.**
 - **Tell them that God is not mad at them, even if they have been bad.**
 - **Tell them that Jesus took their sin and died for them.**
 - **Tell them that God wants to turn their problems into blessings.**

**Jesus is our Shepherd
We are His sheep.**Read **John 10:1-18**
(Optional for upper grades, read the entire chapter)

Power Lesson : In this chapter Jesus is using the picture story showing us as sheep and Him as the shepherd. Lets look at some of the things He was trying to tell us in the picture story.

Sheep are dumb animals. They are not like lions or wolves or bears or dogs or even horses. They cannot survive without a shepherd. They cannot feed themselves. Sheep have no way of protecting themselves against their enemies with help from their shepherd. Sheep go astray a lot. They get lost all the time.

There are good and bad shepherds. Good shepherds risk their lives for their sheep. They love their sheep. They fight off the wolves, bears and lions. They take their sheep to good pastures and lead them to clean waters to drink. They get rid of their bugs, trim their hair and keep them clean.

We are like sheep. Not that we are “dumb”, but when we try to live without God we are dumb. We do need a shepherd, and His name is Jesus. Most people feel like they can live their lives without having God lead them every day. They are WRONG ! The Bible said we were all like sheep that left home and got lost.

The Devil tried to become our shepherd. He knows we need a shepherd so he fools us and using sneaky ways to control us. He will not let us know that it is really him. He lies to us and makes us think that it is not really him.

Jesus is not only the Shepherd, but in this story He calls Himself the DOOR into the sheep pen. The sheep pen is where sheep are kept at night when they are traveling up into the mountains looking for green pastures for eating. Jesus is using this story to tell us that once we were in the Devil's family and he was our shepherd, but if we come through Jesus the REAL DOOR, then we can walk through that door right into God's family. When we are in God's family by making Jesus our Lord or boss, we can spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven.

Jesus said that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. How did we get into God's family, what is the DOOR we must walk through? It is the Cross of Jesus when He died and laid down His life for your sins and rose again so that you could go to heaven.

How did the shepherd get his sheep to come with him from the sheep pen? His sheep knew His voice and they would not follow the voice of a stranger.

In the morning when it was time for the shepherds to gather their sheep from the sheep pen, their sheep were all mixed in with sheep from other shepherds. They all spent the night in the same sheep pen (that is an outdoor hotel for sheep).

Now that we are in God's family that means that Jesus is our Lord, or boss or Shepherd. Right? Well only if you choose Him as your Shepherd.

How can we make sure that Jesus is really our Shepherd? Jesus will not force Himself on you. He will not bully you around like the Devil. So you must make Jesus your Shepherd on

purpose. HOW? How can you hear God's voice like a sheep hears his shepherd's voice?

It is different then hearing a human speak.

Jesus is our Shepherd through His Word and through the Holy Spirit Who lives inside of you. The more you read His Word in the Bible and obey what you read, the more you will learn to hear His voice. You get it little by little; first you read His Word and obey, then He speaks again, they you obey again. You do not hear Jesus in your ears, but you hear Him speak in “ears of your heart”. It is different then hearing a human speak.

Things you can do to please God.

1. **Read and obey His Word**
2. **Invite the Holy Spirit to take over your mind and body. Please him by being like Jesus to other people and being honest.**

The Book of John – Message Translation

Chapters 1-10

The Life-Light

1

1-2 The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.

3-5

Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.

6-8 There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

9-13

The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life he brings into Light. He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten.

14

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

15 John pointed him out and called, "This is the One! The One I told you was coming after me but in fact was ahead of me. He has always been ahead of me, has always had the first word."

16-18

We all live off his generous bounty, gift after gift after gift. We got the basics from Moses, and then this exuberant giving and receiving, This endless knowing and understanding— all this came through Jesus, the Messiah. No one has ever seen God, not so much as a glimpse. This one-of-a-kind God-Expression, who exists at the very heart of the Father, has made him plain as day.

Thunder in the Desert

19-20 When Jews from Jerusalem sent a group of priests and officials to ask John

who he was, he was completely honest. He didn't evade the question. He told the plain truth: "I am not the Messiah."

21 They pressed him, "Who, then? Elijah?"

"I am not."

"The Prophet?"

"No."

22 Exasperated, they said, "Who, then? We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something—anything!—about yourself."

23 "I'm thunder in the desert: 'Make the road straight for God!' I'm doing what the prophet Isaiah preached."

24-25 Those sent to question him were from the Pharisee party. Now they had a question of their own: "If you're neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?"

26-27 John answered, "I only baptize using water. A person you don't recognize has taken his stand in your midst. He comes after me, but he is not in second place to me. I'm not even worthy to hold his coat for him."

28 These conversations took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing at the time.

The God-Revealer

29-31 The very next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, "Here he is, God's Passover Lamb! He forgives the sins of the world! This is the man I've been talking about, 'the One who comes after me but is really ahead of me.' I knew nothing about who he was—only this: that my task has been to get Israel ready to recognize him as the God-Revealer. That is why I came here baptizing with water, giving you a good bath and scrubbing sins from your life so you can get a fresh start with God."

32-34 John clinched his witness with this: "I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. I repeat, I know nothing about him except this: The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize

with the Holy Spirit.’ That’s exactly what I saw happen, and I’m telling you, there’s no question about it: *This* is the Son of God.”

Come, See for Yourself

35-36 The next day John was back at his post with two disciples, who were watching. He looked up, saw Jesus walking nearby, and said, “Here he is, God’s Passover Lamb.”

37-38 The two disciples heard him and went after Jesus. Jesus looked over his shoulder and said to them, “What are you after?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

39 He replied, “Come along and see for yourself.”

They came, saw where he was living, and ended up staying with him for the day. It was late afternoon when this happened.

40-42 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John’s witness and followed Jesus. The first thing he did after finding where Jesus lived was find his own brother, Simon, telling him, “We’ve found the Messiah” (that is, “Christ”). He immediately led him to Jesus.

Jesus took one look up and said, “You’re John’s son, Simon? From now on your name is Cephas” (or Peter, which means “Rock”).

43-44 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. When he got there, he ran across Philip and said, “Come, follow me.” (Philip’s hometown was Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter.)

45-46 Philip went and found Nathanael and told him, “We’ve found the One Moses wrote of in the Law, the One preached by the prophets. It’s *Jesus*, Joseph’s son, the one from Nazareth!” Nathanael said, “Nazareth? You’ve got to be kidding.”

But Philip said, “Come, see for yourself.”

47 When Jesus saw him coming he said, “There’s a real Israelite, not a false bone in his body.”

48 Nathanael said, “Where did you get that idea? You don’t know me.”

Jesus answered, “One day, long before Philip called you here, I saw you under the fig tree.”

49 Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi! You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!”

50-51 Jesus said, “You’ve become a believer simply because I say I saw you one day sitting under the fig tree? You haven’t seen anything yet! Before this is over you’re going to see heaven open and God’s angels descending to the Son of Man and ascending again.”

John 2

The Message (MSG)

From Water to Wine

2 1-3 Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus’ mother told him, “They’re just about out of wine.”

4 Jesus said, “Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn’t my time. Don’t push me.”

5 She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, “Whatever he tells you, do it.”

6-7 Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, “Fill the pots with water.” And they filled them to the brim.

8 “Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host,” Jesus said, and they did.

9-10 When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn’t know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, “Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you’ve saved the best till now!”

11 This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum along with his mother, brothers, and disciples, and stayed several days.

Tear Down This Temple . . .

13-14 When the Passover Feast, celebrated each spring by the Jews, was about to take place, Jesus traveled up to Jerusalem. He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength.

15-17 Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, “Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a shopping mall!” That’s when his disciples remembered the Scripture, “Zeal for your house consumes me.”

18-19 But the Jews were upset. They asked, “What credentials can you present to justify this?” Jesus answered, “Tear down this Temple and in three days I’ll put it back together.”

20-22 They were indignant: “It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you’re going to rebuild it in three days?” But Jesus was talking about his body as the Temple. Later, after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this. They then put two and two together and believed both what was written in Scripture and what Jesus had said.

23-25 During the time he was in Jerusalem, those days of the Passover Feast, many people noticed the signs he was displaying and, seeing they pointed straight to God, entrusted their lives to him. But Jesus didn’t entrust his life to them. He knew them inside and out, knew how untrustworthy they were. He didn’t need any help in seeing right through them.

Born from Above

3 1-2 There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we all know you’re a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren’t in on it.”

3 Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to—to God’s kingdom.”

4 “How can anyone,” said Nicodemus, “be born who has already been born and grown up? You can’t re-enter your mother’s womb and be born again. What are you saying with this ‘born-from-above’ talk?”

5-6 Jesus said, “You’re not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the ‘wind-hovering-over-the-water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. When you look at a baby, it’s just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

7-8 “So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone ‘born from above’ by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”

9 Nicodemus asked, “What do you mean by this? How does this happen?”

10-12 Jesus said, “You’re a respected teacher of Israel and you don’t know these basics? Listen carefully. I’m speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don’t believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can’t see, the things of God?”

13-15 “No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.”

16-18 “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person’s failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

19-21 “This is the crisis we’re in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won’t come near it,

fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is.”

The Bridegroom’s Friend

22-26 After this conversation, Jesus went on with his disciples into the Judean countryside and relaxed with them there. He was also baptizing. At the same time, John was baptizing over at Aenon near Salim, where water was abundant. This was before John was thrown into jail. John’s disciples got into an argument with the establishment Jews over the nature of baptism. They came to John and said, “Rabbi, you know the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan? The one you authorized with your witness? Well, he’s now competing with us. He’s baptizing, too, and everyone’s going to him instead of us.”

27-29 John answered, “It’s not possible for a person to succeed—I’m talking about *eternal* success—without heaven’s help. You yourselves were there when I made it public that I was not the Messiah but simply the one sent ahead of him to get things ready. The one who gets the bride is, by definition, the bridegroom. And the bridegroom’s friend, his ‘best man’—that’s me—in place at his side where he can hear every word, is genuinely happy. How could he be jealous when he knows that the wedding is finished and the marriage is off to a good start?

29-30 “That’s why my cup is running over. This is the assigned moment for him to move into the center, while I slip off to the sidelines.

31-33 “The One who comes from above is head and shoulders over other messengers from God. The earthborn is earthbound and speaks earth language; the heavenborn is in a league of his own. He sets out the evidence of what he saw and heard in heaven. No one wants to deal with these facts. But anyone who examines this evidence will come to stake his life on this: that God himself is the truth.

34-36 “The One that God sent speaks God’s words. And don’t think he rations out the Spirit in bits and pieces. The Father loves the Son extravagantly. He turned everything over to him so he could give it away—a lavish distribution of gifts. That is why whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever! And that is also why the person who avoids and distrusts the Son is in the dark and doesn’t see life. All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that.”

John 4

The Message (MSG)

The Woman at the Well

4 1-3 Jesus realized that the Pharisees were keeping count of the baptisms that he and John performed (although his disciples, not Jesus, did the actual baptizing). They had posted the score that Jesus was ahead, turning him and John into rivals in the eyes of the people. So Jesus left the Judean countryside and went back to Galilee.

4-6 To get there, he had to pass through Samaria. He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

7-8 A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

9 The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

11-12 The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

13-14 Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

15 The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

16 He said, "Go call your husband and then come back."

17-18 "I have no husband," she said.

"That's nicely put: 'I have no husband.' You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough."

19-20 "Oh, so you're a prophet! Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship,

right?”

21-23 “Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God’s way of salvation is made available through the Jews. But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you’re called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

23-24 “It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly *themselves* before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.”

25 The woman said, “I don’t know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we’ll get the whole story.”

26 “I am he,” said Jesus. “You don’t have to wait any longer or look any further.”

27 Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn’t believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.

28-30 The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people, “Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?” And they went out to see for themselves.

It’s Harvest Time

31 In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, “Rabbi, eat. Aren’t you going to eat?”

32 He told them, “I have food to eat you know nothing about.”

33 The disciples were puzzled. “Who could have brought him food?”

34-35 Jesus said, “The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn’t you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I’m

telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what's right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It's harvest time!

36-38 “The Harvester isn't waiting. He's taking his pay, gathering in this grain that's ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. That's the truth of the saying, ‘This one sows, that one harvests.’ I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others.”

39-42 Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: “He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!” They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. They said to the woman, “We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!”

43-45 After the two days he left for Galilee. Now, Jesus knew well from experience that a prophet is not respected in the place where he grew up. So when he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, but only because they were impressed with what he had done in Jerusalem during the Passover Feast, not that they really had a clue about who he was or what he was up to.

46-48 Now he was back in Cana of Galilee, the place where he made the water into wine. Meanwhile in Capernaum, there was a certain official from the king's court whose son was sick. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and asked that he come down and heal his son, who was on the brink of death. Jesus put him off: “Unless you people are dazzled by a miracle, you refuse to believe.”

49 But the court official wouldn't be put off. “Come down! It's life or death for my son.”

50-51 Jesus simply replied, “Go home. Your son lives.”

The man believed the bare word Jesus spoke and headed home. On his way back, his servants intercepted him and announced, “Your son lives!”

52-53 He asked them what time he began to get better. They said, “The fever broke yesterday afternoon at one o'clock.” The father knew that that was the very moment Jesus had said, “Your son lives.”

53-54 That clinched it. Not only he but his entire household believed. This was

now the second sign Jesus gave after having come from Judea into Galilee.

Even on the Sabbath

5 1-6 Soon another Feast came around and Jesus was back in Jerusalem. Near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there was a pool, in Hebrew called *Bethesda*, with five alcoves. Hundreds of sick people—blind, crippled, paralyzed—were in these alcoves. One man had been an invalid there for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him stretched out by the pool and knew how long he had been there, he said, “Do you want to get well?”

7 The sick man said, “Sir, when the water is stirred, I don’t have anybody to put me in the pool. By the time I get there, somebody else is already in.”

8-9 Jesus said, “Get up, take your bedroll, start walking.” The man was healed on the spot. He picked up his bedroll and walked off.

9-10 That day happened to be the Sabbath. The Jews stopped the healed man and said, “It’s the Sabbath. You can’t carry your bedroll around. It’s against the rules.”

11 But he told them, “The man who made me well told me to. He said, ‘Take your bedroll and start walking.’”

12-13 They asked, “Who gave you the order to take it up and start walking?” But the healed man didn’t know, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd.

14 A little later Jesus found him in the Temple and said, “You look wonderful! You’re well! Don’t return to a sinning life or something worse might happen.”

15-16 The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. That is why the Jews were out to get Jesus—because he did this kind of thing on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus defended himself. “My Father is working straight through, even on the Sabbath. So am I.”

18 That really set them off. The Jews were now not only out to expose him; they were out to *kill* him. Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was calling God his own Father, putting himself on a level with God.

What the Father Does, the Son Does

19-20 So Jesus explained himself at length. “I’m telling you this straight. The Son can’t independently do a thing, only what he sees the Father doing. What the Father does, the Son does. The Father loves the Son and includes him in everything he is doing.

20-23 “But you haven’t seen the half of it yet, for in the same way that the Father raises the dead and creates life, so does the Son. The Son gives life to anyone he chooses. Neither he nor the Father shuts anyone out. The Father handed all authority to judge over to the Son so that the Son will be honored equally with the Father. Anyone who dishonors the Son, dishonors the Father, for it was the Father’s decision to put the Son in the place of honor.

24 “It’s urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has taken a giant step from the world of the dead to the world of the living.

25-27 “It’s urgent that you get this right: The time has arrived—I mean right now!—when dead men and women will hear the voice of the Son of God and, hearing, will come alive. Just as the Father has life in himself, he has conferred on the Son life in himself. And he has given him the authority, simply because he is the Son of Man, to decide and carry out matters of Judgment.

28-29 “Don’t act so surprised at all this. The time is coming when everyone dead and buried will hear his voice. Those who have lived the right way will walk out into a resurrection Life; those who have lived the wrong way, into a resurrection Judgment.

30-33 “I can’t do a solitary thing on my own: I listen, then I decide. You can trust my decision because I’m not out to get my own way but only to carry out orders. If I were simply speaking on my own account, it would be an empty, self-serving witness. But an independent witness confirms me, the most reliable Witness of all. Furthermore, you all saw and heard John, and he gave expert and reliable testimony about me, didn’t he?

34-38 “But my purpose is not to get your vote, and not to appeal to mere human testimony. I’m speaking to you this way so that you will be saved. John was a torch, blazing and bright, and you were glad enough to dance for an hour or so in his bright light. But the witness that really confirms me far exceeds John’s witness. It’s the work the Father gave me to complete. These very tasks, as I go about completing them, confirm that the Father, in fact, sent me. The Father who sent

me, confirmed me. And you missed it. You never heard his voice, you never saw his appearance. There is nothing left in your memory of his Message because you do not take his Messenger seriously.

39-40 “You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about *me*! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want.

41-44 “I’m not interested in crowd approval. And do you know why? Because I know you and your crowds. I know that love, especially God’s love, is not on your working agenda. I came with the authority of my Father, and you either dismiss me or avoid me. If another came, acting self-important, you would welcome him with open arms. How do you expect to get anywhere with God when you spend all your time jockeying for position with each other, ranking your rivals and ignoring God?

45-47 “But don’t think I’m going to accuse you before my Father. Moses, in whom you put so much stock, is your accuser. If you believed, really believed, what Moses said, you would believe me. He wrote of me. If you won’t take seriously what *he* wrote, how can I expect you to take seriously what *I* speak?”

Bread and Fish for All

6 1-4 After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (some call it Tiberias). A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews.

5-6 When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy bread to feed these people?” He said this to stretch Philip’s faith. He already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered, “Two hundred silver pieces wouldn’t be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece.”

8-9 One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, “There’s a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that’s a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this.”

10-11 Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took

the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted.

12-13 When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted.” They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.

14-15 The people realized that God was at work among them in what Jesus had just done. They said, “This is the Prophet for sure, God’s Prophet right here in Galilee!” Jesus saw that in their enthusiasm, they were about to grab him and make him king, so he slipped off and went back up the mountain to be by himself.

16-21 In the evening his disciples went down to the sea, got in the boat, and headed back across the water to Capernaum. It had grown quite dark and Jesus had not yet returned. A huge wind blew up, churning the sea. They were maybe three or four miles out when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, quite near the boat. They were scared senseless, but he reassured them, “It’s me. It’s all right. Don’t be afraid.” So they took him on board. In no time they reached land—the exact spot they were headed to.

22-24 The next day the crowd that was left behind realized that there had been only one boat, and that Jesus had not gotten into it with his disciples. They had seen them go off without him. By now boats from Tiberias had pulled up near where they had eaten the bread blessed by the Master. So when the crowd realized he was gone and wasn’t coming back, they piled into the Tiberias boats and headed for Capernaum, looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him back across the sea, they said, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

26 Jesus answered, “You’ve come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs—and for free.

The Bread of Life

27 “Don’t waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.”

28 To that they said, “Well, what do we do then to get in on God’s works?”

29 Jesus said, “Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of a

commitment gets you in on God's works."

30-31 They waffled: "Why don't you give us a clue about who you are, just a hint of what's going on? When we see what's up, we'll commit ourselves. Show us what you can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32-33 Jesus responded, "The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the *real* bread. The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world."

34 They jumped at that: "Master, give us this bread, now and forever!"

35-38 Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. I have told you this explicitly because even though you have seen me in action, you don't really believe me. Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don't let go. I came down from heaven not to follow my own whim but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me.

39-40 "This, in a nutshell, is that will: that everything handed over to me by the Father be completed—not a single detail missed—and at the wrap-up of time I have everything and everyone put together, upright and whole. This is what my Father wants: that anyone who sees the Son and trusts who he is and what he does and then aligns with him will enter *real life, eternal life*. My part is to put them on their feet alive and whole at the completion of time."

41-42 At this, because he said, "I am the Bread that came down from heaven," the Jews started arguing over him: "Isn't this the son of Joseph? Don't we know his father? Don't we know his mother? How can he now say, 'I came down out of heaven' and expect anyone to believe him?"

43-46 Jesus said, "Don't bicker among yourselves over me. You're not in charge here. The Father who sent me is in charge. He draws people to me—that's the only way you'll ever come. Only then do I do my work, putting people together, setting them on their feet, ready for the End. This is what the prophets meant when they wrote, 'And then they will all be personally taught by God.' Anyone who has spent any time at all listening to the Father, really listening and therefore learning, comes to me to be taught personally—to see it with his own eyes, hear it with his own ears, from me, since I have it firsthand from the Father. No one has seen the Father except the One who has his Being alongside the Father—and you can see *me*.

47-51 “I’m telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life, eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the desert and died. But now here is Bread that truly comes down out of heaven. Anyone eating this Bread will not die, ever. I am the Bread—living Bread!—who came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this Bread will live—and forever! The Bread that I present to the world so that it can eat and live is myself, this flesh-and-blood self.”

52 At this, the Jews started fighting among themselves: “How can this man serve up his flesh for a meal?”

53-58 But Jesus didn’t give an inch. “Only insofar as you eat and drink flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, do you have life within you. The one who brings a hearty appetite to this eating and drinking has eternal life and will be fit and ready for the Final Day. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me. This is the Bread from heaven. Your ancestors ate bread and later died. Whoever eats this Bread will live always.”

59 He said these things while teaching in the meeting place in Capernaum.

Too Tough to Swallow

60 Many among his disciples heard this and said, “This is tough teaching, too tough to swallow.”

61-65 Jesus sensed that his disciples were having a hard time with this and said, “Does this throw you completely? What would happen if you saw the Son of Man ascending to where he came from? The Spirit can make life. Sheer muscle and willpower don’t make anything happen. Every word I’ve spoken to you is a Spirit-word, and so it is life-making. But some of you are resisting, refusing to have any part in this.” (Jesus knew from the start that some weren’t going to risk themselves with him. He knew also who would betray him.) He went on to say, “This is why I told you earlier that no one is capable of coming to me on his own. You get to me only as a gift from the Father.”

66-67 After this a lot of his disciples left. They no longer wanted to be associated with him. Then Jesus gave the Twelve their chance: “Do you also want to leave?”

68-69 Peter replied, “Master, to whom would we go? You have the words of real life, eternal life. We’ve already committed ourselves, confident that you are the

Holy One of God.”

70-71 Jesus responded, “Haven’t I handpicked you, the Twelve? Still, one of you is a devil!” He was referring to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. This man—one from the Twelve!—was even then getting ready to betray him.

7 1-2 Later Jesus was going about his business in Galilee. He didn’t want to travel in Judea because the Jews there were looking for a chance to kill him. It was near the time of Tabernacles, a feast observed annually by the Jews.

3-5 His brothers said, “Why don’t you leave here and go up to the Feast so your disciples can get a good look at the works you do? No one who intends to be publicly known does everything behind the scenes. If you’re serious about what you are doing, come out in the open and show the world.” His brothers were pushing him like this because they didn’t believe in him either.

6-8 Jesus came back at them, “Don’t crowd me. This isn’t my time. It’s your time—it’s *always* your time; you have nothing to lose. The world has nothing against you, but it’s up in arms against me. It’s against me because I expose the evil behind its pretensions. You go ahead, go up to the Feast. Don’t wait for me. I’m not ready. It’s not the right time for me.”

9-11 He said this and stayed on in Galilee. But later, after his family had gone up to the Feast, he also went. But he kept out of the way, careful not to draw attention to himself. The Jews were already out looking for him, asking around, “Where is that man?”

12-13 There was a lot of contentious talk about him circulating through the crowds. Some were saying, “He’s a good man.” But others said, “Not so. He’s selling snake oil.” This kind of talk went on in guarded whispers because of the intimidating Jewish leaders.

Could It Be the Messiah?

14-15 With the Feast already half over, Jesus showed up in the Temple, teaching. The Jews were impressed, but puzzled: “How does he know so much without being schooled?”

16-19 Jesus said, “I didn’t make this up. What I teach comes from the One who sent me. Anyone who wants to do his will can test this teaching and know whether it’s from God or whether I’m making it up. A person making things up tries to make himself look good. But someone trying to honor the one who sent him sticks

to the facts and doesn't tamper with reality. It was Moses, wasn't it, who gave you God's Law? But none of you are living it. So why are you trying to kill me?"

20 The crowd said, "You're crazy! Who's trying to kill you? You're demon-possessed."

21-24 Jesus said, "I did one miraculous thing a few months ago, and you're still standing around getting all upset, wondering what I'm up to. Moses prescribed circumcision—originally it came not from Moses but from his ancestors—and so you circumcise a man, dealing with one part of his body, even if it's the Sabbath. You do this in order to preserve one item in the Law of Moses. So why are you upset with me because I made a man's whole body well on the Sabbath? Don't be nitpickers; use your head—and heart!—to discern what is right, to test what is authentically right."

25-27 That's when some of the people of Jerusalem said, "Isn't this the one they were out to kill? And here he is out in the open, saying whatever he pleases, and no one is stopping him. Could it be that the rulers know that he is, in fact, the Messiah? And yet we know where this man came from. The Messiah is going to come out of nowhere. Nobody is going to know where he comes from."

28-29 That provoked Jesus, who was teaching in the Temple, to cry out, "Yes, you think you know me and where I'm from, but that's not where I'm from. I didn't set myself up in business. My true origin is in the One who sent me, and you don't know him at all. I come from him—that's how I know him. He sent me here."

30-31 They were looking for a way to arrest him, but not a hand was laid on him because it wasn't yet God's time. Many from the crowd committed themselves in faith to him, saying, "Will the Messiah, when he comes, provide better or more convincing evidence than this?"

32-34 The Pharisees, alarmed at this seditious undertow going through the crowd, teamed up with the high priests and sent their police to arrest him. Jesus rebuffed them: "I am with you only a short time. Then I go on to the One who sent me. You will look for me, but you won't find me. Where I am, you can't come."

35-36 The Jews put their heads together. "Where do you think he is going that we won't be able to find him? Do you think he is about to travel to the Greek world to teach the Jews? What is he talking about, anyway: 'You will look for me, but you won't find me,' and 'Where I am, you can't come'?"

37-39 On the final and climactic day of the Feast, Jesus took his stand. He cried

out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says.” (He said this in regard to the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were about to receive. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.)

40-44 Those in the crowd who heard these words were saying, “This has to be the Prophet.” Others said, “He is the Messiah!” But others were saying, “The Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee, does he? Don’t the Scriptures tell us that the Messiah comes from David’s line and from Bethlehem, David’s village?” So there was a split in the crowd over him. Some went so far as wanting to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him.

45 That’s when the Temple police reported back to the high priests and Pharisees, who demanded, “Why didn’t you bring him with you?”

46 The police answered, “Have you heard the way he talks? We’ve never heard anyone speak like this man.”

47-49 The Pharisees said, “Are you carried away like the rest of the rabble? You don’t see any of the leaders believing in him, do you? Or any from the Pharisees? It’s only this crowd ignorant of God’s Law, that is taken in by him—and damned.”

50-51 Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus earlier and was both a ruler and a Pharisee, spoke up. “Does our Law decide about a man’s guilt without first listening to him and finding out what he is doing?”

52-53 But they cut him off. “Are you also campaigning for the Galilean? Examine the evidence. See if any prophet ever comes from Galilee.”

Then they all went home.

To Throw the Stone

8 1-2 Jesus went across to Mount Olives, but he was soon back in the Temple again. Swarms of people came to him. He sat down and taught them.

3-6 The religion scholars and Pharisees led in a woman who had been caught in an act of adultery. They stood her in plain sight of everyone and said, “Teacher, this woman was caught red-handed in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone such persons. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against him.

6-8 Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the dirt. They kept at him, badgering him. He straightened up and said, “The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone.” Bending down again, he wrote some more in the dirt.

9-10 Hearing that, they walked away, one after another, beginning with the oldest. The woman was left alone. Jesus stood up and spoke to her. “Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?”

11 “No one, Master.”

“Neither do I,” said Jesus. “Go on your way. From now on, don’t sin.”

You’re Missing God in All This

12 Jesus once again addressed them: “I am the world’s Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in.”

13 The Pharisees objected, “All we have is your word on this. We need more than this to go on.”

14-18 Jesus replied, “You’re right that you only have my word. But you can depend on it being true. I know where I’ve come from and where I go next. You don’t know where I’m from or where I’m headed. You decide according to what you can see and touch. I don’t make judgments like that. But even if I did, my judgment would be true because I wouldn’t make it out of the narrowness of my experience but in the largeness of the One who sent me, the Father. That fulfills the conditions set down in God’s Law: that you can count on the testimony of two witnesses. And that is what you have: You have my word and you have the word of the Father who sent me.”

19 They said, “Where is this so-called Father of yours?”

Jesus said, “You’re looking right at me and you don’t see me. How do you expect to see the Father? If you knew me, you would at the same time know the Father.”

20 He gave this speech in the Treasury while teaching in the Temple. No one arrested him because his time wasn’t yet up.

21 Then he went over the same ground again. “I’m leaving and you are going to look for me, but you’re missing God in this and are headed for a dead end. There is no way you can come with me.”

22 The Jews said, “So, is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by ‘You can’t come with me’?”

23-24 Jesus said, “You’re tied down to the mundane; I’m in touch with what is beyond your horizons. You live in terms of what you see and touch. I’m living on other terms. I told you that you were missing God in all this. You’re at a dead end. If you won’t believe I am who I say I am, you’re at the dead end of sins. You’re missing God in your lives.”

25-26 They said to him, “Just who are you anyway?”

Jesus said, “What I’ve said from the start. I have so many things to say that concern you, judgments to make that affect you, but if you don’t accept the trustworthiness of the One who commanded my words and acts, none of it matters. That is who you are questioning—not me but the One who sent me.”

27-29 They still didn’t get it, didn’t realize that he was referring to the Father. So Jesus tried again. “When you raise up the Son of Man, then you will know who I am—that I’m not making this up, but speaking only what the Father taught me. The One who sent me stays with me. He doesn’t abandon me. He sees how much joy I take in pleasing him.”

30 When he put it in these terms, many people decided to believe.

If the Son Sets You Free

31-32 Then Jesus turned to the Jews who had claimed to believe in him. “If you stick with this, living out what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.”

33 Surprised, they said, “But we’re descendants of Abraham. We’ve never been slaves to anyone. How can you say, ‘The truth will free you’?”

34-38 Jesus said, “I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can’t come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through. I know you are Abraham’s descendants. But I also know that you are trying to kill me because my message hasn’t yet penetrated your thick skulls. I’m talking about things I have seen while keeping company with the Father, and you just go on doing what you have heard from your father.”

39-41 They were indignant. “Our father is Abraham!”

Jesus said, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would have been doing the things Abraham did. And yet here you are trying to kill me, a man who has spoken to you the truth he got straight from God! Abraham never did that sort of thing. You persist in repeating the works of your father.”

They said, “We’re not bastards. We have a legitimate father: the one and only God.”

42-47 “If God were your father,” said Jesus, “you would love me, for I came from God and arrived here. I didn’t come on my own. He sent me. Why can’t you understand one word I say? Here’s why: You can’t handle it. You’re from your father, the Devil, and all you want to do is please him. He was a killer from the very start. He couldn’t stand the truth because there wasn’t a shred of truth in him. When the Liar speaks, he makes it up out of his lying nature and fills the world with lies. I arrive on the scene, tell you the plain truth, and you refuse to have a thing to do with me. Can any one of you convict me of a single misleading word, a single sinful act? But if I’m telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? Anyone on God’s side listens to God’s words. This is why you’re not listening—because you’re not on God’s side.”

I Am Who I Am

48 The Jews then said, “That clinches it. We were right all along when we called you a Samaritan and said you were crazy—demon-possessed!”

49-51 Jesus said, “I’m not crazy. I simply honor my Father, while you dishonor me. I am not trying to get anything for myself. God intends something gloriously grand here and is making the decisions that will bring it about. I say this with absolute confidence. If you practice what I’m telling you, you’ll never have to look death in the face.”

52-53 At this point the Jews said, “Now we *know* you’re crazy. Abraham died. The prophets died. And you show up saying, ‘If you practice what I’m telling you, you’ll never have to face death, not even a taste.’ Are you greater than Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you think you are!”

54-56 Jesus said, “If I turned the spotlight on myself, it wouldn’t amount to anything. But my Father, the same One you say is your Father, put me here at this time and place of splendor. You haven’t recognized him in this. But I have. If I, in false modesty, said I didn’t know what was going on, I would be as much of a liar

as you are. But I do know, and I am doing what he says. Abraham—your ‘father’—with jubilant faith looked down the corridors of history and saw my day coming. He saw it and cheered.”

57 The Jews said, “You’re not even fifty years old—and Abraham saw you?”

58 “Believe me,” said Jesus, “*I am who I am* long before Abraham was anything.”

59 That did it—pushed them over the edge. They picked up rocks to throw at him. But Jesus slipped away, getting out of the Temple.

True Blindness

9 1-2 Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?”

3-5 Jesus said, “You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world’s Light.”

6-7 He said this and then spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man’s eyes, and said, “Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “Sent”). The man went and washed—and saw.

8 Soon the town was buzzing. His relatives and those who year after year had seen him as a blind man begging were saying, “Why, isn’t this the man we knew, who sat here and begged?”

9 Others said, “It’s him all right!”

But others objected, “It’s not the same man at all. It just looks like him.”

He said, “It’s me, the very one.”

10 They said, “How did your eyes get opened?”

11 “A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ I did what he said. When I washed, I saw.”

12 “So where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

13-15 They marched the man to the Pharisees. This day when Jesus made the paste and healed his blindness was the Sabbath. The Pharisees grilled him again on how he had come to see. He said, “He put a clay paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.”

16 Some of the Pharisees said, “Obviously, this man can’t be from God. He doesn’t keep the Sabbath.”

Others countered, “How can a bad man do miraculous, God-revealing things like this?” There was a split in their ranks.

17 They came back at the blind man, “You’re the expert. He opened *your* eyes. What do you say about him?”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

18-19 The Jews didn’t believe it, didn’t believe the man was blind to begin with. So they called the parents of the man now bright-eyed with sight. They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? So how is it that he now sees?”

20-23 His parents said, “We know he is our son, and we know he was born blind. But we don’t know how he came to see—haven’t a clue about who opened his eyes. Why don’t you ask him? He’s a grown man and can speak for himself.” (His parents were talking like this because they were intimidated by the Jewish leaders, who had already decided that anyone who took a stand that this was the Messiah would be kicked out of the meeting place. That’s why his parents said, “Ask him. He’s a grown man.”)

24 They called the man back a second time—the man who had been blind—and told him, “Give credit to God. We know this man is an impostor.”

25 He replied, “I know nothing about that one way or the other. But I know one thing for sure: I was blind . . . I now see.”

26 They said, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

27 “I’ve told you over and over and you haven’t listened. Why do you want to hear it again? Are you so eager to become his disciples?”

28-29 With that they jumped all over him. “*You* might be a disciple of that man, but we’re disciples of Moses. We know for sure that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this man even comes from.”

30-33 The man replied, “This is amazing! You claim to know nothing about him, but the fact is, he opened my eyes! It’s well known that God isn’t at the beck and call of sinners, but listens carefully to anyone who lives in reverence and does his will. That someone opened the eyes of a man born blind has never been heard of—ever. If this man didn’t come from God, he wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

34 They said, “You’re nothing but dirt! How dare you take that tone with us!” Then they threw him out in the street.

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and went and found him. He asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

36 The man said, “Point him out to me, sir, so that I can believe in him.”

37 Jesus said, “You’re looking right at him. Don’t you recognize my voice?”

38 “Master, I believe,” the man said, and worshiped him.

39 Jesus then said, “I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind.”

40 Some Pharisees overheard him and said, “Does that mean you’re calling us blind?”

41 Jesus said, “If you were really blind, you would be blameless, but since you claim to see everything so well, you’re accountable for every fault and failure.”

He Calls His Sheep by Name

10 1-5 “Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”

6-10 Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

11-13 “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He’s only in it for the money. The sheep don’t matter to him.

14-18 “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They’ll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father.”

19-21 This kind of talk caused another split in the Jewish ranks. A lot of them were saying, “He’s crazy, a maniac—out of his head completely. Why bother listening to him?” But others weren’t so sure: “These aren’t the words of a crazy man. Can a ‘maniac’ open blind eyes?”

22-24 They were celebrating Hanukkah just then in Jerusalem. It was winter. Jesus was strolling in the Temple across Solomon’s Porch. The Jews, circling him, said, “How long are you going to keep us guessing? If you’re the Messiah, tell us straight out.”

25-30 Jesus answered, “I told you, but you don’t believe. Everything I have done has been authorized by my Father, actions that speak louder than words. You don’t believe because you’re not my sheep. My sheep recognize my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them real and eternal life. They are protected from the Destroyer for good. No one can steal them from out of my hand. The Father who put them under my care is so much greater than the Destroyer and Thief. No one could ever get them away from him. I and the Father are one heart and mind.”

31-32 Again the Jews picked up rocks to throw at him. Jesus said, “I have made a present to you from the Father of a great many good actions. For which of these acts do you stone me?”

33 The Jews said, “We’re not stoning you for anything good you did, but for what you said—this blasphemy of calling yourself God.”

34-38 Jesus said, “I’m only quoting your inspired Scriptures, where God said, ‘I tell you—you are gods.’ If God called your ancestors ‘gods’—and Scripture doesn’t lie—why do you yell, ‘Blasphemer! Blasphemer!’ at the unique One the Father consecrated and sent into the world, just because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I don’t do the things my Father does, well and good; don’t believe me. But if I am doing them, put aside for a moment what you hear me say about myself and just take the evidence of the actions that are right before your eyes. Then perhaps things will come together for you, and you’ll see that not only are we doing the same thing, we *are* the same—Father and Son. He is in me; I am in him.”

39-42 They tried yet again to arrest him, but he slipped through their fingers. He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and stayed there. A lot of people followed him over. They were saying, “John did no miracles, but everything he said about this man has come true.” Many believed in him then and there.

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