

Slide Children's Moment

LOOKING FOR SIGNS

Theme: Jesus is the living bread.

Scripture: Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 NIV)



When we travel around our town we see signs that tell us what we should or should not do. I have some signs that you probably see every day. Let's see how many of them you know.

Slide What do you think the first sign tells us? Right! It tells us that there is a school zone ahead and we should drive slowly and watch for children.

Slide How about the second sign? You are right again. We are to stop, before we can travel on.

Slide What does the third sign mean? Does it mean no parking or no passing? That's right. It means no parking. If you don't know what this sign means, you just might get a parking ticket.

Slide Now, how about the fourth sign? That is a sign that we should all obey. **NO SMOKING!**

Our lesson today is about signs of a different kind. It is a story about some people who were looking for a sign that would prove to them that Jesus had been sent from God. Do you remember the story about Jesus feeding five thousand people

with just five loaves of bread and two fish? This story is found in the Gospel of John chapter 3. **Slide** As you might imagine, that made Jesus very popular with the people, so when the crowd realized that Jesus and his disciples had left, they went looking for him. They found Him way over on the other side of the lake. When they found Him, they asked Him, "Teacher, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered them, "You came looking for me not because you saw God in My actions but because I fed you. You shouldn't be so concerned about things like food. Instead, you should be seeking the eternal life that I can give you."

The people wanted proof. "Show us a miraculous **sign** if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, Moses gave our ancestors bread from heaven to eat when they were in the wilderness. Can you do that?"

Jesus answered them, "The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Give us that bread! Give it to us every day," the people said.

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Some people today are still asking for some **special sign** that will prove that Jesus was sent from God. God has given us **all the signs** we need right here in the Bible. All God wants is for us to believe in the One He sent.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son, the Bread of Life. We don't need a sign, we believe in your Holy Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Slide Signs

Open in Prayer

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What is the greatest spiritual need in your life? Although I have a number of spiritual needs, the greatest for me, is to know more of the Word of God, so that I will know God better. I am finally at the stage of knowing enough of the Bible to know how much more there is to know. The more I know of God's Word the more I realize I need more of it for it is inexhaustible and is ever nourishing. Here is a simple truth the world does not understand, many churches do not understand and many of those who call themselves Christian do not understand – NO one ever understands spiritual truths apart from the Bible and therefore, no one can deepen their knowledge of God by any other means. Oh, there are some who think they can know God by human reason, but reason is a dead-end road spiritually. It has always been the great minds of men exercising their intellectual power apart from the Word of God that has created the greatest heresies. Those who follow these reasoning's of man follow them to damnation. The Mormons say they knew their religion is true because of the "inner voice" they hear or the feeling in their "bosom", the voice in no more than the expression of their inner desires to be in control and have God serve them. Many think spiritual truths can be verified by supernatural events or miracles but many of these signs are done to promote men – not God. The Bible teaches that even miracles and signs will not lead men and women to understand and receive God's truth unless they are brought to spiritual life by the Holy Spirit and gain spiritual wisdom to understand

the Word of God. **Slide** Jesus said it clearly in story of *The Rich Man and Lazarus*,
19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen,
joyously living in splendor every day. ²⁰ And a poor man named Lazarus was laid
at his gate, covered with sores, ²¹ and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which
were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and
licking his sores. ²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to
Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades he
lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his
bosom. ²⁴ And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and
send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my
tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember
that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad
things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides
all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish
to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over
from there to us.’ ²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my
father’s house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so
that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹ But Abraham said, ‘They
have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰ But he said, ‘No, father
Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ ³¹ But he
said to him, **Slide** **‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not
be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’**” (Luke 16:19-31 NASB)

Today, it is the same, many will not listen – even if Jesus who has risen from the
dead appeared to them, and yet, Jesus is here if they would only listen and look.
Simply put there is no knowledge of God apart from Jesus Christ and there is no

knowledge of Jesus Christ apart from the regeneration by the Holy Spirit and there is no knowledge of these apart from the Bible.

This truth is illustrated for us in the story, which is the focus of our study this morning. We saw in our study last week that Jesus had just performed a great “sign” by driving out of the Temple all those who were selling and bartering **“making My Father’s house a place of business.”** Jesus fulfilled Psalm 69:9, **Slide** **“For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.”** **Blank** After Jesus had cleansed the Temple they approached Him asking, **“What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?”** What further sign could Jesus give at this time? There was only one. They rejected it also because of their unwillingness to evaluate Jesus’ ministry in the light of the scriptures. Jesus answered them by referring to His death and resurrection when He responded, **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”** At this time because of the people’s spiritual blindness no one understood. The Jewish rulers never understood and the disciples only gained understanding because of the light of biblical revelation.

The Jewish leaders reaction is a great example of the attempts of men to understand spiritual things when they have NOT had their minds and souls illuminated by the scriptures. Learned men, no matter how religious, will end up seeing what they want on a physical level. Paul said it well to the Romans, **Slide** **“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”** (Romans 1:21 NASB) This is exactly what took place when Jesus first spoke spiritual words to Nicodemus, who was one of the rulers of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night, showing at this point he was part of the establishment and

did not want to be seen with this young Rabbi that was creating a stir wherever He went. Nicodemus said, **Slide** “We (meaning the leaders as a group) know You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2 NKJ) Jesus responds, **Slide** “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3 NKJ) Nic does not get it for Jesus is talking spiritually and Nic is thinking as the world thinks. As Nic tries to comprehend his focus is on physical conception, pregnancy and birth – he just cannot get it. **Blank**

Before we sit back and say it is always the way with the unchurched, we only have to look a little farther in John to see the disciples, who were disciplined by none other than Jesus, are stuck in the world when they return from the nearby village where they bought food for lunch and find Jesus sitting at the well speaking to a Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. After Jesus talks with the woman she leaves her waterpot at the well and goes to tell the people about Jesus. The disciples then urge Jesus to eat some lunch and Jesus responds, **Slide** “I have food to eat which you do not know.” (John 4:32 NKJ) The disciples seeing the physical and not the spiritual ask, “Hey, who brought Jesus lunch while we were gone?” **Blank** Until one is enlighten spiritually by the Holy Spirit and Scriptures they are locked into the logic of the world. So when Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jewish leaders, who were no longer spiritual leaders seeking to grow closer to God and no longer pursued God spiritually and they did not have the wisdom to ask Jesus, “What are you referring to?” Instead they took the worldview and assumed Jesus spoke of Herod’s Temple, so they asked, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” To be honest, I do not believe any one understood what Jesus was saying because

they did not try to understand it based on biblical revelation found in the Old Testament. This was not the only miracle or sign performed by Jesus among the throngs of people in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus did a variety of unspecified signs as is referred to in verse 23, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, **observing His signs which He was doing.**” The people followed their leaders and as we have already seen that the Jewish leaders had not been listening to what the scriptures taught for some time. So they were not ready to listen to Jesus either. The Bible of God speaks to both the minds and hearts of men, but because they did not hear God in the scriptures, neither did they hear God when He spoke to them face-to-face. I do not believe the leaders were asking for a sign, but what they were doing in their worldly fashion was to express their anger with Jesus and His actions. They wanted to know what right Jesus had in interfering with their enterprise and money making. Men and women today are much the same as in the time of Jesus – God speaks, but they do not listen or they are not listening well. People are so predisposed to their desired outcome that anything that interferes makes them either privately or more opening angry. They are mad at God for not conforming to their plans. Are you bitter or angry at your life because it has not turned according to your desires? This is one of the purposes for church - to help people learn to see things from God’s point of view. God’s point of view, which is the only valid one – is revealed to us in the scriptures.

This is another reason the temple leaders did not want to hear what Jesus had to say was because they were no longer were interested in God’s point of view, but their own plans. How absurd for Jesus to say the temple would be destroyed. Herod began the Temple in about 20 BC. It was now 26 AD and was still being worked on. It was not completed until 63 AD only 7 years before General Titus

would tear it down to the last stone. Verse 21 makes clear what Jesus was referring to, we read, [“But He was speaking of the temple of His body.”](#) The temple of His body would be in the grave for 3 days and then would rise again to eternal life. I believe Jesus was also conveying another message with His statement about the temple. Jesus was pointing out that the time of the man-made temple in Jerusalem was waning. The temporary sacrifices being offered at the temple was coming to an end and would be replaced by spiritual worship in the living temple of each believer and the atonement that Jesus would offer was permanent or eternal. The history of the tabernacle and then the temple provides a great illustration of the futility of man trying to identify buildings with true worship instead of people worshipping the living God. Judaism would not continue for long as the center of God’s attention – His attention would be on offering all people salvation through Christ. So, again this would not have been what the temple leadership would want to hear.

How about you, are we ready to listen to what God says concerning His plan for your lives – some lives great and some small by man’s standards, some wealthy and some poor? No matter what station in life God always begins changing a person’s heart by making them aware of their need for Him. God shows us our sin and allows us to begin to see our rebellious hearts for what they truly are. This process can be very uncomfortable and some will quit reading the Bible and stop praying – they do not want to be exposed for the sinner they are. It is like having to clean out a deep wound to remove the poison so the wound will scab over and heal. As God scrubs away the layers of sin and filth in our lives and the healing process begins, God then replaces the pain with His grace and love and peace this world does not understand.

I remember as the Lord was working on me and changing me – oh, the pain to see what a poor husband and father I had been. How inflated my ego was. Several men told me if I accepted Jesus my life would be filled with great love and peace. They failed to tell me about the open-heart surgery that had to take place first. During this time I can remember not wanting to hear God any more and at times I stopped listening. I must have kept on listening at least some and my desire for God grew. No promise is made in the Bible to those who partly listen, but only to those who hear and give their lives fully to Christ. I remember my grandmother often accusing my grandfather of being conveniently deaf when it suited him. But there is no such thing as being conveniently deaf with God – one either shuts God out or hears His calling, bringing one from spiritual dead into spiritual life.

People will not believe in Christ because their minds are filled with all the wrong things given to them by the world. At retreats we often like to hear of what I call “bad boy testimonies” and how God miraculously turned around a horrible person. This is my testimony, but the testimony I wish I had is that I was raised in a godly home by believing parents who taught me from a young age the precepts of our most precious faith. And that because of being taught the scriptures - I made only a few mistakes and came to know Christ at an early age. I know without a doubt I am forgiven and I know Christ love for me is more than I can imagine. But like Christ’s scared hands I carry scars that although they are healed. However, the scars continue as reminders of the hurt I did in my own life as well as to others. At some point Christians have to take seriously that almost everything this world promotes is anti-Christian and we, as believers, must not be pulled into the world’s stream of flowing filth. Those who have minds filled with the things of the world, like the Jewish leaders will not hear Jesus. It is God who changes hearts and souls, but it is you and me that God has chosen to use to

share the Gospel of Christ with those who are lost in this world of turmoil. For each of us - we are to be actively **Slide** “...destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB). For those God is calling us to share the Gospel of Christ with we have this knowledge that **Slide** “for our gospel *does* not come to *others* in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” (1 Thessalonians 1:5 NASB) The gospel is not only living in Christ, but in each believer who is indwelt with the Holy Spirit and the gospel that lives in us is to be shared with others. This is probably a good point to end on, but I would like to make two last observations. **Blank**

Slide I will deal with the second, let me read verses 23 to 25 the closing paragraph of chapter 2, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, **many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.**” Unlike the Jewish leaders there were those who God was calling and they believed in Jesus by what He taught and the miracles and signs He did. However we continue in verse 24 and 25, “But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. Jesus as God knows the hearts of men and not all who called Him Lord were sincere. **Slide** In Matthew Jesus said, “**Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’** **Slide** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ (Matthew 7:22-23 NASB) Just because someone calls themselves Christian, unfortunately does not mean they are. **Blank** This is why we observe

the “Fruit of the Spirit” in someone’s life before we allow them to lead. There are wolves in sheep’s clothing in many churches and they have caused much havoc. Jesus knew men who called themselves spiritual and claimed to be called of God would put Him to death. And so it is today.

Now let me back up and make my last observation in closing. Most of this short story revolves around the rulers who did not want to hear and who were no longer living spiritual lives focused on God. But they were not the only ones in the story. There were also the disciples. At this point in time they were a small group, mostly fishermen and would have been considered unlearned in comparison to the Jewish rulers. One reason they may only be mentioned in a small way is that they had no reputation in the world as yet. But they knew some of the scriptures and were learning more every day they spent with Jesus. I believe even at this early stage Jesus was awaking them to evaluate and interpret the world by the scriptures. Had you noticed that this passage begins with verse 17 saying, “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.’ ” They remembered Psalm 69:9 and they knew they had seen the fulfillment of scripture. Then later in verse 22 we read, “So when He was raised from the dead, **Slide** His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” Here the disciples understood later as the result of knowing and growing in the knowledge of the scriptures. Everything Jesus taught was from God the Father and it was all scripture – so the disciples spiritual knowledge was all through scripture. It took Jesus 3 years of discipling and teaching for these men to become the pillars of the Christian faith and unwavering in their faith and loyalty to Christ as their God, their Lord and their Savior. How are you and I doing? Are we allowing God to speak to us through His written Word and His living Word and by the living Spirit?

Or are we like so many trying to puzzle out the meaning of life and God on our own human level? God is the Creator and we are His creation – the Bible is clear we will only know more and more of Him by studying the very words He gave us in His Bible, prayerfully listening to Him and heeding His Spirit that lives in us and we need to recognize our need to be consistently spending time with God in the Bible.

May todays message spur you on in both the hard and good times to have a passion for God and the study of His Word.