



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

**God comes first.** That's the lesson of Genesis 1 and 2...God came first with the Creation of all we know. That's the lesson of the Commandments...there are no other gods we can call upon. That's the theme the prophets harped on constantly...follow God, not yourselves.

**Now Jesus speaks.** We don't - *we can't* - respond until God calls us to do so. God's call comes first.

Theologians have considered what this means. For Calvin, in the midst of the Reformation, it meant focusing on God's sovereign judgment. The Creator, who knows all, has passed judgment on all creation, and there is no appeal (and God isn't happy with us!) Our eternal relationship with God has already been determined.

Wesley, in response, focused on God's grace and God's love. Rather than condemning people, this God is courting them! We hear Jesus' call to "*follow me!*" as an invitation to discover a new way of life, one God has been anxious for us to find. God's love is calling even if we don't pay attention.

We Methodists call this "*prevenient grace*"...the grace which comes ("*veniere*", "*to come*" in Latin) before ("*pre-*", "*before*") our ability even to respond to God. This is one of the reasons we choose to baptize babies. We recognize that even at birth God is reaching out for them.

In Israel's and Jesus' world, the pagan gods gave little thought for humanity, except as playthings, incidental characters in the lives of the gods. So the God of Israel, the one Jesus taught, is unique. Rather than ignoring humanity, this God sees us as the best work of creation, cherished and loved. Jesus reminds us that God will never stop calling to us. Before we believe or act, God comes before us, calling us, seeking us. God comes first.

— Dr. John Clifford, Retired Clergy-in-Residence

## A Family Affair

Read 1 John 4:7-12 and share ideas about this Scripture. In verse 10, the scripture writer specifies that God loved us first. God revealed his love to us when he sent his own Son to live among us. Jesus came to earth to show us how to live in relationship with God and one another. Even though Jesus no longer lives on earth as a human, we learn about him in the Bible. Jesus teaches us many things, including how we can share God's love with others, even when it seems difficult.

We recently celebrated Holy Week and Easter. We remember not only that God sent his only son to live on earth but that Jesus gave his life for us and rose from the grave. Jesus returned to the disciples and encouraged them to share his love. Loving others can be our response these gifts. Talk about how your family can respond to God's loving gifts with your actions. How can you show love to your siblings? Another idea may be to call a grandparent to tell them that you love them or invite a friend you do not know well to the park. Make a list of how each of you will show love this week.

*Dear God, thank you for loving us and for sending your son to show us your love. Please be with us as we strive to show your love every day. In Jesus name, Amen.*

—Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

## Monday: John 6:35

Jesus says he is "the bread of life." We are a people who are constantly hungering and thirsting, and bread is one of the most basic foods we know. Yet Jesus suggests that he is meeting other hungers than our physical one.

- What are some of the "hungers" we are seeking to fill in our lives? Consumption (more "toys")? Adoration? Power?

## Tuesday: John 6:36-37

Jesus tells his hearers that some have been given him by his Father; but any who come to him will be welcomed! In fact, it seems that only those who choose to not believe will fail to be embraced. Our challenge is knowing who to believe.

- Our media-saturated culture makes it imperative – and almost impossible! – to know who to believe. How do we choose what is true and real? What do we believe?

## Wednesday: John 6:39-40

Jesus speaks of the will of his Father who sent him into the world. And it is this: that everyone would believe in him and receive eternal life! We have been called; will we respond?

- In what ways have you heard (or seen) God calling you, inviting you to respond?
- What are signs of God's love in the world around us?

## Thursday: John 6:41-42

Jesus' listeners are scratching their heads, wondering at Jesus' words. They have always known him, and now he is telling them strange things. They have trouble understanding this new mission he is telling them about.

- What are the things in our world we think we know too well to hear differently? (We talk about "paradigm shifts" when we see something in a "whole new light!")
- Have we made Jesus too familiar in our day to really hear his Word to us?

## Friday: 1 John 4:1-12

Jesus reminded his listeners that God had called them to believe. John then writes in his first letter a reminder: we show our belief by loving, because God has loved us first.

- Are we learning to love all of God's creatures, all the people around us?
- What are ways in which we can make God's love visible in our own lives?