

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Bi122-1 Salvation—Belief in Jesus Christ

Jesus commanded the church to make disciples. This course explores aspects of Christian discipleship that are essential for every believer. They include memorizing God's Word, prayer and fasting, witnessing, and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. They give us victory every single day. These essentials of Christianity are to motivate and to encourage each Christian.

Each of the next lessons will introduce you to an essential of Christianity, which will help you to grow and will strengthen your walk with Jesus Christ. Jesus is our example for winning the battles of life and using these essentials to defeat our spiritual enemy. To become a disciple, a person must first believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son and be saved. Salvation is the beginning point. It includes believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, and submitting to Jesus in your daily life.

The Bible tells us the names of the twelve disciples of Jesus. We also have the names of many of the women and others who believed in Jesus. However, we are not given the names of many people in the crowds who followed him. Imagine with me that one young man drawn to Christ was named Jacob.

Jacob was hungry. He had been days in the wilderness following the man named Jesus. Jesus had an attraction that Jacob had not felt before, in his loving eyes and gentle mannerisms. He said things with authority that Jacob had not heard before. Those things made him listen very carefully and made him want more such teaching. Maybe this man was the Messiah that the prophets had told about. Jesus certainly knew God better than any religious leader or teacher that Jacob had ever heard. Now Jacob just wanted to be with Jesus and to do what Jesus wanted him to do. He was amazing!

Jesus Christ, even after days of teaching and performing miracles, still had time for the crowds. He had somehow gotten across the lake without their knowing. It was as if he had walked on the water! This did not stop the hungry crowd. They were hungry both for his teaching and for the bread he seemed to create out of thin air. They got in boats and ran along the shore and found him again.

Jacob, along with the crowd, had questions: "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Just being near Jesus made the crowd want to please him.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval" (John 6:25-27).

Then someone in the crowd asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" They were really asking how they could please God. This crowd was hungry both for bread and for truth. They had seen Jesus and heard him. He had actually taken five small barley

loaves and two small fishes and fed more than 5,000 people. The crowd had wanted to make him king on the spot, but he would have no part of that. Can you imagine this? He just walked away. Anyone else would have jumped at the idea of being king. But Jesus wanted only to do God's will.

"What must we do to do the works God requires?" seemed like the right question. Jesus was talking about "food that endures for eternal life." How could they get such food? Surely they had to work for it. The crowd asked Jesus with hearts that would burst with love. He was so loving. He let people near and didn't try to escape from the pushing crowd. The crowds went silent and were all ears! What was he going to say?

Not a person wanted to miss this and pushed closer. Here was the greatest lesson mankind could learn. They knew he was a prophet sent from God because of the signs he had performed in the last few days. Jacob, too, needed to hear the answer. Jesus said, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (John 6:29).

They could see Jesus and his love for people. They had witnessed the outstanding miracles he had done. It was obvious that Jesus was talking about himself. He was the "one God had sent." He was the Son of Man approved by the Father. Yet they found it hard to take in what Jesus was saying.

The crowd was asking about works. They wanted to earn God's favor somehow. They missed the point that eternal life is Christ's gift and were thinking of achieving it by pious deeds. Jesus' answer was not about works, but about believing in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. The apostle Paul explained it this way, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8). God even gives us the faith to believe and be saved.

Right there many knelt down, believing in Jesus and worshiped him on the shore of the lake that day. Their life with Christ had happily begun as they believed in him as Lord and Savior of their lives.

The story is **important** because it teaches that no one can please God or gain eternal life through works. Believing in Jesus is the way to be saved and receive eternal life.

The **main** truth of this lesson is that what God desires from us is to believe in his Son Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives.

Let's **review** this lesson by answering these questions:

1. Why were the people following Jesus in the wilderness?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "The crowd wanted to learn the truth about life." you are right.
2. Why were the people amazed at what Jesus was teaching?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Jesus taught with an authority the crowd had never experienced before," you are correct.

3. What must every person do to please God?

A. [Pause] If you answered, “Believe in Jesus as God’s Son and your Savior,” you have answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the story several times until you can tell it to three different people. Bring the question to the those you are teaching, “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and your Savior?” Help them understand the need to believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Memorize Ephesians 2:8: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Also learn John 6:29: “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

Here’s a prayer you may want to use: *Dear Father, give me understanding of your work for me. I pray that you will help me to believe in Jesus Christ. Help me to learn to know him better. Strengthen my witness so that I can approach people with this truth. Empower me with your Holy Spirit and guide me to those who need to hear your message. In Jesus’ name I lift these requests to you. Amen.*