

Sunday School Lesson

By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1865 a traveler along a lonely road to western Virginia was approached by a gaunt, gun-wielding man in a tattered gray uniform. Seizing the bridle of the horse, he demanded bread, "I don't want to hurt you," he cried, "but I'm starving. Give me bread!"

"If bread is all you want, then, why don't you go into town and get bread?" asked the rider.

"But I don't dare," answered the soldier, "they'd shoot me as a deserter." Then he blurted out the story of how he had deserted the ranks of the retreating Confederate Army. He had tried to cross over to the Union lines, but the pickets had turned him back. For several days he had wandered around in the woods, scrounging for food, living on whatever roots and nuts and vegetation he could find.

"You poor man," said the rider, now sympathetic, "don't you know the war is over and that the Confederate soldiers have been pardoned? All the food you want is yours for the asking in the next town."

Weren't we all at one time like this run-away soldier? In our rebellion we ran away from God, the source of our spiritual nourishment. How comforting it is to realize that He still offers us and offers Himself, the bread of life, to all who will come to Him! This bread is ours for the asking.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Just prior to the basis for today's lesson, Jesus had fed the 5,000 on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus then retreated up into the mountains to avoid the crowds. At Jesus' suggestion, the disciples had entered a boat and were rowing to the western shore of the sea when a furious storm arose. It was night and Jesus, walking on the water, came to His disciples. The discussion on the bread of life followed on the next day in Capernaum, where the people had gone following the feeding of the 5,000.

THE LESSON

"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35).

Jesus affirmed that He was the bread of life. We are so familiar with this expression that we take it for granted without appreciating what a shocking statement this was. The crowds came seeking bread; He offered Himself instead. In verse 27 of this same chapter, Jesus offers Himself as the giver. In this verse He presents Himself as the gift. No other mortal could ever hope to back up such a statement. In this verse the blessings are expressed in physical terms - never hunger - never thirst. It is obvious, however, that Jesus had in mind spiritual rather than physical hunger and thirst.

"The people started grumbling about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from Heaven.' So they said, 'This man is Jesus, son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How, then, does he now say he came down from Heaven?'" Jesus answered, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me; and I will raise him to life on the last day. The prophets wrote, 'Everyone will be taught by God.' Anyone who hears the Father and learns from Him comes to me. This does not mean that anyone has seen the Father; he who is from God is the only one who has seen the Father. I am telling you the truth; he who believes has eternal life." (John 6:41-47).

John frequently used the term, The Jews, when referring to those Jews, especially the leaders, who so bitterly opposed Jesus. In this case they murmured, the sound that runs through a crowd when it is confused and angry. Their resentment was aroused because of His stupendous claim to be the life imparting bread of God that came down from Heaven.

Their asking if Jesus was not the son of Joseph indicated that at least some in the crowd knew Jesus well enough to know about His earlier life in Nazareth. His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit would not have been common knowledge among them so it is not surprising that they named Joseph as His father. Their big problem was that they could not accept such claims from one of such humble origins. Jesus had already observed how difficult it was for a prophet to be honored in his own country. (John 4:44).

For emphasis, Jesus repeated the statement He made in verses 39 and 40. For those who would come to Him Jesus promised two things: their spiritual hunger and thirst would be banished and they would be raised up to life eternal.

Jesus anticipated the Jews' objections that since they had never seen God, they could not be taught of Him. Jesus granted the first part of their objection: Not that any man hath seen the Father. True, no man had ever seen God with the physical eye, but the Father didn't have to be physically visible or audible in order for men to learn of Him. One who had seen the Father and had been commissioned by Him could teach men about Him. Jesus undoubtedly shocked His hearers when He claimed to be that one who had seen God and had come from Him. God is thus made visible through the incarnation. (See John 14:9.)

Missionaries in many fields have to deal with the problem of nationals who are "converted" to Christ because of the material blessings - food, clothing, money - supplied by the missionaries. In the Orient such "converts" are sometimes called "rice Christians," a term of obvious contempt.

Many of the persons who shared in the feeding of the 5,000, which had occurred the day before the events of today's lesson, were obviously attracted to Jesus because of the prospect of frequent and bountiful handouts they expected from Him. One purpose of Jesus' discourse on the bread of life was to lead those people to a fuller understanding of what His ministry was really all about. A majority of those who shared in this discourse failed this test and "went back, and walked no more with him." (John 6:66).

Before we point our fingers too readily at these, we need to examine our own motives. Have we at times been guilty of following our Savior for less than noble motives? Few of us would be so materialistic as to become church members just for the physical benefits that such membership might bring.



DEACON AND MRS. CARL DIXON
...Members of Second Calvary

But Not From God's Work!

Carl Dixon Retires From FP&E

By Teresa Simmons
Post Managing Editor

At first thought it may seem like retirement for Carl Dixon...last Friday was his last day as a supervisor in the Receiving Department of Federal Pacific and Electric (FP&E). He has worked at FP&E for 15 years and received three pens for service.

But retiring from his job is only a fragment of Dixon's life. Retirement will give him more leisure time, more time with his family as well as completing his calling from God.

At Second Calvary Baptist Church, Dixon is a Deacon, Leader of the Vocal Choir and Sunday School Superintendent. At 63 years of age, he admits he hasn't been an "angel" all of his life, but he has

come to realize the importance of developing both physically and spiritually.

He attributes his physical well being to taking care of himself. "I've tried to take care of myself by getting enough rest and sleep," he commented.

Spiritually, Dixon advises one to be true to yourself first and to those around you, treat them right...The Lord will give you a long life.

Church plays a special part in the life of Dixon and his wife and family. "It's like working on your job. You are always looking forward to pay day. By working in church you can look forward to a greater pay day... This pay day will not be from man, but from God."

His family includes his wife, daughters, Brenda Boston and Frances Dale Dixon, son-in-law, James Boston, and two grandchildren: James Boston Jr. and Demond Boston.

Leisure time will be enhanced, Dixon conveyed as he plans more visits to the local fishing waters. "I'll also be spending my time doing more yard work and picking up cardboard for sale."

Those days of rising and reporting to Federal Pacific and Electric are over for Dixon. "But I've enjoyed those years very much. I had to work and anything I have to do I try to do my best."

Dixon was born in Gastonia and

moved to Charlotte at the age of 16 with his family. Today people know Dixon as a man with a sense of humor and a human being with a big heart for children's welfare.

Upon retirement from his job he has fulfilled his tenure requirements. But his call from God... being a Deacon, Vocal Choir leader, arranging the Halloween and Christmas parties at church for the children or just playing the part of a shepherd in a seasonal church play, are hopefully all parts of Carl Dixon which will never retire.

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The Sugar Creek Road School Of Religion To Open

The Sugar Creek Road School of Religion will open for the second semester for the 1984-85 school year on Tuesday, January 15, at 6 p.m.

The school, beginning its fifth semester of operations, offers courses and degrees in religious education and theology as well as certificates.

The school was begun because of the apparent need for ministers and Christian workers to be trained who could not attend a school of religion in day time or as a full time student. The hours are arranged that persons working in day time can attend and matriculate in the school.

All instructors are qualified persons who have graduated from schools of religion with no less than a master's of divinity degree from seminaries with "A" ratings or seminaries that have associate status with the Association of Theological Schools.

The Sugar Creek Road School of Religion is being held on the third floor of the educational building of the Mayfield Memorial Baptist Church, located at the corner of Sugar Creek Road and Argyle St.

For further information, call 704-596-7935 or come by the office between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Cancer

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mograms, low-dose X-rays of the breast, which can detect cancer before it can be felt. ACS recommendations for mammograms are listed.

Though uterine cancer is fourth in the number of new cancer cases in women, the PAP test, which detects cancer of the uterine cervix early, has been largely responsible for a dramatic drop in cervical cancer deaths.

The digital rectal exam, used to detect colon and rectum cancer, is the best means of checking the prostate gland, according to "Cancer Facts for Men." Prostate cancer, the third most common cancer in men (as well as third in cancer mortality), is generally found in men over 60.

The leaflet for men maintains that testicular cancer is one of the most common cancers in men 15-34 years of age, though it is rare in other age groups. Young men are advised to do a monthly testicular self-examination (TSE) to check for any hard lumps or nodules.

The best defense against skin cancer, according to both leaflets, is to avoid overexposure to the sun, and to report any change in a mole or other growth to a physician.

The seven warning signals of cancer are also included in each leaflet.

Following the precautionary measures discussed in "Cancer Facts for Women" and "Cancer Facts for Men" can help detect cancer early - when chances for cure are best.

To receive copies of the Cancer Facts leaflets, or for other information concerning cancer or what services the Cancer Society offers, call 378-1659.

"I'M STILL CRAZY AS A BEDBUG. BELIEVE ME."

RICHARD PRYOR

Tony Brown reveals the man behind the entertainer in his exclusive two-part interview with Richard Pryor—considered by some to be the heavyweight champion of the world of comedy.

Rap I
In this rare and emotionally frank interview with Tony Brown, Pryor talks about his near fatal accident, his drug problem, his difficult relationship with his father, and more.

Rap II
In this episode, Brown focuses on the aspects of Pryor's life that have brought him happiness. He discusses his rise to stardom, how it's affected his life, and his current quest for serenity. Don't miss this intimate portrayal—as only Tony Brown brings it to you.

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