

John 7:1-36

Why would Jesus not travel to Judea if people wanted to kill him? As God, wouldn't he be able to keep himself safe?

Of course God would be able to keep himself safe from harm. Not traveling to Judea was how he accomplished that. I know what you're thinking, "that's kind of a copout answer." Well, yes and no. Ultimately, we must acknowledge that God has a perfect plan with perfect timing. Nothing can get in the way of the will of our God. He could have prevented anything bad from happening in Judea, because it was not yet his time. God had a perfect plan and timing, and right now, God's plan included Jesus spending time in Galilee.

According to John 7:7, Jesus claims the world hates Him and not the disciples. How have you seen this played out when you've shared your faith with non-Christians?

Personal Reflection.

What are one or two new insights from these verses that are important to you? How do these insights challenge or strengthen your view of Christ?

Personal Reflection.

Jesus challenges the crowd to "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment" in verse 24. Are there prayers for certain circumstances you'd like to share with your Grace Community?

Personal Reflection.

In verses 25-27 there are many who are questioning if Jesus really could be Christ. Pretend you're a first century Christian in the crowds - what would you want to explain to them?

Personal Reflection. Think through how this exercise could help you in the workplace or with your friends who are questioning. Sometimes putting ourselves in a different position makes the conversations obvious, and sometimes with our friends, the conversation seems harder than it really should be.

John 7:37-52

How does Jesus make good on his promise to quench our thirst?

There are many ways that Jesus makes good on his promises to quench our thirst. Perhaps someone in your group mentioned feeling loved completely; perhaps through Jesus someone is now able to see their value in life. There are many answers to this question that could come up, but a big one is through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is after Jesus' glorification, we have God within us.

How is the Holy Spirit like a river of water?

We all know that water is vital to our health and life. Without it, you will surely pass away. The Holy Spirit is much the same in our lives. But there's an interesting connection here as Jesus mentions the Holy Spirit.

On the last day of the Festival of Tabernacles, a priest would use a golden pitcher to draw water from the Well of Siloam. He would pour it at the foot of the altar while worshipers sang songs of praise and thanksgiving from Psalms 113-118. It's during this time that Jesus reveals the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

"Rivers of living water" represent the Holy Spirit's presence and power poured out on Jesus' followers. The Spirit's presence points to his cleansing and sanctifying work in the hearts of God's children. The Spirit's power points to the spiritual ability to know, follow, and glorify Jesus and to participate in his coming kingdom. The Spirit's presence and power flow out of the believer's heart like water in a parched world.

Read Isaiah 55:1-5 out loud. In what ways do we see Christ fulfill this prophecy in these verses?

List the different ways in which people respond to Jesus throughout these verses. How do they compare to people's reactions today?

Personal Reflection.

Some of the responses we see (in order) - this man is a prophet; this man is the true Messiah we've been waiting for; this isn't what I expect the Messiah to look like.

Why would Nicodemus risk his reputation to defend Jesus? Can you think of times when you've done the same?

Personal Reflection.

Nicodemus is seemingly stepping forward in his faith here. To put his reputation on the line for the sake of Jesus' name is something that we would see in the life of a true believer. Have you ever risked your position or reputation to make sure someone had the chance to hear who Jesus really is?

John 7:53-8:11

Begin by reading the article in the front of this magazine written by Pastor Ben about this section. How should this impact the way we read these verses?

Can you remember a time when you felt shame and guilt for wronging someone and they forgave you? How did that impact you?

Personal Reflection.

How was this question designed to trap Jesus? What was the impact if Jesus chose to let her go? What if he chose to punish her?

There really was no winning this argument with the men. Either choice that Jesus made would have given grounds for the men to charge him. If he chose to let her go without any penalty for her sins, He would be charged with breaking the laws given down by Moses. If Jesus tells the crowds to stone the woman, he would have been her executioner! Either answer would potentially leave him vulnerable to people rioting against him.

Why do you suppose the older leave first and then the younger?

Personal Reflection.

How should we correctly apply this lesson today? Are we to never mention sin in those around us?

We need to be careful not to take this story too far. A basic rule when reading the bible - let scripture interpret scripture. What that means is that we need to always compare a passage to the entire bible and not just take it on it's own - pulling out lessons and meanings that aren't intended. Galatians 6:1 tells us "even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." Or Matthew 18:15-17 which gives us instructions on how to treat a Christian who's sinned. Obviously we aren't to act as though sins have never taken place - but we're called as Christians to remember who has already paid for those sins and help point people back to Him.

John 8:12-30

How does this passage help us to understand Jesus' "time?" What will his "time" achieve?

We are constantly hearing throughout the Gospel that Jesus' time had not yet come. So what was his time? Jesus' time is pointing to his ultimate accomplishment on earth - giving himself up for a remission of sins. At this moment, Jesus tells us in verses 28 and 29 that upon his death, the world will know that he is the Son of God. His "time" is when he rescues his people.

Verse 24 summarizes why Jesus is having this dialogue with the religious rulers. Imagine your coworker has never heard the gospel before. How would you explain this verse if it was the first time she heard it?

Personal Reflection.

What are "above and below" symbols of? Do you think they Jewish leaders are understanding it this way?

Jesus is claiming that he is not of this world - that he was sent from heaven to accomplish the mission and will of the Father. It seems as though the Jewish leaders aren't quite picking up on the

What does it mean that the Son of Man will be "lifted up," and how will that help them know that Jesus is who he claims to be?

Jesus is referencing his own death on the cross. Once he's killed, people will see that He was sent to do the will of the Father. His death will clear up the confusion of whether or not this man, Jesus, fits all the prophecies about the coming messiah.

Everything Jesus does is pleasing to the Father (v 29). If the Christian life is to lead us to be more Christlike, in what areas of life are you pleasing the Father? In what areas are you not?

Personal Reflection.

What next step can your Grace Community pray for you to take toward Christ?

Personal Reflection.

John 8:31-59

What does it mean to abide in Jesus' word? How does that look in our day to day lives?

Personal Reflection.

What is the difference between the Jews Jesus is talking to and Abraham?

Abraham not only keep with the laws of God, but he also awaited the coming Messiah. Now these men are staring Jesus in the face and denying his divinity. Jesus says that Abraham awaited Jesus but rejoiced in His coming. These men are also awaiting a messiah but are denying him once he arrived.

The people react very strongly to what Jesus is saying. What are the statements that they have such a strong reaction to?

Jesus ends his conversation with them by claiming to have known Abraham, an ancestor many generations ago. Although they miss Jesus mentioning that he is God the first time, Jesus repeats to them "before Abraham was, I am." There is no mistaking this phrase to the Jewish leaders. Here, Jesus undeniably is calling himself by the same name that God calls himself to Moses. He's not mincing words. Jesus is saying - I am God.

What option does this passage leave us as far as forming an opinion of who Jesus is? Can we see him as just another prophet or a really good teacher?

I forget where I first heard it, but there's a common teaching out there that if we were to take Jesus for his word - if we're to accept the fact that Jesus is walking the streets telling people he was God - we're only left with three options. Either we say he is a liar, we call him a lunatic, or we declare him as Lord. Liar, lunatic or Lord - these are the only options we're left with if we take Jesus' own words at face value. If he's a liar or a lunatic, he can't be a good teacher, for a good teacher would not present falsehood. If He is Lord, then he cannot be JUST a good teacher - He would have to be more than someone from whom we learn lessons and principles. He would have to acknowledge His dominion over our lives.

What must we include in our evangelism if we are to be consistent with John's presentation of Jesus and His message?

Not only must we be bold, but we must be willing to call out the traps that people find themselves in. John does not present Jesus in a way that leaves questions about His nature, character, and sufficiency. When we are explaining Jesus to our friends or coworkers, we need to be sure to leave no question about who He is and what He came to do. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is God. He lived a perfect life in our place, accomplishing on our behalf what we could not. Through faith in Jesus we are given eternal life, and Jesus is the only way to the Father in heaven.

John 9:1-7, 9:35-41

Why was this man born blind? Do you think this a 'fair' reason?

Jesus tells us that this man was not born blind because of his own sins or the sins of his parents. This man was born blind so that God could use him to reveal His works through the man. It was for God's glory that he spent decades without sight.

It's our tendency to immediately try to assess if this is fair or not. "Why should this be allowed," we ask ourselves. It seems callous at face value. I would encourage you to not think this way. Our bible is filled with stories of people suffering pain and infirmity - but we're short sighted to think that this is not fair. Shouldn't we rather celebrate that the Lord of all used the single life of one man or woman to bring everlasting life to many! I challenge you that many lives will be spared eternal punishment because of each of those stories. And I'll guarantee you that although they may have questioned the fairness and experienced hardship in this life, they will spend eternity praising and worshiping God like this man does toward the end. None of them question if it was worth it.

Why do you think Jesus used the clay and spit to heal the man instead of just his words?

Personal reflection.

Jesus says "as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v 5). Does this mean that Jesus, no longer physically in the world, is no longer the light?

No, this is not what the verse is implying. This is a characteristic of Jesus that will continue on through eternity. Jesus is and always will be the "true light." This verse can still seem a little confusing, though.

John Calvin wrote in his commentary, "he compares himself to the sun which, though it illuminates the whole earth by its brightness, yet, when it sets, takes away the day along with it. In this manner he states that his death will resemble the setting of the sun; not that his death extinguishes or obscures his light, but that it withdraws the view of it from the world."

Remember the beginning of John's gospel - John the baptist "came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." (John 1: 7-9). Now that the true light is in heaven, we are given light (the Holy Spirit), and now we're called to bear witness.

Why do you think John includes this passage in his gospel?

Personal Reflection.

How does the blind man react to Jesus at the end of this passage?

He worships Jesus as the Son of Man. He has faith that leads toward everlasting life.

John 9:8-34

Very often we fear a new Christian falling away from the faith due to persecution. What can this passage teach us about our worries?

I would argue that it was possibly because of the persecution the blind man received that he became more and more convinced of who Jesus truly was. We need not be fearful of persecution, earthly or spiritual - it will happen to every Christian on some level. Remember, Christ already warned us that this world hates him and will persecute us (John 15:18-25). But Jesus also promised us that He will not lose a single believer that the Father has entrusted to Him (John 6:39). So will a new believer be persecuted? Yes. Will they lose their salvation? No.

How does the blind man's understanding develop throughout the story?

Throughout this story we see a transition in the way the blind man talks about Jesus. He starts by talking about Jesus as a man (v11) and then a prophet (v17). Later he marvels in what Christ has done on his behalf, saying He must be sent from God (v32-33). And finally at the end of his story we see this man worshipping Jesus as the Son of Man (v38). Perhaps this progression is something you experienced, or have seen friends walk through.

Have you found yourself in the shoes of the parents - afraid to take a stand for Jesus in the face of ridicule or adversity?

Personal Reflection

What lessons can we learn about our own life of faith from the story of the blind man?

This is not the only example - there can be quite a few answers to this question. Let the Holy Spirit guide your understanding and let the word of God speak to you as you think through your own situation.

There may be times when we will not fully understand what God has done in our lives - why we are meant to live the life we are given. But at the same time, we are responsible for one thing - even in our times of questioning, even in the face of persecution, we are to point back to Christ. Sometimes all we can say is "although I don't understand it all, I know HE is real."

Jesus appears to be absent during this time of the story. What can this tell us about 'the work of God'?

It seems a bit strange that Jesus heals this man but then disappears as he is going through adversity. Perhaps you've felt like this in your walk - Jesus starts something and then you're wondering where He went. There's turmoil and trouble and at times you can't quite find him. But hold fast to the truth - Jesus always knew where the blind man was. He never left him completely - Jesus just gave space for the blind man to defend his faith. Had Jesus stood right beside the blind man in front of the Jewish leaders, they would have only questioned Jesus. Perhaps the blind man would not have grown in his faith as quickly without this questioning.