

February 11-12, 2023 John 7:1-24

Ice Breaker Questions

 In John 7, Jesus' character is being debated. Think back on your own life, and your own first impressions of people you know well now! Is there someone who is a good friend (or spouse!) now, who you didn't think would be a good fit the first time you met? What did you learn about them which changed your first impressions?

Understand Their Story

Read John 7:1-24 in your group.

- 1. This passage divides up into three main scenes, which each have their own setting and conflict, and yet tie together with a uniting theme.
 - a. Scene 1: What is the first setting and conflict? Setting: Jesus is in Galilee, right before the Feast of Booths. He doesn't want to go to Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him!
 Conflict: His brothers are taunting him & don't believe. They basically tell him that he's a coward for hiding out: if he is who he says he is, he should show himself to the world.
 - b. Scene 2: What is the second setting and conflict? **Setting:** In Jerusalem at the Feast. **Conflict:** Where is Jesus, and is he a good man or leading people astray?
 - c. Scene 3: What is the third setting? This story has two conflicts or central questions. What are they and who initiates each? Setting: Jesus teaching in the temple. Conflict #1 Initiated by the Jews: How can Jesus teach when he has never studied? Conflict #2 Initiated by Jesus: Why are you seeking to kill me when none of you keeps the law?
 - i. What theme ties all three stories together? What are they all about? People's perceptions of Jesus. He ties the three stories together in verse 24: Don't judge by appearances but by right judgement. All the people in these stories are judging by appearances.
- 2. How would you describe the mood or tone of the narrative? Tense! Lots of uncertainty, questioning and accusations!

Connect to His Story.

- 3. John 7 and John 8 all take place during the Feast of Booths, so its important for us to know a bit about this feast.
 - Read Leviticus 23:33-44. What do you learn about the Feast of Booths in these verses? (eg. How long is it? What does it commemorate? What are they supposed to do during this Feast?) It's an annual 7-8 day feast which occurs in the 7th month, commemorating the time that Israel spent wandering in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. They are to make booths (tents) for their family to live in during this week of celebration, and bring specific offerings with them.

b. Read Zechariah 14:16-19. How important is this feast to God? Why do you think this is the case? Very important - says there will be no rain for those families / nations which don't celebrate, God will send a plague. Why? Because God wants his people to know / remember that HE is their deliverer, HE is their provider. They need to take time to remember and honor him for what he has done for them.

Apply to Our Story

- 4. In John 7:1-24, John repeatedly draws attention to the fact that his own family, the "Jews" and the crowds are divided as they see Jesus' signs and hear his words. The only command that we can apply from this text is found in verse 24: "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." Jesus is chastising people for judging him based on their own self-righteous legalism, rather than the right judgment which would come if they evaluated his claims in light of the rest of scripture (John 7:17).¹
 - a. As the New Testament story unfolds, the 'Bereans' become an example of how people should evaluate the message that Jesus proclaimed, and the message(s) of any teacher(s) who claim to come in his name. Read Acts 17:10-15. What do you learn about the Bereans? They received the word with eagerness, but not at face value! They searched the scriptures daily to see if what Paul & Silas were teaching was true.
 - b. In Acts 17:10-15, Luke (the author of Acts) mentions that the Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica! Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (focussing on v 19-21). What does Paul later tell the church of Thessalonica to do? Don't quench the Spirit. Don't despise prophecies (which doesn't mean Old Testament prophecies, but likely words of wisdom / exhortation / preaching from their leaders), but instead test them (by comparing them to scripture). They are to hold fast (hold onto) that which is good because it lines up with scripture.
 - i. Do you feel well-equipped for evaluating the truthfulness of someone's teaching? Do you have any resources or strategies you could share with your group? If people are looking for some resources, here are a few Northview ones:
 - 1. Bonus Podcast: Discerning the Trustworthiness of Christian Resources.
 - 2. Northview's "Discernment Grid" Worksheet
 - ii. Has there been a specific time where you have been challenged to evaluate your own thinking or actions or teaching (!) in light of scripture? If you're comfortable, share what happened and what you learned through the process.

God's work and our Work How All of Life Connects to the Gospel - in John 7:1-24

As we noted above, Jesus encourages the crowd to examine his claims based on God's will as revealed in the scriptures (John 7:17). As he continues to speak, he also brings in a character piece: the difference between people with a true and false profession of faith is whether they seek their own glory or God's glory.

This is obviously evident in the context of the church and christian ministry. We've seen many pastors and ministry leaders 'crash and burn' in the past few years, and often they seem to be people seeking their own glory. This is not an issue which is only found in the church, however. It is a character piece which plagues every area of life - including the places at which you work or volunteer, and your neigbourhoods and families.

¹ DA Carson. The Gospel of John: The Pillar New Testament Commentary series, p 316-317.

- Think of one situation this week in which you may have felt overlooked or unappreciated, or simply tempted to draw attention to yourself and your own efforts, seeking your own glory! If you're comfortable, share this situation and struggle with your group.
- Why do you think you desired recognition so much? What thoughts or emotions are underneath this desire?
- What is one practical way you can seek God's glory rather than your own this week: at the place you work or volunteer, in your neighbourhoods or families?