



January 14-15, 2023

Ice Breaker Questions

- This week's text reads like a courtroom drama! Jesus is accused of a crime, he gives an opening statement, and calls witnesses to the stand.
 - What is your favorite courtroom drama TV show, mini-series or movie? Why is it your favorite?

Understand Their Story

In John 5:16-47, Jesus deals with the aftermath of last week's text: the Jews are angry that he healed an invalid, and asked him to carry his bed on the Sabbath! If you read the text together all at once, it may feel convoluted; there is a lot going on and several different things being taught! It will feel more manageable if you read and discuss it in the verse groupings listed below.

1. The Charges (verses 16-18)
 - a. What are the specific charges which the Jews bring against Jesus? What do these charges reveal about their own confusion or questions (eg. what don't they understand about Jesus and God?)
 - i. He was breaking the Sabbath, and making himself equal with God.
 - ii. They think of Jesus as a regular man, pretending / claiming to be the Messiah. They believe that "God is one" (see Deuteronomy 6:1-5), and so Jesus' claims seem blasphemous! God has always told them not to worship anyone besides him, and have been commanded to keep the Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:1-8). Jesus' actions and words trouble them.
2. Jesus' Opening Statement (verses 19-29)
 - a. How would you summarize Jesus' argument in verses 19-24? What is the big idea he is trying to get across?

The Son (Jesus) does the same things as the Father - namely raising the dead, and giving life (John 5:21). Because of this, the Jews should honor both the Son and the Father. If they don't honor the Son, they aren't honoring the Father who sent him. Salvation (Eternal life) comes from hearing Jesus' words and believing the Father.
 - b. How would you summarize Jesus' argument in verses 25-29? What is the big idea he is trying to get across?

A time is coming when all the dead will be raised and will stand before the Son in Judgement.

 - i. Is there anything which particularly surprises you, or is a new idea or thought as you read what Jesus explains about the Father's roles and his roles?
 1. Various answers are possible here! I don't think many people think about the Son being the judge on judgment day.

3. Jesus' Witnesses (verses 30-43)

- a. What witnesses does Jesus call "to the stand" in these verses, and how does each person / thing bear witness to the truthfulness of his claims?

John the Baptist (v 33-35). He witnessed about Jesus in John 1:19-36, John 3:22-36)

Jesus' own works (v 36). His works in John are found in John 2 - water into wine / cleansing temple / other signs (2:23), Healing invalid (John 5:1-15).

The Father (v 37-38). In John we don't hear of the Father speaking other than to John the baptist (John 1:32-33), but in the other gospels the Father's voice may have been audible to the crowds (Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22).

The Scriptures (v 39-46). Too numerous to recount how the scriptures point to him, but to Jesus' point that Moses spoke of him, commentators often point to Deuteronomy 18:15-19)

4. Jesus' Counter-charge (verses 44-47)

- a. The Jews are accusing Jesus, but he turns the tables to them at the end of this text. What accusations does he level against them?

They don't have the love of God in them

They receive people who come in their own name, rather than God's name

They don't believe because they are seeking glory from one another, rather than God.

They don't believe because they don't believe Moses' words.

Connect to His Story.

5. Since the text itself is so large, we'll make this section short! We want to focus on why Jesus structures his defense the way he does.

- a. Read Deuteronomy 17:2-7. What were people in Israel supposed to do if they heard that someone had broken God's law? What was considered insufficient evidence? What kind of evidence needed to be present in order for a person to be punished?

Insufficient evidence = simply hearing a report (v 4), or 1 witness (v 6)

Inquire diligently (v 4) / gather evidence - must be at least 2 - 3 witnesses (v 6)

- b. Read Deuteronomy 19:15-21. What does this text add to the Deuteronomy 17 passage?

There is the possibility of a malicious witness - Israel must be aware that people can falsely accuse others (v16).

If facts are in doubt, disputing parties shall appear before the LORD, priests & judges, and if someone is found to be providing false testimony, they shall be punished.

- i. What do these texts teach you about God? How do they encourage or challenge you in your faith?

1. God is a God of justice and order. He knows the condition of the human heart and gives rules to safeguard people against those with evil intentions & not allow evil to flourish. He won't allow people to be punished for unsubstantiated claims or hearsay.

Apply to Our Story

6. In John 5:16-47, Jesus defends himself against the unbelief of the Jews. They could not wrap their minds around the fact that this man standing in front of them was claiming to be equal to Yahweh - the LORD, whom Israel had been called to serve since the days of Abraham in Genesis 12.

- a. People in our day wouldn't have the same objections as the Jews did. Who do you think your non-Christian neighbours, family members and friends think Jesus is? What do you think they can't wrap their minds around?
[Various answers!](#)
- b. Which of the four witnesses (John the Baptist, God the Father, Jesus' works and the Scriptures) are the most accessible to people today? If someone asked you who Jesus is, which Scriptures could you point to, to start explaining him?
[Here are 3. There could be many others!](#)
[John 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Colossians 1:15-23](#)
- c. How are you convicted or challenged by Jesus' counter charge? Do you seek glory from others? If so, does this impact your obedience to Jesus and your willingness to share the gospel with others?
[Personal answers!](#)

Prayer

- *Pray in Adoration: Jesus is the one who gives life! Praise him for the gift he offers to all.*
- *Pray in Confession: Are there ways in which you have not honored Jesus as you should? Do you understand and recognize his authority in judgment? Do you worship Jesus as equal to the Father?*
- *Pray in Supplication: Ask God to help you seek glory only from him, and to accept the testimony of Scripture about who Jesus is, and what it means to follow him.*

God's work and our Work

How All of Life Connects to the Gospel - in John 5:16-47

The Witness of our Works: Jesus had unique *works* which bore witness to who he was, and validated his identity claims (John 5:36). We do different *works* because we are not THE son of God, but our *works* should still be linked to our identity as sons and daughters of the king. Our *works* should bear witness to our Father.

- a) If you are willing, share one thing that you did this past week BECAUSE you are a Christian (it could be something that you prayed, a way in which you adjusted your attitude, or a specific *work* that you did)?
- b) As you think about the week ahead, what specific challenge(s) are you facing that you could approach differently if you remember that your *works* bear witness to who you are, and are linked to your identity as a son or daughter of the king?

Where we seek Glory: As you think about your "sphere" this week (workplace, home, place of volunteering, neighbourhood), what is one way that you could seek God's glory, rather than seeking glory from others?