



For the Week of April 29, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
who is Jesus?

Life Notes for Families

Introductions

We hope you're having a great time learning about Jesus together as a family. Whether you have lots of family members or just a few spending time together, we pray you're having fun and noticing the difference that living with Jesus - *together* - can make. We all have our own relationships with God, but we also share a relationship with those we love. Thanks for helping grow this important relationship!

John 7:1-31

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers talked to him.

Jesus' brothers: *"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."*

For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Jesus: *"The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."*

Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking this question.

Jews: *"Where is that man?"*

Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him.

Some people: *"He is a good man."*

Other people: *"No, he deceives the people."*

No one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed.

Jews: *"How did this man get such learning without having studied?"*

Jesus: *"My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"*

Crowd: *"You are demon-possessed. Who is trying to kill you?"*

Jesus: *"I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."*

Some of the people of Jerusalem: *"Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from."*

Jesus (still teaching in the temple courts): *"Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."*

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him.

Many in the crowd: *"When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?"*

who is Jesus? He is truly God's Son, our Savior, our "forever friend," our example.

We've been looking at who Jesus is and in today's chapter we see people still doubting him. They didn't understand who he really was and they didn't yet know how to truly depend on God the Father the way Jesus depended on God the Father. Jesus depended on his Father literally for everything. And he wants us to learn to do the same. He wants us to experience God's love, all the time. So let's focus on that this week - let's focus on how God shows up in our lives and how he takes care of us.

In the Old Testament, God asked his people to participate in certain Feasts or Festivals every year. These were like "parties" to celebrate how much God loves his people and to remember how he specifically cares for them. This week, we thought it would be fun to throw God a party - to have a festival of our own, just like God asked the Israelites to do a long, long time ago.

The feast Jesus mentions in John 7 is the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. We'll explain this more on the following pages, but let's begin with just talking, as a family, about how God takes care of us.

Where does God show up in your family life each day?

How does God take care of your family?

In what ways does your family depend on God?

The following is a short description of the Festival of Booths. As a family, design a booth that reflects your experience with God. If you can literally build a booth, do so this week. If you're not able to take that time, then design one on paper, create one out of cardboard or drawings or write a description of how the booth would look and what would be inside. *Hint: the Israelites actually ate their meals and spent the night inside their booth...you might consider this option, at least one time this week!*

The following notes were put together from various contemporary Jewish sources.

In honor of the holiday's historical significance, the Israelites are commanded to dwell in temporary shelters to commemorate what their ancestors did in the wilderness. The temporary shelter is referred to as a sukkah (pronounced like Sue-kah). This festival is meant to be a joyful time as the Israelites remember God's provision for 40 years.

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. (Leviticus 23:33-36)"

"So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 23:39-43)"

When we look at current Jewish tradition, we find that the commandment to "dwell" or "live" in a sukkah can officially be fulfilled by eating all meals there; however, the Jewish people are encouraged to spend as much time in the sukkah as possible, even sleeping in it. Why? To reenact the experience...to remember all that God has done...to focus your attention on fully trusting God in a world where we daily deal from our self-sufficiencies.

A sukkah has at least two and a half walls and should be covered with a material that will not blow away in the wind. The "walls" of the sukkah do not have to be solid; canvas covering tied or nailed down is acceptable and quite common in the United States. A sukkah may be any size, as long as it is large enough to dwell in. The roof of the sukkah must be made of something that grew from the ground and was cut off, such as tree branches, corn stalks, bamboo reeds, sticks, or two-by-fours and must be left loose, not tied together or tied down. The roof must be sparse enough that rain can get in and stars can be seen, but not so sparse that more than ten inches is open at any point or that there is more light than shade. The roof is to be put on last. Note: If you don't feel confident in your construction abilities, there are literally online sources for purchasing your ready-to-build sukkah.

It is common practice to decorate the sukkah. Many families hang artwork drawn by the children on the walls and see this festival as truly a family project.

Helpful questions as you think about your festival booth.

Think about a time God truly provided for your family. What kind of booth would you erect to celebrate this feast - this dependence upon God and his provision?

How would the booth look?

Where would the booth be located?

What would be inside the booth?

How would the booth be decorated?

What spiritual family members or friends would be inside with you?

What would specifically help you "remember" God's faithfulness and your total dependence on him?