



For the Week of May 6, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:  
who is Jesus?

Life Notes for Missional Communities

for your personal growth

We're studying the remainder of John 7 this week to learn more about Jesus and what he truly offers his followers.

The questions are here to help you move Scripture into your heart and life - to help you hear from the Holy Spirit. In fact, this week we're particularly interested in listening to the Spirit. Don't forget to journal. It's a great way to gain insight, express perspectives and generally see God at work.

the Word: John 7:32-52

The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

Jesus: *"I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."*

Jews (to each other): *"Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"*

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and spoke in a loud voice.

Jesus: *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

On hearing his words, some of the people spoke.

Some people: *"Surely this man is the Prophet."*

Other people: *"He is the Christ."*

Still others: *"How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?"*

Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees

Chief Priests and Pharisees: *"Why didn't you bring him in?"*

Guards: *"No one ever spoke the way this man does."*

Chief Priests and Pharisees: *"You mean he has deceived you also? Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them."*

Nicodemus had gone to Jesus earlier and was one of their own number.

Nicodemus: *"Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?"*

Chief Priests and Pharisees: *"Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."*

### who is Jesus - a prophet, the Christ, a problem?

This week, Pastor Mark reviewed the various theories we've been examining about Jesus and then addressed a few more from this passage. Was Jesus the prophet they'd been waiting for? Was he the Christ? People were confused. And the Chief Priests and Pharisees were just angry. For them, Jesus was a problem that wouldn't go away.

Read through 7:32-52 at least twice. Try to put yourself in the place of those who were watching, listening and trying to reconcile all that they were experiencing. To answer the questions thoughtfully, you might want to research a bit of their context. Reading Isaiah 9:1-7 and Micah 5:2 would be helpful as well as a websearch on the intertestamental period. Here's a little bit of information to get you started.

Two primary Jewish political/religious groups existed during the time of Jesus: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. As a result of many years of perceived silence on God's part and occupation by Greece and Rome, the Jewish people were either questioning their faith or putting their hope in the coming of a Messiah who would elevate Israel to her proper place in the world. Then Jesus stepped in. They knew where he was born (or at least some of them did!). They knew his family. They couldn't conceive of him being the literal Messiah they'd anticipated for generations.

Think back to your own context when you first came to know Jesus - your own expectations of what Jesus would be like or what he would offer your life.

*What did you expect from God when you first became a believer?*

*What about now, what do you honestly expect from a relationship with God?*

*What happens when God doesn't meet your expectations?*

Search your heart for any doubts or questions you might have related to the true identity of Jesus.

*What are some of your doubts or questions and how do you deal with them? How do you live with that tension?*

*If you are finding comfort in Jesus as Messiah, how did you come to that place? How did you overcome your doubt or at least learn to live at peace with that doubt?*

*What might you say to someone who is in the midst of a time of doubting or searching?*

## who is Jesus - streams of living water

Read John 7:37-41 several times, imagining how you would have understood Jesus' words in the context of his time and then how you understand them in your own context today.

Last week we talked about the festival of booths (tabernacles) and we joined the array of God's people for centuries, remembering God's faithfulness in our lives. Pastor Mark taught us what Jesus was really saying at the end of the feast: *he* is the fulfillment of the feast. He met the people's long-felt need while he was here; and, soon, the Spirit would literally provide constant nourishment for the believer.

*How would you currently define your relationship with the Holy Spirit? What about with God the Father? And with God the Son?*

Do a word search on the Holy Spirit, taking particular note of the following passages. Psalm 51; Isaiah 63:11,12; Luke 11:13; Luke 12:11-13; John 14:15-21; Acts 2:1-5; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 8:1-17; Romans 8:22-27. Now, share from these various passages:

*What do you learn about the role of the Holy Spirit?*

*What do you learn about the relationship between a believer and the Holy Spirit?*

*Examen: Where does what you learn from these passages most coincide with your own experience?  
Where does what you learn from these passages most conflict with your own experience?*

*Examen: What's the easiest thing about relating to God the Spirit for you?  
What's the most difficult thing about relating to God the Spirit for you?*

## for missional communities not doing life notes

Spend a few moments at the beginning or ending of your time responding to the following Examen:

*What's the easiest thing about relating to God the Spirit for you?  
What's the most difficult thing about relating to God the Spirit for you?*

## next week

To prepare for next week's sermon, read John 8:1-11 and pages 114-116 in Metzger's *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Don't forget to email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at [markc@mission68.org](mailto:markc@mission68.org).

see next page for facilitator suggestions

What John 7 introduces is the promise of the Holy Spirit - a very personal God who daily influences our lives and transforms our way of seeing, reacting, loving and experiencing. We'll learn more details about the Holy Spirit's intimate role in our lives in upcoming chapters of John, but here we're given one very clear promise: Streams of living water will flow from within each follower of Jesus.

Examen: *How/in what ways are you currently, experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit?*  
*How/in what way are you currently missing the work of the Holy Spirit?*

*How do you experience streams of living water each day?*  
*How do you want to experience streams of living water each day, but can't quite seem to experience?*

The Pharisees and Chief Priests had been "in control" of all things religious for a long time, so everything Jesus said and did made them want to control even more. Jesus was not the Messiah they'd expected so they felt challenged, threatened, like they needed to control the situation and every one around.

Pastor Mark gave us several characteristics of unhealthy responses to feeling challenged.

- we become unwilling to listen (7:46-47) - "If you disagree with me, you're a threat."
- we use positional authority (7:48) - "I am a leader at the top. Don't question me."
- we exhibit elitism and arrogance (7:49) - "I am educated, you are ignorant. Just fall in line."
- we curse when challenged (7:49) - "Submit to my beliefs/reality, or I will punish you."
- we suppress questions (7:52) - "Don't question me or I'll diminish and humiliate you."

Think about the above list. If we're honest, we do act these ways when faced with confrontation or challenge about our core beliefs.

*Which one of the above most reflects your attitude or position when confronted by a belief that is not the same as your own..when you're challenged?*

*What happens when someone with different beliefs or expectations comes into your circle?*

*How can MYA be a place where anyone is welcome? Specifically, what do we need to do to be Jesus to those who are different, difficult, challenging? What do our attitudes need to be?*

Finally, if you're group is using Metzger's book, he gave us something interesting to discuss in his example of *The Matrix*. In the movie, people's core identities are locked in by their preferred perceptions. In other words, they choose what they've always known. To know a deeper truth takes a complete shift in paradigm, and this paradigm shift is exactly what Jesus presented and still presents.

*In what ways are you still locked in to a paradigm that Jesus is asking you to let him change?*