



For the Week of May 6, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:  
who is Jesus?

Daily Life Notes for Individuals & Couples

## Introductions

Welcome to **Life Notes**. This week, we'll be looking at the last half of John 7, focusing on the kind of spiritual life that Jesus offers us.

The passages selected by Pastor Mark this week are copied below in their entirety, but it's great to use your own Bible so you can make note of things that interest you or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. It's also great to read a second version so you can compare what's going on. The following is the NIV. You can view various Bible versions online at sites like [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

**Note:** Saturday is used as a "sabbath" or "rest from our every day work responsibilities" experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

## 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."*

## Monday: true religion, Jesus our truth

This week, Pastor Mark taught us what true religion is like, so we'll be looking at the spiritual life that Jesus offered the people who followed him then and those who follow him today. To begin, get in a comfortable place with Bible, journal, pen and a few moments away from your other cares, and invite God to speak to your heart. When we find a moment of silence in our day and learn to relax in that silence, we begin to hear God's voice and allow that voice to slowly but surely bring peace and perspective.

So settle in. Talk with God for a few minutes. Ask him to help you open your mind this week. Be aware of God's love, his commitment to you, his presence there with you.

Now read John 7:32-51 at least two times in preparation for today.

And ask yourself,

*What are the most important aspects of my relationship with God as Father, Son and Spirit?  
What about God do I rely on most?*

Pastor Mark told us that Jesus wasn't just a prophet. He never referred to himself that way, and if he'd been a prophet, he would have failed the test of 100% accuracy just on the claim of being One with God ... of God being his Father. If he'd have been a man with the gift of prophecy, his claim as son would have been a lie. Jesus is one member of the Godhead - the Trinity. And that's where the story, for us, begins.

Jesus offered what Pastor Mark referred to as religion that isn't hypocritical. We often shy away from the word "religion," but, in truth, it's the hypocrisy of religion we struggle with, not the word itself. A look at the definition of "religion" clears up a lot of our uncertainties.

- a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.
- a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects; ie., the Christian religion.
- the body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices.
- the practice of religious beliefs; ritual observance of faith.

So you see, religion isn't our problem. The practice of hypocritical religion is what causes us to recoil. The kind of religion Jesus promised is based on the sacrificial, unending love of Father, Son and Spirit, and the truth about all things. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he claimed to be one with God, and that is truth. He himself is truth, he speaks truth and he calls people into a life of truth as we follow him.

Let's review some of Jesus' "I tell you the truth" statements in these first chapters of John.

*"I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51)*

*"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)*

*"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5)*

*"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (John 5:19)*

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24)*

*"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven." (John 6:32)*

*"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life." (John 6:47)*

And another key passage on truth from John:

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:16-21)*

Jesus spoke truth. He never lied. He is our cornerstone...our shepherd...our example...the one who forgives and restores and gives life.

As you close your time today, write about truth. Review the verses in John, research any others where Jesus says, "I tell you the truth." And then think about your own life - everything you can think of that Jesus has done and continues to do in your life that reminds you of your ability to completely trust his word.

Then complete the sentence, "I tell you the truth..." for everything that you hear Jesus saying to you personally today.

As Pastor Mark taught, this is the kind of religion that Jesus offers. Think about his truth today.

### Tuesday: true religion, Jesus our redeemer

As you settle in for your time with Father, Son and Spirit today, let yourself reflect, again, on Jesus as truth. Jesus can be trusted. He is who he says he is. He told us the truth, and thousands of years later, we are still firmly grounded in that truth.

Luke 18:31-34 captures our thoughts today as we see another truth Jesus spoke that has clearly been fulfilled.

Jesus (taking the 12 aside): *"We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."*

*"The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about."*

As we explore what Jesus offers today, we focus on the cross - but on so much more. We focus on what the cross meant to us and means for us and how we are empowered by that gift. And we focus on the resurrection. Jesus paid the price for our sin on the cross, once and for all, but the gift didn't stop on that cross. Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection is real. And the resurrection transforms lives for all eternity. The "true religion" Jesus offers is eternal life (John 3:16), both here and now and throughout what Paul calls "life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:19).

Think about your life before you knew Jesus and after. Even if you were a young child when you came to know Jesus, you can still explore the transformation. Choose words or short sentences to respond.

Before resurrection, I was...

After resurrection, I am...



Concentrate the remainder of your time on ways that the resurrection has affected all of life and the lives of those you love. Let resurrection become a reality for you here and now, not just a doctrinal statement of belief.

Without the resurrection, ...

Because of the resurrection, ...

As you bring your time to a close, ask Father, Son and Spirit to reveal the meaning of the resurrection all around you today.

### Wednesday: true religion, Jesus our “sukkot” - our remembrance

Today, read this week’s passage in John at least two times, focusing your attention on Jesus. In John 7:37 we read,

*“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and spoke in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.’”*

For 1400 years (there are debates as to the actual count), the Israelites had been celebrating the festival of booths or tabernacles. You’ll remember from last week that they created shelters to live in for 7 days each year in order to remember God taking care of them in the wilderness for 40 years. Imagine that situation. For 40 years you’re following Moses and literally wandering. Every morning God provides water and food enough for that day, and you simply follow where he leads, with no clue as to when the journey will end and the promised land will appear. In our culture, it’s safe to say we’d have a very hard time with this arrangement. We prefer almost anything over waiting, feeling helpless and trusting blindly.

With Jesus, the waiting ended. No longer was God’s provision of love a memory or a distant hope, he was right before them.

Pastor Mark told us that Jesus fulfilled the festival of the booths. Think about it. On the last day of the festival, Jesus himself invited people to come to him and drink. The festival of the booths (sukkot) represented God’s sheltering presence and life-provision, and Jesus stepped in to fulfill that role. From Jesus forward, we would have God present in our lives - not just a memory, but a living, daily experience of God’s love and provision. Jesus came to “sukkot” or “tabernacle” with us in order to cleanse our sins and restore us to fellowship with Father, Son and Spirit. God himself showed up - not a man-made booth to remind us of God’s faithfulness.

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).*

Journal your thoughts about John 1:14, “sukkot” and Jesus with us.

*How was Jesus a specific reminder to those around him of God the Father’s provision and love?*

**Note:** A look at John 3:16-21 will help give you insights; also, a review of the first 7 chapters of John reveals what Jesus said about the Father and how the Father was actively caring for them through the Son.

*In what ways did the people with Jesus experience what the Israelites experienced in the wilderness?*

*As you think about your prayers, your conversations with God and others, how do you want God’s provision and love to “show up” in your life right now?*

*How is God’s provision and love showing up?*

As you close your time today, focus on Jesus as the fulfillment of your need - whatever that need may be.

### Thursday: true religion, Jesus our living water and our promise of the Spirit

Begin your time today focusing, again, on Jesus as the fulfillment of our soul-need. Through his life, death and resurrection, we are healed...we are whole...we are free. But the gift didn’t stop there.

The true religion Jesus promised involves streams of living water...the moment-by-moment, eternal presence of a life-giving stream, the Holy Spirit.

We often imagine the disciples were more fortunate than we are - Jesus even called them blessed because they saw, they heard, they witnessed his ministry in action, they experienced the miracles, they knew, they touched and they walked with him for three years. It feels more difficult for us at times - we think we’d do better if the manna were on our porch each morning or we could walk to the mountain to hear Jesus’ teachings.

What we have that they never experienced while he was still with them, before the glorification, is God the Holy Spirit indwelling their very soul. Jesus promised the comforter, and the comforter came and stayed and lives with each believer forever. That is a stream of living water.

From John 7 we read,

*“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and spoke in a loud voice. “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. (John 7:37-39)*

The Jewish people had been celebrating God’s provision, and now God provided in a new but eternal way. As the Israelites emerged from their booths that final day of the feast, they discovered Jesus inviting them to drink from perpetual living water. No one understood the depth of his words, but Jesus spoke the truth.

The following are verses or passages from John that further address the work of the Spirit.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:15-21)

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“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” (John 16:5-15)

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*How would you currently describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit?*

*Where in your life have you specifically sensed the Holy Spirit showing up?*

*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?*

*How do you think you could experience the Holy Spirit's presence on a more regular basis?*



One of the most difficult aspects about our faith walk to discuss or explain is the Holy Spirit. And yet the Spirit is our constant, eternal companion. Today, as you complete your time, talk specifically with the Holy Spirit and sense the Spirit's desire to both communicate with you and for you. See if there are specific steps you can take to begin to "tune in" to the Spirit's love for you and involvement in your life.

### Friday: true religion, release control and have life

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 everyone around.

Pastor Mark contrasted the religion of man with the religion Jesus offered, and he gave us several characteristics of unhealthy "power play" responses by those who want others to fit into their system.

- 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. It's easy to see the behavior of the Pharisees and the Chief Priests, but, if we're honest, we exhibit those behaviors ourselves. We sometimes 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 our hearts, our homes, our community groups, our circle of friends 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 toward people in process?*

This has been a week of discovery together - the discovery of the kind of religion Jesus offers. Pastor Mark also wants those of us who've been involved in man-made religion to experience freedom. He told us that *"man-centered religion uses fear tactics to control people in order to protect their own power."* If that has been your story, then this week's message offers very good news. Pastor Mark continued, *"If you've had the courage to leave one of those systems, but you're still carrying around fear or guilt from that decision, I pray that you'll be set free of that fear. In Christ you are in no way accursed, other people don't control you, Jesus, not man, is your King, and he came to set you free, not enslave you."*

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



In closing today, let's focus on Pastor Mark's final remarks from his sermon. And let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us see where we fit in this examination and what steps we can take to be people who both receive and offer the life that Jesus offers.

*"We want to reduce our faith down to a set of rules to follow, because we can control that in our flesh, but Jesus invites you and me into something totally different, into a totally new life, where we daily submit to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit. That's scary to our flesh, because we don't control the Spirit. He may lead you to do things you don't want to do. You may have to love people you want to hate. You may have to forgive people you want to scorn. You may have to give up something your flesh wants to keep. You may have to sacrifice something you covet. You may have to open your mouth when you want to be silent, or be silent when you want to shout out. Being led by the Spirit is saying, 'in my life and my body, not my will be done today Lord, but yours.' It's saying, 'I'm willing to submit to you, because I believe the life you lead me into is better than the life I can create and control in my flesh.'"*

*People of Mission, this is what we're inviting you into, because it's what Jesus invited us into, not a religion of the flesh we can control, but a new life in the Spirit. Here's the question for you today...will you be willing to live this new life Christ calls you into, and be led by the Spirit of God within you? Will your attitude be, 'today, in my life, not my will be done, but yours Lord. Lead me by your Spirit and I will follow?'"*

## Saturday: Sabbath

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a "mini Sabbath" moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in Life Notes for the day you have off. It's really important to learn to simply "be" with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an "agenda." Sabbath simply means "cease" and "rest." So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. "Cease" all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God's love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God's company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He'll delight and amaze you.