



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: RECEIVING THE WITNESS OF THE WORD

JOHN 5:30-47

02.28.21

MAIN POINT

The emphasis of this passage is upon knowing God and not just knowing about God.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson emphasizes the overarching purpose of John: “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)

Earlier in John 5, Jesus healed a man who was an invalid for 38 years at a pool in Bethesda. The Pharisees didn’t focus upon the miracle, but rather the fact that it was performed on the Sabbath. Even more enraged, the Pharisees were angry that he would make Himself equal with God (5:18). In John 5:30-47, John takes this emphasis a step further and challenges the Pharisaic tradition that is not enough to merely read

the Word, if one does not *believe* the one whom He has sent (5:38-39). Engrossed in their own tradition and ways, they would often search the Scriptures to gain eternal life and miss the person whom the Scriptures were pointing. Dr. Stephen Smith has stated, "God will bless and honor the church that takes His Word seriously." Yet, orthodoxy without orthopraxy is no faith at all (a message seen throughout the Book of James).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Illustration:

Years ago, there was a very wealthy man who, with his devoted young son, shared a passion for art collecting. Together they traveled around the world, adding only the finest art treasures to their collection. Priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet and many others adorned the walls of the family estate. The widowed, elder man looked on with satisfaction as his only child became an experienced art collector. The son's trained eye and sharp business mind caused his father to beam with pride as they dealt with art collectors around the world.

As winter approached, war engulfed the nation, and the young man left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, his father received a telegram. His beloved son was missing in action. The art collector anxiously awaited more news, fearing he would never see his son again. Within days, his fears were confirmed. The young man had died while rushing a fellow soldier to a medic.

Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming Christmas holidays with anguish and sadness. The joy of the season, a season that he and his son had so looked forward to, would visit his house no longer. On Christmas morning, a knock on the door awakened the depressed old man. As he walked to the door, the masterpieces of art on the walls only reminded him that his son was not coming home.

As he opened the door, he was greeted by a soldier with a large package in his hand. He introduced himself to the man by saying, "I was a friend of your son. I was the one he was rescuing when he died. May I come in for a few moments? I have something to show you." As the two began to talk, the soldier told of how the man's son had told everyone of his, not to mention his father's, love of fine art. "I'm an artist," said the soldier, "and I want to give you this." As the old man unwrapped the package, the paper gave way to reveal a portrait of the son.

Though the world would never consider it the work of a genius, the painting featured the young man's face in striking detail. Overcome with emotion, the man thanked the soldier, promising to hang the picture over the fireplace. A few hours later, after the soldier had departed, the old man set about his task.

True to his word, the painting went well above the fireplace, pushing aside thousands of dollars of paintings. And then the man sat in his chair and spent Christmas gazing at the gift he had been given. During the days and weeks that followed, the man realized that even though his son was no longer with him, the boy's life would live on because of those he had touched. He would soon learn that his son had rescued dozens of wounded soldiers before a bullet stilled his caring heart.

As the stories of his son's gallantry continued to reach him, fatherly pride and satisfaction began to ease the grief. The painting of his son soon became his most prized possession, far eclipsing any interest in the pieces for which museums around the world clamored. He told his neighbors it was the greatest gift he had ever received.

The following spring, the old man became ill and passed away. The art world was in anticipation!

Unmindful of the story of the man's only son, but in his honor, those paintings would be sold at an auction. According to the will of the old man, all of the art works would be auctioned on Christmas day, the day he had received his greatest gift. The day soon arrived and art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the world's most spectacular paintings. Dreams would be fulfilled this day; greatness would be achieved as many claim "I have the greatest collection." The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum's list. It was the painting of the man's son. The auctioneer asked for an opening bid. The room was silent.

"Who will open the bidding with \$100?" he asked. Minutes passed. No one spoke. From the back of the room came, "Who cares about that painting? It's just a picture of his son. Let's forget it and go on to the good stuff."

More voices echoed in agreement. "No, we have to sell this one first," replied the auctioneer. "Now, who will take the son?" Finally, a friend of the old man spoke, "Will you take ten dollars for the painting? That's all I have. I knew the boy, so I'd like to have it."

"I have ten dollars. Will anyone go higher?" called the auctioneer. After more silence, the auctioneer said, "Going once, going twice. Gone." The gavel fell, cheers filled the room and someone exclaimed, "Now we can get on with it and we can bid on these treasures!"

The auctioneer looked at the audience and announced the auction was over. Stunned disbelief quieted the room. Someone spoke up and asked, "What do you mean it's over? We didn't come here for a picture of some old guy's son. What about all of these paintings? There are millions of dollars of art here! I demand that you explain what's going on here!" The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will of the father, whoever takes the son...gets it all." -Unknown

This illustration is a great introduction to the text, for the Son is the way to the Father and Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In this section of John 5, Jesus presents a legal argument for the validity of His claim for equality with God. In a legal system, what makes a person's testimony or witness credible?

According to the NY courts system, there are many factors that determine whether a witness is able to provide valid testimony.

- *Did the witness have an opportunity to see or hear the events about which he or she testified?*
- *Did the witness have the ability to recall those events accurately?*
- *Was the testimony of the witness plausible and likely to be true, or was it implausible and not likely to be true?*
- *Was the testimony of the witness consistent or inconsistent with other testimony or evidence in the case?*
- *Did the manner in which the witness testified reflect upon the truthfulness of that witness's testimony? (<https://www.nycourts.gov/judges/cji/1-General/CJI2d.Credibility.pdf>)*

In our culture, what has caused many to become hardened to the testimony of Christ? How do we overcome this? (In discussion, you may encounter thoughts of hypocrisy, religious barriers, cultural barriers, discussions of intolerance, etc. These same barriers were encountered throughout Scripture and should not be a hindrance, but rather a talking point to a deeper conversation.)

Begin as the leader of your group by sharing your personal testimony of Christ and ask if one more person within the group would like to share. (This would be a good opportunity to recap Dr. Smith's message on John 4 and our importance of investing in ONE. As will be seen throughout Scripture, it is true life change shared and invested that produces life change in others (2 Timothy 2:2).)

When someone refers to another as “spiritually blind,” what is meant by this phrase?

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 5:30-47

Who or what evidence does Jesus give for His claim of equality with God?

Jesus presents three testimonies to the Jewish leaders. First, he points to John the Baptist who has testified about Him. Recall John 1:7: “He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.” John the Baptist made it evident in John 1 that he was “not the Christ,” but the one who would make the way for the “Word which became flesh.” Second, Jesus points out that the truth of His testimony is backed up by his works (5:36). Finally, He points to OT Scripture and the witness of Moses and the Father.

For you, which of the three evidences are more significant for you and why?

What is Jesus’ view upon how the Pharisees and Jewish leaders study Scripture?

The Jewish leaders study Scripture because they believe that by them, they inherit eternal life (vv. 38-40). In fact, in Jewish culture, it was often customary that the Jewish leaders would memorize the Pentateuch (first five books of OT). The point being made is that the Jewish leaders were spiritually blind and believed that knowing about God equated with knowing God. This Pharisaical view is seen and re-emphasized throughout the NT (Matthew 23:13, 23-27; Matthew 7:21-23, 24-27, James 2:14-19, 20-26).

What is the difference between knowing *about* God and knowing God? What can you gain from this and apply to your own spiritual life?

This particular passage of Scripture is both a defense of who He is and a declaration of who they are (Jewish leaders). Jesus had just healed a man on the Sabbath, but the Jewish leaders were less enamored with the changed life and more concerned with Jesus' statement of equality with God (5:18). He then makes a statement which is echoed throughout Scripture, "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (5:24).

The first question asked in Genesis was "Where are you?" (Genesis 3). God asked Adam this question in the garden after he had sinned and was hiding from Him. God certainly knew where Adam was since He was all-knowing, but He wanted Adam to know where he was. The two greatest questions we can answer in life is who is God and who am I? As Dick Woodward once stated, our Outlook = Uplook (who He is) + Inlook (who we are). Jesus begins a defense dialogue in this section of who He is as the Son of God and equality with God. In this defense, there are three that testify to this fact: John the Baptist (vv. 32-34), His works (v. 36), and the words of Moses and the Father (vv. 37-47).

Amidst this dialogue, Jesus turns the table and accuses the Jewish leaders as not having the word abiding in them, for they do not believe the one whom He has sent (v.38). Furthermore, He states that they do not have the love of God in them either, challenging the superficiality of their faith. A similar comparison is made in Matthew 23:27 as the teachers of the law and Pharisees are likened to "whitewashed tombs," beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead bones. This challenge is the same for believers today in questioning whether we truly *know a lot about God* or truly *KNOW GOD*.

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE MATTHEW 7:24-27

Have someone summarize the parable of the foolish man and the wise man. What prevents us from being obedient *doers* of the Word and not just *hearers*? (*Both the wise man and the foolish man knew about God's Words. They both heard it, but only one practiced it. James states that our faith is useless if not put into practice through our actions. James 2:18, "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have*

deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.”)

Consider this passage in John 5 as a precursor to John 14:6-7 (*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well.*). Why is this passage in John 14 considered controversial in our culture with one way to the Father?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God for obedience to act upon the Scripture that we read and for our faith to be active.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

vv. 33-35: Jesus places limited value on John’s testimony because Jesus is not subject to human testimony (v.34). Jesus is a result of God’s testimony and revelation through the ages, there is nothing that John the Baptist’s witness could add to that testimony (Carson, 260). John 5:41 states clearly, “I do not accept the praise from men.”

V. 36: The truth of Jesus’ testimony is backed up by his works . These works are a greater testimony than the words of John the Baptist. They are a means by which the Father is able to demonstrate that Jesus is his unique son. The Father gave these works to Jesus in order for him to do them.

Vv. 37-40: The law that was given by the Father was meant to be the revelation of Christ Himself. The Jews would use the law to persecute Christ, yet do not understand that the purpose or intent was to reveal His Son. Yet the witness of the Father was an invitation to believe Jesus Christ in a way that many of the Jews did not in this day (Carson 265-266). The Jews acknowledged they had not seen the form of God, they prided themselves on being the nation that heard the voice of God (Beasley-Murray, 78).

Vv. 41-44: The Jews addressed by Jesus have neither the Word of God in them (v. 38), nor the life of God (v. 40), nor the love of God (v. 42). (Beasley-Murray, 79)

Vv. 45-47: Most of the Jews still believed in Moses as the mediator for God and had a strict adherence to the law passed down from Moses. The problem is that they saw the law as an end in itself and not as a witness to Christ himself. Their adherence to the law and rejection of the Messiah places Moses in accusation (Carson, 265-266). Both verses 39 and 46 refer to the fact that Scripture is pointing toward Christ.