

CHURCH.

LESSON 18

| | |
|----------|--------|
| 1 | PRAYER |
|----------|--------|

Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 2 | SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> PHILIPPIANS 3 - 4 and COLOSSIANS 1 - 2 |
|----------|---|

Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Philippians 3-4 and Colossians 1-2). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 3 | MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE]</i> REVIEW SERIES F |
|----------|---|

Review two by two the series F: "Preparation for Christian marriage".

- (1) Both believers. 2 Corinthians 6:14. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
- (2) Same life-goals: Amos 3:3. Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?
- (3) Self-control: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5. It is God's will that you be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to acquire a wife (or: that each of you should learn to control his own body).
- (4) Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6a. The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter.
- (5) Right priorities: Matthew 6:33. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 4 | BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 7:1-53 |
|----------|---|

Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 7:1-53 together. John 7:1-9 describes the Word, Jesus Christ going around openly in Galilee (April-October 29 A.D.)¹, but finally going secretly to Judea for the Feast of Tabernacles (October 29 A.D.). Jesus makes an appeal to the crowds in the temple. "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."

| | |
|---|------------|
| STEP 1. READ. | GOD'S WORD |
| Read. LET US READ John 7:1-53 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading. | |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| STEP 2. DISCOVER. | OBSERVATIONS |
| Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things) | |

7:37-39

Discovery 1. Streams of living water.

¹ **The Retirement Ministry of Jesus in Galilee** between April and October 29 A.D. (Mark chapters 7-9). To a large extent Jesus withdrew himself from the multitudes of Capernaum in order to be with his disciples. Jesus went from Capernaum in Galilee (north coast of Sea of Galilee) to the borders of Tyre and Sidon (north coast, north of Sea of Galilee), traversing a large section of Galilee. Then he crossed over to Decapolis (south-east of Sea of Galilee), went back into Galilee (Dalmanutha), left Galilee again for the region of Caesarea Philippi (north-east of Sea of Galilee, south of Mount Hermon), and finally covering a large stretch of Galilean territory on his way back to Capernaum. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for a week. On each of the seven days, a priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the Pool of Siloam. He would carry the water to the temple accompanied by a solemn procession. Amid the sounding of trumpets and the joyful shouting of the crowd he would pour the water through a funnel that led to the base of the altar of burnt offering. This ceremony reminded the people of Israel of the water that flowed from the rock in the desert (Exodus 17:1-7) and it pointed forward to the spiritual blessings of the coming Messianic age (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Probably just after the completion of this symbolic rite of pouring water, Jesus stood up and said 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." It was as if Jesus wanted to say to the crowd that this water was pointing to him. Jesus Christ is the True Fountain of living water. Two very important things will result from coming to Jesus Christ and believing in him.

(1) The believer (Christian) himself will receive everlasting life.

"He who believes in Jesus Christ will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). All people who drink from the Fountain, Jesus Christ, receive lasting satisfaction for themselves. They will receive everlasting life, that is, complete salvation. They will experience what Jesus promised the Samaritan woman in John 4:14, "The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

(2) The believer (Christian) himself will become a channel (a means) of everlasting blessings to others.

"He who believes in Jesus Christ, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38). In the Old Testament the river of life was found in the city of God (Psalm 46:4). It flowed out from under the threshold of the temple to become an abundant blessing (Ezekiel 47:1-12). That is why Jesus says, "As the Scripture says". The Holy Spirit gives to the Old Testament passages their deepest and highest application in the New Testament. All believers who have ever lived in the world constitute together "the city of God", the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:9-10). And according to John 7:38, the streams of living water are pictured as flowing from the hearts of every individual believer! By coming to Jesus Christ, the believer's own thirst is quenched and he himself becomes a channel (a means) of abundant blessings for others!

The Old Testament connects the issuing of streams of blessing with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 43:3). Likewise, the writer John says, "By this Jesus 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 7:39). Jesus proclaimed that everyone who believed in him would receive everlasting life, that is, complete salvation, but also an abundant life now. Christ is the real Source and Mediator of eternal life as well as abundant life for everyone who comes to him and believes in him.

However, the promise would not be fulfilled until Christ was glorified, that is, until he was crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven and sat on the throne in heaven. Then only would he pour out from heaven above the streams of living water on the hearts and lives of believers. The apostle John explains that Jesus was referring to "the baptism with the Spirit" (the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after his death and resurrection). It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ works rebirth, new life and salvation in the hearts and lives of believers. And it is through the Holy Spirit that he will make Christians channels (means, agents, instruments) of abundant blessings for other people. In the book of Acts we can read how, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the believers became an abundant blessing for other people. They brought the gospel of salvation to very many people all over the world!

7:45-52

Discovery 2. Knowing the law and obeying the law.

The religious leaders of the Jews had ordered the temple guards to go and arrest Jesus. However, they could not do it, because the temple guards were utterly amazed at the teaching of Jesus. They said, "No one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46). The religious leaders were angry and accused the temple guards of being deceived by Jesus. They claimed that none of the religious leaders of the Jews has ever believed in Jesus and that the mob (the rabble), who believed in Jesus, did not know the Old Testament law and were cursed!

However, one of the religious leaders, called Nicodemus, called their attention to the teaching of the law. The law teaches that no man may be condemned without first giving him a trial to find out what he has done (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). Yet, the Jewish religious leaders were condemning Jesus without giving him a trial. Thus, although the Jewish religious leaders and teachers claimed that they knew the law, they did not obey the law! In this way their ignorance was publicly exposed! And if they were not ignorant of what the law said, then they were guilty of unwillingness to obey the law!

Also in Matthew 23:3, Jesus accuses the Jewish religious leaders and teachers of not practising what they preached. Therefore, it is important for me to know that God wants me to obey what I know about his will. A Christian must practise what he believes and preaches! He must obey what he knows about the Bible!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 7:1-53 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

7:2

Question 1. What was the Feast of Tabernacles?

Notes.

(1) The seven appointed feasts (at fixed times) in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament knows seven religious festivals (Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29):

- The Sabbath
- The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread
- The feast of weeks or the feast of the harvest (the first fruits) or Pentecost
- The day of blowing trumpets
- The day of atonement
- The feast of Tabernacles
- The feast of Purim (Esther 9:18-32).

Three of these feasts were at the same time pilgrimage-festivals, during which Jews from all countries in the world would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (Deuteronomy 16:16):

- Passover marked *the beginning of the harvest*
- Pentecost celebrated *the ingathering and end of the harvest*
- and the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated *the thanksgiving for the harvest.*

(2) The Feast of Tabernacles.

The feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, that is, approximately October and lasted for seven days. It was not only a harvest festival, in which the Israelites thanked God for the vintage, but also a joyful festival commemorating God's guidance of Israel through the desert for forty years and a festival anticipating God's blessings in the future for Israel and the whole world. The seven days of feasting was characterised by bringing sacrifices, building booths and sleeping in them at night, a procession of lights and the outpouring of water on the altar of burnt offerings. Small huts made of branches and leaves were erected on the rooftops and in the streets and provided shelter for the pilgrims who attended the feast. The great candelabrum in the temple was lit and reminded the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel by night after the exodus. There was also a parade with burning torches by night.

The ceremony of the outpouring of water commemorated the refreshing stream of water that miraculously flowed out of the rock at Meribah in the desert (Exodus 17:1-7). On each of the seven days of the feast, a priest would fill a pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam and carry it back to the temple accompanied by a solemn procession. At the temple, amid the sounding of trumpets and the shouting and rejoicing multitudes he would pour the water through a funnel, which led to the base of the altar of burnt-offering.

The symbolic rite of water-pouring reminded the people of the Old Testament promises, "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants" (Isaiah 44:3). "Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1) And "You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Isaiah 58:11). That is why Jesus in verse 38 can say with confidence, "As the Scripture has said, 'streams of living water will flow from within him'."

7:6

Question 2. Why does Jesus say that the right time for him has not yet come?

Notes. Three times in John chapter 7 we read about "the right time" (Greek: *kairos*) or "hour" (Greek: *hóra*). This means *the proper time* or *the appointed time* for Jesus to act. The Bible clearly teaches that for every deed and action of Jesus Christ on earth, there is a definite moment, determined from all eternity by God the Father in his eternal plan.

In verse 6 and 8, Jesus says that *the right time* to go up to the feast had not yet come. After Jesus had told the Jewish religious leaders in unmistakable language that they did not know God the Father, they were anxious to arrest Jesus (John 7:28-30). However, nobody laid his hand on him, because *his time* had not yet come. No matter what the difficult

circumstances of Jesus were, in reality he was save from danger of his enemies, because it was not yet the will of God the Father that he should die at this time!

Only in John 12:23-24, Jesus says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”. Then Jesus prophesied that he would die. Also in John 13:1 Jesus says that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. And in John 17:1, Jesus prays to his Father saying, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son”. Therefore, the time Jesus came to earth, the time for everyone of his actions and the time he died, were all determined from all eternity in God’s plan. It is not man who determines the course of the history of salvation within the history of the world on earth, but the sovereign God in heaven (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8)!

7:14-16

Question 3. How did Jesus get such learning without having studied?

Notes. When Jesus taught the people in the temple, the people were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?”

(1) The standard education during the days of Jesus.

During the days of Jesus, the only schools that were recognised were schools in which certain religious teachers (rabbis) taught the Old Testament and Jewish theology. Unlike the two opposing religious parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Jesus never received any education in any of these religious or rabbinical schools. This means that in the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers, Jesus failed to receive his diploma in any accredited institution. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers concluded that everything Jesus taught must be wrong! Jewish learning concentrated on the interpretation of the Old Testament and the standard doctrines. In the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders Jesus only proclaimed his own opinions. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers urged that people should refuse to listen to his teachings.

(2) The unique source of the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus answers his critics by saying, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me”. No human religious teacher ever taught Jesus! Only God himself taught Jesus! The Jewish religious leaders failed completely to think of the possibility that the contents of Jesus’ teaching might have been derived from another source than the Jewish schools. God himself is a source of education that is far superior to any Jewish theological school! Jesus said that he received his teaching from this Source: God himself (cf. John 8:28; 14:24; 16:13; 1 John 2:27). This was a serious warning to his enemies, because if they rejected his teaching, they rejected the Greatest Teacher, God himself!

7:17-18

Question 4. What should the qualifications of anyone be in order to evaluate the teaching of Christ?

Notes. Jesus says, “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 honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false in him”. Jesus says that anyone who wishes to understand and evaluate his teaching must have the proper attitude and the proper motive.

(1) The proper attitude is the willingness to obey God.

In verse 17, Jesus says, that a person who does not have the desire to obey the will of God as revealed in the Bible, will never find the true knowledge!

- Intellectually, he will not be able to grasp the meaning of God’s message.
- Existentially, he will never be able to establish a personal relationship with the only God that exists.

In verse 17, Jesus teaches that you must have the right attitude and be willing to obey God before you can understand God’s teaching.

(2) The proper motive is to work for the honour of God.

In verse 18, Jesus says, that if a person speaks to gain honour for himself, then he is nothing but a false pretender. The Jewish religious teachers and leaders were such pretenders. They wanted all people to look up to them as the leaders and teachers, to admire them for their religious zeal (in praying, fasting, giving, keeping the ceremonial laws). But they were jealous, because the crowds listened to Jesus instead! They were seeking their own honour and that is why they could not recognise that Jesus was speaking the words of God.

However, Jesus spoke the words of God and obeyed the words of God. He worked for the honour of his heavenly Father. That is why he was truly reliable! Anyone who wishes to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus must have the right attitude (be willing to obey the Word of God, the Bible) and the right motive (to seek the honour of the God of the Bible). Jesus promises that he will then know (find out) that the teaching of Jesus really comes from God in heaven!

7:17

Question 5. What is the relationship between knowledge and obedience in verse 17?

Notes. There is a specific relationship in the Bible between knowledge, love and obedience.

(1) The relationship between knowledge, love and obedience. Knowledge comes first.

In John 17:26 Jesus says that he has given *knowledge* of God to his disciples, so that God's *love* may be in them. In John 14:15 Jesus says, "If you *love* me, you will *obey* what I command." Therefore, knowing God leads to loving God and loving God leads to obeying God (John 14:21,23). The relationship between these three is then: first knowledge, second love and third obedience.

(2) The relationship between obedience, love and knowledge. Knowledge comes last.

However, John 7:17 says, that you must be willing to *obey* before you can find true understanding and knowledge. And Ephesians 3:17-19 says that you must be rooted in *love* before you can grasp the knowledge of God. Therefore obedience to God leads to more love for God and to more experiential knowledge of God! The relationship between these three is then: first obedience, second love and third knowledge.

(3) Obedience, love and knowledge are inter-dependent.

All three are inter-dependent, influence one another and enrich one another:

- knowledge of the mind
- love of the heart
- and obedience of the will

None of the three is really first. What is really first is the sovereign grace of God! Only by God's grace do we gain knowledge, love and obedience! God's sovereign grace influences and transforms our entire personality so that we may live for the glory of God.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 7:1-53.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 7:1-53.

- 7:1. Often it is wise to stay away from places where people want to harm or kill you.
- 7:5. Do not be surprised when some of your own family members, parents, brothers and sisters or children do not believe and even ridicule your faith in Jesus Christ.
- 7:7. Do not be surprised that the world will hate you when you expose the evil of this world.
- 7:8. There is a right time for everything; a time to wait and a time to act. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 8:5b-6a. There is also a time for God to wait and a time for God to act! *It is not man who determines the course of events and history on earth! It is the sovereign God in heaven who determines the course of events and history on earth!*
- 7:12. Do not be surprised that people are divided in their view about who Jesus Christ is. Even today many see Jesus as only a Prophet, while in reality he is the Messiah (7:40-43). Read Luke 2:34.
- 7:14. Jesus taught in places where people sought religion, where people were interested in religious matters. Give special attention to people who are seeking God.
- 7:15-16. A person may receive a good education at an official institution. But a person will always find the best education in the world by sitting at the feet of the Greatest Teacher, Jesus Christ.
- 7:17. If you want to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus Christ, you must first have the right attitude and willingness to obey him.
- 7:18. If you want to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus Christ, you must first have the right motive and seek only the honour of God.
- 7:20. Do not be surprised when people say that you are demon-possessed.
- 7:24. Stop judging people and situations by mere appearances and make right judgments.
- 7:37-39. Know that when you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit in you will not only transform your own life, but also use your life to bless many other people.
- 7:47-51. Be careful not to condemn other people for not knowing the law when you yourself fail to keep the law.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 7:1-53.

I want to consciously be aware that God has made me a channel (a means) of blessing for other people. He has given me the Holy Spirit to live in my body and life, so that I may share the gospel of salvation to others and love and serve them with the love God has given to me.

I want to continue to obey God's law, that is, God's words which are written in the Bible. I want to practise what I preach. I want to obey what I know of the Bible.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 7:1-53.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 7 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Colossians 3 -4 and 1 Thessalonians 1 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (6) John 5:24. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation