

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 5:1-47. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S)      **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 5:1-47 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John 5:1-47 for yourself.

(T)      **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 5:1-47. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S)      An important truth for me is in John 5:17-23 about the claims of Jesus. Jesus made certain claims about himself that were not misunderstood by the Jews.

First. In John 5:17-18, Jesus claims that he is equal in essence with God the Father.

Jesus calls God “*his Father*”. Jesus does not say that God is his *physical father*, as is misunderstood by many people, but that God is his *spiritual Father*. The Jews clearly understand that Jesus claims for himself *deity in the highest sense of that term*. They understand that Jesus claims that he is equal with God the Father! The claim of Jesus is either the most wicked blasphemy that should be punished with death, or it is the most glorious truth that should be accepted by faith. God the Father and God the Son have the same divine nature. God took on a body in Jesus Christ in order to reveal himself visibly to us. Thus Jesus claims that he is equal in essence with God the Father. For this reason the Jews want to kill Jesus.

The Jews also attack Jesus for violating the Sabbath law. They regard the essence of the Sabbath as *idleness* and maintain that all work on that day is wrong. But Jesus says that if that is true, then the Jews indirectly accuse God the Father of violating the Sabbath. God the Father is always at his work, because he preserves the whole creation from falling apart and he continually saves his people from sin! God the Father never stops and rests. Jesus Christ is God the Son, because he stands in the closest possible relation to God the Father. God the Father and God the Son are working, even on the Sabbath. In John 5:17, Jesus says, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too, am working”. The meaning of the words of Jesus was that when the Jewish religious leaders attack God the Son for violating the Sabbath, then they are also attacking God the Father himself for violating the Sabbath, because God the Son is equal in essence with God the Father.

Second. In John 5:19-22, Jesus claims that he is equal in works with God the Father.

He says, “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”. *The activity that originates with God the Father is manifested in God the Son*. God the Son sees what God the Father shows him, and then by his word and action he reveals the mind and works of God the Father. God the Son perceives the will of God the Father and then puts it into effect.

Jesus assures the Jews that he has the *authority to perform much greater works than miracles* like healing the paralysed man. Jesus says that if his miracles have taken them by surprise, his future work would really amaze them. His future work would be two main activities: to save people that believe in him and to judge people that do not believe in him. He gives spiritual and physical life to dead people who believe in him, but executes judgement on people who do not believe and do evil.

Jesus claims that he has the same spiritual authority as God the Father. He said, “Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.” Jesus does not say that he will make physical dead people temporary alive again, as the prophets Elijah and Elisha did. He claims that he has the same spiritual authority as God the Father to make spiritual dead people permanently alive by giving them eternal life and that he has the spiritual authority to make physical dead people permanently alive by resurrecting their mortal bodies and giving those bodies immortality.

Jesus also claims, "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son". Throughout the Old Testament God has been acknowledged as "the Judge of the earth" (Gen 18:25). His judgements were constantly being exercised in the lives of people and nations and at the end of times there would be a final judgement. Now in the New Testament Jesus also claims the authority to execute the final judgement. As a matter of fact, he claims that God the Father has given the whole final judgement to God the Son. The reason why God the Father commits all judgement to God the Son is that Jesus Christ may receive the same honour as is given to God the Father!

Third. In John 5:23 Jesus claims that he is equal in honour with God the Father.

He says, "That all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him". In Philippians 2:9-11, as a reward for his obedience unto death, God the Father has given Jesus a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. In Isaiah 45:22 this same honour belongs only to God. Therefore, when Jesus Christ receives these honours, the glory of God is not diminished or given to another. The glory of God is rather enhanced, because Jesus Christ receives these honours "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. Whenever Jesus Christ is exalted, God the Father is glorified.

**(T)** An important truth for me is in John 5:30-47 about the witnesses of Jesus Christ.

In John 5:31, Jesus says that his witness concerning himself is true, but that the Jewish religious leaders do not regard his claims as valid. Of course, a testimony should come from someone else. No one can witness his own signature. If the claims of Jesus are made without the authority of God the Father, then nobody would be obligated to accept them. But the testimony of Jesus is true, because according to John 8:13-18, it has been confirmed by the testimony of God the Father. And there are other testimonies too. Jesus calls attention to five other very important witnesses on his behalf! The Jewish religious leaders cannot ignore these witnesses and their testimonies!

First. The witness of God the Father himself.

In John 5:19 and 30, Jesus says that God the Son does nothing on his own initiative. He follows the example of God the Father. For all eternity, the relationship between God the Father and God the Son was characterised by God the Son doing the will of God the Father, speaking what God the Father speaks, judging like God the Father judges and pleasing God the Father. Because of this unchanging principle of action between God the Father and God the Son, Jesus can safely leave his vindication in the hands of God the Father. And God the Father indeed vindicates God the Son and provides credentials for him.

In John 5:32, Jesus introduces another witness. From John 5:36-37 we know that this witness is God the Father. God the Father is constantly bearing witness to God the Son. Especially in the following three ways: One. In the Old Testament Scriptures. Two. In speaking directly from heaven at his incarnation. And three. By the great works he has given him to fulfil. All the other witnesses are subordinate to the testimony of God the Father.

Second. The witness of John the Baptist.

In John 5:33-35, Jesus introduces John the Baptist as his witness. According to John chapter 1, the calling and task of John the Baptist was that he came as a witness to testify concerning *the light*. He testified to the delegation of Jewish leaders and teachers, who came from Jerusalem to test him, that Jesus is *the true light that gives light to every man*; that Jesus is *the coming Lord, whose way he prepared* (Mk 1:3); that Jesus is *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*; that Jesus *baptises with the Holy Spirit*; and that Jesus is *the Son of God* (Jn 1:7,9,23,29,33,34)! John was not the light, but the light-bearer or lamp, who attracted the crowds to Jesus. John fulfilled his task well. Now Jesus Christ was here with even more important witnesses than even John the Baptist could supply.

Third. The witness of the works of Jesus.

In John 5:36, Jesus introduces the very work that God the Father had given to him as a witness. The work that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ to do was to make the invisible God known and to die in order to make atonement for sins and thus to save people and to reconcile them to God. All the other works of Jesus on earth, like his preaching, teaching and healing, contribute to this great work of Jesus: to reveal God and to execute God's plan of salvation. Even his miracles were signs that pointed to the reality of God in the works of Jesus Christ. The miracles proved that God the Father had sent him and approved of him.

Fourth. The witness of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In John 5:39-40, Jesus introduces the Old Testament Scriptures as his witness. Jesus says that although the Jewish religious leaders and teachers possessed the word of God in a book, they did not have the word of God in their hearts. They possessed the Old Testament, but did not believe what it taught or obeyed its commands. The Old Testament spoke much about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, but the Jewish religious leaders and teachers did not see Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. They also did not come to Jesus Christ to receive eternal life. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus teaches that he had come to fulfil the Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke 24:27 and 44, Jesus explains to his disciples what was said in all the Old Testament Scriptures concerning himself. The Old Testament Scriptures very clearly speak about the birth and life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and about God's people

spreading to all the nations on earth! And 2 Timothy 3:15 teaches that the holy Scriptures is able to make a person wise with regard to salvation. And it teaches that salvation only comes through faith in Jesus Christ!

Fifth. The witness of Moses.

In John 5:45-47, Jesus introduces Moses as his witness. The Jews regarded Moses as their highest prophet. However, Jesus points out that the Jews did not believe what Moses wrote. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses prophesied, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him". Moses himself prophesied that God commanded all people to obey the coming Messiah. However, the hostile Jews did not see in Jesus the coming Messiah, the voice of God and the form of God. In their hardness of heart, they rejected the Messiah, the Son of God. So God rejected them

**(S) STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 1:1-18 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

**1<sup>st</sup> Question.** (5:8). Why was the paralysed man immediately healed?

**(T)** A paralysed man cannot move himself, cannot stand up or pick up something or walk. This paralysed man complained that there was no one to help him. Then Jesus said to this paralysed man, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!" This was a great challenge to a man who had just confessed his own complete inability!

One. Jesus never commands anything that would be impossible. When he speaks, he wants it to happen. His spoken word is powerful and effective. Here, Jesus wants this paralysed man to walk again.

Two. The paralysed man believed the word of Jesus. To show that he believed, he obeyed. The paralysed man was immediately cured, picked up his mat and walked! The recovery of the man was not gradual nor partial, but instant! Again the spiritual authority and glory of Jesus is revealed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question.** (5:24-25). How does the Son give life to the dead?

**(S)** One. The word of Jesus gives a person ability and life.

In John 5:24, Jesus Christ, the Son of God says, "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". Jesus Christ gives life to people by his word. *His word* is his whole message to the world. He speaks his word by the authority of God the Father. The incident of the healing of the paralysed man is *a sign* of how Jesus gives spiritual life to people by his word. The paralysed man received physical healing through *the word of Christ that gives him a new ability*. In the same way, anyone who believes in Jesus, will receive spiritual healing through the word of Christ that gives new and eternal life.

Two. The word of Jesus causes the Holy Spirit to work.

In John 5:25, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when *the dead* will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." How can spiritual dead people be expected to hear? In Ezekiel 37:4, the prophet says, "Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" And the breath of God entered the dead bodies and they were able to respond! They came to life! It is the same Spirit of God who now enables the spiritually dead people to hear the voice of Jesus and enter into eternal life!

Three. The word of Jesus comes only to those whom he sovereignly chooses.

Which spiritually dead people will hear his voice and live? In John 5:21, Jesus says that he gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Jesus Christ gives eternal life to those people he sovereignly chooses to give it. The Holy Spirit will cause them to hear his voice and will regenerate them. Don't forget that God's sovereign choice includes man's responsible response!

**3<sup>rd</sup> Question.** (5:26). What does it mean that the Son has life in himself?

**(T)** None but God the Father possesses inherently this *life-in-himself*, because only he is unbegotten and uncreated. He is in his very being *the living God* and completely self-sufficient. Now Jesus says, "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself". God the Father has from all eternity imparted his prerogative to have *life-in-himself* to God the Son. This is the meaning of the words "only-begotten" with respect to God the Son. It never refers to *his physical sonship*, but always to *his eternal spiritual sonship*. Jesus Christ is begotten, but not created. God the Father did not give this *life-in-himself* to God the Son at his incarnation or at the baptism of Jesus. This is an eternal act and a part of the unique Father-Son relationship that already existed *in the beginning*, before the creation of matter, space and time. *In the eternal order*, God the Father imparts this *life-in-himself* to God the Son. *In the temporal order*, God the Son reveals this life to people on earth. In 1 John 1:2, God the Son is depicted as the embodiment of that eternal life that "was with the Father and was made manifest to us". Human beings and all other

created beings on earth do not possess this *life-in-themselves*, because they are all created. Their life is derived from their Creator.

(S)     **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*.

I want to practise to have faith in what Jesus says. Like the paralysed man, I will first confess my complete inability, but then obey what Jesus says.

(T)     I always want to speak about God as he has revealed himself in the Bible.

**STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 4:1-47.

(S)     Dear Father in heaven, I thank you for teaching me to have faith in you just like the paralysed man had. Whenever I read the Bible, help me to realise deep in my heart that you are speaking to me and want me to hear your voice. Help me to discern what you are saying to me and make me willing to do what you say.

(T)     Dear Father in heaven, you eternally possess *life-in-yourself* and are completely self-sufficient. Yet, you have created me and my physical life is completely dependent on you. You have saved me and also my spiritual life is completely dependent on you. Help me to realise more and more how you are the Source of every good thing in my life. Help me never to put my small mind above your infinite mind and understanding.

(S)     **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John 6:1-71.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air."