

(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 7:1-53. 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 7:1-53 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 7:1-53 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 7:1-53. “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 7:37-39 about streams of living water.

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for a week long. 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 and it pointed forward to the spiritual blessings of the coming Messianic age. Probably just after the completion of this symbolic rite of water-pouring, 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 the water that was poured out was pointing to him. Jesus Christ is the True Fountain of life.

Two very important things will result from coming to Jesus Christ and believing in him.

First. The believer himself will receive everlasting life.

John 6:35 says, “He who believes in Jesus Christ will never be thirsty”. 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 to 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”.

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

John 7:38 says, “He who believes in Jesus Christ, streams of living water will flow from within him”. The Old Testament speaks of what people may expect in the future. Psalm 46:4 says that *the river of life* is found in *the city of God*. Ezekiel 47:1-12 says that this river of life flows out from under the threshold of the temple to become an abundant blessing. Jesus quotes these Scriptures and says, “As the Scripture has said”. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit applies these Old Testament passages. Hebrews 12:22-24 and Revelation 21:9-10 teach that all believers in Jesus Christ together constitute *the city of God*, called *the new Jerusalem*. John 7:38 teaches that the streams of living water is pictured as flowing from the hearts of these believers in Jesus Christ. When any person comes to Jesus Christ and believes in him, his own thirst for spiritual life is quenched and he becomes a channel of abundant spiritual blessings to other people!

Isaiah 44:3 connects the outpouring of streams of blessing with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the apostle John says, “By saying ‘Streams of living water will flow from within him’ Jesus was pointing to the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Jesus Christ were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified”. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus thus proclaimed that every person who believed in him would receive salvation and an abundant life now and complete and everlasting salvation thereafter.

Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. He is the real Source and Mediator of eternal life and abundant life for every one who comes to him and believes in him.

Nevertheless, the promise would not be fulfilled until Jesus Christ was glorified. First Jesus had to be crucified and resurrected, first he had to ascend into heaven and sit on the throne in heaven. Then only would Jesus Christ pour out

the streams of living water into the hearts of believers in him. The apostle John explains that Jesus was referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after his death and resurrection on the Day of Pentecost. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ would work rebirth, new life and salvation in the hearts and lives of believers. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ would make all Christians channels (means, agents, instruments) of abundant blessings for other people.

(T) An important truth for me is in John 7:45-52 about 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 they were utterly amazed at the teaching of Jesus. They said, "No one ever spoke the way this man does". The religious leaders were angry and accused the temple guards of being deceived by Jesus. They claimed that not one of the religious leaders of the Jews had ever believed in Jesus and that the mob (rabble), who believed in Jesus, did not know the Old Testament law! The religious leaders cursed the crowd who believed in Jesus!

However, one of the religious leaders, called Nicodemus, called their attention to the teaching of the law. The law in Deuteronomy 1:16-17 teaches that no man may be condemned without first giving him a trial to find out what he has done. The Jewish religious leaders were condemning Jesus without giving him a trial. Although the religious leaders of the Jews claimed that they knew the law, they did not obey the law! The same people who a moment ago denounced the crowd as *rabble* because of their ignorance of the law, now have their own ignorance of the law exposed! And if they were not ignorant of what the law said, then they were guilty of unwillingness to obey the law! In Matthew 23:3, Jesus accuses the Jewish religious leaders of not practising what they preached. Therefore, it is important for me to obey what I know about his will. A Christian *must practise what he preaches!* A Christian *must obey what he knows about the Bible!*

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 7:1-53 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.

1st Question. (7:2). What was the Feast of Tabernacles?

(T) The Feast of Tabernacles or the feast of dwelling in booths was one of the three important pilgrim-feasts of the Israelites. All Israelites in the world came to Jerusalem to celebrate. Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29 say that this feast was celebrated in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, that is, approximately October and lasted for seven days. It was a harvest festival, in which the Israelites thanked God for the vintage. It was 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 of sacrifices in the temple, living in booths, a procession of lights and the outpouring of water. 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 torch-parade 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. 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. This symbolic rite of the outpouring of water reminded the people of the Old Testament promises. Isaiah 44:3 promised, "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 55:1 said, "Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters." And Isaiah 58:11 promised, "You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." 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'."

2nd Question. (7:6). Why does Jesus say that the right time for him has not yet come?

(S) Three times we read in John chapter 7 about *the right time*. The right time means *the proper time* or *the appointed time* for him to act. In John 7:6-8, Jesus says that the right time to go up to the feast had not yet come. The Bible clearly teaches that for every deed and action of Jesus on earth, there is a definite moment, determined from all eternity by God the Father in his eternal plan. In John 7:28-30, after Jesus had told the Jewish religious leaders in unmistakable language that they did not know God the Father, they tried to arrest Jesus. 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 very soon die. Also in John 13:1 is written that Jesus knew that *the time* had come for him to leave this world

and go to the Father. And in John 17:1, he 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 time of events and the course of history, but the sovereign God in heaven!

3rd Question. (7:14-16). How did Jesus get such learning without having studied?

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

One. What was 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 taught the Old Testament and Jewish theology. Unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus never received any education in a school of a Jewish religious teacher. In the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers Jesus was uneducated and failed to receive a diploma in any accredited institution. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers concluded that everything Jesus taught must be wrong! Jewish teaching concentrated on the interpretation of the Old Testament law. In the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers Jesus did not teach the standard doctrines concerning the law, but was only uttering his private opinion. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers urged people to refuse to listen to his teachings.

Two. What was then the unique source of the teachings of Jesus?

Although the Jewish religious leaders and teachers rejected Jesus, the crowds were amazed at his wonderful teachings. Where did Jesus receive such wisdom, insight and spiritual knowledge and power? Jesus answered his critics, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me”. Jesus clearly said that he was not taught by any man on earth. He did not even teach himself. He was taught by God himself! The Jewish religious leaders and teachers completely failed to think of the possibility that people could be educated outside the religious schools of the Jews! Jesus said that God himself was his Source of education and God is a far superior Teacher than the Jewish religious schools! While the Jewish religious teachers taught their many traditions and legal interpretations, God taught his Word.

This was a serious warning to the Jewish religious leaders and teachers. If they reject the message of Jesus, they also reject God himself!

4th Question. (7:17-18). What are the qualifications for anybody in order to evaluate the teaching of Christ?

(S) 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 evaluate his teaching must have both the proper attitude and the proper motive!

One. The proper attitude is to be willing to obey God.

In John 7:17, Jesus says that if a person does not have a desire to obey the will of God as expressed in the Bible, he will never find the true knowledge! Intellectually, he will not be able to grasp the meaning of God’s message and experientially he will fail to establish a relationship with God. Jesus says that you can only really know and understand the teachings of the Bible and experience its truth when you are first willing to obey the teaching of the Bible.

Two. The proper motive is to work for the honour of God.

In John 7:18, Jesus says, that if a person speaks to gain honour for himself, then he is nothing but a false pretender. This was what the Jewish religious leaders and teachers were doing. They wanted all people to look up to them as the leaders, to admire them for their religious zeal and they were jealous whenever the crowds listened to Jesus! They were seeking their own honour and that is why they could not recognise that Jesus Christ was speaking the words of God. However, Jesus spoke the words of his Father and sought to do the will of his Father. He worked for the honour of his heavenly Father. That is why he was truly reliable.

Likewise, if you wish to evaluate the teaching of Jesus you must first be willing to do what he says and you must do it to the honour of God. Only then will you be able to know that the teaching of Jesus really comes from God in heaven.

5th Question. (7:17). What is the relationship between knowledge and obedience?

(T) There is a specific relationship in the Bible between knowledge, love and obedience. 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*. The relationship between these three is then: first knowledge, second love and third obedience.

However, John 7:17 says, that you must be willing to obey before you can find true knowledge. And Ephesians 3:17-19 says that you must be rooted in love before you can grasp the knowledge of God. In these passages, obeying God and loving God comes before knowing God! *Obedience to God leads to more love for God and to more experiential knowledge of God!*

All three: knowledge of the mind, love of the heart and obedience of the will are inter-dependent, influence one another and enrich one another. 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.

(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 consciously be aware that God has made me a channel of blessing for other people through the Holy Spirit living in my body.

(T) I want to continue to obey God's words in the Bible, so that I may practise what I preach, know God's will better and better and grow in loving God and people.

STEP 5. PRAY

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 7.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, make me continually conscious that your Spirit dwells in my body and that you want streams of living water to flow to other people.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, help me to read and study the Bible every day so that I will put some truths into practise. I really desire to practise what I preach. Give me your grace to obey what I know of the Bible. Let me be the person you want me to be and do what you want me to do! In Jesus name, amen!

(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 8:59.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

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