

The Year of Discipleship in 3-D

(Further Developing Devoted Followers of Christ)



Welcome! Growing into more fully-devoted followers of Christ, may this time help all: **Grow Upward** into a more mature personal relationship and commitment to Christ Jesus faithful to God's Word!

Grow Outward to neighbor and world around, learning how to love well and to lead in what matters to God - guided by God's Word, by Jesus Himself, and by the Holy Spirit!

And, **Grow Inward** to discover a more contemplative faith, enhanced by both silence and prayer!

The Scripture for Sunday, February 20, 2022

[STUDY LESSON 24]

THE GOOD NEWS READING:

John 7:37-52

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, {38} and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" {39} Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

{40} When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." {41} Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? {42} Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" {43} So there was a division in the crowd because of him. {44} Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

{45} Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" {46} The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" {47} Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? {48} Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? {49} But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed." {50} Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, {51} "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" {52} They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

DISCUSSION GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS:

1. Open (*or have someone in the group open*) with a prayer inviting the work of the Holy Spirit to open up the hearts and lives of any and all to shape believers into more fully devoted following of Christ.
2. Read (*or have one or more persons read*) the passage printed above (*or from a bible*).
3. What words or phrases caught your attention as your heard this passage read? Put another way, were you to choose to memorize a verse and cherish it from this text, what verse might that be and why? Take note within yourself, what sort of feelings arise in that word, phrase, or verse?
4. BACKGROUND NOTES: The setting for this text is again in Jerusalem for yet another festival, that of the Festival or Feast of the Tabernacle, or Booths (*Sukkoth in Hebrew*). It is an 7-8 day fall festival (typically in late September early October) commemorating God's provisions of water particularly during the exodus wandering in the wilderness. Pilgrims to Jerusalem would construct booths in the city to live in. Each day a procession would take place in the city with people holding palms and fruit along the way to represent the harvest. A priest would daily, with a golden pitcher, go down to the Pool of Siloam, fill it, process to the temple, walk around the altar, and then pour out the water. With it they would proclaim the words of Psalm 118:2. Such a context greatly informs Jesus' pronouncements here.

5. Recall a time in your life when you were particularly parched or were extremely thirsty. What was the experience like as you remember? Consider, as you do, that essential fact of water as a necessity for living, or put another way, “Without water we don’t make it!”
6. One cannot be certain, but suppose at the very moment the priest is pouring out the water around the altar that day, Jesus is crying out for all to hear, “Let anyone who is thirsty *come to ME.*” (*Emphasis mine*) How might His declaration be heard in light of the festival, the water, the harvest, and God’s abundant provision in the wilderness. (*See Exodus 17:1-17*) How do you want to hear Jesus’ words?
7. No specific verse in the Old Testament is referenced by Jesus when He said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (*See John 7:38*) In actuality, were that verse literally translated from the Greek it would sound more like this: “Out of ‘his’ ‘belly/womb’ shall flow rivers of living water.” “Believers” is not there, but rather “he,” and the Greek “cardia” or “heart” is not there but rather “belly, womb, or even gut.” Jesus appears to be pointing to Himself. In what ways is this text reinforced and even informed by Jesus’ encounter at the well with the woman of Samaria?
8. An argument ensues over where Jesus comes from, over and against the notion purported by the religious leaders that the Messiah must come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, and not from Galilee. (*See John 7:40, 52*) How or in what ways does one’s place of origin dictate, inform, or carry weight for one’s identity? Is this a fair assessment? Ask yourself, especially given John’s Gospel, where Jesus originates.
9. More than a little legalism comes down heavy-handedly from the chief priests and Pharisees, even to the point of accusing the “misinformed” of being deceived, and calling those who disagree with them, “accursed.” (*See John 7:47, 49*) Have you ever been at the receiving end of an other’s self-righteousness, or some judgmental legalism or “bible-thumping?” How did you feel for you? Is this something you’ve ever done to someone else “in the name of Jesus?” What might a disciple learn from listening in to this text?
10. Nicodemus makes another appearance here is a subtle or apparent defense of Jesus that he first receive a fair hearing. John even reminds us of Nicodemus and somewhat pulls us back to his night-time encounter in John 3. (*See John 7:51*) Nicodemus has come out of the darkness, to a degree, and appears to display a bit of courage. Maybe even seeking Jesus as he is engaged here. It could be argued he’s a work in progress at this point still. How are you in any way a “work in progress” with regard to aspects of believing and following Jesus?
11. Looking ahead to John 19:38-42, Nicodemus makes a third and final appearance (literally between the cross and the empty tomb). How can you use the image of life between the crucifixion and the empty tomb as a means of describing discipleship?
12. Spend some time talking or reflecting upon believing as an aspect of discipleship. If willing, share (*or personally identify within yourself*) an aspect of your life where you know God is working on your believing and what you believe and how this impacts your following of Jesus.
13. What is your main discipleship “takeaway” from this text?
14. Can you identify any particular ways your Christian faith and following might be inspired to change in light of this passage from the Bible (and any discussion and/or reflection that may have taken place)?
15. (*Optional*) Read the passage once more. Then, take some time to close (or have someone close) with a prayer.