



Lesson 5 ~ who is Jesus?

John 5

Discussion Starter

- As you get older, do you find yourself becoming more or less like your parents? Why?

Introduction

In the first four chapters of John, as Jesus began his ministry by calling his disciples and doing miracles, people generally responded positively to Jesus. Beginning in **John chapter 5**, however, things begin to change as Jesus challenges the authority of the Jewish religious leaders. When confronted, Jesus makes some astounding claims about his own identity and, as a result, he becomes more and more controversial.

Jesus is just as controversial today. As we read Jesus' claims, we too, must decide to believe or reject his identity and mission. It has been argued that there are three possible beliefs about Jesus – he was a *liar*, a *lunatic* or he is who he says he is – *Lord*. There is no middle ground. Who do *you* say he is?

Preparation

1. Before you read **John 5**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).

Amen

2. Read **John 5** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read this chapter in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version* (NIV), the *New Living Translation* (NLT), or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

3. Write one question that you have about this chapter that you would like answered as you do this lesson.

QUESTIONS

Read **John 5:1-15**

1. Picture the setting of this story in your imagination (**5:2-5**). What are the smells? The noises? The atmosphere? How does it make you feel? What do you see Jesus doing as he comes to this place?

2. What does the fact that the man had been sick **thirty-eight years** add to the story?

A Missing Verse? Does your Bible include **John 5:4**, or does the verse numbering go from verse **three** to verse **five**? Verse four is usually deleted in most contemporary translations because it is not found in ancient manuscripts dating before 400 AD, which are considered the most reliable. (Look for the omitted verse in the footnotes of your Bible.) Scholars think verse four was added at some point in history as an explanation to how the waters were occasionally stirred (**5:7**). A more likely explanation is that there were underground springs that occasionally caused the water in the pool to bubble or move. It was believed that the waters had healing power and the pool site became a sanctuary of healing where sick people gathered. Contemporary examples of similar healing places might be the spa at Lourdes, France or the shrine of Guadalupe, Mexico.

3. What motives and underlying attitudes did Jesus intend to expose by his question, "Do you want to get well" (**5:6**)?

♥ What is the connection between wanting to be well and receiving healing?

4. List several things the invalid man would have to "give up" if he were healed, as well as several things he would have to "take on."

| "Give Up" | "Take On" |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Dependence on others</i> | <i>Responsibility for himself</i> |

♥ How does Jesus' question (**5:6**) apply to the problem areas of your life? What is your answer? What might you have to change?

5. What does the man's answer in **5:7** tell you about his expectations for being healed? Where is his focus? What are some words that describe his attitude?

♥ When have you wanted to give up all hope because you thought things would never get better? What happened to change things?

6. What did Jesus contribute towards the man's healing and what did the invalid contribute (5:8-9)? Why were both contributions important?
- ♥ When did God last work in your life to correct a situation that seemed hopeless? What was God's part? What was yours?
- ♥ Is there an area of your life where you feel paralyzed, lame, and not able to "walk"? What kind of hope does the story give you? What will you do?
7. How would the outcome of this whole story (**John 5**) have been affected if Jesus had told the man to get up and walk, but *not* to pick up and carry his mat?

Can you think of any reasons why the man taking his mat with him was important?

Sabbath – Given in the Law of Moses, the *Sabbath* was the practice of observing one day in seven as a time for rest and worship. It was intended to be a day of celebration and rejoicing for all of God's gifts and provision. It was also a day when work was to cease based on God ceasing from his work and resting during the creation of the world (**Genesis 1**). Over the centuries, in their eagerness to keep God's Law, Jewish rabbis spelled out thirty-nine different ways by which the Sabbath could be violated by certain types of work. As a result, the Sabbath was, in Jesus' day, a dreary institution of following rules and regulations instead of enjoying rest, relaxation and relationship with God.

- ♥ How can we still celebrate the principle of Sabbath rest today? Do you think this important for a Christ-follower to do? Why or why not?
- ♥ Which is *easier*: Following rules and regulations in order to obey God **OR** learning to obey by developing a meaningful relationship with God? Why?
8. Read what Jesus said to the healed man in **5:14**. Did Jesus say this to everyone he healed? Why would Jesus say this to this man? What are the implications for us?

Read **John 5:16-47**.

- ♥ Does Jesus' lengthy speech about himself and his identity (**5:19-47**) change your previous concept of him in any way? If so, how?
9. For what reasons were the Jewish religious leaders opposed to Jesus (**5:16-17**)?
- ♥ Jesus was persecuted for his statements about himself. Might we be persecuted for making the same claims about him? What kind of persecution could we experience?
- ♥ Jesus was eventually crucified because of his claims about himself. We are fortunate to experience very little religious persecution in this country. But if we did, as many Christ-followers do all over the globe, how far would you go for Christ? How strongly do you believe that he is who he says he is? How much does he mean to you?

10. From the following verses, in what ways does Jesus claim to be equal with God the Father?

| | |
|---------|--|
| 5:17 | |
| 5:19 | |
| 5:20 | |
| 5:21 | |
| 5:22-23 | |
| 5:24 | |
| 5:26 | |

♥ Agree or disagree? *In our culture, it is fine to make Jesus one way to God, but not **the** Way. It is fine to affirm Jesus as one version of the truth, but not **the** Truth against which all other truths are weighed.*

11. According to 5:24, *when* does a person receive eternal life and cross over from death to life?

♥ What area of your life would see the most change if you lived all your life with the same motives that Jesus did (5:30)?

♥ How could Bible study become a dangerous activity (5:39-40)?

12. What witnesses does Jesus name that testify to his identity?

5:33-35 -

5:36 -

5:37 -

5:39 -

5:46 -

How do *you* know Jesus is who he says he is? What convinced you?

Response

♥ Who is Jesus? Discuss with your small group C.S. Lewis' well-known quote from *Mere Christianity* about the identity of Jesus. Do you think Lewis makes a useful argument? Why or why not?

I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people often say about Him: "I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher.

C.S. Lewis

Encounter with Jesus

When Jesus asks, "Do you want to be well?", he is really asking, "Do you want to change?" Are you willing to change as you are healed? Are you willing to think differently, act differently and relate to God and others differently? Are you willing to learn new patterns for living, thinking, feeling and relating?

Healing of the body or heart is never done in isolation, unrelated to other parts of our lives. Healing means change. We desire healing to get relief in one area of our life, but we may not realize that healing in one area will also mean change for other areas of our lives. Do you want to be well? Are you willing to change? **Write a letter** to Jesus telling him what is on your heart concerning healing and change. **Listen and look** for what he might say back to you. Write down anything you want to remember.