



LESSON 7 ~ ARE YOU THIRSTY?

John 7

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Were you ever dared by your siblings or friends to do something dangerous? What happened?

INTRODUCTION

The events of **John 7** take place in Jerusalem during the Jewish *Feast* (Festival) of *Tabernacles* (Booths or Shelters). This was a very joyful festival and it was so important to the Jews that it was often called *the* Feast. It was held after harvest, so it celebrated the people's thanks for a good harvest as well as God's care for the people during their desert wanderings under the leadership of Moses. To remind themselves of their temporary shelters in the desert, the celebrants lived in tents (huts, booths) made of branches during the seven days of the festival.

The symbol of water was also important during this festival. Harvest was a period of drought in Israel. Drenching rains had not been seen since Spring. Cisterns were low and the hills were barren and parched. Because the ground could not be renewed without water, the festival

included rituals and prayer, asking God for water to replenish the land.

The prayer for rain was dramatized each day with a procession that descended the temple hill to a fountain or pool. There the priest filled a golden pitcher with water and the pilgrims sang, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (**Isaiah 12:3**). The procession then went back up the hill to the temple altar with pilgrims singing, dancing and waving branches and citrus fruits as symbols of the leafy huts and the harvest. The priest would then go up the ramp to the altar and pour the water through a silver funnel from which it flowed into the ground. The water symbolized the rain needed for next year's harvest as well the "living water" that would someday flow from Jerusalem to the entire world as prophesized in **Zechariah 14:8-9**.

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 7**, 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 7** 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.

QUESTIONS

Read John 7:1-13. ACT ONE: THE BEGINNING OF THE FESTIVAL

1. Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus (John 5:18)?
2. In what sense, do you think, did Jesus' own brothers not believe in him (7:3-5)?
 - ♥ Do you have family or friends who think your beliefs are foolish or who ridicule you for your faith? How do you deal with it? Does knowing what Jesus faced help you at all? Why or why not?
 - ♥ What advice would you give a friend who faces opposition from their family because of their faith?
 - ♥ Are you more likely to be bold or cautious in sharing your faith with your family? Why?
3. How did Jesus know when the "right time" came for him to speak or act (John 5:19; 6:38)?
 - ♥ How do you know when the "time is right" for you to speak or act? What can you learn from Jesus' example?
4. Read 7:7 in the *Amplified Version*. Why would the world hate Jesus and not hate his brothers?

World - The organized system of earthly values that are opposed to the values of God. The Bible describes the world system as "dark" (Ephesians 6:12) and operating on basic principles that are not of God (Colossians 2:20; 1 John 2:16). The entire system is under the power of Satan (1 John 5:19) and it is from this kingdom that people are rescued when they believe in Christ (Colossians 1:13-14). The Bible teaches that every human culture is warped and twisted by the impact of sin. The basic human desires that motivate people (i.e., *wanting our own way, wanting everything for ourselves and wanting to appear important*) are proof of sin's warping power. Followers of Jesus are called to display on earth a completely different set of values. Rather than being squeezed into the world's mold, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). Worldliness is unthinkingly adopting the perspectives, values, and attitudes of our culture, without examining them in the light of God's Word. It is carrying on our lives as if we did not know Jesus. A Christ-follower does not live for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God (1 Peter 4:2).

- ♥ In what ways is the world today evil?
- ♥ Can you expect any different reaction from the world than Jesus received (John 15:18-21)? What is your level of comfortableness in the world? When do you feel unaccepted in the world?
- ♥ How does fear sometimes keep you from openly sharing your beliefs about Jesus (7:13)?

Read John 7:14-24. ACT TWO: THE MIDDLE OF THE FESTIVAL – SCENE 1: YOUR CREDENTIALS, PLEASE!

As Jesus began to teach, the Jews (the religious leaders) were amazed at his skill and authority. Educational standards for rabbis (teachers) were well established in the first century. Advanced study under a rabbinic scholar in order to become a rabbi was the norm. Knowledge and authority was passed down from rabbi to rabbi.

5. Where did Jesus say he got his "diploma" (7:16)?
 - ♥ How can a person know if Jesus' teaching is true and comes from God? (7:17)? Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?

- ♥ According to the "test of proof" in 7:17, why would the religious leaders' desire to kill Jesus keep them from recognizing the truth of Jesus' message?
 - ♥ What will you have to do to apply the test given in 7:17?
6. The religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus because he healed a man on the Sabbath. How does Jesus show his brilliance by using their own law and reasoning to prove his case (7:21-23)?

- ♥ How do people today respond to the teaching of Jesus?
- ♥ What gives you the confidence to believe that what Jesus taught is true?
- ♥ How do we sometimes judge Jesus by "appearances" instead of thinking it through and making a right judgment (7:24)?

Read John 7:25-36. **ACT TWO: THE MIDDLE OF THE FESTIVAL – SCENE 2: DIVISION IN THE RANKS**

7. What two, differing opinions emerged about Jesus among the crowd at the festival (7:25-31)?

- ♥ What divisions do we see today over Jesus' identity?
- ♥ Why do you think Jesus consistently used double meanings and plays on words (7:28-29; 35-36) when talking about himself and his mission?
- ♥ Do you think Jesus is more or less controversial today than he was 2000 years ago? Why?

When the Christ (Messiah) comes, no one will know where he is from (7:27). Messiah means **anointed** and the Jews believed, from Old Testament Scripture, that a special **Anointed One** would come from God and set the world right. Where the Gospels read "**Christ**", they give Jesus the title of God's Anointed One. In Jesus' day, the Christ (Messiah) was thought to be Israel's deliverer. God's Anointed would redeem Israel, rule as king over the restored kingdom, and answer all mankind's questions about God's plans and purposes. Even though it was expected that the Messiah would come from King David's line, it was also believed that the Messiah would appear suddenly and mysteriously and no one would know where he came from. For some, Jesus' background disqualified him as being the Messiah.

Read John 7:37-52. **ACT THREE: THE LAST AND GREATEST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL**

On the last and seventh day of the festival, the water procession (see *Introduction*) took place seven times. It was on this final day, as water is being poured out from the golden pitcher into the silver funnel, that Jesus steps into public view and makes his most stunning declaration of the festival, crying out the words of **John 7:37-38**.

8. Jesus extends an invitation in 7:37-38. What two words define who is included in the invitation?
9. **Thirst** can be defined as *the desire or need to drink water or a feeling of dryness in the mouth or throat caused by the need for water*. We become thirsty because water is needed to sustain physical life. Some synonyms for thirst are *dryness, desire, longing, craving, yearning and eagerness*. Relate these facts about **physical thirst** to **spiritual** (pertaining to soul and spirit) **thirst**.

- ♥ What spiritual needs and desires are you aware of in your life right now?
- ♥ How does it make you feel when your spiritual needs and desires are unmet?

10. What two things must we do if we want our spiritual thirst quenched (7:37)?

11. *Come* means to *approach, move toward, draw closer to* and *get near*. *Drink* means to *take in*. What are some ways we can **come** to Jesus and **drink**?

- ♥ When was a time when you came to Jesus to quench a specific thirst or need in your life?
- ♥ Where do we encounter Jesus when we come to him? Heart? Mind? Body? Soul? Spirit? Other?
- ♥ In what ways do we attempt to satisfy our thirsts and longings in life outside of Christ?

12. Read 7:38-39 in the *Amplified Version*. What does Jesus promise for the one who *believes* in him?

13. What do the words *streams, living water* and *flow* tell you about the Holy Spirit and his role in your life ?

Discuss with your small group:

- ♥ Who is the Holy Spirit and what are some things he does?
- ♥ Where does this flow of living water begin and what do you think is its destination?
- ♥ How can you tell when streams of living water are flowing from within you?
- ♥ What difference does the presence of the Holy Spirit make in your life?
- ♥ What, specifically, do *you* need to do in order to experience *streams of living water flowing from within*?

Response

John wrote his Gospel so *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)*. Put yourself in the crowd at this festival, closely watching Jesus as you try to decide who he is. Below are some events from this chapter. Which of these would be *most persuasive* in convincing *you* that Jesus is the Son of God, come to save you? Why?

His miracles? 7:3, 21, 31	His life of destiny? 7:6-9	His exposing evil? 7:7
His insightful and powerful teaching? 7:14-18; 21-24, 46	His humility and lack of arrogance? 7:18	His knowing people's hearts? 7:19
His confidence in his own identity? 7:28-29; 33-34	His miraculous escapes? 7:30,32,44-45	His personal invitation and offer of living water? 7:37-38
The fact that the religious leaders <i>didn't</i> believe and accept him? 7:32; 48-52	Your ability to know the truth because of your willingness to do God's will? 7:17	

Encounter with Jesus

Write out a paraphrase of Jesus' invitation in 7:37-38 so that it is worded as a personal invitation to you. Be sure that the invitation includes your name.

Imagine yourself sitting or walking with Jesus in a peaceful setting. Read his invitation to you out loud. Tell him what it is you are thirsty for. Tell him how you are going to respond to his invitation to you.

Wait and listen. How do you sense Jesus' presence with you? What do you sense he is communicating to you? How sure are you that he will give what you have requested? After you listen, thank him for being with you and write down anything you want to remember from this encounter.