

BRMC Small Group Study: John 7:1-24

Leaders' Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

In chapter 6, we studied the miracles of Jesus feeding the five thousand and of him walking on water. He then tells people that he is the bread of life, providing eternal life if eaten. While Moses provided manna through God, thus supplying physical sustenance, Jesus provided both physical bread through the miracle and also gives himself as the bread that leads to eternal life. It is significant that all these happened during the Passover, as it parallels the Israelites Exodus from Egypt under Moses.

We now move on to chapter 7 where the Feast of Booths (or Feast of Tabernacles) was happening. This is a festival which commemorates the time where the Israelites lived in temporary shelters in the wilderness. The Jews would spend a week living in booths (or tents) across the city. This would also be a time of harvest and the festival also served to celebrate this time.

Introduction:

In this study, we will see how Jesus' ministry was building up momentum. Opposition was starting to get fiercer and the divide between Jesus' supporters and opponents were becoming wider.

We will study how Jesus explains his divine timing and that his authority is from God and not man.

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand Jesus' interaction with his brothers.
- See how Jesus is a divisive character.
- Learn how Jesus explains his wisdom and exposes the Jews' hypocrisy

Observation

1. What was the setting of the passage? What was the event that was going on?

- The Feast of Booths (or Feast of Tabernacles) was happening. This is a festival which commemorates the time where the Israelites lived in temporary shelters in the wilderness. The Jews would spend a week living in booths (or tents) across the city. This would also be a time of harvest and the festival also served to celebrate this time.

- Jesus was firstly with his brothers in Galilee (v. 1-9), he then went up to Judea in secret (v. 10-13). Finally, he ended up in the temple to teach (v. 14-24).

2. Which groups of people were mentioned in this passage?

- Jesus' younger brothers, born of Mary and Joseph. For another reference to Jesus' siblings, see Mark 3:31-34.

- The Jews (Jewish leaders) and the crowds. These were the people Jesus was teaching to in the second part of this passage (v. 14-24).

Interpretation

3. How did Jesus' brothers pick up on the issues and questions from John 6:60-66?

- Jesus' brothers may have felt that he lost honour because his teachings caused many followers to turn away at the end of chapter 6. His brothers' prompting may have been a way to get him to make up for that by showing himself to the world and proving himself through signs.

- John wrote that Jesus' brothers did not believe in Jesus because they had a different understanding of what success and glory is for Jesus. They wanted Jesus to go up and "show" himself to win back his followers and gain more, to gain greater honour.

4. What was the timing that Jesus was talking about in John 7:6-8?

- Jesus wasn't just referring to the time that he had to go up to Judea for the festival. Instead also referred to the time which he had to die on the cross. This is similar to John 2:4 where Jesus was talking to his mother about timing.

- Jesus was explaining that his brothers were of the world as they were looking to Jesus to perform more miracles. They did not believe in Jesus because they failed to grasp the true nature of Jesus' work. Hence, their timing would always be of the world and the world wouldn't hate them like they would Jesus.

- The time and work that Jesus was referring to was in his sacrifice, death and resurrection.

5. How does Jesus seeking God's glory confer him with truth and authority (John 7:16-18)?

- Jesus' authority and wisdom does not come from himself as he was not looking for his own glory. To have true authority, one must glorify God first.

- Jesus was implying that the Jews questioned Jesus' authority because they do not do God's will.

- Therefore, we can conclude that for one to discern who speaks with God's authority, one must first seek to do God's will.

6. Why did Jesus bring up the law of circumcision to contrast his act of healing on the Sabbath?

- The Jews were breaking the Law by seeking to kill Jesus (v. 19). However, they claim that because Jesus has sinned (healing on the Sabbath, John 5), he deserves to die.

- Jesus counters that although Jews are not allowed to do work on the Sabbath, they still perform circumcisions (circumcisions must be performed on the 8th day of an infant's life even if it falls on a Sabbath). This suggests that there are "work" which supersedes keeping the Sabbath.

- The Jews did not allow Jesus to heal on the Sabbath but were willing to break the Sabbath to perform circumcisions.

- On this basis, Jesus exposes their legalism and hypocrisy.

Application

7. How have we been like Jesus' brothers, concerned about our public image instead of grasping the work and timing of Jesus?

- For example, some may have been overly worried about scandals affecting the church, or churches being in decline around the world. However, Jesus reminds his followers that his work and time cannot be understood in worldly terms but through a Kingdom perspective.

8. What are some ways in which we may have inadvertently become like the Jews in Jesus' time, applying God's law in legalistic and hypocritical ways?

- For example, some may have been judgemental and harsh on others they view as sinners without seeking to understand their needs and circumstances.