



That you may believe... Leaders Guide for Week 7

(Times are approximate) – start time: _____

Welcome

- Welcome folks as they come in and you might ask them, “Describe briefly how/when you do the study lesson?” This might help others who are struggling.

(+6 min)

Opening prayer

- Praise Him, thank Him, and petition Him for what is needed in your group. Trust the Holy Spirit to work in your group members and lead you.

(+2 min)

Opening Comments on Chapter 7:

- What was the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned in **7:2**?
- When: It was celebrated “*On the fifteenth day of the seventh month*” (**Lev.23:34a**), about the 2nd week of October.
- Length of the Feast: Began five days after the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and lasted eight days (**Lev. 23:33-36**).
- Families were to: construct a temporary shelter of branches to live in during the eight days.
- Purpose of the feast: It represented years of wandering in the desert prior to entering the Promised Land.
- It was a time of *thanksgiving* for the harvest that marked the transition from nomadic poverty to stable affluence in their own land.
- The eighth day represented Israel entering Canaan – this was the most exciting day of the entire feast!
- In **verses 7:1-5** we see Jesus’ brothers trying to convince Him to go to the Feast with them.
- They didn’t believe in the deity of Jesus and were no different than the other Jewish people who wanted Him to prove Himself over and over again.
- Jesus had four brothers and several sisters (**Matt. 13:55**)
- Jesus knew it was not His time so He refused to go with them.
- Notice some contrasts in these **verses 6-7**: “*My time*” verses “*your time*”
- **Vs. 7**: “*world hates Me*” verses “*The world cannot hate you*”
- Isn’t this a sad statement?
- Jesus is saying the world cannot hate them because they live for the world, its possessions, power, and pleasures!
- **Vs. 8**: “*I am not going*” verses “*you go*”
- A message for us may be that it isn’t so much what we do, as it is the time when we do it.
- Think about it, God knows everything that is going to happen – who better to manage our time!
- A summary statement for us in these verses may be: **God’s timetable should be our timetable.**
- Some think that Jesus telling His brothers He was not going to the Feast and then going later was a form of deception.
- It was more a method of protecting Him – He wanted to avoid unwelcome publicity.
- He knew His enemies were watching and wanted to arrest Him, even kill Him and it was not His time!

- Jesus finally went up to the temple to teach and they were amazed at what He said (**14-15**).
- “The Jews” in **verse 15** is referring to the religious leaders present as well as others.
- In **verses 16-18** Jesus gives us three truths about Himself:
- First, His teaching is from God, it is not His own (**16**).
- Second, if they were obedient to God’s will, they would instinctively (via the Holy Spirit) know His teaching is authoritative and from God (**17**).
- Third, Jesus speaks for His Father not for Himself to gain glory – a man who speaks for another speaks truth (**18**).
- In **verses 19-24** there is considerable tension at this time towards Jesus because of what He says.
- They challenged Him for healing a lame man on the Sabbath, but He turns the tables on them by referring to the Moses and the Law – that they circumcise a boy if he is eight day old on the Sabbath – and that is work!
- Jesus was indicating circumcision was a minor and partial work, compared to the powerful work of God through Him in healing a lame man completely.
- So let’s see what happens beyond this point in **Chapter 7**:
(+12 min)

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~35 min)

This week’s title: Reactions to the Son of God: Skepticism and Confrontation - **John 7:1-52, John 8:12-59**

Highlighted verses: *“Jesus stood 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.’”* **John 7: 37-38**

Day 1: Read John 7:1-52 and John 8:12-59

1. Read **John 7:1-52** and **8:12-59** at least once, jotting down initial observations.
- Listen to various comments and how they relate to these passages.
 - If people seem a bit confused on something, later in the study you might have others share their answers to help clarify any issues.
- (+3 min)

Day 2: Read John 7: 25-52

Leaders notes to share if time permits:

- The first 7 days of the Feast, in the early morning, people went from their *booths* to the temple to worship.
- After worship and sacrifice, the priest led them to the pool of Siloam where he filled a golden pitcher with water from the pool and brought it back to the temple.
- As the priest was carrying the pitcher, people rejoiced by singing and played music using cymbals/trumpets.
- According to rabbinic tradition, once in the temple, the priest said, “Lift up thy hand” and he poured the water out – it was similar to a responsive reading.
- As he did this, the people would respond with *“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation”* (**Isa. 12:3**)

- This demonstrates, in part, that the people of Jesus' day saw a relationship of water to salvation.
- Their understanding was more from a physical/practical perspective than spiritual which Jesus is talking about.
- However, the 8th day was different – it was always on a Sabbath (**Lev. 23:36**)
- This day was to represent *new life* for the Israelites.
- It represented them having passed through the river Jordan into the Promised Land – Canaan.
- There was no water on this day – Why?
- Because this day represented the end of life in the desert – they would drink from the rivers of Canaan.
- Scholars believe it was this time of day, when the priest would have normally poured out the water, that Jesus made His statement in a loud voice.
- Jesus' loud voice got peoples attention as He presented Himself as the **true Living Water**.
- Jesus was saying that He was the One to which all the temple symbolism pointed!
- He compared the thirst in the desert to the thirst of those in this world who do not know Him.
- Those who thirst spiritually and He offers Himself as the One who quenches all spiritual thirst.
- Three promises can be found in **37-39**: First, Jesus promises to quench anyone's spiritual thirst, to give a *new life* to those who believe.
- Second, He promises streams of *living water* will flow out to others from you when you believe.
- That means that you and I will be suppliers of *living water* to all who thirst around us!
- Third, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him and believe.
- However, the Holy Spirit could only come into believers after the sin problem had been handled – that was yet to come.
- Jesus had to shed His blood, die, be resurrected, and ascend back to the Father before the Holy Spirit came.

(+6 min)

1. What impresses you about Jesus' offer in **7:37-39**? (Other references: **Jer.2:13, Isaiah 44:3, Isaiah 55:1, Rev. 22:17**) Why do you think Jesus spoke in a loud voice?

- His offer was for those who were spiritually thirsty, to drink of Him and receive *living water*.
- You might refer to the above notes.

(+2 min)

2. **Chapter 7** describes both skepticism and confrontation. Describe people's reactions to Jesus in verses **7:40-49**.

- This should be an interesting and safe question for each person to share quickly.

(+2 min)

Comments on Chapter 8:

- Your Bible probably has a note about verses **7:53-8:11** stating these verses are not in the earliest manuscripts.
- Dr. James Boice explains the issues regarding these verses.
- *"The difficulty, simply put, is that the majority of the earliest manuscripts of John do not contain these verses and, moreover, that some of the best manuscripts are of this number.*
- *The best evidence for the story is its presence in Codex Bezae, of the fifth and sixth century, now in the University Library at Cambridge, England.*
- *But it is not in the older Codices Sinaiticus or Vaticanus, nor in the Washington or Koridethi manuscripts.*

- *In fact, of the older manuscripts, eight omit it entirely, though two manuscripts leave a blank space where it would have come.*
- *And not until the medieval manuscripts does it seem to have been included with any regularity.*
- *Some early manuscripts attach it at other places, such as at the end of the Gospel or after **Luke 21:38**.”¹*
- In view of the highlighting in our Bibles, Dr. Boice’s comments, and those of other Biblical scholars, we will not discuss these verses.
- Now on to **Day 3** of our study lesson:
(+2 min)

Day 3: Read John 8:12-59

1. What did Jesus claim in **8:23-24**? How does our contemporary culture react to this claim?
 - He claimed to be from heaven, not of this world, unbelief in Him would result in them dying in sin.
(+2 min)
2. What did Jesus claim in **8:58-59**? Why did people react so strongly to this claim?
 - He claims He is eternal – above Moses!
(+2 min)

Day 4: Read John 20:31

Consider how **John 7:25-52** and **8:12-59** relates to John’s purpose in writing this Gospel. “...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**).

1. John’s purpose in writing this Gospel is that people may believe. Why do you think he includes examples of people who did not believe?
 - Even in our day people still struggle with similar questions.
 - John is showing two options: to believe or to not believe. These two options have very significant consequences.
(+2 min)
2. In what ways have this week’s passages helped you see Jesus more clearly as the Son of God?
 - Throughout this passage the claims of Jesus show his authority and divinity.
 - **John 8:58** is a very clear statement of Jesus’ divinity when He said, “before Abraham was born, I AM”.
(+2 min)

Day 5: Read John 7:25-52 and 8:12-59

(Leaders note: This question has two parts, have people answer both parts together.)

1. In these passages we see people asking Jesus questions. As we interact with people that are not believers we should be sensitive to questions and look for opportunities to share the Gospel. Can you think of an example when you experienced unbelievers asking questions that provided an opportunity to share the Gospel? Describe a question you have heard and write a response that shares the Gospel.
(+6 min)

2. Concerning those who believe, Jesus states, *“Streams of living water will flow from within him” (7:38)*. Do you have these streams of living water? If not, is this because you do not really believe **or** is this because you are not realizing who you truly are in Christ? In either case, please explain your response.

- This is a personal question and the response may be hesitant or not at all. Either case is fine. If no one shares, you might share your situation.

(+2 min)

- Similar to previous weeks we need to be sure our understanding of the meaning of a passage is aligned with what the passage intends to say. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.
- In the Old Testament, living or running water was employed figuratively as a reference to divine activity.
- **Jeremiah 2:13**
- Isaiah frequently describes the new era of salvation, God’s kingdom and divine blessings, in terms of an abundance of water. **Isaiah 44:3**
- We all need to be cautious that our understanding of Living Water does not take off in some imaginative way, but stays in line with what is revealed in the Bible.

(+1 min)

Closing Comments

- In closing, some of the main points we have discussed in these two chapters are:
- In **Chapter 7**, Jesus stated very specifically about His identity/deity.
- There shouldn’t have been any doubt in anyone’s mind what He was saying.
- *“I am not here on My own, He was saying God sent Him... I know Him because I am from Him.” (28)*
- *“...where I am, you cannot come”* – speaking of His resurrection **(33)**
- *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”*
- Jesus was speaking of the spiritual life of believers.
- This is also a statement that we need to pay attention to – we, as true believers, are to overflow with our new *spirit* living within and share what we have with everyone.
- In **Chapter 8**, Jesus continues with more statements regarding His true identity/deity.
- Jesus also claimed *“to have much to say in judgment of you” (22)* which would cause even more reaction.
- He claimed to be from heaven, not of this world, and unbelief in Him would result in a person dying in his/her sins. **(23)**
- They all knew that only God could forgive sin and reconcile people to Himself so these statements must have truly stirred their hearts either for Him, or hardened them against Him.
- Jesus didn’t stop there; rather He touched a chord with all Jews.
- He claims He is eternal and greater than Moses!
- He said, *“before Abraham was born, I AM!”*
- This was not well received at all since Scripture tells us they picked up stones to stone Him.
- What lessons will you apply from this study lesson?

(+4 min)

Closing Prayer

(+1 min)

¹ Dr. James Montgomery Boice, *“The Gospel of John Volume 2 Christ and Judaism John 5 – 8,”* Baker Publishing, 2001, pg. 602