

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 7:1-39 | CONFUSION ABOUT JESUS

KEY TERMS

Galilee - Galilee was a region in northern Israel including the towns of Capernaum (Jesus' "home base" for his ministry" and Nazareth (Jesus' hometown). Jesus was likely safer in Galilee where there were fewer religious leaders than in Jerusalem in Judea.

Feast of Booths - The *Feast of Booths* was one of Israel's three major festivals. Celebrated in fall, Jewish families would build tents or "booths" to eat and sleep in during the festival, commemorating their ancestors' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness following the exodus.

The Dispersion - The *Dispersion* refers to the scattered Jewish communities living outside of Israel among Gentile peoples. The religious leaders misunderstand Jesus' words about going away (vv. 33-34) and mockingly suggest that he may be going to live amongst the *Dispersion* (v. 35) and teach them instead.

SYNOPSIS

Following the feeding of the 5,000 and subsequent discourse in Capernaum, Jesus' brothers ask him to go to Jerusalem with them for the Feast of Booths in order to openly show those in Jerusalem his power (v. 2-4). Jesus initially tells them no—saying that his *time has not yet come* for people to know who he is—but then, after his brothers have left, Jesus goes up privately to Jerusalem (vv. 5-10). During the festival, Jesus goes into the temple and begins teaching to the amazement of those who heard him because they knew he was a carpenter and did not have formal religious training (vv. 14-16). After his teaching, the crowd begins to question if Jesus may actually be the *Christ* or Messiah, and some move to try to arrest Jesus while others believe and ask *When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?* (v. 25-31). When the chief priests and Pharisees come to arrest Jesus he responds by saying *I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me*, which confuses the religious leaders but is a look ahead to when Jesus will return to his Father in heaven (v. 32-36). Finally, on the last day of the festival, Jesus gets up again and says *If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (vv. 37-38). Jesus is not directly quoting a single Old Testament passage, but instead drawing on Old Testament stories (like Ex 17 and Num 20) and Old Testament imagery (like Is 58:11, Prov 4:23, Joel 3:18, and many more) to make this point: the triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—is the source of life.

GOING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 55:1-3 and Psalm 63:1-4. How do these passages challenge you to seek God as the ultimate source of life? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in being satisfied in him (see John 7:37-39)? What are some ways you can cultivate a heart that continually comes to our triune God?

DID YOU KNOW?

Part of the Feast of Booths included a daily water-pouring ceremony at the temple, symbolizing God's provision of water from the rock (Ex 17:6). With this backdrop, Jesus' invitation to *drink* from him is a claim that he is the true source of spiritual water, greater than the temple rituals.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 7:1-14. Make some observations. What discussions occur? Where is the tension? Why?
2. What advice do Jesus' brothers give to him? Why does Jesus refuse their counsel?
3. Read John 7:25-36. In these verses as well as verses 11-12, who do people say that Jesus is? Why do you think there are such varied opinions?
4. Read Ezekiel 47:1, Zechariah 14:8, Isaiah 12:3. How do these verses from the Old Testament shed light on what Jesus says in Verse 37: "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

LIVING THE WORD

5. In our day, what are the different approaches that people or groups take to this question about who Jesus is? Have things changed much since the time of Christ? Why or why not?
6. Why will the world always express both confusion and conflict over Jesus? How does Jesus respond to these things?
7. Jesus' message in verses 37-38 is a gospel invitation echoing Isaiah 55:1-3. Where do you see grace in these verses? What promise is made to those who believe?
8. As you reflect on this lesson, is there any worldly noise or confusion that you need to set aside? What would it look like to "come to Jesus" for satisfaction and fulfillment of your thirst?