

John Chapter 7

This chapter emphasizes the division between two groups of people. On one side are those who are beginning to believe Jesus really is who he says he is. On the other side are those who are so blinded by preconceived notions and traditions that they refuse to believe.

The people who pay close attention to his words and his deeds gradually grow more and more convinced he is telling the truth.

However, those who are convinced they already have all the answers continue to think they are superior to everyone else. Some things never change. This group remains unwilling to accept Jesus' claims. Instead, they maintain their opposition and mock anyone who doesn't fully agree with them.

A false sense of spiritual superiority is still very common today. No matter what position you take, on any range of issues regarding theology or Christian practice, you usually believe your position is correct. There are probably thousands (maybe millions) of people who share your opinion. However, there are probably thousands of Christians who disagree with you as well.

The danger we all face is that we have a tendency to think everyone who disagrees with us is wrong. This may be true in some circumstances, but be careful not to assume your understanding of every topic is unarguably better than everyone else's. Think about the way you believed and practiced your faith five or ten years ago. Chances are you thought you were right about everything then, too. But there are probably some areas in which you have matured, right? Your understanding of certain issues has likely shifted. You probably have some beliefs now that the old you would have disagreed with. Isn't it also safe to assume the same will be true another five or ten years in the future?

We can learn from the mistakes of those in John 7 who had an opportunity to walk alongside Jesus and still refused to change their beliefs. Recognize that you don't know it all and be willing to listen to new ideas.

Jesus, right in the middle of this disagreement among the people who know of him, goes into the temple and starts teaching. As he must have already anticipated, Jesus receives immediate pushback. His response is to point out inconsistencies in the way they practice their religion.

Jesus reminds them of the man he healed on the Sabbath, and he reminds them of how upset they were about it. Then, he questions them about their practice of circumcising on the Sabbath. Is circumcision more significant than the ability to walk?

Be careful here. Because, Jesus isn't saying circumcision is unimportant, or that they should simply disregard any commands from God. He simply wants them to see how silly it is to elevate that ritual above the physical healing of a man's entire body. The healing of the body should be celebrated as well.

Well, guess what? I believe Jesus would say the same thing to the church today.

The root of the problem he is highlighting is that the Jews don't care about the suffering of those around them. They only care about making sure people are spiritually clean.

Much like the way we put so much focus on saving a person's soul and showing people how to behave, yet be all too willing to ignore the physical pain they are enduring right now. We believe that telling a person about Jesus is more important than giving them food or shelter. But even when they are starving and freezing?

Have we forgotten the ways of Jesus? What did he do for that man by the pool? He healed his physical body. Only after meeting his physical needs did he even mention the man's heart issues. Jesus provided for the need the man knew he had before drawing his attention to the need for a heart transformation.

Jesus isn't telling the Jews in the temple to stop worrying about their standing with God. He never says that is unimportant. The point he wants to drive home is that they need to stop neglecting people's physical needs. Stop pretending to care for people, when all you really care about is sharing your message.

If Jesus were to return and mingle with the hurting people in our city, how would you respond? Would you join him and meet physical needs? Or, would you be too concerned with giving a gospel presentation and making sure to first break their sinful habits? Would you be so worried about telling them about Jesus, that you can't show them the love of Jesus in a way that matches his own actions?