

He Sent Me

Jesus was sent by the Father so we could know the Father.

JOHN 7:14-29

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 7:29

STUDY John 7:14-29, noting Jesus's authority to teach. Use Explore the Text on pages 95-99 to gain insight into the questions and concerns posed by the crowd and the Jewish leaders. Reflect on what gives us confidence to trust Jesus and His teaching.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 100-102. Focus on helping the group root out areas of hypocrisy in their own lives so they can confidently proclaim Jesus to others. Consider ways to incorporate the Memory Verse (John 7:29) in group time.

GATHER the following items:

- Extra *Personal Study Guides* (PSGs)
- A whiteboard or poster and markers
- Any materials needed for the options on page 102

Prepare to display:

- Pack Item 1** (*Map: Key Cities in John's Gospel*)

Make copies of:

- Pack Item 7** (*Handout: John Time Line*)

- Pack Item 8**

(*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)

CONSULT the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional commentary and biblical insights related to the focal passages (available for purchase from Lifeway.com).

REINFORCE the session by meeting with leaders of the group to discuss how to facilitate spiritual growth within the group. Invite leaders to suggest steps for group time that can facilitate this growth, as well as steps for outside of group time.

KEY DOCTRINE

Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. (See Job 28:28; 2 Timothy 3:14-17.)

FIRST THOUGHTS

Most of us remember teachers who positively impacted us. They may not have been our favorite teachers, but what set them apart was something beyond their likability. Their wisdom, experience, or honesty may have set them apart. The people of Jerusalem were evaluating Jesus’s teaching, especially His authority. In the process, they were confronted with their own hypocrisy and lack of power.

(In PSG, p. 82) **What makes a teacher effective and memorable?**

BIBLE SKILL

Use a concordance and/or Bible dictionary.

Review an article on “Festivals” to better understand the Feasts of Shelters (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths). Compare passages identified in the article. Note why the Jews celebrated this feast. How did the feast serve as a fitting backdrop for Jesus’s teachings in John 7?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOHN 7:1-53

Jesus feared no one. He determined each action based on the purpose of His heavenly Father. Following a confrontation in Capernaum, He chose to remain in Galilee. This northern part of Israel had become the focal point of many of His miracles and much of His ministry. Nazareth, near the center of Galilee, was home. Capernaum, on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, provided the base of operations for His ministry.

Jesus periodically traveled to Judea, especially during the holy days in Jerusalem. At first, He refused to go to the capital for the Festival of Shelters (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths). During this eight-day feast, Jews commemorated the exodus by dwelling in temporary huts made from leafy tree branches. It also celebrated the end of the harvest. Jesus postponed going because the Jewish leaders had conspired to kill Him. Deliberately, He delayed because His time of fulfilling His Messianic purpose had not arrived. Not even the taunts of His unbelieving brothers could divert Him from this path.

As the festival neared its midway point, Jesus quietly entered the city and began teaching in the temple. At first, people were amazed. They knew the leaders sought His death; yet, He spoke publicly in the city’s most prominent spot. Listeners began to wonder if He really was the Christ. Since prophecies specified the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, they argued about His identity. Jesus asserted that their confusion was the result of not knowing Him or the Father who sent Him.

Jesus fearlessly preached that whoever believed in Him would receive Living Water. He was speaking about the Holy Spirit who would be given after His resurrection and ascension. Astonished at His authority, soldiers sent to arrest Him refused to do so. Rebuked by their leaders, the officers testified to the power of Jesus’s words.

When the religious leaders argued that none of the Sanhedrin believed Jesus, Nicodemus argued that they should hear Jesus before condemning Him. With a sneering reply, the chief priests and Pharisees ended the debate and left the scene. They refused to believe that this lowly, itinerant rabbi was sent by God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

FROM THE FATHER (JOHN 7:14-19)

Verses 14-15

Jesus waited until ***the festival was already half over*** to make His appearance in Jerusalem. He refused to be bullied by His half-brothers or intimidated by leaders who sought His life (John 7:1-5,11). Publicly entering the city might have caused a riot, so He waited until the time was right to come in quietly. Once He did arrive, ***Jesus went up into the temple*** to teach.

The temple had been built on a hill once known as Mount Moriah at the northeast side of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 3:1). Coming from Galilee, Jesus would have entered through one of the northern gates, possibly the Sheep Gate near the Pool of Bethesda. One was said to “go up” because the temple was on a hill and because it was considered holy ground.

The temple was a large complex with separate spaces for the priests, for Jewish men, for Jewish women, and for Gentiles. Near the building, various porches and courtyards provided places for people to gather and discuss religious issues. In such a spot, Jesus ***began to teach***. Jesus often taught in synagogues (Matt. 13:54; Mark 1:21; 10:1). He even taught in open air gatherings (Mark 4:1). By teaching in the temple, He brought His kingdom message to the apex of Jewish religion.

The Jews who heard Jesus recognized that He had not been trained in the rabbinical schools. Perhaps they knew because of His language or clothing, or maybe they were familiar with the prominent teachers who frequented the temple courts. In any case, they were ***amazed***.

Amazed implies bewilderment. The people could not understand how He had become so ***learned***. Unlike other teachers, He did not parrot well-known rabbis, and His mastery of Scripture surpassed anything they had heard. His teaching was different because He spoke in His own authority—not something He had gleaned from others (Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32).

Verses 16-18

The term ***answered*** does not mean the people asked Him where He gained so much wisdom. Jesus’s divine omniscience revealed their inquisitive thoughts, and He responded accordingly. Although He was not hesitant to assert His oneness with the Father, Jesus wanted the crowd to understand that God was the source of His teaching (John 5:17,43; 6:32; 10:30-36).

To say ***My teaching isn’t mine*** did not suggest that Jesus was not in harmony with scriptural interpretations. Rather, He wanted people to

VERSE 14-15

¹⁴ When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. ¹⁵ Then the Jews were amazed and said, “How is this man so learned, since he hasn’t been trained?”

VERSES 16-18

¹⁶ Jesus answered them, “My teaching isn’t mine but is from the one who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. ¹⁸ The one who speaks on his own seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

understand His teaching came from **the one who sent me**. They needed to comprehend His relationship with the Father. Not only His teaching, but also His presence was the result of the Father's initiation.

To **know whether the teaching is from God**, one must filter it through **his will**. Anyone who refuses to obey God will naturally resist attempts to legitimize such instruction. As today, the people found it easier to question the origin of Jesus's teaching than to change their ways. Those who do not want to follow God's Word question it really comes from God.

Jesus contrasted the person who **speaks on his own** with someone who **seeks the glory of the one who sent him**. He wanted the people to understand that He sought to honor the Father through His teaching. Therefore, there was **no unrighteousness in him**. This final qualifying statement clearly pointed to Christ Himself. He alone could claim the absence of *unrighteousness*, a term that connotes injustice and iniquity. On the other hand, the scribes and Pharisees spoke for themselves and sought their own glory. Their jealousy of Jesus inflamed their hatred of Him.

VERSE 19

¹⁹ Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

Verse 19

As Jesus taught, representatives of the religious leaders entered the scene. Jesus reminded them that Moses had given them **the law**, the five books of Moses called the Torah. They trusted this link to Moses, but **none** of them were obeying it. While they boasted of following the most obscure details of tradition, they failed to honor weightier matters of godliness.

Specifically, Jesus asked **why are you trying to kill me?** He knew about their conspiracies and confronted their evil intentions. They had the audacity to question Jesus's authority, while at the same time breaking one of God's most basic commandments.

(In PSG, p. 85) **How do we know if a person's teachings are from God?**

VERSE 20

²⁰ "You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?"

WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS (JOHN 7:20-24)

Verse 20

The **crowd** raised questions about Jesus's claim that someone was trying to **kill** Him. Some contend that **You have a demon!** was not literal. Instead, the accusation in the first century would be more like someone calling Jesus "paranoid" or being "crazy" in a casual use like today. Others, though, believe the crowd believed Jesus was possessed by an evil spirit that caused paranoia (see John 10:20). This interpretation parallels other times when people said He was under the control of evil forces (Mark 3:22).

Jewish leaders and others who felt threatened by Jesus often employed character attacks since they could not refute His words. Ironically, some of this same group later admitted that their leaders really did want to kill Him (John 7:25-26).

Verses 21-23

Jesus's **one work** that instigated the Jews' hatred involved healing a man on the Sabbath. In that encounter, Jesus also claimed that God was His Father, which was tantamount to claiming equality with God (John 5:18). The Jews were infuriated and sought His life.

Jesus had **performed** many other signs, but apparently these people were most familiar with this single act of healing. Jesus noted they were **all amazed** because they did not understand the full meaning of either the miracle or the law. As an example, Jesus reminded them why Moses gave them **circumcision**. This external act constituted a sign of God's covenant with the Hebrew people. The rite actually predated Moses, as God originally initiated it with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-12). Therefore, it did not come from Moses but from patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jesus also employed a rabbinical argument to illustrate their hypocrisy. The Jews would **circumcise a man on the Sabbath**, even though doing so could be construed as work. This type of rhetorical device held up one law as superior to other laws, thus allowing observant Jews to avoid the obvious conflict. The term *man* referred to any male since circumcision was generally performed on a boy who was eight days old. Rarely would an adult man be circumcised, except in the case of proselytes.

According to Jewish traditions, a baby could still be circumcised when the eighth day fell on the Sabbath (Lev. 12:3). In such cases, they believed the command of circumcision superseded Sabbath laws. Later rabbinical writings confirmed this belief. The people of Jesus's day meticulously kept the outward tradition without maintaining the deeper truths of righteousness and justice. They objected because Jesus made a man entirely well on the Sabbath, but they had no qualms about conspiring to commit murder on that same day (John 5:16-18).

Verse 24

Jesus rebuked their hypocrisy and told them to **stop judging according to outward appearances**. The Jewish leaders were more concerned with the external rituals of religion than with demonstrating any kind of internal fidelity to their faith. As the apostle Paul would later emphasize, a circumcised body is nothing without a circumcised heart, regardless of being a Jew or a Gentile (Gal. 2:15-21).

As believers, we must examine our own lives for such hypocrisy. Modern Christians do not face culture wars over circumcision, but we do encounter other issues just as controversial. True spirituality requires application of inner faithfulness by glorifying Christ in the way we treat others and through external worship.

(In PSG, p. 87) **What makes seeing our own hypocrisy difficult?**

VERSES 21-23

²¹ "I performed one work, and you are all amazed," Jesus answered. ²² "This is why Moses has given you circumcision — not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers — and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won't be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath?"

VERSE 24

²⁴ Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment."

THEY KNOW EACH OTHER (JOHN 7:25-29)

Verses 25-27

VERSES 25-27

²⁵ Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?” ²⁶ Yet, look, he’s speaking publicly and they’re saying nothing to him. Can it be true that the authorities know he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where he is from.”

The number of people and groups present here makes tracing the conversation challenging. At first, participants were simply “the Jews” (John 7:15). Next, the larger crowd joined in response to Jesus’s rebuke (John 7:20). Now, we hear voices of **the people of Jerusalem**. This designation specified residents of the capital city who were distinguished from the general crowd of pilgrims who came for the festival.

Discussing the situation, they asked each other if Jesus were **the man** the leaders were **trying to kill**. Apparently, the plot had become public. This is also likely since instructions had already been given to seize Jesus if He appeared at the feast.

The people were incredulous that, despite the danger, Jesus was **speaking publicly**. They were surprised the **authorities** were **saying nothing to him**. The Jewish leaders had the power to arrest Jesus. With their influence, they also could ask the Romans to take Him into custody. Yet, they did not even speak to Him.

This statement suggests the leaders may not have been among those in the crowd who entered the debate with Jesus or accused Him of being demonized. Another interpretation suggests that they spoke to Him from the safety of the crowd, but they did not confront Him with an arrest warrant. Regardless, some observers began to wonder aloud if the **authorities** were starting to believe that **he is the Messiah**.

The syntax of the statement could imply that the rulers did not confront Jesus because they believed Him to be the Messiah. Such a supposition could also be drawn from the lack of official action against Jesus’s public appearance. However, the leaders’ statements and their conspiracy against Jesus would be contrary to such a conclusion. Some scholars see an attitude of sarcastic ridicule toward Jesus. Others interpret the statement as a question that expected a negative response: “They don’t really believe He is the Messiah?”

Moreover, the people believed **nobody will know where he** (the Messiah) **is from**. Their belief in the Messiah’s rise from obscurity was not based on Scripture but on a common folk tale. In spite of their conjecture, Jesus actually fulfilled this expectation since the people did not recognize His true origin. Years later, the writer of Hebrews likened Christ to the ancient king Melchizedek whose origin was unknown (Heb. 7:3).

The people argued that Jesus could not be the Messiah because they knew **where this man is from**. They understood that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and lived in Galilee. Accordingly, they assumed He was born there. The general public did not know about His birth in Bethlehem, the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah (Mic. 5:2).

Verse 28

VERSE 28

²⁸ As he was teaching in the temple, Jesus cried out, “You know me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the one who sent me is true. You don’t know him;

These conversations were interspersed as Jesus **was teaching in the temple**. He deliberately chose this public location to reach residents of Jerusalem and visitors coming to the festival. Also, the temple was a natural place

for His claim to be the Anointed One sent from God. In the midst of the controversy, **Jesus cried out**. This term means to shout with a loud voice. He did not whisper His message in fear or behind closed doors. Instead, He confidently declared His identity to the entire assembly.

Although these people might **know** Him and **where** He was **from**, they didn't know **the one who sent** Him. Some people thought they were familiar with the carpenter's son who became an itinerant rabbi. They believed they understood His connection with Galilee. Yet, they really did not comprehend His true nature.

Jesus did not **come** on His **own**. This statement did not apply to His arrival at the festival, but referred to His overall mission. He had not merely come from Galilee; He came from heaven. Speaking to the crowds in Capernaum, Jesus declared Himself to be the bread of life descended from God (John 6:33-35). At the temple, He reaffirmed that He had been sent from the Father. This fact did not subordinate Jesus to God, since He and the Father were one. We do not worship multiple Gods, but one God who expresses Himself in the three Persons of the Trinity.

He also declared that the *one who sent* Him was **true**. Jesus's authentication came not from His words alone. He was also attested by God. The Jews' problem was they did not **know him**. They believed they had a unique connection to God based on their heritage and religious works, but they really did not have a personal relationship with God. As a result, they could not have a personal relationship with the Messiah standing in front of them.

Verse 29

Referring to the Father, Jesus boldly claimed to **know him** because He was **from him**. Jesus asserted this unique relationship on several occasions in John's Gospel (John 8:55; 17:25). Some scholars understand this phrase to mean Jesus came from the presence of the Father. The phrases *from him* and **he sent me** refer to Jesus's divine origin.

Believers can confidently proclaim that Jesus was sent by the Father. He was not merely another teacher or healer. He was (and is) God the Son who came from heaven, took on human flesh, died for our sins, and was raised again. His mission was no less than the salvation of all people who will repent of sin and place their faith in Him as Savior and Lord.

As today, he was the One sent by the Father so humanity could truly know the Father and have an eternal relationship with Him.

[In PSG, p. 88] **What are the dangers of not knowing the full facts about Jesus?**

VERSE 29

²⁹ I know him because I am from him, and he sent me.”

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

BEGIN: Prior to the session, hang a large sheet of paper labeled “teachers” on a focal wall. As the group arrives, invite them to think of a teacher who had a positive impact on their lives and to write one word that describes what made that teacher special on the paper.

DISCUSS: Ask: *What makes a teacher effective and memorable?* (PSG, p. 82). Discuss responses and review the words on the paper. Note how each word describes a great teacher. Invite a few volunteers to share about teachers who embodied the word they chose.

EXPLAIN: Invite the group to follow along as you read aloud the lesson introduction on page 82 of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG). Repeat the final two sentences of the paragraph: *The people of Jerusalem were evaluating Jesus’s teaching, especially His authority. In the process, they were confronted with their own hypocrisy and lack of power.*

TRANSITION: *Today, we study Jesus’s teaching during the Festival of Shelters. As we do, put yourself in the sandals of Jesus’s listeners. Try to understand their struggles to accept Jesus and how that applies to your life.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Summarize previous lessons and how they led to this point. Note that those opposed to Jesus were intensifying their efforts to arrest and even kill Him. Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Key Cities in John’s Gospel*). Share that Jesus began John 7 in Galilee, but He moved down to Jerusalem for one of the annual Jewish festivals. *In doing so, He was moving to the epicenter of the threats against Him.*

STUDY: Invite the group to review the information about the Festival of Shelters in *Understand the Context* (PSG, p. 83). Encourage the group to discuss what this particular festival represented and how it was celebrated. Note that the festival crowd would have included religious leaders, residents of Jerusalem who were probably familiar with the tension between Jesus and the leaders, and out-of-town visitors who were not as familiar with the situation.

TRANSITION: *Jesus did not immediately go to Jerusalem. But midway through the festival, He entered the city and began teaching in the most public place possible, the temple. He was confident that He would be safe because He understood the Father’s perfect timing.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **John 7:14-19** and encourage the group to notice the Jews’ response to Jesus’s words.

ASSERT: *This is not the first time people were amazed by Jesus. Even as a boy in the temple, religious leaders were astounded by His insights (Luke 2:47). This time, though, His listeners also questioned His qualifications as a teacher since He had not been trained by a rabbi.*

ASK: *How do we know if a person’s teachings are from God?* (PSG, p. 85) Discuss responses. *According to Jesus, why was His teaching trustworthy?* Note that Jesus was sent by God and only did and said what the Father directed Him to do and say. Emphasize that Jesus’s only goal was to bring glory to the Father.

FOLLOW-UP: *How did Jesus turn the question back on the Jewish leaders?* Point out that Jesus emphasized belief in God and obedience to God as prerequisites for discerning the truth. Jesus suggested that the leaders failed to follow God, so they could not judge His teaching.

PROBE: *How does being obedient to God's will help us discern the validity of someone's biblical claims?* Emphasize that the only way to discern the truth is to stay close to the One who defines all truth. Share that a healthy, ongoing relationship with God through Jesus will help us have wisdom and discernment.

TRANSITION: *Jesus's claim that some in the crowd wanted to kill Him created a stir. But He turned the tables on His opponents by using their own religious rituals to prove His point.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read **John 7:20-24**, while the group pays attention to the crowd's shift in attitude.

IDENTIFY: Write *hypocrisy* on a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper. Invite a volunteer to share a definition of *hypocrisy* using an online dictionary. Record their responses under the heading. Lead the group in considering how the actions Jesus described in these verses constituted hypocrisy. Invite the group to share other examples of hypocrisy in the Bible. (*Possible examples: David's initial response to Nathan's story in 2 Sam. 12; the Unforgiving Debtor in Matt. 18; and Jesus's teaching on the splinter in your brother's eye from Matt. 7*)

DISCUSS: Direct attention to the session's summary statement: *Jesus was sent by the Father so we could know the Father.* (PSG, p. 82) Ask: **What makes seeing our own hypocrisy difficult?** (PSG, p. 87) Assert that we have been sent to make Jesus known so the world can see the true light of Jesus through us.

TRANSITION: *Jesus's amazing teaching and bold, public stand began to convince some that He might be the Messiah. But they still had questions and doubts to overcome.*

READ: Direct the group to read **John 7:25-29** silently, taking note of why the people of Jerusalem were confused.

COMPARE: Guide the group in a discussion of the reasons the people gave for thinking Jesus was the Messiah and the reasons they gave for doubting this truth. Lead the group to discuss Jesus's answer to the people and why they did not understand who He is or what He had come to do. Ask: **What are the dangers of not knowing the full facts about Jesus?** (PSG, p. 88)

ASSERT: *He agreed with their assessment from a physical standpoint, but He also accused them of missing His true identity. They would never really know Him until they had a true relationship with God through Him.*

HIGHLIGHT: Guide the group to locate the memory verse on **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Encourage the group to memorize John 7:29 this week.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Direct attention to the last paragraph under verses 28-29 on page 89 of the Personal Study Guide. Call on the group to suggest verses from today's session that support the statement that Jesus was unlike any other teacher because He was God in flesh. Invite members to read and reflect on the application statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 90). Encourage them to circle the one they need to implement the most this week.

RESPOND: Direct attention to the second set of questions under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 90). Lead the group to share their responses to these questions. Challenge them to revisit this section for deeper reflection later in the day or week.

PRAY: Conclude the group time with prayer, thanking God for sending His Son so that you could know Him.

OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

Secure a copy of “How Deep the Father’s Love,” by Stuart Townend. Invite the group to sing along and contemplate how the cross of Jesus allows us to know the Father.

CASE STUDY

In advance, prepare a case study of a person who is interested in the teachings of Jesus, but does not believe that He is the Son of God. Include reasons this person might give for studying Jesus’s teachings, as well as reasons for disbelieving in Jesus’s deity. Distribute copies of the case study and guide the group to discuss with a partner how they could help this person recognize who Jesus really is. Consider Jesus’s own words about His divine nature.

JOURNAL

Invite the group to create a journal entry from the point of view of someone who heard Jesus speaking at the temple during the Festival of Shelters. Some possibilities for point of view are Jewish leaders, pilgrims to Jerusalem for the festival, residents of the city, followers of Jesus, and a Gentile in Jerusalem. Encourage the group to describe what those individuals might have thought about Jesus’s teaching and how they might have felt to hear Him.

PHYSICAL

Set up a pop-up canopy so your group can meet outside. Use this as a physical introduction to the Festival of Shelters. Direct the group to work in teams of three or four to complete the Bible Skill activity. (PSG, p. 89) Guide the group to discuss the significance of this festival and how this festival pointed toward Jesus.

PRESENTATION

Pre-enlist a volunteer to prepare a short presentation on Jesus as fully human and fully divine. Direct the volunteer to research historical heresies such as Docetism, Arianism, and Nestorianism. Invite them to discuss why denying Jesus’s full humanity or full deity falls short of biblical truth and how that impacts believers. Share **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Jesus’s Humanity and Deity*) with the volunteer. After the presentation, distribute copies of the pack item to the group.

BRAINSTORM

Refer to the question on page 85 of the PSG: ***How do we know if a person’s teachings are from God?*** Guide the group in creating two lists: *indications a teaching is from God* and *indications a teaching is not from God*. Encourage the group to work together to find Bible verses to support their conclusions. If possible, provide some study Bibles, concordances, and online references for the activity. Suggest keywords such as “truth” and “know.” Invite the group to discuss specific ways to apply this information.