

Leader's Guide
Sports in Focus Guide Six

Below are some additional insights for
John 7:1-10:42
Source for answers: MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Context of John 7:1-10:42

The main point of this section of John's Gospel can be summarized as high-intensity hatred, as the smoldering dislike of Christ erupts into a blazing inferno. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. The major themes associated with this feast (water and light) come to prominence in this section. The central truth is that Jesus was a divine timetable. He lived according to God's sovereign and perfect timing and direction. Chapter 9 features the healing of the blind man. This is followed by Jesus' discourse on being the Good Shepherd in chapter 10.

Keys to Text Stoning: The usual method of capital punishment in ancient Israel. People who broke specific statues of the law of Moses were put to death by stoning. It was carried out by the men in the community upon the testimony of at least two witnesses who would throw the first stones. Jewish Religious Leaders: Referred to in John as "the Jews" in various places. This group was made up of Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and teachers of the law.

Read John 7:1-10:42

1. What did Jesus' family (specifically his brothers) think of Him? What clues do you find here to support your answer?

Jesus' brothers challenged Him to perform His miracles openly, on the grand stage that Jerusalem would provide during the Feast of Tabernacles. Then, they reasoned, His disciples from both Galilee and Judea would see the works which He was doing—works which demonstrated that He was in fact the Messiah. Further, some of the disciples who had recently abandoned Him (6:66) might be won back. The Lord's brothers were not, as some mistakenly think, zealous for Him to show His glory. On the contrary, they did not even believe in Him yet (v. 5).

Their comments appear to have had a dual motivation. First, they may have wanted to see Jesus perform miracles, so they could decide for themselves whether or not His works were genuine. Second, they were probably expecting a political Messiah, like the crowd Jesus fed (6:14–15). Thus, in their minds, the acid test of Jesus' messiahship would be at Jerusalem (the political center of Israel), and not in Galilee. If the ruling authorities at Jerusalem signed off on Jesus, His brothers would also accept Him as the Messiah.

Their next statement to Him, "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly," would have made perfect sense if Jesus were the political Messiah they sought. For Him to remain relatively secluded in Galilee seemed inconsistent with His messianic claims. But like the crowd that wanted to make Him king (6:14–15), Jesus' brothers completely misunderstood His mission, as He would soon point out. Their final challenge, "If You do these things, show Yourself to the world," reveals their doubt and unbelief. The word if foreshadows the mocking unbelief that Jesus faced on the cross (Matt. 27:40), and is reminiscent of Satan's challenge (4:3, 6) during Christ's temptation.

The apostle John's footnote, For not even His brothers were believing in Him, explains why they spoke to Him the way they did. Earlier in His ministry, their unbelief had led them to think He had lost His

mind (cf. Mark 3:21, 31–34). Nothing the Lord had done since then had penetrated their hard hearts. It would take His resurrection from the dead to finally persuade them that He was the Son of God (Acts 1:14).

2. What was the crowd's response to Christ's teaching (7:14-19)? How did Jesus characterize His own teaching?

7:14–24 The increasing hostility to Jesus did not prevent His teaching ministry. Instead, Jesus relentlessly set forth His claims regarding His identity and mission. In the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles, when Jews from all over Israel had migrated into Jerusalem, Jesus once again began to teach. In this section, Jesus set forth the justification of His ministry and taught with authority as God's Son. In this passage, 5 reasons are set forth as to why Jesus' claims regarding Himself are true: 1) His supernatural knowledge originated from the Father Himself (vv. 15, 16); 2) His teaching and knowledge could be confirmed by testing (v. 17); 3) His actions demonstrated His selflessness (v. 18); 4) His impact on the world was startling (vv. 19, 20); and 5) His deeds demonstrated His identity as the Son of God (vv. 21–24).

There are only three possible explanations for the amazing claims Jesus made. Either He was a deranged madman, a diabolical deceiver, or exactly who He claimed to be. He could not possibly have been merely a good moral teacher, for such people do not make the kind of claims Jesus made. As C. S. Lewis notes,

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (Mere Christianity [New York: Macmillan, 1971], 56)

3. What did the Pharisees claim about Christ (8:13-59) - that is, His identity and nature? What did Jesus in turn say about them?

8:13 You are testifying about Yourself. The Jews mockingly brought up Jesus' own words from 5:31. However, Jesus' words there and here are reconciled by the fact that OT law required not one but multiple witnesses to establish the truth of a matter (Dt 17:6). Jesus was not alone in His witness that pointed to Him as Messiah, for many had already testified concerning this truth (see note on 1:7).

8:14–18 These verses give 3 reasons why Jesus' witness was true: 1) Jesus knew His origin and destiny while the Jews were ignorant even of basic spiritual truths, making their judgment limited and superficial (vv. 14, 15); 2) the intimate union of the Son with the Father guaranteed the truth of the Son's witness (v. 16); and 3) the Father and Son witnessed harmoniously together regarding the identity of the Son (vv. 17, 18).

4. What is significant about what Jesus shouted out on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles? (see 7:37-39)

7:37 on the last day. This suggests that this occasion occurred on a different day than the controversy

in vv. 11–36. If anyone is thirsty. A tradition grew up in the few centuries before Jesus that on the 7 days of the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, a golden container filled with water from the pool of Siloam was carried in procession by the High-Priest back to the temple. As the procession came to the Water Gate on the S side of the inner temple court, 3 trumpet blasts were made to mark the joy of the occasion and the people recited Is 12:3, “you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.” At the temple, while onlookers watched, the priests would march around the altar with the water container while the temple choir sang the Hallel (Pss 113–118). The water was offered in sacrifice to God at the time of the morning sacrifice. The use of the water symbolized the blessing of adequate rainfall for crops. Jesus used this event as an object lesson and opportunity to make a very public invitation on the last day of the feast for His people to accept Him as the living water. His words recall Is 55:1. thirsty ... come ... drink. These 3 words summarize the gospel invitation. A recognition of need leads to an approach to the source of provision, followed by receiving what is needed. The thirsty, needy soul feels the craving to come to the Savior and drink, i.e., receive the salvation that He offers.

5. Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd. What does that mean? How can this truth make a difference in your life?

The Bible refers to Jesus Christ by many titles.

But perhaps His most endearing and intimate title is that of Shepherd. Centuries before the Messiah came, the Old Testament had predicted that He would shepherd His people. In Ezekiel 34:23 God said, “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David [a reference to the Messiah, David’s descendant], and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd” (cf. 37:24). Micah prophesied that the Messiah would “arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God” (Mic. 5:4). Predicting Messiah’s death, Zechariah 13:7 says, “ ‘Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate,’ declares the Lord of hosts. ‘Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones.’ ”

The New Testament also depicts Christ as Shepherd. When asked by Herod where the Messiah would be born, the chief priests and scribes quoted Micah 5:2: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel” (Matt. 2:6). Predicting that the disciples would desert Him when He was arrested, Jesus quoted Zechariah 13:7: “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered’ ” (Matt. 26:31). The apostle Peter described Jesus as the Shepherd of believers’ souls (1 Peter 2:25), and later as the Chief Shepherd of the church (5:4). The writer of Hebrews closed his epistle with the benediction, “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20–21). Even beyond this life, Jesus will continue to shepherd His people for all eternity in heaven; “the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

Nowhere in all of Scripture is Jesus Christ more clearly portrayed as the Shepherd of His people than in the tenth chapter of John’s gospel. This discourse in which He presents Himself as the Good Shepherd flows directly from the events of the preceding chapter; there is no time gap or break in thought

between chapters 9 and 10 (cf. 10:21). The Lord continued to speak to the same people—His disciples, the formerly blind beggar, the hostile Pharisees, and the others in the ever-present crowd.

6. What does the story of the adulterous woman (8:1-11) reveal about Christ? About forgiveness, grace, pride and repentance?

7. As the self-proclaimed “light of the word,” Jesus speaks blunt truth to the darkened hearts of sinful people. Will we hear and obey? Or, like the Pharisees, will we resist and reject the hard truth of God? In what area(s) of your life do you sense the Lord speaking uncomfortable words to you? What will you do?