

Jesus Glorifies God

Sister Serena has a burning testimony she would like to share with the group," said Jarvis.

Serena smiled widely at the eight adults gathered in Jarvis's living room for Bible study. "I couldn't wait to share my testimony with you all."

"Last week," continued Serena, "I was at the gas station and had just got out of my car when a man approached me. I was immediately guarded. However, he smiled and introduced himself as William. He said he wanted to give me free gasoline as an act of kindness. My SUV was almost on empty. It took \$65 for him to fill it up. We talked for a little while, and then he left. Praise the Lord! I don't know if it was the Lord blessing me, or the guy was just trying to talk to me because I was looking cute that particular day."

"Did William ask for your phone number, or did you all exchange phone numbers?" asked Makeba, sitting across the room.

"Well," said Serena, "he wasn't there that much longer after he swiped his card."

"Oh, I thought you said you all spoke for a little while," she countered.

"The point is," Jarvis interrupted, "that God gave Serena a tremendous blessing! And we have been praying for your financial circumstances for a while now."

"Yes, and thank you everybody," said Serena.

1. *What do we want to hear when we have accomplished something we consider important?*

2. *As Christians, what should motivate us to achieve great accomplishments with our God-given abilities?*

3. *How can we know if we are being a witness for God or for ourselves?*

Marveled at Jesus

John 7:14-15, KJV

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

John 7:14-15, NIV

¹⁴Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

Festivals in Jerusalem set the city abuzz with activity, trading, and boisterous celebration. People made pilgrimage from all over the region to attend these times of celebration. Jews and God-fearing Gentiles came to the city to worship and focus on God. Others, not too concerned about matters of faith, knew they could make a lot of money with this much traffic in the city. This particular festival would have been the Festival of Tabernacles to recall the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, preparing themselves to enter into the promised land.

When Jesus started to teach, He went to the temple courts. During festival times, it was common for rabbis to stand on the temple stairs (to gain some height over the crowds) and expound on the Word of God.

It's obvious that those in the crowd listening to Jesus that day knew Him—namely, that He was not one of those Jewish boys who aspired to be a Pharisee, and so spent His adolescence under the wings of a prominent rabbi. As far as they were concerned, He was not much more than a manual laborer. But when He opened His mouth to teach, they were stunned. They had no idea where He would have gotten this depth of insight. But as we shall see, Jesus was very clear about the source of His wisdom—and authority.

4. *Where did Jesus teach?*

5. *How did people respond to His teaching?*

Glorifying God

John 7:16-20, KJV

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of Himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

John 7:16-20, NIV

¹⁶Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. ¹⁸Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent Him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about Him. ¹⁹Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

²⁰"You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

Jesus, who is God, is qualified to be worthy of our worship. Even so, He did not seek His own glorification during His earthly ministry, but instead focused people's attention on the source of His knowledge and wisdom—His heavenly Father. Even though He was equal with God, He voluntarily derived all of what He knew, and what He taught, from His Father. As God, Jesus was omniscient (all-knowing). Even so, in obedience to His Father, Jesus only spoke that information (from His omniscience) as allowed by the Father. This is how we understand that Jesus, even as truly God, could "grow in wisdom" and "learned obedience" (see Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8).

The filter through which some people are able to recognize the origin of Jesus' teaching are those who do the will

of God—namely, those who have experienced saving faith through repentance and belief, and consequently filled with the Holy Spirit, so that they can discern the voice of God and obey His commands.

Jesus said that the ultimate test of integrity of a person is that he or she is seeking to glorify God, and not themselves. Anyone who is truly teaching God's truth as revealed by Him is not going to draw attention to themselves.

Then Jesus turned the table on His listeners. He was frustrated with the hypocritical disobedience of many of the so-called devoted people in Jerusalem. In fact, knowing their hearts, Jesus confronted them on their evil thoughts: they were plotting to kill Him. Of course, they denied this vehemently, and even introduced the blasphemous idea that He was possessed by a demon. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of being in cahoots with the devil, Jesus implied that such an accusation was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And the crowd seemed to come close to doing that here.

6. *From whom did Jesus say He received His teaching?*

7. *Whose glory was Jesus seeking?*

Judge Accurately

John 7:21-24, KJV

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because

John 7:21-24, NIV

²¹Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. ²²Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath.

²³Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you

I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? ²⁴Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

Jesus then referenced His miracle at an earlier festival, when He healed the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9). The crowd did not seem to be upset that He had done the miracle, but that He did it on the Sabbath. This was the same criticism Jesus had received from the religious leaders when He performed the miracle (5:16-18). Jesus was known for healing on the Sabbath, which the religious leaders considered "work." Jesus said it was hypocritical to allow one type of "work" on the Sabbath, circumcision, while condemning another, healing.

Most Jewish male infants were circumcised on the eighth day of their lives, and sometimes this came on the Sabbath. But, since this ritual was a sign of God's covenant with His people, the rabbis reasoned that performing this procedure on the Sabbath would have been acceptable. But, Jesus said, should you do something that has a healthy impact on an entire human body—like healing it?

And so, Jesus called them to focus on the heart of the issue. They were only looking at the surface of what was happening. He encouraged them to be curious enough to look at what was happening behind the scenes instead of just gawking at what appeared to be happening. While we can judge words and actions as immoral or unhealthy, we don't have the ability to accurately judge a person's motives unless he or she tells us why they did what they did. Jesus encouraged His listeners (and us) to look beyond what simply appears to be true—and tune into the heart of what was really going on.

8. What contradiction did Jesus expose?

9. What did Jesus teach about judging?

Self-glorification vs Glorifying God

I'm a born leader. I desire to be successful in everything I do. The first time I walked to the front of the church to sing a solo, my ego swelled at the applause. As I continued to sing publicly, I worked harder and harder for more acknowledgement. Awards, press releases, and of course, six-figure checks motivated my singing career.

As a gospel singer, I always acknowledged God before I sang. On the outside, I said, "To God be the glory." But, inwardly I bathed in self-glory.

One evening after a performance, someone said to me, "God gave you that beautiful voice to glorify Him."

"Of course, He did," I replied. Later that night, I heard my inner voice ask, "Does singing gospel music really mean you are singing for God's glory?" All night I wrestled with that question.

The next morning, I fell to my knees and prayed for God to speak to me about singing to His glory. I read in Psalm 66, "Sing the glory of His name...." Then Isaiah 42:8 said, "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another...."

I cried to the Lord for forgiveness. Even though I sang about God, my talent and success had always been about myself. God forgave me, but I needed more. I asked Him to transform my heart. I needed to learn how to sing for His glory alone. It's not easy, but I continually pray before I publicly sing that God will shine through me and He will receive the glory. The first time I sang after my surrender to Him, I felt different. I felt peace over pride. I realized self-glorification results in pride. Glorifying God results in peace.

10. *Why is it so easy to become caught up in self-glorification?*

11. *How can having a close relationship with God and His Word keep us from self-glorification?*

12. *Why do you think glorifying God brings inner peace?*

Refocusing

Giving glory to God in all that we do takes refocusing our mindset. The words of the hymn “All for Jesus” (Mary Dagworthy James, 1889) can assist us in refocusing our minds and motives for doing what we do: “All for Jesus, all for Jesus! All my being’s ransomed pow’rs;/ All my thoughts and words and doings all my days and all my hours,/ Let my hands perform His bidding, let my feet run in His ways./ Let my eyes see Jesus only, let my lips speak forth His praise.”

▶ *How does refocusing your thoughts, words, and actions all for Jesus glorify God?*

▶ *How do you let your hands, feet, eyes, and lips glorify God?*

KEY VERSE

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. —John 7:18, KJV

“Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.” —John 7:18, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of September 18 through September 24

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals on these passages.*)

- Mon.** Ephesians 4:17-32—Forgive as You Have Been Forgiven.
- Tue.** Psalm 130—God Forgives.
- Wed.** Matthew 5:27-32—Adultery in the Heart.
- Thu.** Matthew 7:1-5—You Get the Judgement You Give.
- Fri.** Psalm 32—Rejoice in God’s Forgiveness.
- Sat.** Isaiah 55:6-13—Let the Wicked Forsake Their Way.
- Sun.** John 8:1-11—Neither Do I Condemn You.