

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. John 7:3-4 tells us that Jesus' brothers saw his miracles, and encouraged him to make his ministry more public to build a larger following, but then verse 5 tells us that they said this because they didn't believe in him.
 - a. Their excitement about his miracles and their encouragement to make his ministry more public appears to be an expression of their belief. What does John mean by describing this as an expression of their unbelief?
 - b. Why do you think they wanted Jesus to take his ministry to the big cities and make his ministry more public? What was their motivation?
 - c. How can we (personally and as a culture) demonstrate the same type of unbelief in Jesus as was expressed by his brothers?

2. There were many who followed Jesus as a good man (vs. 12) and as a great teacher (vs. 15), but throughout his Gospel, John describes these people not as believers, but unbelievers.
 - a. If these people accepted, and even followed Jesus as a great teacher, why does John describe them as unbelievers? Are there people today who attend church and identify as Christians because they follow Jesus' teaching, who may really be unbelievers? Explain your answer.
 - b. In his message Pastor Mike explained that when we accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, we make him a teacher and consultant. What does he mean by that? Why is this an expression of unbelief?
 - c. Pastor Mike also said that there are many people who affirm the theology that Jesus is God, but their actions reveal they don't really believe that. He said that our true belief is revealed by our actions, not our thoughts or claims. What does he mean by that? Do you agree?
 - d. Based on the above question, do you think there are people who think they believe in Jesus as God, but who really only believe in him as a great teacher? If so, are they true believers – do they have a relationship with God? How can you know if you believe in and accept Jesus as God, or only as a great teacher?

3. How can unbelief in Jesus be expressed as religion?
 - a. Can religion – our religious ideas and practices get in the way of us believing in Jesus? If so how? It is easy to see how the religion of the religious people of Jesus day kept them from seeing and believing in Jesus, but how does the religion of our day keep people from seeing and believing in Jesus?
 - b. How can we elevate doctrinal positions, spiritual opinions, and the writings of respected spiritual leaders over God's word? Can you think of examples in recent times that this has happened?
 - c. How can you defend yourself from allowing this to happen in your own life?

4. People often refer to any form of judgement as being wrong – as being 'judgmental.' But in John 7:24 Jesus calls us to not judge by appearances, but to "**judge with right judgement.**"
 - a. What is he calling us to do? What does it mean to judge with right judgement?
 - b. In Matthew 7:1-2, Jesus taught, "*Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*" What kind of judgement is telling us to avoid in Matthew 7, and how is that different from the type of judgement he is calling us to exercise in John 7?