



LC STUDY GUIDE

Done in Sync with the Really?!? Sermon Series

The Passage: John 8:39-59

For Life Community usage 1/25 - 2/7/16

Central Point – Jesus never fits in neatly with our personal worldviews, cultural systems, and religious understandings BUT helps us to recognize their limits and that there is something greater.

The Passage: John 8:39-59

³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the works of your own father."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

⁴⁹ "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.

⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."

⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not,

I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Context:

We pick up the story during an ongoing argument between Jesus and the Pharisees. While we did not read it today, back in verse 31, Jesus addresses "the Jews who had believed him and said to them, "If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples." Commentators suggest that throughout the exchanges in these chapters, there was a spectrum of attitudes including some who believed, some who believed initially but became increasingly alarmed, and those who refused to believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

O – Take some time and read through the text. What do you find disturbing? Which of the Pharisees' insults troubles you the most? Which of Jesus' refutes stirs you the most?

I – The tension moves up another level when Jesus tells them they are not legitimate children of Abraham, and then later, when he says their father is the devil (v. 44). The Pharisees are claiming their secure relationship with God based on their ancestral lineage, while Jesus focuses on their spiritual heritage. How does our understanding of the passage shift when we apply the spiritual lens of obedience to verses 39-47?

(When understood as a spiritual lineage of Abraham's obedience to God, we understand that peace with God is not inherited, not passed genetically or culturally—it is only through the surrender of the heart.)

A – Have you ever had an experience when everyone around you accused you of being guilty or of being something you were not? How did you react? Did you defend yourself? Were you able to make progress in the conversation? What did you think about afterwards?

O – What was the answer the Pharisees gave to Jesus when he asked, "Can anyone of you prove me guilty of sin?" (v. 46)

I – What is the connection between being Samaritan and demon-possessed? (They could have simply said demon-possessed.) Why do you think they used the combination?

(The Jews and the Samaritans both held many beliefs in common as they relied on the Pentateuch. However, the Jews felt the Samaritans had a lax view of the Pentateuch and dismissed them as heretics, and thus included Jesus' teachings and his works as heretical and demonic. They also wanted to reiterate they were the rightful children of Abraham.)

O – Some of the most beautiful words in the Gospel of John come in verse 51. What do you see and feel when you read and mediate on them?

I – The Pharisees' reaction to those words was to take them literally, thus confirming their accusations that he is demonic (or demented). They exclaim that "everyone dies! even Abraham!" Why does Jesus keep referring to His Father during these exchanges?
(Jesus consistently keeps "sticking to His story" that His authority comes from God, that He is the son of God, and if they were listening to God versus their understanding, they would understand this and believe Jesus.)

A – We all like to think that we would find the magical words that win the argument, but so often in such heated moments, there is nothing that can be said to change the minds of the accusers. In addition to Jesus' words, what else can we glean during these exchanges with his accusers?

A – We all have Pharisee-like tendencies. We are all limited by our understandings, worldviews, and systems. How can we see these limits, move beyond them and grow in ways that are truly faithful to the person of Jesus and His message?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.