

Lesson 7 Notes

John 5

Focus Verse

“Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” (John 5:23b)

Outline

- Jesus’s Demonstration of Divine Authority – John 5:1-15
- Jesus’s Claims of Divine Authority – John 5:16-47

Engage

People make all kinds of claims. Companies market their products by promising incredible results, which may or may not prove reliable. How can we know if any of the information provided is factual? Governments claim the right to collect taxes and expect compliance with established laws. Citizens demand personal rights such as ownership of land or property. The legitimacy of any claim depends on the authenticity behind that declaration.

A claim must prove true to be real. In a world where people claim so many things, we often struggle with knowing what to believe and whom to trust. !

In John 5, Jesus made bold pronouncements that rattled His hearers, inciting opposition. He healed a lame man and indicated His authority to forgive sin. He explained the unified work of God the Father and His Son. He even cited witnesses to verify His claims. Jesus’s enemies recognized His words as a proclamation of His deity and were offended; what right did this upstart man have to say such things? Jesus’s declarations forced deep thought and ultimately a decision. To comprehend Jesus’s authority, we must recognize Him for who He really is. **Jesus’s deity establishes His authority.** The claims of Christ are not empty. He spoke unshakable truth.

✦ Jesus’s Demonstration of Divine Authority – John 5:1-15

Chapter 5 begins a new section of John’s Gospel. As both faith and unbelief grew, so did conflict. The scene shifts from personal conversations to public disputes. As Jesus’s light shone brightly, the darkness of unbelief deepened. No one can remain neutral about Jesus. By the end of this chapter, Jesus’s enemies threatened His life.

The Man’s Condition – 5:1-5

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts and passed the Pool of Bethesda, located near the “Sheep Gate.” The accuracy of John’s description of this pool with five covered

porches remained disputed until archeologists discovered the five-sided pool in the 19th century. Today many visit this site in Jerusalem.

Crowds of disabled people gathered at this pool, believing an angel occasionally imparted healing powers to the waters. Jesus did not address all the needs surrounding Him. **One man among the crowd of blind, lame, and paralyzed people captured the attention of Jesus.** We do not know why He singled out this man, who had been an invalid for 38 years, as the recipient of His compassion and healing.

The Lord's Compassion – 5:6-7

Jesus saw and sought out this man. He did not waste time on small talk but, instead, asked a penetrating question: “Do you want to get well?” Jesus’s question may seem strange to us. This man’s obvious physical condition and his presence at this pool would seem to indicate a desire to be healed. How did the question impact a man likely accustomed to hearing daily conversation about physical ills and life’s hardships? Sometimes seeking health and wholeness represent responsibility or effort that weary people cannot muster.

Jesus recognized this man’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. **The lame man’s answer to Jesus’s question revealed his hopelessness and isolation.** He could not get into the water fast enough when the supposedly healing ripples erupted, and he had no one to help him. He did not realize that humanity’s source of hope and healing—Jesus—stood before him.

The Call to Action – 5:8

Though the lame man did not recognize Jesus or ask for healing, Jesus challenged him to take action and risk obedience. The Lord issued three commands, each rich in spiritual significance.

- **“Get up!”** – Jesus’s words communicated power that demanded a response, mysteriously combining His healing power and this man’s effort. Jesus offered His healing power to legs that had not borne weight for 38 years.
- **“Pick up your mat”** – Jesus invited this man to move forward from dependence upon others while offering him the strength to do so. This command later invited the condemnation of the religious leaders.
- **“Walk”** – No longer immobilized in a hopeless state, the man heard Jesus call him to step beyond where he had been stuck. He could choose a new life with all the responsibilities of a whole body and personality.

The Changed Life – 5:9-15

In response to Jesus’s power-filled commands, the man was instantly healed. Jesus’s divine method of healing had nothing to do with the tradition of the pool’s healing power. The man picked up his mat and began to walk, demonstrating faith and obedience with action. Without physical therapy or gait training, his formerly lame legs sprang to life.

Verse 9 adds an ominous and significant detail: “The day on which this took place was a Sabbath.” The newly healed man met immediate opposition as the religious leaders confronted him about carrying his mat on the Sabbath. **Instead of rejoicing at this man’s glorious restoration, those entrusted with Israel’s spiritual leadership saw only their broken rules.** 🙄

The formerly lame man did not know who Jesus was, but Jesus later found him again and urged him to “Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.” This command may have referred to a particular habit of sin, but it more likely represented a call to repentance and faith in Christ. **We cannot clearly conclude whether this man trusted in Jesus for salvation, but he did identify Jesus to the religious officials as the one who healed him.**

With purposeful compassion, Jesus sought out a crippled man accustomed to rejection and stuck in desperation. **This physical healing points to the spiritual healing God has entrusted to His Son.** All humans are born spiritually blind, paralyzed by sin, and unable to come to God on our own. Jesus has authority to heal bodies and forgive sin. As we trust in Jesus, He enables us to live for Him with all we say and do. His compassionate invitation to sinners continues: “Do you want to get well?”

✦ Jesus’s Claims of Divine Authority – John 5:16-47

The Controversy – 5:16-18

The Ten Commandments provide core principles for wholeheartedly loving God and others. The fourth commandment states God’s desire that His people set the Sabbath apart from all other days of the week.¹ **God intends the Sabbath day to be a delight not a burden.**² Ordinary work stops so people can focus on loving and worshiping God.³

Did Jesus intentionally seek to expose the legalism of the Jewish religious system by healing on the Sabbath? The law of Moses ordained one day in seven for rest as a sign of Israel’s covenant. **By the time Jesus came to earth, Jewish religious traditions exceedingly multiplied the original constraints of the law.** The code of Jewish law, known as the Mishnah, describes 39 activities as work on the Sabbath, including plucking grain, hunting, sewing two stitches, or writing two letters.⁴ Additional man-made regulations forbade carrying a small item, administering medicine, or attempting to heal on the Sabbath. **The Sabbath became a burden God never intended, which distorted His original intent for His people.** Jesus loved and fully obeyed God’s law; He never encouraged anyone to dismiss or treat God’s law casually. **The healed man did not break God’s law but simply carried his mat.**

The religious leaders questioned Jesus about this healing. Jesus responded with a bold statement packed with deep truth about His union with His Father: **“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”** **Jesus’s words express the mysterious oneness of purpose the Father and the Son share alongside their constant activity, most of which humans**

1. **Sabbath set apart:** Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17
2. **Delight of the Sabbath:** Isaiah 58:13-14
3. **Work stopped:** Nehemiah 13:15-19; Jeremiah 17:19-27
4. Mishnah, Shabbat 7.2

fail to recognize. God rested from His work of creation on the seventh day.⁵ **However, God never ceases to protect, preserve, and direct His creation.**⁶ Babies are born, crops grow, and the wind blows on the Sabbath just like every other day. **The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constantly work together to redeem and restore humanity from sin's curse.**⁷ **In this very moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is "sustaining all things by his powerful word."**⁸


The Jewish leaders immediately grasped Jesus's claim to equality with God. Jesus's statement accelerated their opposition. From this time on, they planned to kill Him.

The Claims of Divine Authority – 5:19-30

In this powerful discourse, Jesus explained His union with His Father and some specific ways He exercised His authority as God's Son. **Jesus's detailed explanation proves His equality with God.**

Jesus's Union with the Father – 5:19-20

The Surrender of the Son – 5:19

Jesus emphasized the absolute truth of His claims by stating, "Very truly I tell you." **Jesus exercises submission to His Father in everything He says and does.**⁹ He stated, "The Son can do nothing by himself." **Jesus never seeks His own advantage in a self-serving manner.** The Lord did not mean He *could* not do anything on His own initiative so much as **He would not.** 

Complete dependence on His Father not only keeps Jesus from acting on His own, but also allows Him to actively accomplish everything His Father planned. **The harmony between God and Jesus cannot be overstated, while the distinctiveness between them remains mysterious.**

The Solidarity of the Father – 5:20

Jesus explained three ways He and His Father remain united.

- **First, love defines the relationship between the Father and the Son.** Through Christ, this deep, personal love extends to all whom the Father has given Him.¹⁰
- **Second, the Father and the Son share complete, mutual knowledge and full disclosure about all matters.** All the Father does, the Son knows, shares, and does as well. Jesus does state that some things rest with His Father's discretion. The timing of His return, for example, is His Father's business.¹¹
- **Third, greater works of divine power were yet to come.** The Sabbath-day healing foreshadowed **even greater signs of Jesus's oneness with His Father.** This likely refers to Jesus's power over death,¹² the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Church.¹³

5. **God rested:** Genesis 2:1-3

6. **God's sovereignty:** Psalm 104:27-30

7. **Sin's curse:** Genesis 3

8. **Sustaining power:** Hebrews 1:3

9. **Jesus's perfect submission:** Philippians 2:6-8

10. **Father's love:** John 17:24-26

11. **Timing of Jesus's return:** Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:6-7

12. **Power over death:** John 11; 20

13. **The Spirit and the Church:** Acts 2

Jesus's Divine Authority – 5:21-30

Jesus backed up His claim of union with His Father by citing rights He exercises equally with His Father.

Jesus's Authority to Give Life – 5:21 with Illustration in 5:24-26

Jesus explained, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." **The Father and the Son give physical and spiritual life.** Jesus gave renewed physical life to the lame man. Even more, Jesus grants eternal life to all who place their faith in Him.¹⁴ Jesus sets believers free from condemnation, without fear of final judgment or eternal death.¹⁵ The one who trusts in Jesus awaits a future resurrection and a glorified body for all eternity.¹⁶

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Jesus's Authority to Judge – 5:22 with Illustration in 5:27-30

Jesus's authority as humanity's judge demonstrates His equality with God. His just judgments, unlimited knowledge, and infallible justice flow from this perfect relationship. **With God's authority, Jesus—the Son of Man—will make the final determination regarding the eternal destiny of everyone who has ever lived.** ➤

All people will hear Jesus's voice and the dead will be resurrected. Some will rise from their graves to receive eternal life and salvation while others will face eternal death.¹⁷ In context, to do "good" refers to coming to Christ as the source of all goodness and life. God views turning away from Jesus's gracious offer of eternal life as evil.¹⁸ **The choice to follow Jesus or reject Him determines the kind of resurrection you will experience.** Now is the time to hear and respond to Jesus's words.¹⁹ Eternity holds no second chances.

Jesus's Right to Receive Honor – 5:23

No one can honor the Father without giving honor to His Son. Jesus's union and equality with His Father signifies His worthiness to receive honor. To reject Jesus is to turn away from the Father because Jesus provides the only way to God.²⁰ God and Jesus cannot be separated. If you do not love Jesus, you cannot claim to know God. Some people comfortably think about God, but stumble over Jesus, whose death confronts their sin and demands a response.²¹ **Most of the people who came near Jesus when He walked on earth failed to recognize Him for who He is—God in the flesh. Heaven's songs resound with eternal praise for Jesus, God's Son. The Son of God, who came to earth and paid sin's price to redeem humanity, deserves honor and worship now and forever.** ➤

14. **Eternal life through the Son:** John 10:28

15. **No condemnation:** Romans 3:22-26; 8:1

16. **Resurrected body:** 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-21

17. **Resurrection:** John 5:28-29

18. **Turning away from Jesus:** John 3:18-21, 36

19. **Now is the time:** 2 Corinthians 6:2

20. **Only through Jesus:** John 14:6

21. **Jesus, the stumbling stone:** 1 Peter 2:1-8

The Father and Son—Equal in Power and United in Purpose

The Doctrine of God the Father

How can we understand what God is like? **God the Father, the author of creation, can only be known and understood through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.**¹ The unity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit represents a mystery that transcends human understanding. **Jesus came to earth to reveal His Father’s heart and accomplish His work of redemption on our behalf.** Out of abounding love, Christ’s costly sacrifice made a way for sinners to enjoy restored fellowship with their Creator. **Believers delight in calling God “Abba, Father,” the same name for God that Jesus Himself used.**²

Failure to look to Christ for salvation means living life and facing eternity with a broken relationship with God. Our heavenly Father created every human with an eternal soul designed for communion with Him. Words cannot fully capture the present and eternal loss that results from rejecting God’s love through Christ. You cannot know God without receiving Christ as His Son and your Savior.

God created all people in His image—made to be in relationship with Him. Knowing, worshiping, and glorifying God represents your highest calling and greatest joy. **You can intimately know God’s immeasurable greatness, unconditional love, and amazing grace when you come to Him through His Son.** How has Jesus opened your eyes to His provision of rich fellowship with God the Father? In what ways does Jesus’s sacrifice reveal God’s infinite majesty to you? The Holy Spirit awakens our hearts to embrace Jesus’s sacrifice, which opens the way for rich fellowship with God the Father. What amazing truth! What an amazing God!

1. **Jesus reveals the Father:** Matthew 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 14:6-11; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 2:9-10; Hebrews 1:2-3

2. **Abba, Father:** Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6

The Confirming Witnesses – 5:31-47

Jesus backs up His divine credentials with the testimony of four reliable witnesses. Though the Lord’s testimony about Himself carried sufficient weight, Jesus provided additional witnesses to validate His claims.

John the Baptist – 5:33-35

God sent John the Baptist to point to Jesus.²² **John the Baptist testified to Jesus boldly, bravely, and often.** Jesus said John the Baptist was “a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.” Many rejoiced in John the Baptist’s witness. Jesus spoke of him in the past tense, which indicates that King Herod had imprisoned and perhaps already executed John the Baptist. Jesus’s words extend an unspoken challenge regarding the religious leaders’ response to John the Baptist’s testimony.

22. **John the Baptist’s testimony:** Matthew 3:3, 11-12; Luke 1:17, 76-77; 3:16-17; John 1:19-34

Jesus's Works – 5:36

Jesus stated that His own works offered a testimony “weightier than that of John.” **The miracles Jesus performed attested to His divine authority.** The Sabbath healing, intentionally suppressed and contested by the religious officials, presented evidence of His deity. Jesus did things only God could do. His “signs” revealed not only His unlimited supernatural power but also His compassionate heart for needy people. Jesus’s miracles validated His identity as God in human flesh. Jesus demonstrated works that pointed to the ultimate work He came to finish—His death and resurrection.²³


The Father – 5:37-38

The Father Himself testified regarding Jesus’s authority. When did this happen? Jesus is possibly referencing His baptism, when God’s voice declared, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”²⁴ This acclamation was repeated at Jesus’s transfiguration.²⁵ The Father’s commendation permeated all of Jesus’s works and words.

The Scriptures – 5:39-47

The Jewish officials Jesus addressed diligently studied the Old Testament Scriptures. **Jesus pointed out that when they rejected Him, they shunned the very Messiah the Scriptures proclaimed.** Though people did not fully understand everything the Old Testament proclaimed about Messiah, Scripture clearly pointed to Jesus.²⁶

Jesus, in a scathing indictment, exposed the fundamental problem of these proud religious leaders. They refused to come to Jesus for life and did not have God’s love in their hearts. They accepted spiritual frauds and promoted empty religious practices but rejected God’s Son. They did not seek God’s glory because they preferred the honor of other people. They refused to honor Jesus by believing in Him.

Jesus boldly confronted His accusers with undeniable truth. The Son of God who came to earth speaks and works in perfect harmony with God the Father. **Jesus’s deity establishes His authority.** Reliable witnesses and Jesus’s works confirm His equality with God. 

Take to Heart

Hold Fast

Jesus noticed and healed a man beside the Pool of Bethesda who had been lame for 38 years. When Jesus asked him if he wanted to get well, **the man shared his desperate plight.** He had no one to put him into the pool when the waters rippled. In response to Jesus’s power and authority, this man went from victim to victor. Jesus commanded him to stand up, pick up his mat, and walk. When the Jewish religious leaders saw the healed man carrying his mat, they

23. Jesus’s work: John 4:34

24. Jesus’s baptism: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:22

25. Jesus’s transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-7; Luke 9:28-35

26. Testimony of Scripture: Luke 24:27

accused him of breaking their Sabbath laws. The healed man pointed them to Jesus as the one who had healed him.

Offended by Jesus's merciful act of healing on the Sabbath, the religious leaders began to persecute Jesus and make plans to kill Him. **Jesus, with unwavering forthrightness, offered claims of His divine authority and equality with God.** As Lord of all, including the Sabbath, He had every right to do what He was doing on that day.²⁷ Jesus cited His unity of purpose and constant alignment with His Father in accomplishing His work. Jesus's authority to give life, render judgment, and receive honor all point to His deity. Additionally, Jesus listed confirming witnesses to verify His divine identity. John the Baptist, Jesus's works, His Father, and the Scriptures all corroborate who Jesus is.

Jesus concluded His conversation with these fault-finding religious leaders by exposing their own hypocrisy. They could not hide behind their outward vigilance to uphold God's law. Although they claimed to honor God, they refused to accept Jesus as Messiah—proof that they did not truly believe the Scriptures or love God. No one who rejects Jesus actually loves God. Jesus's authoritative words and healing power prove that He is who He claimed to be—the Son of God. Jesus is worthy of worship and honor.

Apply It

Among a crowd of needy people, Jesus set His gaze and compassion upon a lame man stuck in a hopeless situation. He healed a man who found unexpected help. This man received new life on the Sabbath. Sometimes we find ourselves caught in challenges where resolutions seem impossible. Jesus did not heal every broken body gathered around that pool. While Jesus does not promise a remedy for our every woe, we can know that, like this man, Jesus sees us right where we are lying. **There is no situation too hopeless for Jesus to transform.** Difficult circumstances reveal our helplessness and invite us to seek the Lord. Even when our challenges remain, God provides the strength we need to trust Him and His purposes. What situation are you facing that invites you to look to Jesus, not human solutions? How will you find comfort knowing that Jesus sees you, understands your struggle, and wants to help you?

Do you ever wonder why God does not decisively intervene to alleviate human suffering, right wrongs, and end injustice? How might a lingering struggle lead you to doubt God's care and love for you? Why does God sometimes seem to take so long to do anything? John 5 offers a helpful promise. God the Father and Jesus the Son are continually at work. Not one second, one trial, or one moment of suffering evade God's constant, purpose-filled work in this world. **God is always doing so much more than we realize.** The God who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground,²⁸ who controls every droplet of water in the universe,²⁹ and establishes kings and kingdoms³⁰ can be trusted with His purposes and plans that we cannot see or understand. When, by human estimation, God appears slow to respond, we must know that we do not see all He is doing. Will you trust that God is in control even when He appears silent or inactive?³¹ In what challenge or joy will you confidently rest in God's constant, active care?

27. **Lord of the Sabbath:** Mark 2:28

28. **Sparrows:** Matthew 10:29

29. **Control of the waters:** Job 38:8-11; Psalm 33:7

30. **Kings and kingdoms:** Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1

31. **Waiting:** Habakkuk 2:1-3

Jesus defined His authority over humanity and history. As God's Son, equal in power and united in purpose with His Father, Jesus deserves honor. **Why is it easier to accept Jesus's authority over heaven and earth than to yield our own will to His authority—especially when God's ways conflict with our plans or preferences?** The Jewish religious leaders refused to acknowledge or yield to Jesus. **Ultimately, the truth about Jesus's authority should lead us to humble ourselves before Him.** Jesus's authority does not stand as a benign force of nature but as a personal reality that impacts our lives. We need never fear surrendering to Him who guards our souls and seeks our highest good. How might you currently be resisting Jesus's rightful authority over your life? In what ways will you purposefully yield to Him this week?

How do you know if you really love God? Jesus made the answer clear to the religious experts, who diligently scrutinized others and the Scriptures but rejected Him. **If you love God, you will love Jesus.** The Son of God left heaven's glories to die on a cruel cross for you and could not love you more. Love for Jesus grows as we walk through life, apply the Scriptures, and seek God. Believers joyfully anticipate the day when they will see Jesus with an unveiled face.³² They will spend eternity free from this world's burden of sin—worshiping and loving their Savior. How has your love for Jesus grown as you daily walk with God through this life? Everything you do now and for eternity to honor Jesus also honors God. What a privilege!

32. Unveiled face: 1 Corinthians 13:12