

INTRODUCTION

If you've ever had family problems, then you can relate to this message. Jesus had trouble with His biological family.

Some time ago, someone gave me a Peanuts cartoon strip and in the first panel, Linus is in front of the television with his blanket. Lucy comes in and walks right in front of him and changes the channel. Linus is incensed and says, "What gives you the right to change channels? I was here first." Lucy looks at him with one of those every-brother-is-dumb looks and says, "Jesus said the first shall be last and the last shall be first." Matthew 19:30. In the last panel, Linus looks at the reader and says, "I'll betcha' Jesus never had an older sister." Well Jesus didn't have an older sister, because He was the firstborn. But we'll see in this passage that Jesus had brothers and sisters and they didn't always get along.

John 6 was a turning point in Jesus' ministry, because that's when the huge crowds stopped following Him. And there arose a real hostility toward Him. And as we will see in this passage, the Jewish leaders were already planning to kill this pesky Rabbi.

John 7:1-20 (CSB). After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since he did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him. The Jewish Festival of Shelters was near. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea so your disciples can see your works that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he's seeking public recognition. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." (For not even his brothers believed in him.)

Jesus told them, "My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it—that its works are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves. I'm not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come." After he had said these things, he stayed in Galilee.

After his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up, not openly but secretly. The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, "Where is he?" And there was a lot of murmuring about him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "No, on the contrary, he's deceiving the people." Still, nobody was talking publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How is this man so learned, since he hasn't been trained?"

Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't mine but is from the one who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. The one who speaks on his own seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in

him. Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

"You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?"

Everything in John 7 takes place in one week, during the celebration of the Feast of Shelters. It was also called The Feast of Tabernacles or Succoth in Hebrew. Of the three major feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, this was the most joyous celebration for the Jews. During eight days in the Fall, Jewish families would move out of their homes and stay in temporary shelters. The frame was made with tree limbs and the roof was covered with branches and thatched leaves. It was like camping out for a week, but with no traveling because they usually set up the shelter right beside their homes. It was to remind the Jews of the forty years when the people of Israel had wandered in the wilderness. Orthodox Jews in Israel still follow this custom, and for the last thirty years about 5,000 Christians have attended the Feast of Tabernacles by gathering to show their love for Jerusalem. They have a roll-call of nations. Some see this as a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy that all the nations of the world would ascend to Jerusalem.

But let's go back to the Festival during the time of Jesus. It was to be a time of celebration but we are going to see that Jesus changes it into a time of confrontation. By the end of the week, people are going to try to arrest Him and kill Him. As we study this passage we will see that Jesus had to deal with disappointments and disagreements.

I. Be prepared for relational disappointments.

All of us grew up in some kind of a family. It was either our biological family, or an adopted family. And any time you have people living together, there is going to be friction. Sometimes brothers and sisters don't get along. Sometimes parents and children don't get along. For some reason we have expectations that every family should be perfect and never have any conflict. And when that doesn't happen, it leads to disappointment.

A Sunday school teacher was teaching on the Ten Commandments. She told the children, "The Bible says we are to 'Honor our father and mother.' Is there a commandment that tells us how we should treat our brothers and sisters? One kid raised his hand and said, "Thou shall not kill." That's funny, but it's not far from the truth. The very first set of brothers, Cain and Abel didn't get along. And Cain killed Abel. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. And you may be surprised to learn that there was conflict between Jesus and His siblings.

A. Jesus' siblings rejected Him.

Jesus was the firstborn of Mary, but according to the New Testament, Jesus had half-brothers and sisters. They had the same mother, Mary, but different dads. Jesus was the supernatural Son of God and His siblings were the natural children of Mary and Joseph. So Jesus was part of a blended family. We read His brother's names in Matthew 13 and Mark 6. The people following Jesus asked, "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses,

Judas, and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?" So they were offended by Him." (Mark 6:3 CSB)

Circle two of those names, James and Judas (or Jude). These two half-brothers would go on to believe in Jesus and write the two books in the New Testament that bear their names.

But we see in John 7 that at this stage his brothers didn't believe in Him. So their advice to Him to go up to Jerusalem for the festival could have come from two different motivations. Maybe they thought brother Jesus had a chance to succeed in Jerusalem politics so they advised Him to go up and launch his public campaign. They were saying, "Hey you should try to big stage instead of backwoods Galilee." Or they may have just been using sarcasm to say, "Since you're so high-and mighty. Why don't you go up to Jerusalem and perform some of your magic tricks for them? Or are they too sophisticated for you?"

We often use words to hurt our family members. A man told his lazy teenage son, "Son, when Abe Lincoln was your age, he was already splitting rails." The son said, "That may be true, but when he was your age, dad, he was President."

It's ironic to see that the siblings of Jesus didn't believe in Him. It must have been a heartache to Jesus that His family didn't understand Him and believe in Him. Maybe you've experienced that. Maybe you're going through it now. It's tough when we are rejected by members of our own family. Jesus understands the pain you may be experiencing.

B. Jesus' hearers hated Him.

Jesus wasn't being deceptive when He told His half-brothers He wasn't going up for the full festival. He didn't want to arrive when the crowds were arriving. Instead He stayed in Galilee and arrived in the middle of the eight-day celebration. When he arrived He started teaching in the Temple courts.

And there were some listeners who hated his message, so they attacked the messenger. They hated Jesus for the same reason the world hates us today. Jesus said in John 7:7 "The world hates me because I testify about it—that its works are evil." They hated Jesus because He had the nerve to say sinful behavior was evil. This creates hostility because nobody wants to be told their behavior is evil.

The same is true today. The world doesn't mind religion or religious practices, but when we start calling sin what it really is, the reaction is always hate. Christians who hold to a Biblical view of morality and sexuality are actually labeled as hate groups today.

The main offices of the Southern Poverty Law Center are in Montgomery, Alabama. It was started in 1971 to help litigate against racial discrimination, but has since become a misguided whistle-blower for their definition of hate-groups. Every year they publish a new list of hate groups and most of the list is accurate including the KKK and Aryan Brotherhood. But also on

the same list is the Alliance Defending Freedom and The Family Research Council. These are Christian groups who dare to define sexuality and marriage according to the Bible.

Jesus predicted we would be hated. And He gave us instructions on how we should react when we are hated. He said, "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets." (Luke 6:22-23 NKJV)

So Jesus faced disappointment from His family and from those to whom He was preaching. So we should be prepared for disappointments as well. But we should revolt, and we shouldn't resign, we should rejoice.

II. Be prepared for doctrinal disagreements.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem it created a buzz all around the city. People were asking each other, "Where is He?" But they were having to do it quietly because everyone knew that the Jewish Mafia—the scribes and Pharisees—had put out the word that they were going to kill this false prophet. When you read this passage it's obvious the people were divided about him. Jesus is still the great divider. I'll talk more about that in the coming messages. People today still disagree about three important beliefs about Jesus. There are three questions about Jesus that every person must answer.

A. People disagree about the Authority of Jesus.

To put it in the form of a question, you must decide: "What right does He have to say these things?" Here's how Jesus answered the question. In John 7:15-16 we read: Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How is this man so learned, since he hasn't been trained?" Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't mine but is from the one who sent me. (John 7:15-16)

Jesus didn't teach like the other rabbis. The rabbis back then (and still today) are careful to say something like, "The Torah says" or "The Talmud says" or "Rabbi Shammai" says. But Jesus was different because over and over again He said, "Truly, truly, I say unto you."

Jesus never attended rabbinical school or had formal training. But at age 12 He was amazing the elders in the Temple.

Jesus claimed to be speaking the very words of the One who sent Him, His Heavenly Father. Through the years I've often had someone come up to me and say, "God told me to tell you something." I always listen. If what they share with me is a passage from God's Word, then yes, that could be God speaking to me. But if they say something like, "God told me to tell you to preach on the second coming next week." I'm a little skeptical because I wonder why God didn't just tell me Himself. You have to be discerning when someone says God told them to tell you something.

But when Jesus said, "God told me to tell you..." You'd better listen and obey! Every person must decide for themselves, "Can I trust the words of Jesus found in the Bible?" I believe you absolutely can trust His words. But there are many today who disagree with me. What say you?

B. People disagree about the Character of Jesus.

This is a question every person must answer today: "Who is Jesus?" People disagreed about His character 2,000 years ago just as they do today. We read: Some were saying, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "No, on the contrary, he's deceiving people"... "You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?" (John 7:12,20 CSB)

Some of the people said, "He must be a good man. He healed that paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, and that guy had been there 38 years!" Others would say, "But he is teaching people to break the Sabbath laws. He can't be good!" Others even said, "This man is demon-possessed!"

So, in your opinion: Who is Jesus? I've quoted C.S. Lewis many times, but he made a brilliant observation that it is impossible to simply say Jesus was just a good teacher. He didn't leave that option. He claimed to be God. Later in this chapter He yelled to the crowd, "If any person is thirsty, let him come unto me and drink. The person who believes in me will have springs of living water flow out of him." That's a bold, audacious claim!

So there are only three options. Either Jesus claimed to be God and knew He wasn't— then He wouldn't be a good man, He would be a liar. Or the second option is that He claimed to be God and really thought He was—but He wasn't. That's not a good man, that's somebody who is crazy as a bed bug. Plenty of patients in psychiatric wards have claimed to be Jesus. The third option is that He claimed to be God—and He really was. So the options are: Was He a Liar, Lunatic, or Lord? What say you?

C. People disagree about the Origin of Jesus.

This third question is one you must decide for yourself: "Where did Jesus come from?" And in John 6 Jesus made another amazing declaration. Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38 CSB) In the last chapter the people said, "Isn't this the son of Joseph and Mary? How can he claim that He came from Heaven?" Later in this chapter, the people will say, "This man can't be the Messiah. He is from Galilee!"

How you answer this question determines what you believe about the Deity of Christ. Is Jesus God? So, here are your choices: Do you really believe that Jesus existed with the Father from the beginning of the beginning as part of the eternal Godhead? Or you believe that He was just a man born like everyone else with two human parents. How you answer that question will determine your eternal destiny. So, where did Jesus come from? What say you?

What is the practical application of what we've learned? I call it the Take Away Truth: Since we live in a culture of relative truth, we must allow God's light, truth, and love shine through us.

I'm not one of those "ain't if awful?" preachers. Some people moan and complain about how hard it is to be a Christian in such a pagan culture as we find ourselves. Well, our culture was a lot more accepting of Biblical truth fifty years ago, but we still don't have as tough a job as the Christians in the First Century. The Roman Empire under Nero was much more of a filthy moral sewer than we live in now. But in the midst of that spiritual and moral darkness, the followers of Jesus were persecuted but they thrived and the faith spread like wildfire throughout the Empire. Now think about those believers living in such a moral swamp and then think about our culture. Here is the instruction Paul gave to them—and we need to hear it and heed it in the 21st Century. In Philippians 2 he wrote: "Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, by holding firm to the word of life." (Philippians 2:14-16 CSB)

As we continue the moral conversation with our culture, let's not argue with anybody. We need to have light without heat. We must speak the truth in love. Truth without love is cruelty. Love without truth is cowardice. We need both truth and love.

CONCLUSION

I've discovered that even after you start following Jesus, you will experience disappointments. But I've also discovered that when you are trusting God, your disappointments can become His appointments.

Those who know God intimately have come to see that He often allows us to face adversity in order to conform us to the image of Christ. God determined from the beginning that we should be shaped into the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29) Part of this plan involves the painful removal of those things in our lives that don't reflect this image.

A man traveling in the Smoky Mountains stopped at a small, rustic gas station and country store. Outside the store, an elderly man was displaying woodcarvings for sale. He had masterfully created horses, dogs, and other wildlife from blocks of wood. As the visitor examined the art, the old man was busy carving a reproduction of a dog. After watching with fascination, he asked the artist, "How do you get such a beautiful image out of a plain block of wood?"

The old man smiled knowingly, having answered that question numerous times. He replied with a twinkle in his eye, "I just cut away everything that doesn't look like a dog!"

As God conforms us to be like Jesus, He often uses painful experiences to accomplish His plan. So don't fight against disappointments and disagreements, just let your light shine for Jesus.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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