

Believe and Have Life

The Gospel of John

John 5:31–47

Read John 5:31–47.

1. What are some things that people have heard Jesus say about himself so far in the Gospel of John?
(Examples include 2:16, 19; 5:17–18, 19–30)

2. Given the remarkable things Jesus has said and done, do you think it is reasonable for the Jewish leaders to seek an explanation from him—in a way, to put Jesus on trial?

Why or why not?

3. What testimonies, or witnesses, does Jesus present?
v. 33

v. 36 (compare vv. 19–20)

v. 37

vv. 39b, 46


4. In addition to preaching and teaching, what other “work” (v. 36) has Jesus been doing that testifies to who he is?
2:1–11

2:13–17


2:23

4:46–54

5:1–9a

5. How has God the Father been the ultimate source behind all these testimonies? (v. 1:6; Acts 2:22; Heb. 1:1;  *1 Jn. 5:9–12)

6. Why does Jesus present all these witnesses? Is he merely trying to justify himself in the eyes of a skeptical audience? (v. 34b; compare 1:6–7 and 20:31)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. As Jesus continues to speak, the situation becomes reversed: it is no longer he who is on trial, but his listeners.¹ What does Jesus say about them?
 - v. 37b
 - v. 38
 - v. 42
8. In verse 44 Jesus charges his listeners with “accept[ing] praise from one another, yet mak[ing] no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God.”
 - a. What is the danger for them in doing this?
 - b. In what areas do you find yourself vulnerable to valuing the approval of people more highly than the approval of God?
 - c. What have you found yourself tempted to do or be to earn human praise?
 - d. What is the danger for you in this?
9. Though Jesus will one day judge those listening to him (5:22, 27, 30), he makes it clear in verse 45 that he is not the one who will accuse them before the Father (📖*3:17). Who is their accuser?
10. What do Jesus’ Jewish listeners hope to gain from their diligent study of the Scriptures, including the writings of Moses? (v. 39a)
11. In this hope they are badly misguided. Where should they be looking instead? (vv. 39b–40; 1 Jn. 5:12; 📖* 14:6)
12. What was in fact the primary purpose of the Scriptures? (v. 39b, 46; Lk. 24:25–27; 📖*Mt. 5:17; Acts 10:43)
13. Commentator N.T. Wright notes that “it is possible to allow the study of the [Bible] text, and of different interpretations of the text, to become a substitute for allowing the text to bring us into the presence of the living God. It is deceptively easy to know everything about ‘the Jewish hope for the Messiah’, and not to know the Messiah himself, in person. And it is all too simple...to use our knowledge and intellectual ability to gain status and prestige among our colleagues, or among those who belong to the same part of (or party within) the church as we do. That is as true today as it was in Jesus’ day.”²
 Do you sometimes find yourself analyzing the Bible, or looking for answers to questions about it, without engaging God himself?

Spend time now in God’s presence in prayer, asking the Spirit to draw you into a deeper relationship with Jesus himself as you move forward in this study.

¹ N.T. Wright, *John for Everyone: Part One* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 67.

² Ibid., 70.