

The Character of Jesus 41
Pointing to God
John 7:11 – 52
Letting the Spirit Work

- Characteristic: Letting the Spirit Work
 - (11 – 15) Jesus' prior behavior mystified the crowds. Normal leaders glorify themselves (not necessarily in a bad way, but rather promoting themselves as the best answer to the present situation) and live comfortably. Plus, rabbis had competing theories.
 - (16 – 19) The mindset of the faithful:
 - (16, 18) The faithful talk about God. They themselves are merely a vehicle and largely invisible. Note that no physical description of Jesus survived. He wrote nothing.
 - (17) "He who wants to know what God wants will understand." Promises of understanding are given in 1 Corinthians 2:9 – 12, Ephesians 1:17 – 19, 2 Corinthians 3:15 – 18, *et al.*
 - (19) How is your present rubric working for you?
 - The desire of the leaders to see Jesus dead stretches back at least to John 5:18 after He healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda.
 - (20 – 24) The consistency of the faithful:
 - The rabbis had missed the point of the Sabbath: a day of non-labor so that one could spend time thinking about God and be with family. They focused on defining what was forbidden instead of what was appropriate.
 - When practices require exceptions, something went wrong.
 - (25 – 32) Facts, not speculation
 - The crowds speculated, but no one went to investigate. The birth records were nearby. They already knew that Jesus did miracles.
 - Further answering the question of verse 15, Jesus says that He knew this stuff because He is from God. The challenge was to put the evidence together and make a decision, not just speculate.
 - The reason that "no one laid a hand on Him" is addressed further in verse 46.
 - (33 – 36) Challenge people to think
 - Jesus' statement is obvious to us, but would it have been to them? He already has referred to "Him who sent me," so it should have been apparent.
 - Sometimes people just pretend to be clueless to avoid applying the obvious.
 - (37 – 44) Be illustrative.
 - According to Jewish tradition, on this day of the feast, a line of priests passed golden pitchers hand-to-hand from the Gihon spring to the base of the altar where the water was poured out. This was to represent the water from a rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:5 – 7, 1 Corinthians 10:4 as well as predictions of living water in Isaiah 12:3, 58:11, Ezekiel 47:1 – 12, and Zechariah 14:8).
 - The illustration would be remembered better than a sermon.
 - (45 – 52) Change is hard. Do not expect massive results.
 - (46) The real reason no one arrested Him; "Don't mess with the real thing."
 - Nonsensical accusations are a favorite defense of the threatened. Expect it.
- Application: Letting the Spirit Work
 - Mystifying the crowds probably is a good thing. What might that be?

- Be invisible. Encourage people to seek God. Ask how their present method is working.
- Consistency and simplicity will be remarkable to most.
- Evidence is of first importance. The work of the Spirit means I am not required to fix myself.
- How can we challenge people to think?
- Illustrations work because the gospel is simple. Know the communion and baptism symbols.
- Don't expect big results, God never has.