

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 11-4-18

To Adult Teachers:

November 4 we will study John 8:42-59. Discussion questions are:

1. Has anyone ever said to you, “You look like your father (or your mother).”?
  - a. At what point in your life did you officially start to resemble your father or mother?
  - b. At what point in his/her life does a Christian start to resemble his/her heavenly father?
2. Track the exchange between Jesus and a group of Jews”

Jesus - “slaves of sin” (34)  
Jews - “sons of Abraham” (39a)  
Jesus - “you don’t act like Abraham” (39b) - “you act like your other father” (44)  
Jews – “we aren’t illegitimate” (41b)  
Jesus – “whoever your father is, it’s sure not God” (42)  
“your father is a murderer and a liar” (44)  
Jews – “you are a Samaritan and demon possessed” (48)  
Jesus – “My life honors God who is my father.” (49)  
Jews – “That settles it. You are demon possessed.” (52)
  - a. Why all this focus on who your father is?
  - b. What evidence did Jesus offer that God was his father?
  - c. Using that same logic, how would a person prove he is a Christian?
3. How is it true that Christianity judges all cultures?
  - a. How should that affect the way a Christian responds to his culture?
4. How does it help you in the spiritual war to know that when the Devil lies “he speaks his native language”?
5. How have you been influenced by the “Hollywood” version of the Devil?
  - a. Why is the “Hollywood” version of the Devil a problem for Christians?
6. When you meet a brother or sister in Christ from another culture, what is the “tie that binds”?
7. Agree/disagree: “There are only 2 powers in this world and you must choose which one you listen to.”
  - a. How do you implement that principle in your life?
8. Agree/disagree: “Every problem humans have has a spiritual dimension to it.”
9. When we speak of truth being a powerful weapon in fighting spiritual warfare, what truth are we referring to?
10. What specific thoughts might Abraham have had when he “rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day”? (56)

Sermon: *On Looking Like Your Father*  
John 8:42-59

The story begins in vs. 34 with Jesus saying, "You are slaves of sin." The Pharisees reply, "How dare you? We are children of Abraham." Jesus replies, "You are children of

the devil." The Pharisees reply, "You are a Samaritan", which is a racial slur, "and you are demon possessed.", which is blasphemy. This conversation reveals a terrible truth - everybody on this planet is in one of two camps. You either live under the power of a loving, personal God or you live under the power of the forces of darkness and evil. All accountable people are in the darkness and evil group until Jesus translates us into God's group. Let me say that another way. Every accountable human being is under the power and control of one of two supernatural beings - God or Satan.

In our culture today the big move underway is called multi-culturalism. As I understand multi-culturalism it says that all cultures are equally valid and shouldn't be violated. In one sense multi-culturalism is a vast improvement over the way it used to be. It used to be that the dominant group said to the minority, "Our culture is superior to yours. Stay on your side of the tracks. Know your place." Christianity does not fit into either of those views of people. Christianity does not say that all cultures are equally valid, nor does it say some cultures are superior to others. Instead Christianity says there is a fundamental standard deeper than any culture. There is a standard that judges all cultures.

If you visit with foreign students who love God you begin to get a really enlightening view about faith and culture. A few years ago I was visiting with some ECU students from Africa. As we ate together I asked, "What is your favorite food you wish we had in America?" They all answered, "Pounded yam and goosey stew." I can honestly say I have never spent one second in my life pining for pounded yam and goosey stew. Frankly, if they had said, "biscuits and chocolate gravy" I would have felt a lot better about them. I could not identify with their taste in food, their choice of clothing, their view of what is socially acceptable, etc. They weren't very good at talking sports or the best places to find bargains when shopping but as I talked to them I began to sense something I don't sense very often from people in my culture. They had a respect for the power of God that made me feel very comfortable to talk to them about spiritual things. I don't find that very often as I move around in my own American culture. If you pray with a believer from Africa and you turn around and pray with your next-door neighbor in America, you will likely come away from that experience with a deep feeling of oneness with the believer from Africa and a sense of separation from your next-door neighbor in America.

Do you get it? It's not about which culture is superior to the other, American or African? It is about a standard that judges all cultures. You eat your pounded yam and goosey stew and I'll eat my biscuits and chocolate gravy and we will probably never agree on a definition of good food. But if we both know about the living God, our cultural differences fade into quaintness. I do not feel a sense of brotherhood with people who merely like the same food I do, or vote for the same politician I do, or sit in the same church building I sit in, or like acapella music as much as I do. I feel a sense of brotherhood with people who reverence the living God. I feel a sense of brotherhood with people who see that everyone on this planet is under the control of one of two supernatural forces - God or Satan.

Jesus saw the devil as real. If you believe what Jesus said about Heaven and the Holy Spirit why would you not also believe what he said about Hell and the unholy spirit? What does the Bible say about the devil? The Bible calls the devil "the god of this world", "the prince of the power of the air", and "a roaring lion." What difference does that make to you? It makes a difference in at least 2 areas:

The choices you make today have eternal consequences.

If you want to understand the significance of the demonic you must forget the images Hollywood taught you. Forget the heads turning all the way around and voices getting incredibly deep and scary and the projectile vomiting. An old Puritan named William Grenald wrote: "If people hear a noise at night they cry out, "The devil, the devil!" and they run. But they carry around the devil in their hearts all day for when you have a proud spirit or resentment you are under his power. He is setting you in a precarious place. Why not run from your pride saying, "The devil, the devil!""? Why not run from you resentment and your grudge saying, "The devil, the devil!""? When Paul says "Don't choose a novice to be an elder because he may get proud and fall into the snare of the devil." or when he says, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger." or "Don't ever hold a grudge or you'll give the devil a foothold." what is he saying? He is saying the same thing Grenald is saying. He is saying there are only 2 powers in this world and you must choose which one you listen to.

Listen to the difference in the language of those who listen to the devil and those who listen to the voice of God. The language of the devil is: "Nobody can tell me what to do." "I will ascend. I will be as the most high." That's the language of the devil. Listen to the language of Jesus: "I will descend. I will be the most lowly to serve my father." Rather than, "Nobody can tell me what to do.", the language of Jesus is, "Not my will but thine be done."

It takes time to start looking like your father. The last time I visited my home congregation at Holdenville people said to me, "You look like your dad." They never said that to me when I was a kid growing up there. They didn't say that to me when I came home from college. But they say it now. It takes time to look like your father. That's equally true when it comes to being like your heavenly father. It takes time. Over time you will start to look like your father in Heaven or your father, the devil. Who do you want to look like?

What is the significance of the devil being real? First, the choices you make today have eternal consequences. Second, it is simplistic to look at our problems and think we can handle them without God.

If what Jesus is saying is true then there is not just impersonal evil in the world, there is also personal evil. That means that every problem we have is multi-dimensional. People look at a slum or at a mental hospital and say "These problems are only human so we need education, we need therapy, we need social planning." That's all true but there is more to it than that. You can throw all the money you want to at a slum, all the therapy

you want to at patients in a mental hospital but if you ignore the spiritual issues that contributed to the problem you have done something equivalent to putting a band aid on a cancer. You have just covered up the problem momentarily.

Here is someone who is depressed. Why are they depressed? One resource person says it's biological; another says it's because of a dysfunctional family; another says it's because you don't eat right, sleep right, and exercise right; another says it's your own fault, you are responsible for your choices. The Bible says it's multi-dimensional. It's not that simple. There is evil inside me. I've done things wrong. I've violated my conscience. I've given in to idols. But the Bible also says there is evil outside of me. People have sinned against me. And there is evil above me. There are personal supernatural beings who are aggravating and arranging the evil within me and outside me. Therefore if you go out into the world and try to deal with your problems using only human means and not using the tools God provides you go into battle unarmed.

Ronald Reagan was only partially correct when he called the Soviet Union the evil empire. On a much greater level is the ultimate evil empire which the Bible calls "principalities and powers in the heavenly places." If we are to survive in the great war those principalities and powers have declared on us we must know what our weapons are. Let me demonstrate just 2 of the weapons in our arsenal:

#### Awareness that Satan is the father of lies.

It's in verse 44, "...[the devil] is a liar and the father of lies." The way he deals with people is not fang marks on the neck but falsehoods in the heart. That means you better saturate your mind with the word of God. You better know what the truth is so you will recognize a lie when it is presented to you. Suppose when you were young someone told you that you were ugly or stupid or worthless and you can't get over that. Your life is controlled by a lie you believe. A lie is ruining any chance you have for happiness. Or take someone who is afraid of death. What is the lie they believe? The lie is that they will cease to exist or their salvation is not secure or they are going to float off into some great scary unknown place. The truth is that death is the final victory for the Christian. It is only at death that our faith becomes sight, our hopes realized, our dreams reality. That, friend, is an enormous weapon with which to fight the despair of the devil.

So the first weapon in our arsenal is awareness that Satan is the father of lies. The second weapon is learning to rejoice to see his day.

It's in verse 56, "...Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day." What does that mean? In Genesis 12 God told Abraham that someday in the future the Messiah would come through his descendants. The Bible says that because Abraham believed God, God imputed it to him as righteousness. When you look at the distant future, past your old age, past your funeral service, what do you see? However you envision that part of your life, be aware of one thing, Jesus would have you see that day with rejoicing. That, friend, is an enormous weapon with which to fight the despair of the devil.