

- I. Jesus speaks truth to those around Him about themselves and about Himself
 - A. John 7:14-18 . . . But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. [15] The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" [16] So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. [17] If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. [18] He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
 - B. In these five verses, Jesus provides two vital lessons for the church. The first lesson explains how to discern God-serving teachers from self-serving teachers, and the second lesson explains the difference in focus between the God-serving teachers and the self-serving teachers.
 - C. Prayer
- II. Jesus provides a means to accurately know if someone is speaking God's truth for God's glory or their own ideas of God's truth for their own glory.
 - A. John 7:14 . . . But when it was now the midst of the feast (*possibly the fourth or fifth day*) Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. [15] The Jews then were astonished (*both shocked and puzzled*), saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"
 - 1. In John 6, we read that the crowds knew who Joseph and Mary were, and that Jesus was their son – which implies they knew about Jesus upbringing and the fact that Jesus had neither attended a rabbinical school nor had a formal education under a rabbi.
 - 2. Therefore, the Jews were shocked at His knowledge of God and the scriptures, and puzzled as to why He taught as one who had the education and the religious stature to express His own views as opposed to quoting the views of those older and more educated than Him.
 - a. It was common for Jewish rabbis and teachers to establish their credibility by pointing out which rabbinical school they attended or which rabbi taught them.
 - (1) In contrast, Jesus established His credibility by pointing out that He was sent by God to speak what God told Him to say.

- (2) And as to His educational credentials, the inference of His claims is that He had been taught by God.
 - b. It was also common for the younger Jewish rabbis and teachers to quote their teachers or other well-known and well-respected rabbis, rather than giving their own opinions about God and the scriptures. Yet Jesus did not quote any rabbis, but instead claimed to be quoting God, as the prophets did in times past.
 3. The point here is that somehow Jesus knew far more than the Jews figured He should have known, and He taught in a way that was far beyond what the Jews believed He was capable of, especially since He had not gone through the common process of religious education. And so they were both shocked and puzzled.
- B. John 7:16 . . . In response to their shock and puzzlement, Jesus explained to them where He got His knowledge from and why He taught the way He did. He said –
1. “My teaching is not Mine.” In other words, Jesus is confirming that He is not self-taught, and therefore He is not expressing His own opinions.
 2. Then Jesus identifies His teacher and the source of His words by saying, “My teaching is His who sent Me.”
 - a. And as we have seen in the first six chapters of John, the One who sent Jesus is God.
 - b. Jesus stated this same truth in John 12:49-50, “For I [do] not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. [50] I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”
 3. Then Jesus lays down a principle that when followed enables us, that is, you and me to know whether Jesus’ teaching, or anyone else’s teaching, is from God – for God’s sake and glory, or from the teacher himself – for his own sake and his own glory.
- C. John 7:17 . . . If anyone is willing to do [God’s] will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.
1. In most places, and especially here in our own country, the church is overflowing with Biblical, theological, and even practical knowledge about God, the scriptures, the end times, and healthy ways of living a better life.

- a. Yet as Jesus makes clear here in vs 17, school and book learning are not enough to equip you to discern the difference between what sounds like God's truth and what is God's truth. And if you cannot discern that difference, you will not be able to discern who is and who isn't speaking God's truth for God's sake and God's glory.
 - b. So what does equip us if school and book learning are not enough?
 - (1) To be equipped to discern, you must apply what you know to how you think, speak, and act.
 - (2) In other words, it is only those who apply or live up to what they have learned from a teacher or a book – including the Bible – who have the ability to recognize the difference between a teacher who sounds like he is teaching God's truth and one who is teaching God's truth.
2. This principle of applying the knowledge you have to gain discernment is not only a Christian principle, it applies to other areas of life as well. For example, to be a surgeon, you must go to medical school.
- a. To become a good surgeon, you must not just attend medical school, you must be willing to put in the time and effort required to learn all that you are being taught about surgery.
 - b. But to finally be a good surgeon, you must go into the real world and practice what you have learned by performing numerous surgeries on a variety of people with various problems. And when you have gone this far, than you are equipped to discern the difference between a bad surgeon, a mediocre surgeon, and a truly good surgeon.
3. Just as you are far safer in the hands of a truly good surgeon than you are in the hands of a mediocre or bad surgeon, so you are far safer being able to discern who is and who isn't conveying God's truths for God's sake and God's glory. And as Jesus makes clear, we gain this ability to discern by applying in very practical ways the knowledge we have, and by doing the will of God as much as we know to do it.
4. In relation to this principle, three things happen when you apply and continue to practice what you currently know about the will of God and the truth of God.
- a. First, the knowledge you have becomes clearer and clearer as to how to apply it, how far reaching it is to be applied, and why you ought to apply it.
 - b. Second, as you apply what you know, you progressively gain insight and understanding into what you previously misunderstood or still do not know. In other words, applying what you know

equips you to continue to grow in knowledge and understanding in things related to God, His will, and His word.

- c. Third, applying what you know equips you to discern the difference between those who sound as if they are teaching the truth and those who actually are teaching the truth.
5. Therefore, there is no spiritually eye-opening education that is better or more universally accessible than the education that comes from applying and continuing to practice the truth you already know.
6. David said it this way, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts" (Psalm 119:97-100).
7. Jesus said something very similar to a group of Jews who believed in Him. We read this in John 8:31-32, where Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

III. Jesus explains the difference in focus between God-serving teachers and the self-serving teachers.

A. John 7:18 . . .

1. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, that is, he seeks his own popularity, praise, position, power, income, honor, and applause.
 - a. And though Jesus is speaking directly about teachers and preachers, let me broaden the application of His words to include radio and TV preachers, evangelists, those who travel from church to church telling their story, writers of Christian books, writers of Christian songs, singers of Christian music – whether soloist, trio, quartet, or choir, worship leaders, and worship teams.
 - b. Those who do these things from themselves rather than from the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit are doing it for themselves. In essence, they are using God, God's word, the church, and the religious system to gain something for themselves.
 - c. I understand there may be times when this is totally innocent or even unavoidable, but I cringe when I see a speaker's or an author's or a singer's picture on a Christian web site or the front of a Christian book or the jacket of a Christian music CD. Such pictures compel me to wonder whose glory is being sought?

2. but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
 - a. Though it appears that Jesus is speaking about Himself, once again allow me to broaden the application to all teachers, preachers, evangelists, those who travel from church to church telling their story, writers of Christian books, writers of Christian songs, singers of Christian music, worship leaders, and worship teams.
 - b. Those who are doing these kinds of things for the sake of God and for the glory of God, do not use crowd pleasing methods, or psychological tactics, or entertaining stories and humor, or feel good music to gain such things as a larger following, greater power and influence, or more income.
 - (1) Instead, they present God's truth in the clearest, most applicable, most edifying, most spiritually profitable way possible, while drawing the least amount of attention or praise to themselves.
 - (2) And they do these things this way for the glory of God, and for the building up of the Body of Christ, and for the sake of teaching all who belong to Christ to live according to all that Christ commanded, and to promote conformity to the likeness of Christ and spiritual maturity within the church.
3. The fact is, the one whose glory we seek determines the message we teach or write or sing, and the focus of the message.
 - a. If we are seeking our own glory, we will teach or write or sing in a way that gains the largest possible following. And to do that, our teaching or writing or singing – though at times true and spiritually rich – must be of a nature that appeals to the listeners flesh, that is, makes him happy or feel better about himself or entertains him or in some other way gratifies him so that he will want more and keep coming back for more.
 - b. If we are seeking God's glory, we will teach or write or sing in a way that points the listeners to God, to faith in God, to humility before God, to submissive obedience to God, and to doing the will of God. And to do this, our teaching, writing, and singing must be of a nature that deflects the attention away from ourselves and makes God, the glory of God, love for God, and fellowship with God the focus.
4. May we follow Jesus' example in our teaching, speaking, Bible Study leading, writing, and singing, so that we humbly and faithfully

proclaim the truth of God for the glory of God and for the spiritual well-being of whomever we touch – regardless of the price we have to pay.

IV. Conclusion

- A. It is not just your personal spiritual health that is at stake, but also the spiritual health of the church – from those who lead in some capacity, to those who follow.
- B. Jesus addresses both groups.
 - 1. In addressing the leaders, He exposes the spiritual emptiness of those who lead for their own sake rather than for His sake. And we know how dangerous leading for one's own sake is, because we read in James 3:1 that those who lead will be subject to a stricter judgment.
 - 2. And in addressing the followers, Jesus makes it clear that we have the means and therefore the responsibility to discern the difference between God-serving teachers and leaders and self-serving teachers and leaders.
- C. May we value our spiritual health and the spiritual health of the church enough to do our part, whether leading or following, to ensure that what is being done is being done for God's sake and God's glory and the spiritual health of all who follow.