

Let's Do Difficult

Jesus' Experience

World Outreach Church
Sermon Discussion Guide
Sunday Sermon: **February 17, 2024**



God's people need to recalibrate the imagination and expectation of our faith. Until now, we have imagined church could be evaluated on the sermon quality, the music style, the facility's comfort and convenience, the children's class quality, etc. But that imagination is incomplete and inadequate for the season we are walking through. Flourishing in the season before us is going to take a more courageous and determined faith than most of us have experienced in our lifetimes—because the pressures being exerted toward the people of God, globally, are far greater than most of us have ever experienced. The answer is to recalibrate and be willing to do some difficult things. We can be encouraged as we do that, because the best things in life result from the sacrifice of doing something difficult. This is a completely biblical premise, best observed in Jesus' own experiences ...

JESUS' TESTIMONY: John 7:7, 11–13, 14-20, 25-32, 8:39-53

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. ... ¹¹ Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?" ¹² Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." ¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

1. What are some common tactics Satan uses to hinder the work of the Lord in your life?

¹⁴ Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵ The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" ¹⁶ Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. ¹⁷ **If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.** ¹⁸ He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. ¹⁹ **Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"** ²⁰ "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

²⁵ At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?" ²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from." ²⁸ Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me." ³⁰ **At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.** ³¹ Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?" ³² The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

2. Share one of the most difficult decisions you have ever had to make. How did it grow your faith?

³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ **You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" ⁴⁹ "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵² **At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"**

3. What would change if you sought the approval of God in every area of your life and no one else's? How would you encourage others to do the same?

A FRIEND'S DEATH, A TIPPING POINT: John 11:1-8, 44-48, 11:56-12:2, 12:9-11, 17-19, 36-37, 42-43

¹ Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." ⁵ Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. ⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." ⁸ **"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"**

⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." ⁴⁵ **Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.** ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ **Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."**

⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" ⁵⁷ **But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.** ^{12:1} Six days before the Passover, **Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.** ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

^{12:9} Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

¹⁷ **Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word.** ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹ **So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"**

³⁶ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, **Jesus left and hid himself from them.** ³⁷ **Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.**

- 4. Have you ever experienced a miracle? What was the experience like for you? Did it change the way you perceive the physical world?**
- 5. Share a time when you spoke godly truth that brought freedom into someone's life. Share another time when godly truth brought division and anger. What did you learn from both?**

OVERCOMERS: Revelation 21:7–8

⁷ **He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.** ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

- 6. How does a proper and biblical understanding of reconciliation help you when sharing your faith with others? How have you observed or experienced Christ's work of reconciliation between two people?**

PRAYER

"Sovereign Lord, You made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.' ... ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant, Jesus." Amen.

Adapted from Acts 4:24-26, 29–30 (NIV®)