

Series: Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

Sermon Text: John 5:1-18

Kids Word: Authority

(*This is the only account in all 4 gospels)

John said he wrote this letter to help us find “*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” We’re working through **1:19-11:57** where he tells real-life stories of how it looked when people met Jesus.

- Imagine your next-door neighbor has been in the hospital near death, like the official’s son we learned about last week. You’ve been praying for him, checking on his family, prepping meals, and giving gift cards to his wife and children. Then one morning, let’s say around 4:30am, you are jarred awake by a band rocking out next door. You run to the window and see your friend, no longer ill, but dancing on his lawn with his family. Instead of rushing out to do the electric slide with them, you pick up the phone and contact the police and zoning departments. You’re witnessing an undeniable miracle of God, yet somehow are more concerned about the violation of local ordinances. It should be obvious something is gravely wrong with you. A lawful heart, consumed with rules, control, and self always struggles to worship God, enjoy His handiwork, and celebrate His acts of mercy and grace. This is the essence of today’s...

BIG IDEA: We won’t enjoy Jesus until we surrender authority.

Let’s consider some key ideas and applications in our text.

*Verses 1-3 say there was a (Sabbath) feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem ([implies the timing of John's writing](#)) by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed support columns. In these lay a multitude of invalids--blind, lame, and paralyzed. Verse 4 may not be in your Bible. Some translations don’t include it because it wasn’t in early manuscripts. You see, later manuscripts began including a comment about the local superstition. It went like this, “From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.” Due to archeological digs, it seems these water disturbances were likely caused by the underground spring feeding the **pool**. Much like the mythical “*fountain of youth*”, desperate people sought **healing** from creation instead of from Creator. Let’s call that point #1...*

***Jesus is God’s only fountain of blessings.* (5:5-9)**

- In *verses 5-7* we’re told ***one man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.***
When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing he had been there a long time, he said, “Do you

want to be healed?” The sick man answered, “Sir, I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going, another person steps down before me.” I have lots of questions about this superstitious *man*, which is okay because as with the Samaritan and the official, this story isn’t about him. Let’s notice: First, Jesus didn’t heal everyone around the *pool*. Second, Jesus was good to an ungrateful guy who chose not to follow Him (cf. Luke 6:35)! Third, this *invalid* put his hope in things like magic *pools*, the kindness of strangers, and suddenly being able to win a foot race! We may laugh, but we should ask ourselves, “*When do I let wishful thinking or silly superstitions eclipse God as my only hope?*” **Verses 8-9** say **Jesus told him to, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.** Then there’s this ominous comment...*Now that day was the Sabbath.* It segues into point #2...

Jesus’ authority makes people uncomfortable. (5:9-13)

- The last 6 words of **verse 9** are the key to this story. Let’s zoom out for context...in **chapters 2-4**, John contrasted Jesus with **Jewish** institutions like ceremonial water pots, the temple, and miraculous signs. In **chapters 5-11**, he contrasts Jesus with **Jewish** festivals. Did you know God required Jewish families to make 3 trips to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the spring **Feast** of Passover, the **Feast** of Pentecost 7 weeks later, and the fall **Feast** of Tabernacles? I know folks who whine about a weekly drive to church, so imagine packing up your family 3 times a year to walk to Columbus! Anyway, the **feast** referenced in **verses 1 and 9** was the weekly **Sabbath**, which Israel celebrated at home. Its origin is seen in Genesis 2 where God “rested” on day 7 of creation and declared the day holy (sacred). The laws God gave Moses in Exodus 20 included **Sabbath** laws. Evidently, **Sabbath** was still a thing in the 1st century, and the New Testament says it has **implications** for **modern times** (cf. Hebrews 4). My point is, that God no longer requires 3 annual trips to the holy city, but it seems God still seeks to disrupt our busy schedules with pesky things like rest and celebration! Do you know why? It’s because such things are acts of worship that declare God to be our authority and provider, and therefore life is more than work (i.e., it’s all on me!). Now, just as this lesson is not about the *invalid*, it’s also not about **Sabbath**. So, let’s zoom back into our story for point #3...

Discomfort leads us to put Jesus on trial. (5:10-13)

- *Verses 10-13 tell us...the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” But he answered them, “The man who healed me told me to. Instead of defending Jesus, he used a political maneuver like, “who was I to question his authority? Take it up with him.” So, they asked, “Who is this man?” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn because there was a crowd. The guy had been an invalid for 38 years, yet Jesus chose to **heal him** on the **Sabbath**. Had He picked any other day, this would be a non-story, and no one would’ve interrogated the **man** for **carrying his bedding** through town. We think he was heading to the temple (cf. Leviticus 13-14; Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:44-45) when he was stopped by “**the Jews**.” Since John was Jewish, we know he wasn’t being **anti-Semitic**. This was a term he used over 70 times to describe “**antagonistic Jewish leaders**”, not “**every Jewish person**.” Here, for instance, they seem unmoved when **the guy** says, “**I’ve been healed!**” The phrase “**Get up**” in **verse 8** is related to the word “**resurrection**”, which tells us they were witnessing evidence of resurrection power...His dead limbs had been given new life, yet their only concern was, “**Why are you violating a law and who are your accomplices?**” Their thirsty lust for power prohibited their enjoyment of God and His gifts. They even turned God’s gift of **Sabbath** into a strenuous task, which they themselves violated by hunting violators. Of course, are we any better? We expect Jesus to act certain ways and when He does something wonderfully different, we remain unmoved and start asking accusatory questions. This leads to our final point...*

Stop putting Jesus on trial. (5:14-18)

- *Verses 14-18 reveal that **afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went away** (a term used of a disciple abandoning his teacher) **and told the Jews it was Jesus who had healed him** (the guy snitched on Jesus). John went on to say, **this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking Sabbath, but he was even calling God his Father, making himself equal with God.** So far in John, it seems people enjoyed meeting Jesus and desired to follow Him. All the sudden, some are walking away after being **healed** and others are seeking to **persecute** or **kill** Jesus! Actually, it’s not all that sudden. Recall what John wrote*

in chapter 1:9-11, “*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him*”? Now, recall what John wrote in chapter 3:19, “*This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*” John has been setting up this turn of events since **chapter 1**! His story telling comes full circle in **chapter 5**...God visited us in the person of Jesus Christ, who apparently has authority over the world as co-Creator (chapter 1), authority over the Jewish systems including the temple (chapter 2), authority over Jewish leaders like Nicodemus and Israel’s prophets like John the Baptizer (chapter 3), authority over who gets to hear about God and who gets healed (chapter 4), and now we learn of His authority over the ancient **Jewish feasts**, including the **Sabbath**. They questioned, **persecuted**, and **killed** Him for 1 main reason...AUTHORITY.

- Like the **Jewish** leaders, sin leads us to despise God for telling us who we are, what we can do, or when and where we can do it. We can root out this tendency by frequently asking ourselves, “*Where do I struggle with Jesus’ authority? When do I put Him on trial for not doing things my way? Where do I need to repent?*” Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Only through humble repentance can we enjoy Jesus, rest in rightful authority, and live for His glory instead of ours (cf. Matthew 28:18-20).

Let’s pray...Father, we need your Spirit to break our wills and humble us to end our obsession with being the authority for our lives and the lives of others. Little by little, as we abide in your Word and spend time with you in prayer, you break us down and conform our will to yours. I hope this morning we not only recognize the absurdity of putting Jesus on trial but also are willing to identify and root this habit out of our lives. Help us to wholeheartedly worship instead of being unmoved and jealous when you do good things for others. Thank you for being merciful and patient with us. Amen.

Our next song is a great tool to help us become worshippers instead of persecutors. Please stand and join us in singing about God’s “Amazing Love.”

So, what’s your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes/Additional thoughts:

- **Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “**Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “zōē”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it's “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”
- **Interpreting this section:** “I have suggested that one effective way to organize the section is to group the four major festivals together, leaving the Lazarus story aside (as foreshadowing of death and resurrection) ...An outline of the festivals makes John's structure clear: The Sabbath Festival in Jerusalem (ch. 5), The Passover Festival in Galilee (ch. 6), The Tabernacles Festival in Jerusalem (chs. 7–8), Case Study: A Blind Man and “Light” (ch. 9), The Hanukkah Festival in Jerusalem (ch. 10) ...Interpreters have often been tempted to allegorize the story in order to find some relevance for present generations. For instance, Augustine and many others have looked at the pool with five porches at Bethesda as a symbol of the Torah, the five books of Moses.¹⁵ The man, as it were, is trying to be cured in Judaism, but Jesus must redirect him another way...Patristic interpreters such as Tertullian and Chrysostom thought that the water of the pool represented baptism, which, when stirred by heavenly beings, could heal...But such allegorizing is unnecessary and likely inappropriate...in the twentieth century a pair of twin pools was discovered in the northeast section of Jerusalem (inside St. Stephen's Gate, at St. Anne's Church).” Professor Gary Burge
- **History of the pool:** Professor NT Wright tells us, “*The pool of Bethesda was a well-known place of healing. It was in Jerusalem itself, just to the north of the Temple Mount area. The original site has been excavated by archaeologists, and if you go to Jerusalem you can see it for yourself. But it wasn't just a Jewish healing place. The evidence suggests that pagans, too, regarded it as a sacred site. At one stage it was dedicated to the healing god Asclepius...The way it worked seems to have been like this. The waters in the pool would bubble up periodically; when that happened, the first person to get in would be healed. Some people reckoned that the bubbling water was caused by an angel. (The reason there is no 'verse 4' in*

this passage is that several ancient copies of the gospel have an extra verse at that point, explaining all this; but most of the oldest and best copies haven't got it.)" Professor Gary Burge offers some additional insights, "A pool with the requisite five colonnades, and located in the north quarter of the old city, has been confidently identified by archaeologists as the pool in question, a salutary reminder that we are dealing with history, not idealized legend or mere fable... The manuscript evidence is poor for verses 3b and 4 and they should be omitted (as in NIV). Later copyists apparently thought it would be helpful to the reader to explain why the sick gathered there... Today this pool, complete with five porches, is located adjacent to the Church of St. Anne inside Jerusalem's Old City."

- **Superstition surrounding the pool:** "Bethesda is a kind of play on words, meaning 'house of grace' or 'house of outpouring [water].' ...A curious blend of Hebrew religion and Greek superstition held that an angel of God periodically stirred the waters and promised healing to the first invalid able to pull himself into the pool. (We now know that the pools were periodically fed by an underground spring that caused the surface to stir.) ... There could not have been a more fitting image of legalistic religion in all of Israel. Around the symbol of life lay desperately sick people, waiting for the chance to participate in a pathetic race of invalids to the water, in which healing went to the least needy person among them." Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Healing:** "From this perspective Jesus' question, 'Do you want to get well?' is a penetrating one. 'An eastern beggar often loses a good living by being cured' (Finlay). Cure has its implications, particularly when the need is so long-standing that a whole way of life has been built up around it... Jesus' question needs to be faced by all who would be delivered. Are we ready for the implications, including possibly repenting of sin and expressing a new loyalty to Christ (14)? ... The man's reply to Jesus (7) is not particularly encouraging, being in essence a complaint about lacking someone to get him into the pool at the requisite moment... Nonetheless Jesus extends his healing power to this unattractive character—Get up!... and walk (8). The verb for get up (8, *egeire*) will be used again in the following dialogue for the life-bringing effect of Jesus' call at the last day (28–29). Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Sin and Sickness:** Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote, "*Some have taken Jesus' warning to mean that sin had caused the man's illness, but Jesus later denied a moral cause-effect relationship between sin and physical disabilities (John 9:3). A simpler explanation is that Jesus knew the man's heart. Having delivered the man from his physical affliction, Jesus sought to save the man from eternal spiritual suffering. The 'worse' Jesus had in mind was hell. Jewish theology of the day correctly taught that sin deserves punishment; however, the rabbis incorrectly attributed physical illness to God's wrath. The true and ultimate punishment for sin is eternal torment after death.*" Professor NT Wright added, "*If Jesus' work of healing and new creation was going forward, what was holding it up? Not just opposition, but also sin... in the present case Jesus implies that the crippled man had got into his present condition because of his own sin (verse 14), but four chapters later Jesus also insists that the condition of the man born blind had nothing to do with anyone's sin (9.1–3). It seems that some sicknesses may be related to some sins, but you can't and shouldn't deduce the one from the other... We see here, in fact, the expansion and outworking of the short, sad statement in the gospel Prologue (1.10–11): 'He came to his own, and his own didn't accept him.' They were not ready for new creation, for the living Word of God to come to them with new things to say. They were living*

in the old time zone, and were angry with Jesus for, as it were, waking them up too soon.” We should also consider this from Pastor Bruce Milne, “When Jesus meets the man again, possibly at some time removed from the healing, he warns him of the need to respond to the grace of God in his life by repenting of his sin, lest he face a worse fate. This something worse is most probably a reference to the coming last judgment (cf. Lk. 12:4f.; 13:1–5).”

- **He went away:** “The Greek word rendered ‘went away’ is better translated ‘went after’ and usually indicates purpose. It’s a common expression in the Synoptic Gospels for discipleship. One ‘goes after’ a mentor in order to learn from him. The man turned away from following Jesus and affirmed his allegiance to the Jewish leaders. His response to Jesus proved quite different from that of another man healed by the Lord (9:13-34).” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **John’s festival cycle:** “The Sabbath was the only weekly festival, observed in homes and synagogues in Israel’s villages...in some respects, the Sabbath set the tone for what it meant to have a period of time set aside for reverence and devotion for any festival...Some scholars have argued strenuously that John 5 is a troubling chapter in that it does not refer to its festival directly and is out of place sequentially...If chapters 5 and 6 are reversed, so the argument runs, John’s stories about Galilee are gathered together (4:46–54; 6:1–71) and his Jerusalem stories come together as well (5:1–47, followed by 7:1ff.)...While this solves some problems, it fails to see the intrinsic value of the Sabbath of chapter 5 as heading an all-important festival list. John’s literary efforts are not haphazard...The festival here is the Sabbath (see 5:9), and the argument that flows from it is based on rabbinic expectations for behavior and piety on the Sabbath...above all, John (and Jesus) has a ‘Sabbath understanding’ of the festivals that we will see surface repeatedly in the festival cycle. Festivals were made by God to bring good gifts to his people, not to legislate and control behavior.” Professor Gary Burge
- **Turning Sabbath into a burden:** “According to Exodus 20:11, the Hebrew people were to stop all work on the Sabbath because the Creator ‘rested’ after the sixth day of creation... Omnipotence never needs to rest. The Hebrew term translated ‘rest’ is shabat [H7673], which means ‘to cease.’ The Lord ceased work because His creative work was complete, at which time He called His creation ‘good.’ ...God set aside the seventh day—the Sabbath, the ‘ceasing-time’ as it were—to be a perpetual gift...He intended it to be a time of rest, feasting, enjoying family, and—more than anything—celebrating His provision and protection. However, by the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had turned this wonderful gift of grace into a toilsome, tedious burden...By focusing on the letter of the Law, the Pharisees turned a day of rest into a tedious burden! ...This is a perfect example of the legalist’s obsession with the letter of the law while ignoring the inspiration (or the “spirit”) of the law...The Lord instituted the Sabbath as a gift. He ordered a day of rest to rejuvenate the bodies and minds of His people. More importantly, it was given in order to break the day-in, day-out cycle of routine so that people would not forget that God is the ultimate source of their sustenance; their labors are but a means of His provision...The Sabbath gave people permission to stop work so they would not neglect a vital need: worship. We are created for worship; therefore, worship is good for us. But the Pharisees turned this wonderful gift of God into a burden, an occasion for severe criticism, an excuse to exercise power, and yet another opportunity to remind themselves and everyone else of their superior moral worth.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Jesus was always on trial:** “John’s Gospel places Jesus on trial not simply at the end of his life (as in the Synoptics), but rather continually...In this sense, Jesus is ‘in the dock’ or on trial

in every episode. In fact, one of the ways John introduces the miracles of Jesus is to offer them as ‘evidence,’ as if Jesus were on trial...there is an ironic twist here because in the end, it is not Jesus who is on trial; the world is on trial. Even though Jesus is clear that he is not judging the world (8:15; 12:47), still, the entry of the light into the world exposes the darkness and judges it for what it is. ‘This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil’ (3:19).” Professor Gary Burge

- **Working in 2 different time zones:** “The point of this passage is that Jesus and his Judaeen opponents are working in two different time zones...they were in what you might call different theological time zones. Basically, the Judaeans think it’s still time for rest, but Jesus is wide awake, and has already started the business of the day...As we discover in the Old Testament, one of its original purposes was to highlight the seventh day as the time when the creator God rested from his work in making the world. Week by week, the law-observant Jews kept a strict day without work – defining quite carefully what ‘work’ might include so there would be no doubt...Jesus, however, seems systematically to have continued doing things on the sabbath that could be understood – and were understood by some at least of his opponents – as deliberate ‘work’. After all, in the present case he didn’t have to heal the man that day. He’d waited nearly forty years to be healed; another day wouldn’t have hurt him...though what Jesus himself had done was hardly ‘work’ – all he’d done was to issue a command – what he’d told the man to do, to carry his mattress, certainly was...His father was at work, and it was important for him to be as well. What could he have meant? The heart of it seems to be Jesus’ belief that Israel’s God was then and there in the process of launching the new creation...And somehow this new creation was superseding the old one. Its timescale was taking precedence. God was healing the sorry, sick old world, and though there might come a time for rest (when Jesus’ own work was finished, maybe: see 19.28–30), at the moment it was time for the work of new creation to go forward. Especially, from John’s point of view, if the ‘signs’ correspond in some way to the ‘days’ of the new creation.” Professor NT Wright
- **The Decision to Prosecute:** “WE DARE NOT miss the pivotal importance of these three verses (5:16–18). These are John’s own comments explaining the nature of Jesus’ persecution. John tells us about Jesus’ opponents and assesses the reason for their fury. In 5:18 he anticipates the conclusion of the story with a shocking disclosure: His opponents want to kill Jesus (cf. 7:1) ...Jesus was viewed as indifferent to divine Sabbath law as mediated through Jewish tradition, and observers to such violations were obligated to punish the offender (Num. 15:32–36)...The second charge against Jesus has to do with blasphemy...God himself continues working. For instance, God sustains the universe every day. Moreover, God continues to exert his prerogative over life and death since people die and children are born on the Sabbath...He is God’s Son, and as such, if God (who made the Sabbath) can continue to work positively while commanding rest, and if Jesus’ works are the works of God, then Jesus’ works on the Sabbath are defensible. Jesus is assuming divine prerogatives (5:19)...Jesus is claiming equality with God (5:18)...But we must be clear about Jesus’ claim. Borchert writes, ‘What Jesus, as the One and Only Son of God (1:14, 18), claimed was to be sent by God, on a mission for God, doing the works of God, obedient to God, and bringing glory to God. That is not the role of one who displaces God but one who is a representative or emissary of God.’ As God’s divine agent, Jesus has the right and the ability to do what God does.” Professor Gary Burge

- **Lord of the Sabbath:** “Jesus responded to the religious leaders’ false claim in two ways: first by refuting their self-serving definition of ‘work,’ and then by claiming ownership of the Sabbath as God...He began by pointing out that God had never stopped “working.” This goes to the root of the religious leaders’ theological presumption that “work” includes any kind of activity. They pointed to Exod. 20:9-11 as precedence, which in turn points to Gen. 2:3... Having refuted the faulty theology of the religious leaders, Jesus equated His act of grace with God’s continuing ‘work.’ This was an outright claim to ownership of the Sabbath...The Son of God was merely continuing to do what He, as the Creator, had been doing since the seventh day of creation.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Working on Sabbath:** “Strictly, there was no contravention of the written commandment (cf. Ex. 20:8–11), which was generally interpreted as a prohibition of performing one’s daily occupation on the Sabbath. Since the man was not a furniture remover, he could not be accused of ‘working’ in that sense...The oral traditions, however, which the Pharisees cherished, amplified the written law into an elaborate jurisprudence which significantly extended its range. With respect to the Sabbath, thirty-nine categories of work were identified which breached the Sabbath law. These included carrying anything, except in cases of compassion...In practice the letter of the law had come to dominate its spirit. Outward conformity replaced heart commitment. They lost sight of the ultimate purpose of the law, its modelling a life which pleased God and witnessed to his gracious choice of Israel. The law became an end in itself.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Condemning or Defending Jesus:** “John 5 is a story about trial and conflict. The paraplegic in the story plays a role smaller than that of the woman in chapter 4. Once he identifies Jesus, he exits the stage, only to make way for the opponents of Jesus to accuse him and for Jesus to provide his defense. Thus, the story becomes a model for us to explain something about Jesus—why he died and how he should be defended... ‘If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also’ (15:20). This verse tells any would-be disciple that the account recorded in chapter 5 may well be the story of their own lives...Or consider the theology of 15:18–25. Jesus begins by saying, ‘If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.’ ...We are seeing the evidence for and against Jesus. As we read, we too must come to a verdict. Will we believe or will we condemn?” ...Is Jesus not still on trial today? A quick answer points an evangelistic finger to the world and its unbelief. But I ask: Are there no religious contexts in the church where Jesus is on trial? No religious systems that are so well-defined, so comfortable, so safe that Jesus himself would have difficulty being accepted? Is there no one in our churches who has ‘lost the love for God’ in his or her heart, but nevertheless remains consistently and vigorously religious?” Professor Gary Burge
- **Resting in the claims of Jesus:** People say Jesus never claimed to be God, however John documented when He did. People will call you lazy or even threaten your job if you take time off to enjoy God’s blessings with your family and friends, however John documented where Jesus said it’s still important. In fact, He seemed to double down on this point! The question before us is, “*Who will we believe...people or Jesus?*” Here’s what happens when we take the time to abide with Jesus (read His Word, pray, truly get to know Him): 1) You quit heaping guilt, shame, and condemnation on yourself (cf. Romans 8:1). 2) You start learning to rest and sync up with all He is doing and become less uptight. 3) You’ll love the rules, but you’ll be more about relationship (cf. Psalm 119). 4) You’ll be more concerned with love than results,

which will make you more worshipful. *Sabbath* is not really about a day, it's about an attitude that says, "Life is ultimately about God and what He's up to, not me and my efforts." We put God on trial and refuse to accept His gifts because we ultimately believe everything is on our shoulders. Think about it...the All-Mighty God required no rest, yet He took a whole day off. If we ever hope to be like Jesus and find rest in our always-on world, we must do what God did...be satisfied with our work. Only then can we accept the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Articles/Songs/Videos:

Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don't drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.

Challenge Questions

Review the BIG IDEA: We won't enjoy Jesus until we surrender authority.

-Simple questions...What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparation questions for John 5:1-18.

- What feast is being discussed in verse 1?
- What does history tell us about the pool at Bethesda? (5:2-4)
- What seems "off" about the guy who was healed? (5:5-15)
- Who were the "Jews" that persecuted and wanted to kill Jesus? Why do you think they felt this way? (5:16-18)
- What did John clearly state about what Jesus was understood to be saying in verses 17-18?

Application questions from John 5:1-18.

- Where have you allowed wishful thinking or silly superstitions to eclipse God as your only true hope? What would it look like for you to repent and trust in God alone?
- How has Jesus' authority made you uncomfortable? How is the authority of Christ evident to others in the way you handle things like your calendar, money, and relationships?
- We often point fingers at the world, but where does the church (or you) put Jesus on trial? What keeps you from repentance and worship? A few examples: 1) Having religious systems that are so well-defined, comfortable, and safe that Jesus would have difficulty being accepted. 2) Being earnestly religious while having lost our first love for Jesus. 3) Limiting Jesus and conforming to human thinking (e.g., a cultural perspective, religious interpretation, political persuasion, scientific theory, bias).
- What social or legal risks do passages like John 4 and John 5 insist that Christians take? How must we prepare for persecution knowing the world rejects our Savior's absolute authority?

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>