

John 4:43-54 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To unpack areas of our lives where we are prone to not take Jesus at his word.

Sermon Refresher: We tend to have the mindset that we have to see before we'll believe in something. At one level that's a right way to approach God: we see the evidence of what he does and then we believe. But that's only one stage in the journey of faith. The next stage is to believe before we see — we take Jesus at his word and trust him. That's what the dad did in John 4, what Abraham did, and what we can do when we see the resurrection. We grow in our faith when we see that God is trustworthy and then believe what he tells us before we see how it's fulfilled.

Icebreaker Suggestion: Jesus said a prophet is without honor in his home country.

- What were you known for in high school?
- What about your current self would surprise your high school classmates and why?

Discussion

A. Recap – Please decide how much of this recap to do based on the needs of your groups and how fresh the sermon is in your group's mind. Questions 1-5 are somewhat summary-like whereas question 5 onwards assumes a high level of recall and moves towards application.

Read John 4:43-54.

1. The sermon started with some examples of not believing something without seeing it. What does Jesus say in these verses about this mindset?
2. Charles talked about half-way faith (being where you have to see in order to believe) as a rest-stop. What does that mean?
3. If we aren't supposed to stay at the rest-stop, then what should the "vacation place" look like in regards to seeing and believing? What are we supposed to be striving for?

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4. Charles laid out an argument for believing in the resurrection as evidence of why we can take the Bible and Jesus at their word (see Appendix). What struck you about this argument?

Transition: Charles discussed that one of the ways we get to a place of “believing before seeing” is that we have already “seen” (i.e., we can look back) through past experiences both personal and other people’s (Abraham/Gideon/ourselves).

5. When you look back, where are you aware of God making good on his word/promises to you or to others?

B. Application

Charles mentioned two areas where we might need to take Jesus at his word: forgiveness and finances. Pick one of those areas (or both if you have time) to delve into further.

1. Forgiveness – Read the following passages:

- Ephesians 4:32 – Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- Matthew 6:14–15 – For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

After reading these passages, work through the following questions:

1. What did Jesus say relating to forgiveness?
2. What gets in the way of us taking Jesus at his word? Why is this hard? What lies do we believe instead?
3. If we were to apply Jesus’s words to our lives, what would change?
4. Thinking very concretely, where could you take Jesus at his word relating to forgiveness this week?

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2. Finances – Read the following passages:

- Matthew 6:19-21 – Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Hebrews 13:5 –Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.
- Acts 20:35 – In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

After reading these passages, work through the following questions:

1. What did Jesus say relating to money/finances?
2. What gets in the way of us taking Jesus at his word? Why is this hard? What lies do we believe instead?
3. If we were to apply Jesus’s words to our lives, what would change?
4. Thinking very concretely, where could you take Jesus at his word relating to finances this week?

Appendix: How Can We Believe in the Resurrection?

- I. Jesus either didn't die on the cross or he did.
 - A. Crucifixion was literally excruciating and not prone to failure.
 1. Scourged with whip, nailed through ankles and wrists, hung on the cross fighting for breath, spear piercing his rib cage and heart.
 2. Done by Roman soldiers whose business it was to kill people.
 - B. If not dead, then too pathetic to inspire worship.
 - C. Thus it's more reasonable to believe that Jesus died on the cross.

- II. Either Jesus' body was discarded or buried.
 - A. Common criminal fate was anonymous, shallow earthen grave.
 - B. But the early testimony that he was buried.
 1. [1 Corinthians 15:1–8](#) is an early credal statement (within 20 years of Jesus' death) that states he was buried.
 - C. Invocation of Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus in his tomb is not the kind of thing that would be made up.
 1. Analogy of me claiming to have lunch with U.S. Senator
 - D. Thus it's more reasonable to believe that Jesus' body was buried.

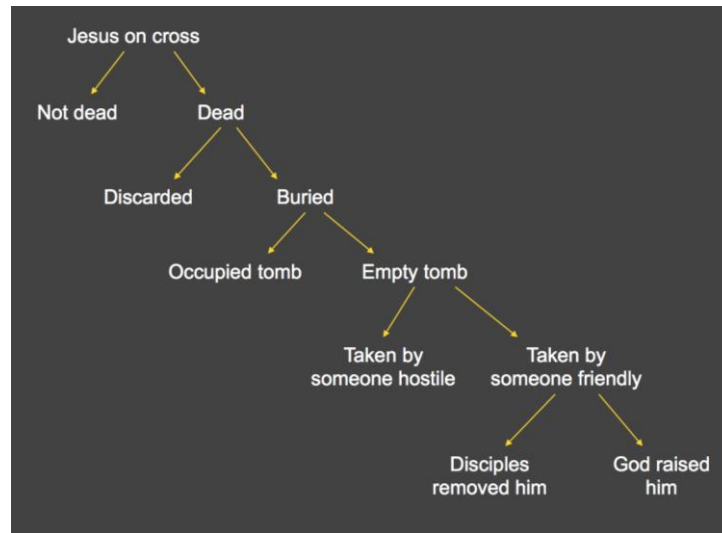
- III. Either the tomb was occupied or empty.
 - A. If it's occupied, why not produce the body?
 - B. Women as first witnesses to empty tomb doesn't help credibility in the ancient world.
 - C. Believable narratives: early, realistic tone
 - D. Thus it's more reasonable to believe that Jesus' tomb was empty.

- IV. Either Jesus' body was taken by someone hostile or friendly (i.e. where did the body go?)
 - A. Couldn't be robbers because of the armed guard
 - B. Makes no sense for the authorities, massively counter-productive
 - C. Even if was taken by someone hostile, wouldn't account for resurrection appearances.
 - D. Thus it's more reasonable to believe that Jesus' body was taken by someone friendly.

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- V. Either the disciples removed Jesus' body or God raised him
- A. If disciples, then dying for a lie; no one ever cracked.
 - B. Moreover, they were putting their eternal destinies at risk by claiming that God raised him from the dead—if he didn't, that's blasphemy.
 - C. Evidence of the appearances
 - 1. Sheer variety and variability of how Jesus appeared
 - a. Different numbers of people: individuals to 500
 - b. Different dispositions: James not a believer
 - c. Different locations: Jerusalem, Galilee, houses, mountains
 - 2. Not predisposed to believe in Jesus' individual resurrection, either individually (Thomas) or culturally-religiously
 - 3. Always bodily: eating fish, cooking over a fire, inviting Thomas to touch him
 - D. Transformation of the disciples

What best accounts for the empty tomb, these appearances, and the transformation of the disciples? That God really did raise Jesus from the dead.



Further Resources

[Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Easter: A Journalist Investigates the Evidence for the Resurrection*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.](#)

[Wenham, John. *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* Cascades, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005. More advanced.](#)