



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Jesus the Apprentice of God his Father

Bible Reading: John. 5:17-24

[Watch LIVESTREAM at 10am](#)

SUMMARY: John’s Gospel was written in the ancient Middle East. Consequently, we often miss what’s obvious to the original audience. Jesus’ ‘apprenticeship analogy’ is a case in point. Apprenticeship enabled sons to learn their father’s trade; Jesus & Joseph, his (putative) father, were carpenters. Now Jesus applies this metaphor to his ongoing relationship to God, his Father. It’s a unique window into the intimate Father-Son relationship of showing/seeing, loving/ submitting, hearing/ speaking, doing/imitating. Jesus calls his disciples into apprenticeship to him. This isn’t the ‘Great Commission’ of discipleship; it’s the “Great Invitation” into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Let’s all become apprentices to the risen Jesus!

Insight into Father-Son Relations

A. Father sent the Son on a Mission—one time action (5:23b, 24a, cf. Gal. 4:4)

B. Father- Son Ongoing Interdependence (John 5:17, 19-20; 8:28)

- | | FATHER | SON |
|---|---|-------------------|
| ▪ | 5:17 is working | is working |
| | 5:19 is doing | does likewise |
| | 5:19-20 shows the Son (5:20) sees what the Father’s doing (5:19) | |
| | 8:28 teaches | is taught, speaks |
| ▪ | “The motif of <i>family apprenticeship</i> ...in 5:19-20 probably explains the change to the present tense [verbs].”—William Loader | |

Family Apprenticeship in the Ancient World

- “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”—L. P. Hartley

- A. Importance of Apprenticeship in the Ancient World
- B. Based on Jesus' own life-experience in Nazareth? (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)
 - "Jn. 5:19 is "built on *the idea of a son learning his father's trade*—something *Jesus* did when he *apprenticed to his stepfather Joseph, learning to become the village carpenter*...Here *Jesus viewed himself as the ultimate apprentice to his true Father*."—Philip Comfort
 - Jesus places his work within the divine economy, using a figure [–apprenticeship–]...from ancient practices. Jn. 5:19-20... In the *ancient economy, one is entitled to do a job by virtue of heredity & apprenticeship*..." –Jo-Ann Brant

The Father-Son 'Apprenticeship' Analogy (5:19-20a)

- A. Part of Jesus' 'Defense Strategy'
- B. *The 'Hidden Parable of the Apprentice'*
 - "Behind [Jn. 5:19-30]...lies a simple *parable of apprenticeship*...This...is certainly a *brilliant suggestion*."—John Ashton
- C. The Father-Son 'Apprenticeship' Analogy
- D. The Apprentice Metaphor
 - Jesus "is...like an apprentice in the Father's workshop (5:19-20)."– George Caird
- E. The Son 'sees' & the Father 'shows' (5:19-20)
- F. The Father Instructs; the Son Learns & Speaks (8:28)
- G. The Father's 'Trade'—Raising the Dead & Giving Life (5:21)

Jesus Applies the Apprentice Analogy (5:17, 19-20)

- Jesus responds to this opposition by declaring that he is simply *engaging in the family business*"—Köstenberger & Swain
- A. The Son's Subordination as the Father's Apprentice
- B. But this Apprentice is the eternal Son, part of God's very Self!
- C. Jesus is not merely God's Agent (5:23-24), but also his Apprentice

Jesus: Apprentice of his Father; Believers: Apprentices of Jesus

- A. Jesus' Apprenticeship in his earthly ministry
- B. Disciples become Jesus' Apprentices (15:14-15)
- C. Our Apprenticeship with/to Jesus
 - "Jesus...taught an apprenticeship model...*Our primarily transforming apprenticeship is with Jesus*...There's no substitute for our most important apprenticeship. When we *apprentice ourselves to Jesus*...with time, discipline & the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we become increasingly like Jesus. In our *apprenticeship with Jesus*, we experience the deepest intimacy our hearts long for...In John, *Jesus invites his apprentices into a fruitful life of joyful intimacy with himself*." –Tom Nelson
- D. The 'Great Commandment,' the 'Great Commission' & the 'Great Invitation'
 - "The primary aim of *our apprenticeship with Jesus* is not to accomplish great things for Jesus, but to enjoy a growing intimacy with Jesus...[&] to learn from Jesus how to live our lives like Jesus would if he were us."– Tom Nelson

QUESTIONS:

- A. Many NT scholars agree that Jn. 5:19-20 allude in some way (parable, metaphor, allegory) to a 'family apprenticeship' relationship, like that between Jesus & Joseph in carpentry (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3) or the disciples—James & John with their father, Zebedee in the fishing business (Mark 1:19-20)
 1. What are the various aspects of that apprenticeship relationship covered in the phrases of Jn. 5:19-20?
 2. How does Jesus (as God's Son) apply these various aspects to his relationship with God his Father?
 3. How do these aspects justify Jesus' healing of the disabled man at Bethsaida's pool on the Sabbath?

- B. John's Gospel tells us repeatedly that God the Father sent Jesus (God the Son) e.g. Jn. 5:23b, 24. What additional insights do Jn. 5:19-20 add to that? What more are we told about the Father-Son relationship? Discuss.
- C. 'The Jews' accused Jesus of "making himself equal with God" (5:18) John 5:19-24 are part of Jesus' response to that charge. How would you summarize Jesus' overall response?
1. "YES. I *am* making myself equal with God the Father."
 2. "NO, I'm not making myself equal with God; I'm less than Him."
 3. "NO, I am (already) equal with God; I don't have to "*make myself*" equal with Him." Something else; try to express it...
- D. If we accept that John 5:19-20 describe a kind of "apprentice" relationship between Jesus (as God's Son) and God his Father, how does this answer (in part) 'the Jews' charge that Jesus is "making himself equal with God" (5:18)?
- E. Later in his Gospel John suggests that Jesus called his disciples (& us) into an "apprenticeship" to him e.g. Jn. 15:14-15
- Father -> Son -> Disciples: "You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I don't call you servants anymore...I've called you friends, because *I have made known to you everything I've heard from my Father.*" (Jn. 15:14-15)
 - "In John's Gospel, *Jesus is shown things by the Father, & he also shows these things of the Father to his disciples & others.*" –Benjamin Reynolds
1. If this is so, what are the implications for each of us of being "apprentices of Jesus"? Discuss
 2. What's the difference between [a.] being a "disciple of Jesus, answering the 'Great Commission'" (Mt. 28:19-20) and [b.] being an "apprentice of Jesus" having a relationship with Jesus similar to Jesus' relationship with his Father (5:19-20)?