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The One?

The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come. John the Baptist said that he was sent to prepare the way for the Lord. When he saw a sign from heaven, he knew that Jesus was “the One.”¹ Yet in this lesson, John asks, “Are you the One?” As more and more people were coming to see that Jesus was the Messiah, the great prophet John was beginning to doubt.

Can we question God? Can we doubt and still believe? Wouldn't you love to ask Jesus yourself, “Are you the One?” What other questions would you ask? Here are two stories about life and death, faith and doubt.

Part One: The Funeral

Luke 7: 11-17

When someone died in Israel, he or she was carried outside of the town to a cave or a hole in a rock. All the people in the city stopped what they were doing to join the family.

LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look over Luke 7:13-15. Underline the verb phrases that tell what Jesus did. You can scan for the verbs without reading all the words.
2. Read Luke 7: 11-17.

¹ See Luke 3 and John 1.

7:11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain,² and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 7:12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.³ And a large crowd from the town was with her. 7:13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her⁴ and he said, “Don't cry.”

7:14 Then he went up and touched the coffin,⁵ and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 7:15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

7:16 They were all filled with awe⁶ and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” 7:17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea⁷ and the surrounding country. NIV

LABEL the Text

3. Observe the setting. Write observation questions above the details.

When?

For example: soon afterward

4. Ask each other questions about the setting or tell the story.
5. Luke gives details⁸ that make the story very dramatic. What *do you think* is the most important detail in the story? Circle the words. Why *do you think* it is important?

² Nain is a few miles south of Nazareth.

³ A widow is a woman whose husband is dead.

⁴ ESV: “He had compassion on her.”

⁵ It was not actually a closed coffin. The dead body was carried to the grave on a simple, flat board.

⁶ ESV: “Fear seized them all.”

⁷ Judea is the land of the Jews.

⁸ Details are specific bits of information. Fact: a man is dead. Detail: he was the only son of a widow.

LINK the Text to Different Cultures

Here are some facts about Jewish funerals at the time of Jesus:⁹

- a) They carried the dead body on a simple, flat board.
- b) Everyone stopped what he or she was doing to join the crowd carrying the dead person.
- c) They usually buried the body in a cave or a hole in the side of a stone cliff.
- d) The body was wrapped with strips of cloth and spices. Even so, the funeral and the burial happen fast so the body will not smell.
- e) It was against Jewish law to interrupt a funeral. (Numbers 19:21-22)
- f) Touching a dead body was one of the worst forms of uncleanness. Only those who were close to the person could prepare the body, and they had to follow special rules to become clean again. (This is also in the law: Numbers 5:2-3 and 19:11-20.)

There are different traditions for respecting and remembering a dead person. Compare this funeral with ones you have seen or heard about.

LEARN from the Text

6. The only son of a widow has died. How does Jesus feel about this? What words tell you?

⁹ This information comes from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Craig G. Keener, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois:1993, p. 207.

7. It is terrible to lose a son, but in Jesus' day, this was especially terrible for a widow. Why *do you think* that is?

8. What risks¹⁰ did Jesus take?

9. The people's reaction is recorded in Luke 7:16. Who did they think Jesus was? Discuss what is said and what is implied (suggested).

10. This is a good story to act out. Tell the story or act it out with dialog.

Part Two: John's Question from Prison

Luke 7: 18-23

Read Luke 3: 18-20 to find out why John the Baptist is in prison.

3:18 In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways. 3:19 But John reprimanded¹¹ Governor Herod, because he had married Herodias, his brother's wife, and had done many other evil things. 3:20 Then Herod did an even worse thing by putting John in prison. GNB

¹⁰ A risk is a chance that something might go wrong.

¹¹ To reprimand is to tell someone that they should stop doing something wrong (or start doing something they should.)

LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look over Luke 7:21,22, the **bold** words. Underline the verb phrases in those verses to see what Jesus has been doing.
2. Read Luke 7:18-23.

7:18 John's¹² disciples told him about all these things. 7:19 Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come,¹³ or should we expect someone else?"

7:20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

7:21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 7:22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: **The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy¹⁴ are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.**¹⁵ 7:23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."¹⁶

NIV

¹² Luke tells about John in Luke 3:1-20.

¹³ ESV: "...one who is to come." John said that the Messiah was coming.

¹⁴ The Greek word means various diseases that affect the skin, such as leprosy. "Dreaded" means terrible. To the Jews, a person with this disease was "unclean." They could not touch or come close to any one. They were "outcasts." Jesus healed their body and brought them back to people.

¹⁵ Jesus is telling what he has done, but he is also quoting a prophecy. He also did this in Luke 4: _____. (Look for the verse.)

¹⁶ To fall away is to turn away from God. GNB: "How happy are those who have no doubts about me."

LINK to Other Verses in Luke

When one part of the Bible refers to something that happened in another part, it often “cross-references” the two parts with a footnote. It is helpful to cross-reference this story to Luke 3 in order to review about John the Baptist. Look back to Luke 3.¹⁷ How did John know that Jesus was from God?

Likewise, the words in Luke 7:22 above can be cross-referenced to Luke 4. Look back to Luke 4¹⁸ and find the verses that are similar to Luke 7:22 above. Write the verse numbers from Luke 4 in footnote #14. Note: A cross reference can refer to the same words or the same ideas. The reference for a quotation is a kind of cross reference.

Some of the words in Luke 4 are missing in Luke 7:22. Write the missing words.¹⁹

LEARN from the Text

3. What are “these things” in Luke 7:18? Note: These verses follow right after the story in Part One.

4. John sent his followers to ask Jesus an important question. What is the question? Where is John when he asks the question? Why *do you think* John asks this question?

¹⁷ Use a Bible or the text in lesson two.

¹⁸ Use the Bible or the text in lesson four.

¹⁹ Jesus leaves out some words that are important to John. Jesus might be giving a message to John about how John was going to die. Teachers at the time gave messages to their students in riddles like this. Later you can find out how John dies in Luke 9:9 and Matthew 14.

5. How did Jesus respond to John's question? What does his answer imply (suggest) about himself?

6. In Luke 7:23, *do you think* Jesus was saying that John was already far from God? If not, why *do you think* Jesus said this?

Note: After John's disciples left, Jesus tells the crowd what a great prophet John was. This is in Luke 7:24-28.

LIVE What you Learn

Discuss one of these questions:

1. A doubt is different from not believing at all. Do you think doubts are good or bad? Give some examples. How *do you think* Jesus would respond to our doubts?
2. What risks do you take when you help someone?
3. If you decided to follow Jesus today, what risks would you be taking?

Consider this:

Do you have doubts and questions about God? What questions would you like to ask Jesus? Write them down. You will find that God is very patient with you. You will not find 100% proof that the Christian faith is true, but you will find good answers to your questions. Ask God to help you search.



The Final Word

“I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus in John 14:6