

## “Show Us the Father” - John 14:7-14 <sup>1</sup>

**Before the lesson:** Make copies of the handout, ““In Jesus’ Name’???””, for the Transformational Exercise.

**Fellowship question:** (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion, and to lead into the study):

If you could have been present at only one of the miracles Jesus performed, which would it be?

What is your experience with the state of Missouri? (Lived there? Passed through? Relatives there? Etc.)

### Information

Missouri is known as the “show me” state. Do you know why? According to the website of the Missouri Secretary of State, “The most widely known legend attributes the phrase to Missouri's U.S. Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the United States House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903. While a member of the U.S. House Committee on Naval Affairs, Vandiver attended an 1899 naval banquet in Philadelphia. In a speech there, he declared, ‘I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me.’ Regardless of whether Vandiver coined the phrase, it is certain that his speech helped to popularize the saying.”<sup>2</sup> Another site notes, “The phrase is now used to describe the character of Missourians - not gullible - conservative and unwilling to believe without adequate evidence.”<sup>3</sup>

Maybe the disciple Philip was from Missouri.

- Have a class member read John 14:7-8.

Think of what Philip has experienced with Jesus in the last week:

- Jesus raises Lazarus to life.
- Jesus parades into Jerusalem.
- Jesus predicts his death and resurrection.
- Jesus washes the disciples’ feet.
- Jesus gives a new commandment to “love one another as I have loved you.”
- Jesus assures, “I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am you may be also.”
- Jesus insists that his teaching is not his own.

- Have a class member read John 12:44-45.

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<sup>1</sup> This lesson is copyrighted by Dr. Rick Jordan, Great Bible Teachers, Inc, 2024. More lessons may be found at [greatbibleteachers.com](http://greatbibleteachers.com).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/history/slogan.asp> Accessed July 2, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/missouri/state-nickname/show-me-state> Accessed July 2, 2024.

Philip demands, "Show us the Father and we will be satisfied." Maybe he was speaking only for himself. Maybe he was speaking for many of the disciples. Either way, there was a definite impression that Jesus was connected to the Father in some deep way and that Jesus could somehow make God appear to them. "Just show me," Philip says, as would any Missourian who was "conservative and unwilling to believe without adequate evidence."

Jesus responds:

- Have a class member read John 14:9-11.

Jesus begins with a good question. "Have I been with you this long, Philip, and you still do not know me?" Philip (and the other disciples?) were stuck in how they saw Jesus. What might be some ways they misperceived Jesus? (merely a man; a magician; a healer; a great teacher, etc.)

But Jesus says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." There is a union of God and Jesus. If you have seen Jesus, you have seen God the Father.

Why do you think this was hard for the disciples to grasp? (they had been raised in a monotheistic religion; only crazy people claim to be God; etc.)

Would you have felt like the disciples, too? Why or why not?

Is it possible that we, too, are stuck with our filters and images of who Jesus/God is? What if Jesus were to ask you, "Have I been with you this long, [your name here], and you still do not know me?" Could this be asked of our church? Our denomination?

Jesus is incredulous. "How could you even ask such a question?" If it was hard for the disciples to grasp that Jesus was one with God, it was hard for Jesus to grasp that the disciples could not see that this was obvious.

Should Jesus have cut them some slack or was he right in coming down so hard on his disciples?

Jesus says, "You can believe me because of my *words* or believe me because of my *works*." Which is easier for us to believe?

This is not the only time in the Gospel of John that we have this sentiment:

- Have class members read John 3:1-2; John 5:15-18; John 5:36; John 15:23-24.

So, Jesus urges people to believe in him and follow him as if they were believing in and following God. And, Jesus offers an out:

- Have a class member read John 10:24-25 and 10:31-33 and 10:37-38. These verses will be best read by one person without interruption.

Jesus challenges, “If you can prove that the works I am doing are not from God, you are justified not to believe in me.” Jesus, however, felt that there was adequate evidence to believe in him. His words and his works are proof that he is God incarnate.

Of course, even this takes faith – not a “blind faith”, but a faith that trusts the evidence. That faith leaps from “Jesus was a good man” to “Jesus was a godly man” to “Jesus was God and man.”

Now Jesus says something that can be and often is distorted.

- Have a class member read John 14:12-14.

How would you answer someone who takes this passage to mean, “God wants you to have whatever your heart desires. All you have to do is ask!”?

What do you think Jesus means by “the one who believes in me will do the works I do and will do even greater works than these?”

John Wesley took this to mean *qualitatively*. “So one apostle wrought miracles merely by his shadow, Acts v, 15; another by handkerchiefs carried from his body, Acts xix, 12; and all spake with various tongues. But the converting of one sinner is a greater work than all these.”<sup>4</sup>

Others take this phrase *quantitatively*. “The ‘greater works’ that they would do is understood in the sense of more works...they would move out in an ever growing circle of influence and ministry which would see thousands of people brought to faith in him, Jews and Gentiles alike.”<sup>5</sup>

As a chaplain and a local church minister, I wondered how I could possibly do “even greater works.” I visited hospitalized people who I could not raise from illness. I left many a person’s lifeless body at a gravesite. I could not even stop a rain shower from canceling a church picnic. Then I wondered, “What if it is a ‘greater work’ to represent God’s presence when I do not have supernatural power?” Maybe it takes as much faith and is a greater work to offer assurance of God’s care and provision when that care and provision seem questionable and you have no power to change the circumstance. Jesus healed people because he could. I can’t. Is it a “greater work” to be one who has no power, and yet to encourage faithfulness despite illness, death, or random rain showers? Could simply being present be a greater work? What do you think?

### **Transformational Exercise**

Based on Jesus’ words in this passage (“ask in my name” v. 13), many of us were taught to conclude our prayers with the phrase, “In Jesus’ name we pray.” It is like the closing words of a letter – like writing “Sincerely” or “Love” before we sign our name. For others, it is like a notary

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<sup>4</sup> John Wesley. Wesley’s Notes on the Bible. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.i.v.xv.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ray Summers, *Behold the Lamb: An Exposition of the Theological Themes in the Gospel of John* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 184.

seal – it makes this prayer official. Without that phrase, the prayer is not a “legal” prayer. For some, a prayer is not a “Christian prayer” unless “in Jesus’ name” is used as a concluding phrase that God recognizes as a “real prayer.” At high school football games or city council meetings, it is used oftentimes to make Christians feel more religious and superior to non-Christian pray-ers.

However, the phrase was meant neither to be a rote conclusion nor a magical incantation. Praying “in Jesus’ name” is an attitude that means “in the Spirit of Jesus” or “in the character of Jesus” or “in a way that would honor Jesus.” It means, “This/my prayer is a prayer Jesus would have prayed were he in my situation.” So, the concluding words of a prayer are not as important as the prevailing attitude of the pray-er. A prayer can end with a simple, “amen” (Hebrew for “may it be so”) or it may not have any particular ending. (However, in a public setting, saying “amen” or a similar phrase such as “hear our prayer” or “let it be” does help everyone know that the one praying has concluded, which prevents the awkward confusion that follows when something similar is not said.)

Look over the following situations and prayers. With a neighbor, discuss which of these are true prayers “in Jesus’ name.”

A child prays that her sick grandfather will be well soon.

A pastor publicly prays for the victims of the past week’s terrorist attack.

A pastor publicly prays for the perpetrators of the past week’s terrorist attack.

A rabbi opens a city council meeting by praying that council members will have the wisdom to make difficult decisions – but he doesn’t conclude his prayer with “in Jesus’ name.”

A parent asks his Bible study class members to join him in prayer for his wayward child.

A person prays they will win the mega-lottery.

A person prays for more faith so that they will never be ill.

A woman prays for new neighbors who are getting a fresh start in her country.

[After time for some discussion, call the class members back together and conclude the class session with a prayer something like this: *In Jesus’ name, we come to you, Father. We pray for the heart of Jesus so that we will pray with Jesus’ compassion and with Jesus’ sense of justice. And, when we don’t know how to pray, we invite your Holy Spirit to pray through us. Forgive us for times we have used Jesus’ name to intimidate others or to manipulate you. We pray that our prayers will honor your dream for this world. Amen.*]

## **“In Jesus’ Name”???**

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