

- I. Pressuring people to agree with us, believe like us, behave like us
  - A. John 7:45-53 . . . The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring [Jesus back with you]?" [46] The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." [47] The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? [48] No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? [49] But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." [50] Nicodemus (he who came to [Jesus] before, being one of [the chief priests and Pharisees]) said to them, [51] "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" [52] They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." [53] [Everyone went to his home.
  - B. This is the last part of a story that began back in vs 14, and it is my intention to use this part to remind you about perspective and it's power to influence how you see and understand things. Following that, I want to point out three common methods that people use to get what they want.
  - C. Prayer
- II. The power of perspective and three common methods used to get our way
  - A. John 7:45-46 . . . The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" [46] The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."
    1. The officers mentioned here are Temple workers whose primary role was to maintain order in the temple and to enforce the decisions of the Sanhedrin – such as seizing Jesus and bringing Him to them.
    2. But the more important point I want to make from these two verses deals with our perspective – a topic we talked about a few weeks back. And as you may you recall, I said our perspective or mindset has a strong influence over how we hear what is said, how we understand what we read, how we make sense of what we see, and how we interpret a situation or event.
    3. Though we do not find two differing perspectives of the same event in vs 45-46, we do find them in the larger context. And the single

event these differing perspectives deal with is the failure of the officers to bring Jesus back to the religious leaders.

- a. From the officers perspective, they did not seize Jesus and bring Him with them because they couldn't believe someone who spoke the way Jesus spoke could be doing anything wrong. In other words, it is implied that they were so impressed with Jesus' knowledge and ability to communicate that knowledge that they believed the only reasonable response was to give Him the same level of respect they would give any rabbi of such a caliber.
  - b. However, in contrast to the officer's perspective, we have John's perspective – which is found in vs 30, where John says that they were seeking to seize Jesus, yet no one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come.
4. Do you see the difference?
- a. The officers reasoning was based on a perspective that either ignored or excluded God's presence and activity in the situation.
  - b. John's reasoning was based on a perspective that fully expected God to be present and active, and that perspective enabled John to see that it was God who prevented the officers from seizing Jesus.
- B. My reason for pointing this out is to once again encourage you to be aware that your perspective has a powerful influence over how you see and understand things – and therefore it influences how you deal with things.
1. Whenever and wherever your perspective ignores or excludes God's presence and activity, you will rely on your accumulated knowledge, human wisdom, and non-biblically based reasoning to interpret and make sense of a situation, and determine how to deal with it.
  2. However, whenever and wherever your perspective is built on the expectation that God is present and active, and then you reinforce that perspective by looking to God's word to find wisdom and insight about how to deal with a particular situation and the people involved, you will see, hear, interpret, and make sense of the events in that situation, and respond accordingly.
- C. I suspect most, if not all of us here today consider ourselves Christ-ones, and as Christians we ought to be building and nurturing a perspective that expects God to be present and active, and that expects God's Word to give us the kind of direction and wisdom that will enable us to figure out how to deal with people and situations in a godly manner. And if you need help with this, ask someone who knows how to help.

D. John 7:47-49 . . . The Pharisees then answered [the officers], "You have not also been led astray, have you? [48] No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? [49] But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

1. As I stated at the beginning, I want to use these three verses and the next three verses to point out three common yet ungodly methods that we are prone to use to get our way.
2. The first common method used to get our way is to exaggerate whatever we have to exaggerate in order to get others to do what we want, or to get them to agree that what we are saying is right and makes sense while implying that what they are saying is wrong or makes no sense.
  - a. So with this exaggeration method in mind, here is a paraphrase of vs 47-48, "The Pharisees then said to the officers who were supposed to bring Jesus back with them, 'You have not also believed the lies told by Jesus and His disciples, have you? Are you aware that everyone who takes their religion seriously – like us rulers and Pharisees – do not believe in Jesus?'"
  - b. Do you see the exaggeration? It is as if they were saying, "No one who is anyone important believes in Jesus, so why would you?"
  - c. Interestingly, John exposes the dishonesty of this reasoning by reminding the reader of Nicodemus in the very next verses.
3. Now this example of exaggerating the truth to get our way is not just about them, it applies to us as well. For example, how often have you said or heard, "Everyone is doing it" or "You're the only one who disagrees with me" or "Even your friends know this is the right thing to do" or "No one at church does that."
  - a. When you exaggerate in order to convince others to see something your way or do something your way, you are not just lying, you are using self-serving, manipulative tactics to get what you want. And this is not just wrong, it is self-destructive – in that it damages your character and feeds selfish thinking habits. And it is unloving – for it harms those you use this method against.
  - b. It damages your character and thinking habits by reinforcing prideful arrogance and the selfish use of power to get your way – two things that ought not to exist in God's children.
  - c. And it damages those you use this method against by promoting fear based or mindless appeasement rather than encouraging those disagreeing with you to think rationally and carefully, to look for the truth, and to make choices accordingly.

- d. To sum up, exaggerating reality to get your way is a selfish act that has no interest in the truth, no desire for fair play, no concern for the godliness of your character, no commitment for the well-being of others, and no trust in God to be present and active. Therefore, such behavior ought not to exist among those of us who name Jesus as our Savior and Jehovah as our God.
4. Vs 49 presents us with a second commonly used method to win an argument, or prove that we are right and the other person is wrong. And this method can best be described as using put downs, derogatory and belittling comments, ridicule, expressions of contempt, humiliation, and open disrespect to try and move others to agree with us or act according to our wishes.
- a. And with this put-down method in mind, I am going to paraphrase vs 48-49, “Are you aware that everyone who takes their religion seriously – like us rulers and Pharisees – do not believe in Jesus? And as for the common Jews who foolishly believe in Jesus, they are uneducated in the law and ignorant of what the rest of scripture says. And if you believe in Jesus, you are just like them!”
  - b. What I am hoping you can see is that the rulers and Pharisees used put-downs and humiliation to get the offices to do what they wanted them to do.
  - c. However, the use of this method did not start with the rulers and Pharisees and it did not stop with them. We know that children use this method. Brothers and sisters use this method. Husbands and wives use this method. And it is probable – even you have used this method to get the people you are dealing with to do what you want, or to believe as you want them to believe, or to see things the way you see them.
  - d. Now I acknowledge that this method works often enough that it is tempting to use it over and over again. Yet in spite of its repeated success, there is no godliness or love or respect or kindness or tenderness in it – only selfishness, unkindness, disrespect, and the kind of distrust of God that leads you to conclude that life is better, safer, and happier when you are getting what you want, even if you have to take matters into our own hands and act a bit ungodly to get it.
  - e. I believe Paul’s words about speaking the truth in love provides an essential principle for how to communicate. And this principle is essential because it is realistic. And it is realistic because it

gives us way to speak the truth and show respect and preserve love at the same time.

5. And by way of reminder that trusting God to be present and active is also an essential principle for communication, I want to say that when dealing with adults, we are to speak the truth in love while allowing them to come to their own conclusions.
    - a. So let me ask you, when dealing with adults, will you trust God enough to speak honestly, respectfully, and kindly while allowing the other person to form their own opinion and come to their own conclusion?
    - b. And when dealing with children, will you trust God enough to patiently speak honestly, respectfully, and kindly even though you are not giving them a choice about doing what you want?
  6. Using put downs, derogatory and belittling comments, ridicule, expressions of contempt, humiliation, and open disrespect to try and move others to agree with you or act according to your wishes is evidence that you distrust God and His ways, that you regard yourself more important than others, and that you are not loving your neighbor as yourself. This is neither godly nor loving.
  7. Moving on to vs 50-52, we see the third ungodly and unloving method commonly used to get our way or prove that we are right.
- E. John 7:50-52 . . . Nicodemus (he who came to [Jesus] before, being one of them) – said to them, [51] "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" [52] They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."
1. The third method commonly used to win an argument, or prove that we are right and the other person is wrong in order to get what we want is based on ignoring the truth or overlooking the facts and attacking or demeaning the other person's intelligence and character.
  2. And so, as before, let me give you a paraphrase of vs 50-52. "The same Nicodemus who came to Jesus as recorded back in John 3:1-21, said to his fellow rulers and Pharisees, 'Does our Law allow us to condemn someone without hearing and trying to understand his side of the story?' Instead of answering Nicodemus' question, they responded by saying, 'You are not a dim-witted Galilean also, are you? Do some valid research and you will see that no prophet, that is, no one sent by God comes from Galilee.'"

3. Do you see how the rulers and Pharisees side-stepped dealing with a fact in the Law and went straight to attacking Nicodemus' character and intelligence in an effort to convince him to join them in condemning Jesus?
4. And as we have seen before, they are not unique in using such methods to get their way or win the day. We are prone to do the same. We are prone to side-step or ignore or hide any truth or fact that might prevent us from winning the argument, or getting someone to agree with us, or convincing someone to do what we want. And this is not just a foolish mistake or a minor wrong, it is evil.
  - a. It is evil because it is a deliberate and dishonest act of side-stepping a truth or ignoring a fact in order to get what we want.
  - b. And then we make things worse by attacking and discrediting the person's intelligence and character in order to win.
5. Which brings us back to us. There is nothing godly or loving or respectful or fair when you side-step a truth or ignore a fact and resort to attacking and demeaning the person's intelligence or character to get your way. And as I said already, this is not just a minor wrong, it is evil in that it is doubly wrong.

### III. Conclusion

- A. There is great power in the desire to be selfish and get our way, but there is far greater power in God – a power that is ours if we belong to Him. And it is His power that enables us to overcome and defeat the desire to use ungodly means to satisfy our selfishness and get our way. And it is His power that enables us to use godly means and Biblical wisdom to love as we ought – even when it means loving our enemy, or a difficult co-worker, or an unloving spouse, or a disobedient and disrespectful child.
- B. May we choose God, godliness, love, and respect while trusting God to bring good from what may appear to be a hopeless situation.