

Lesson Overview

1 Life Need:

Discuss expectations and how they can affect us.

2 Bible Learning:

See how Jesus did not allow people's rejection to keep Him from doing God's will.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible sheet—Words to the Wise

3 Bible Application:

Realize that God and His wisdom is more important than the opinion of others.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible handout—Do What He Says

4 Life Response:

Put other people's opinions in perspective and seek God's wisdom always.



The Wisdom of Jesus

Unbelief—Jesus left Capernaum and traveled with His 12 disciples to His hometown, Nazareth. On Saturday at the synagogue, He announced He was the Messiah. It did not go well. The residents of Nazareth had watched Jesus develop from a child into manhood in the house of His parents, Joseph the carpenter, and Mary. Now He was popular and influential, a worker of miracles. How did this happen?

Insults—When they heard His words, they marveled at a depth of His insight. He explained the Scriptures with such skill. However, their comments were filled with doubt and insults. In Jewish culture, the son was identified by his father's name. The town's people referred to Jesus as Mary's son, a putdown. They also mentioned His siblings. Why was He acting so differently from His brothers and sisters? Those who professed to know Him growing up in their city entirely dismissed His divinity—they were “offended at him,” meaning the Nazarenes stumbled over Him, seeing Him as a scandal to their town. He did a few miracles there; some sick individuals in the town darkened His door requesting healing, but the majority wanted Him out of town. While crowds in other places flocked to Him, esteeming Him as one sent from God, He was not esteemed in Nazareth. Astonished at the unbelief He found, He nonetheless kept moving forward, advancing God's kingdom. He continued His teaching circuit in the other areas of Galilee.

Suffering Rejection—Walking God's path of wisdom and doing His will is not easy. At times, loved ones and close friends will be making light of or ignore our faith and Christian service. We can listen politely, but we must let the discouraging conversations go in one ear and out the other. Close friends and relatives may keep reminding you of your past or pointing out your limitations. We can learn from Jesus' example—keep pushing ahead, following the wise way with the guidance of God.

AS YOUR STUDENTS ARRIVE

Ask your students to think about expectations they had for themselves growing up and if they met those expectations. For example, they may have expected to have a high-paying job by now, or be retired

and living on a tropical island. They may have had a career they expected to be in, and that may or may not be what they are now doing or did.

Link to Last Week: Did some of your students feel they grew in wisdom this past week? Allow them to share what happened.

Lesson 7 • July 19 • Page 47

The Wisdom of Jesus

A Present-Day Illustration

Lawrence says. Lawrence says!" exclaimed Mrs. Simmons. "That's all I hear. Didn't you go to prison for something?" Lawrence was in Mrs. Simmons's living room. He had come to pick up Austin for a men's conference. Lawrence smiled slowly. He did do a short stint in jail 13 years ago for drug possession.

Lawrence had committed his life to the Lord a few years after that. Now, he was gainfully employed as a counselor in a boy's program and was involved in several community projects. He let everyone know, however, that it was only because of Christ that his life turned around.

The Lord had changed and grown him, and Lawrence was grateful. Still, there were people who could not see the good that God had done. Austin and a few other young people were not part of them, and for that, Lawrence was grateful.

"Yes ma'am, that was years ago," Lawrence began.

"It was 13 years ago, Grandma," Austin said, bounding down the stairs, "and the Lord has changed him."

"Where are you all headed again?" asked Mrs. Simmons, dragging on her cigarette.

"A group of five of us are going to Springfield for a conference on how to be godly men," said Lawrence. "I'm paying for the registration, food, and gas. We should be back this evening."

1. How is having expectations for our lives a positive thing? How could it be negative?

2. How much does what we did in the past affect our present?

3. Why is it often important to lay aside the expectations of others?

LESSON FOCUS: Pursue God's wisdom, laying aside your past and others' expectations.

1 Life Need

Discuss expectations and how they can affect us
.....

Read together the opening story in the student book, then ask the class to form small groups to discuss how they would answer

Questions 1, 2, and 3.

For Question 1, they may say that expectations can give us goals to work for and spur us on to do things we otherwise might not do, especially if we "own" those expectations ourselves. However, if we try to live by or live up to someone else's expectations we often find heartache and frustration if we don't become the people others think we should be. Parents may put unrealistic expectations on their children and may constantly remind them of their child's "failure" if the child does not meet the parents' expectations.

Question 2 points out that our past very much affects our present because we are the end product of all our past decisions. Also, if we have let our expectations be given to us by someone else, we will always judge everything we do by those expectations and may not become the person God wants us to be.

Question 3 reminds us that the expectations of others may be selfish, or someone may not want us to dream too big or aspire for too much. They may become upset if they feel we have stopped listening to them, but we need to seek God's plan for our lives and look beyond others' expectations and past situations to live for Him in the present.

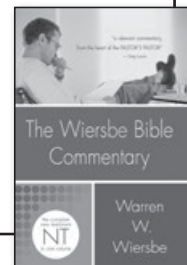
Bible Learning 2

See how Jesus did not allow people's rejection to keep Him from doing God's will

On the poster sheet, read the eighth paragraph and note the photo of a reconstructed synagogue in Nazareth.



You can find more commentary on the Scripture passage on pp. 105-106 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.



GOING BACK HOME

Read Mark 6:1-2a with your class, then note these ideas:

- By the time Jesus visited His home country, His ministry and miracles were well known throughout the region.
- Jesus spoke in wisdom and walked in the fullness of the spiritual gifts. Everything (both spiritual and natural) was subject to His Word and power, and the people were amazed.

Going Back Home

Mark 6:1-2a, KJV

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.
2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished.

Mark 6:1-2a, NIV

¹Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

When Jesus arrived in Nazareth, He and His followers would have likely stayed with Jesus' mother Mary. More than likely, given the culture of hospitality in the Middle East, other neighbors would also have opened their homes if room was needed.

Until the Sabbath, Jesus may not have caused much commotion except for people noticing Him and His entourage. When the Sabbath did arrive, Jesus went to the synagogue with His disciples and began to teach those who were present. Since Jesus had a group of people following Him, He would have been recognized as a rabbi, and thus given a chance to teach.

As we see from other passages in the Gospels, when Jesus taught in the synagogue, He stood out dramatically from other rabbis who were given the pulpit. Instead of quoting other prominent teachers and offering commentary on their views, Jesus spoke as one who had authority—as if He were the one the rabbis should be quoting (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22)!

4. With whom did Jesus return to His hometown?

5. How did the crowds in Jesus' hometown initially react to His teaching?

Who Does This Guy Think He Is?

Mark 6:2b-3, KJV

2b From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him,

Mark 6:2b-3, NIV

^{2b}“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these

BIBLE EXTRA

First-Century Nazareth

In this week's Scripture passage, Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth. From the archeological evidence, we believe that Nazareth in the first century was a very small village, perhaps of 150-200 people. The discovery of a winepress, several watchtowers, and irrigation channels here indicates the residents were primarily farmers who tended crops and livestock and made a living growing grapes, olives, and grains on hillside terraces. First-century tombs have been found under a convent as well, and the remains of a large courtyard house with doors and windows still intact and a well. Archeologists also have found immersion pools used for Jewish rites of ritual purification.

The evidence seems to indicate that the residents of Nazareth were devout Jews who took the rituals reflecting the law of Moses seriously. That is in contrast to nearby Sepphoris, four miles away, a very Greek and Roman styled city that Herod Antipas made his capital of Galilee.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Jesus came into His hometown with His disciples, after they had been doing ministry in Galilee.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

Apparently, they were awestruck by what they heard, but they had other reactions as well.

WHO DOES THIS GUY THINK HE IS?

Read Mark 6:2b-3 and discuss these key points in the text:

- The people were astonished at His teachings. They knew His ordinary family and the simplicity of His upbringing—so they were unable to understand the scholarly knowledge and wisdom that He possessed.
- The people knew Joseph was a humble carpenter, no one

Week of July 19 • Page 49

KJV

that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Despite His authoritative teaching and clearly supernatural miracles, the response of the people in Jesus' hometown to His speaking was (in modern language), "Who does this guy think he is?" He had seemingly exalted Himself over other, respected religious teachers; in fact, it seemed as if Jesus were putting Himself on par with Moses. They were not used to someone speaking to them so boldly.

In the beginning, the crowds were clearly perplexed as to how Jesus got to the point of not only being an itinerant preacher with a huge following, but apparently able to do miracles upon command. Like most small towns, everybody knew what was going on in everybody else's lives. They had seen Jesus growing up, working with his earthly father, playing with his siblings. Isaiah 53 implies that when Jesus was growing up, there was nothing spectacular about Him. He seemed to his neighbors to be absolutely ordinary in every way. And, to have this much learning, He would be expected to come from some noted town such as Jerusalem where a renowned teacher would live. The village had such a non-stellar reputation that Nathanael's response when he first found out about Jesus and where He was from was, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:43-46).

Therefore, the people begin to publicly challenge Jesus' credibility. They had heard Him teach and knew of His reputation for performing miracles, but they seemed unimpressed by all of these things. When many human beings refuse to accept something extraordinary at face-value, they begin to question the origins or power behind what they can plainly see in front of them. In other contexts, the Pharisees plainly accused Him of being in league with the devil, who they said was the real

NIV

remarkable miracles he is performing? ³Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

BIBLE EXTRA

First-Century Synagogues

Synagogues played a central role in the towns of first-century Israel, even in the small villages. Reading and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures (out loud), collecting funds for the poor, and serving as a community center were the primary purposes of these small houses of worship. They were generally small buildings with benches built into the walls. While the Temple held a supreme role when it came to worship, the synagogue served as a daily reminder of God's love for His chosen people.

BIBLE EXTRA

Jesus' Miracles

Before coming to His hometown of Nazareth, Mark records that Jesus had performed multiple, stunning miracles around the Sea of Galilee. On the Gentile side of the lake, He had exorcised a legion of demons from a man who had long been tormented by these dark, supernatural beings. After Jesus allowed the spirits to inhabit a nearby herd of pigs, the swine ran off a steep bank and drowned in the lake. The people who had once seen this man with the strength of a giant, tearing chains from his body as if they were made of tissue paper, and now in his right mind—were stunned. After this, Jesus went back across the lake and healed a woman who had been bleeding for years. He then raised the young daughter of Jairus, the synagogue leader, from the dead.

special. They also knew that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had four sons and some daughters, and the daughters were living in Nazareth.

- Since the people knew Jesus' family and origins, they couldn't reconcile that with the idea that He might be the Messiah. They could not understand where His great wisdom and miracles came from.

- Therefore, they rejected Him and thus missed salvation and eternal life standing right in front of them.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

They had known Him as a boy growing up with His family. All of them seemed quite ordinary, so Jesus' wisdom seemed out of place.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Jesus was breaking the mold of the typical person from Nazareth, and these people took it personally.

AMAZED AT THEIR LACK OF FAITH

Read Mark 6:4-6, and think

about these ideas from the Scripture:

- The Messiah was in their presence, filled with divine power, but their small-minded thinking caused them to miss an opportunity to experience the miraculous.

- Since it is impossible without faith to please God (Heb. 11:6), the majority of the people did not experience God in their midst that day.

- Only a few sick people had enough faith and wisdom to receive divine healing.

- Jesus was astounded that the

power behind His miracles (Matt. 12:22-28).

Then they moved from rationalizing the exceptional to appealing to the mundane. They referred to Jesus' ordinary occupation as a carpenter who more than likely did some building projects in the town. They referred to Jesus' "ordinary" family: His mother Mary, His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, and some unnamed sisters. It is interesting to note that the people say nothing negative about Jesus' behavior or that of His earthly family. From their statements, however, we see that there was nothing extraordinary about His home.

And so, the townspeople of Nazareth singularly dismissed Jesus. While He had experienced incredible popularity elsewhere, this did not move the people who saw Jesus grow up.

6. Why were folks in Nazareth perplexed about Jesus' wisdom and miracles?

7. Why did these people take offense at Jesus?

Amazed at Their Lack of Faith

Mark 6:4-6, KJV

4 But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Mark 6:4-6, NIV

⁴Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

The townspeople took offense at Jesus and refused to give Him the honor any other rabbi would have received from them. The popular phrase "familiarity breeds contempt" was certainly true of the people of Nazareth toward Jesus. They had seen Him grow up as a boy and refused to believe that he had

BIBLE EXTRA

First-Century Carpentry

A carpenter in first-century Galilee did not limit himself to working with wood (as we would associate the profession today). The word translated "carpenter" is the Greek word *tekton*, and it is possible to also translate this word as "artisan," "contractor," or even "handyman." Therefore, carpenters during this time could work with common metals, iron, and even stone. When Jesus worked as a carpenter in His small village, He may have spent a good deal of his time making plows and yokes for the farmers in His community. He may also have made low tables, chests, and other products made of wood and metal for domestic living.

people chose not to believe. They heard things never before spoken and they knew of His works and power, never before seen, and yet they refused to believe.

- Therefore, Jesus left His hometown of Nazareth and went to other villages looking for receptive

audiences for God's message.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

He pointed out that God's prophets were usually honored everywhere except their hometowns; Jesus realized that this

kind of contempt was now being directed toward Him.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Most of the people in Nazareth had rejected Jesus as anything special, much less a messenger from God, so their lack of faith prevented them from believing He could do anything for them.

Week of July 19 • Page 51

turned into anything extraordinary.

In response to their condescension, Jesus stated that prophets are usually dishonored in their hometowns, where neighbors and even family members refuse to change their minds about someone who was raised among them.

Because of their spiritual indifference, Jesus refused to do many miracles there—except to heal a few people who seemed to have had faith in Him. This was not because He lacked power. He chose not to do many miracles because of the people's faithlessness. As long as the people were unwilling to believe, Jesus knew no teaching or miracle would persuade them to follow Him. And if He had done more miracles in a climate of unbelief, the people's guilt would have become all the worse. Thus, the Nazarenes missed out on the benefits of Jesus' power because of their unbelief. The same is true for all who refuse to believe.

The text tells us that Jesus was actually surprised at their lack of belief. To cling to alternative interpretations of Jesus' ability to teach with authority and heal the sick absolutely astounded Him. So, after doing what He could for those who truly believed that God was able, and sometimes willing, to heal those who needed it, He moved along. Jesus went to other villages teaching and healing. While the response to His teaching and presence was sometimes mixed, it never seemed to be as dismissive as the reception He received in His hometown.



The traditional site of the synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus spoke.

Photo: Ori

8. How did Jesus feel about His reception in His hometown?

9. Why didn't Jesus do many miracles in Nazareth?

BIBLE EXTRA

Families, Growth, and Being Taken Seriously

The warmth of family- and friend-based affection is often heavily dependent on keeping the status quo, where everyone is behaving in a manner that everyone expects, usually according to some unwritten rules with which the community is expected to comply. That's why when one person in the relationship experiences significant personal and spiritual growth, some friendships and even marriages experience tension. The person who is not growing may begin to think "What's wrong with me?" But instead of exploring the possibility of change and growth, the one who has made no movement begins to get defensive and even dismissive of the other person's progress. This could be what was happening with the people of Nazareth and their contemptuous attitude toward Jesus. In their minds, it was better to write Him off instead of taking Him seriously.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Certainty of Rejection


The unpleasant episode in Nazareth likely had one benefit: it taught the disciples to expect opposition. Shortly afterward, when the disciples set out on missions for Christ, it must have comforted them to know that a negative response to the Gospel message is not necessarily due to a flaw in the messenger. Even the greatest Messenger was not received by all. He was rejected by those who knew Him best.

Bible Application **3**

Realize that God and His wisdom is more important than others' opinions

You may want to photocopy this page and cut out the boxes so that each group has its own set of instructions. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give those to the group using it.

• **Handout: 'Do What He Says'**
Read the handout, fill in the chart, and respond to the questions at the end.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

• Discussion Group

Read "Not without Honor" in the student book and discuss your answers to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. People talk; that's what they do. But if God is for us, who can stand against us? When people die, their plans die with them, but it is the eternal plan of God that is established in the heavens. We were created to love, serve, and obey our Creator. We must discover, then fulfill the will of God for each of us. Jeremiah 29:11 declares that the Lord's thoughts and plans concerning us are good and lead to peace. When we forfeit our purpose, we live unfulfilled lives because those lives are rooted in disobedience.

• I Know You Too Well

Discuss how the expression "Familiarity breeds contempt" can apply in familial relationships. When have family members or acquaintances struggled with your transformation and calling? How have you reacted to them? Why is breaking off relationships usually not a good solution?

Week of July 19 • Page 52

Not without Honor

As a Christian, one of the most difficult things in life to navigate are relationships. We have family, people, and perceptions that existed prior to our salvation experience. Our history doesn't have to be difficult or steeped in darkness. Rather, it's people's familiarity with our childhood and the unexpected paths that we are called to that can be met with cynicism from others: "How can we believe you have changed? How can you be a different person than when we first knew you?"

Consider Jesus. He was God, come to bring the Good News of salvation and love to the people who knew Him best—yet the people of Nazareth rejected Him because they couldn't see beyond His earthly family. Jesus never sinned; He was absolutely holy, perfect, righteous in everything He said and did. His miracles were already known throughout the region; every place He went, the multitudes followed and witnessed many signs and wonders. But that did not faze the people of Nazareth. They would not honor Him, and so the miracles performed there were few.

Sometimes, we've felt like Gideon, from the least esteemed family and the least member within the family. Sometimes we've felt like David, who was held in such low regard that his father left him in the field while the prophet examined his other sons to see who would be king. But the expectations of others or the past we've lived should not keep us from following the Lord's path for us or listening to His wisdom, whatever it may tell us. Nothing others said about Him or the humbleness of His past stopped Jesus from doing what the Father said He must do. How we live our lives should hinge on the Word of God—not the opinions of men.

10. *Have you allowed the opinions of others to impact your faith and faithfulness? Explain your answer.*

11. *Why is fulfilling the will of God the most important duty of life?*

12. *Why is it often hard to see beyond our past and past expectations to do the Lord's will?*

4 Life Response

Put other people's opinions in perspective and seek God's wisdom always
.....

By the time that Jesus returned to His own hometown, His ministry was well known. Jesus taught in the synagogues with such profound wisdom that the people were amazed. Still, the people He grew up with dishonored Him because they couldn't accept who He was. But He didn't

allow the praise or rejection of people to move Him from the will of God.

Ask your class to read "What God Says" and think about the question there. The voices often play in our head long after the people who said them are gone. If we want to be who God wants us to be rather than who others expect us to be, as the apostle Paul said, we must be "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13, KJV). Today and this week can be a time of new beginnings that put the past and its expectations behind us to serve the Lord in new and exciting ways we might never have thought possible.

Close the class in prayer, something like this: "Heavenly Father, we first repent for every time we've failed to obey Your voice. We ask that You give us the strength of character and faith to obey You in all things. Direct our paths as we submit ourselves to You—spirit, soul, and body. We belong to You, and we pray that Your will be done in us and in the earth. In Jesus' name, amen."

When the students are dismissed, distribute copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Send *Lesson Leaflet* to people who could not be with you today.

Before next week, read John 14:1-14. Ask your students to think about at least three things they believe in besides Jesus, God, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

Week of July 19 • Page 53

What God Says

Many voices try to tell us who we should be and what we should do. Anyone who tries to keep us locked in the past or chides us for not being everything we "should" be is not a voice to listen to.

► *Which voices are you listening to that you shouldn't—voices that keep you from doing God's will and being His servant? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you tune out those voices and listen to Him instead.*

KEY VERSES

And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

—Mark 6:2-3, KJV

When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

—Mark 6:2-3, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 20 through July 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 3:13-18—Wisdom, the Source of Abundant Life.
- Tues.** John 5:19-24—Jesus Does What the Father Does.
- Wed.** John 13:30-35—Love as I Loved You.
- Thurs.** John 14:15-17—The Spirit of Truth Dwells in You.
- Fri.** John 14:18-24—Love Binds Believers to God.
- Sat.** John 14:25-31—Spirit of Wisdom Promised to All.
- Sun.** John 14:1-14—Jesus, the Way to the Father.