

An Invitation to Mandatory Fun and God's Ultimate Intent

SPEAKER	Jayson Knox
DATE	Sunday, February 11, 2025
PASSAGES	John 6; Leviticus 23; Numbers 20; Exodus 16
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:03:33 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The Gospel of John was built around two questions: *who is Jesus*, and *what are you going to do with him*. Both are present tense. At the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus answers the first himself — he is the bread, the water, the rock, the tent of meeting — and then leaves the second one standing in front of everybody in the room.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ John's questions are not historical. Jesus does not ask what you did with him last week; he asks what you are going to do with him now.
- ◆ The first recorded words of Jesus in this gospel are a question — "What are you seeking?" — and the disciples dodge it. His next words are "Follow me." Twenty chapters later, that is still the answer he gives Peter.
- ◆ Manna could not be stored. You cannot bank yesterday's devotion, and a prayer has to be real on the day you pray it.
- ◆ Ezekiel's river gets deeper the further it runs from the temple. That is not hydrology — it is the economy of the kingdom, and it is the same picture Jesus claims on the last day of the feast.
- ◆ John 6 ends with a crowd walking away over a hard saying. Being offended by Jesus is a normal reaction to him, not a modern one.
- ◆ Jesus' brothers wanted to be kin to a king without following one. They offered him publicity; he declined it.

- ◆ Discipleship is not getting your house in order. It is removing whatever in your soul, mind or body keeps you from obeying a Jesus you already love — which is why it looks different in every person.
- ◆ Faith is not only believing he died and rose. It is trusting that he knows how to live life, and that the way he lives is right.

► 1:03:34

Jayson Knox opened by explaining the trade: Matt had reached, in his telling, the level of spiritual maturity required to teach third and fourth grade Sunday school, so the two of them swapped rooms for the morning. “Good luck all around.”

A title changed at seven in the morning

► 1:04:25

The original title was *Mandatory Fun* — the first rule of his Sunday school class. By 7:00 that morning it had become “Who is Jesus, and what are we going to do with him,” because those are the questions the Gospel of John is built on. “They are the prerequisite questions. They are the anchor questions that we have to answer.”

Why John wrote the way he did

► 1:05:10

John outlived the other apostles and wrote perhaps forty years after Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jayson’s reading: he knew those accounts and approved of them, but he had been unusually close to Jesus — close enough to be handed his mother — and before he left he wanted the things that mattered most emphasized again, possibly because he was no longer hearing them in the churches. Chief among them, love. “Love is the bottom line,” he said, crediting Keith Atkinson for the phrase. Less exciting than other theological ideas, perhaps, but it is the test.

The book is also a deliberately structured piece of art — seven signs, seven *I am* sayings, seven discourses — and in Jayson’s judgment it tells us more about the Holy Spirit than any other book.

► 1:08:18

His shortcut for proving the theme: get a red-letter Bible and read only the words in red. The first thing Jesus says in this gospel is a question — “What are you seeking?” — and the disciples answer with a question of their own about lodging. “I do that sometimes. He’ll say something to me and I’ll go, well, I’ll get back to you on that.” Jesus does not spend extra words on it. His next line is “Follow me,” and for

twenty chapters they do, ruined for anything else. At the very end, when Peter starts comparing himself to John, the answer has not changed: "You follow me."

Mandatory fun: the Feast of Tabernacles

► 1:11:47

Chapter 7 happens at the fall harvest festival, the third of the three feasts Israel was required to keep, and Jayson's favorite by a wide margin: barbecue every day, parades, singing, dancing, water, fire, and camping out. *Tabernacle* means tent. Pilgrims came from across the kingdom and pitched tents on street corners and rooftops, commemorating the forty years their ancestors spent camped in a wilderness they were never supposed to be in that long.

► 1:14:37

To make the scale of it land, he spent several minutes on his own small Texas hometown, where homecoming and the harvest festival were stacked into one weekend: the Thursday bonfire, class reunions filling the square, a parade with more people on the floats than watching them, buckets of candy thrown to elementary-age children of all ages, a homecoming queen crowned at halftime of a game against an opponent chosen for being beatable, and the Rotary Club making a pilgrimage to Fredericksburg for sausage on a stick. He still remembers winning the watermelon seed spitting contest at fifteen.

► 1:15:17

"On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work."

LEVITICUS 23:34-36 ↗

Water, fire, and bread you cannot store

► 1:16:31

Over seven days the exodus was re-enacted. Trumpets, because there were trumpets at Sinai. Torches carried in procession before dawn, because a pillar of fire led them. Seventy-five-foot candelabra lit at night — moon towers, effectively. And each day a priest carried water up from the pool of Siloam and poured it out on the altar, remembering the rock Moses struck in the desert when there was no water and the people were grumbling.

► 1:17:48

Then bread. Manna — “what is it?” — arrived every morning, enough for the day, and spoiled if you kept it. Jayson pressed the point hard: “You can’t bank on your old devotion and your old storehouse. When you say a prayer, it’s got to be real that day.” Which is exactly the kind of God who calls himself *I am*.

► 1:19:18

On the last day, water was poured out in volume and ran down the temple steps — a deliberate echo of Ezekiel’s vision:

“Behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east... it was ankle-deep... it was knee-deep... it was waist-deep... and it was a river that could not be passed through. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live.”

EZEKIEL 47:1-9 ↗

“This is not classic hydrology,” Jayson said — the further it runs from the source, the deeper it gets. Neither is walking on water classic physics. It is a picture of the kingdom of God, a different economy with different rules, the same one that returns thirty, sixty and a hundredfold on what gets sown.

John 6: the trap on two legs

► 1:24:19

Chapter 6 sets up chapter 7. Jesus feeds five thousand people, the crowd loves it enough to try to draft him as king, and he withdraws to pray. The disciples leave without him; he catches up on foot, across the water. Then the crowd finds him and wants more, and he tells them so: they are seeking him because they ate their fill.

What follows is a verbal dance. They ask what they must do to be doing the works of God; he says believe in the one God sent. They ask for a sign, and bring up manna — and walk straight into it. Jayson tracked the closing jaws with visible enjoyment: “The trap is already on one leg, and now it’s on two.”

► 1:26:28

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet you do not believe.”

JOHN 6:35-36 ↗

► 1:27:49

Then he raises the stakes past offense:

unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Jayson admitted the language should still land as strange, and told on himself to prove it — in college he invited someone to a joint midweek service at Hope Chapel where another church led communion, and at the words *this is the body of Christ* the visitor came apart and demanded to be driven home.

► 1:28:28

The reaction in the text is not much better. “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” — and many stopped walking with him. Which leaves Jesus asking the twelve the same question the whole book is asking.

“Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

JOHN 6:67–69 ↗

They had tasted the bread and there were no other options. “They are ruined,” Jayson said — for the power and the beauty and the goodness and the wisdom of God, and for anything less.

Brothers who wanted a king they did not have to follow

► 1:31:20

Six months pass in one sentence, and then Jesus’ brothers — he had four, and Jayson offered a dollar to anyone in his Sunday school class who could name them without Google — spot a public relations opportunity. The biggest holiday of the year, crowds from everywhere: go show yourself to the world. They were not convinced the miracles were real, and their advice reminded Jayson of a Bono lyric about trying to help God across the street like a little old lady. “They want to be kin to the king, but they don’t want to really follow the king.”

► 1:33:06

Jesus declines — he is not hearing it from the Father — and then goes anyway, alone, prompted by the Spirit, arriving in the middle of the feast to teach in the temple. The courthouse steps of the whole festival. The crowd cannot place him: no education, no training, talking like this. Some say he is a good man; others ask why a good man has people trying to kill him. Coffee shop debate, Jayson called it — “he’s great to be around when he’s doing miracles, not so much when he’s asking hard questions.”

The last day, the great day

► 1:35:16

Everything has been moving toward this. Jayson pictured Jesus standing ankle-deep in the water running out of the temple — the kingdom flowing out — and standing up to shout over it:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

JOHN 7:37–38 ↗

It is not a subtle reference to the rock they had spent the week commemorating. And Paul, Jayson noted, does not treat that rock as a metaphor or a foreshadowing:

“They all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1–4 ↗

► 1:36:49

Then John explains himself:

he said this about the Spirit, who had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified. So the river now runs out of us, because we are the temple. Something happens in the center of a person who believes — the old has passed away, the new has come — and we spend the rest of our days meditating on it and being conformed to it. What flows out of it does not trickle. Because his word does not return void, it explodes into a harvest.

What discipleship actually is

► 1:39:24

Here Jayson stated a conviction plainly. Discipleship is not getting your house in order, not learning the scriptures, not learning to pray, not finishing a study guide. At its essence it is “removing any impediments out of your soul, your mind, even your body, that would keep you from obeying this Jesus that you’re ruined for.”

The disciplines then take their proper place — as means, not as the point. You may need to learn the scriptures because you cannot yet tell the voice of God from the voice of advertising. You may need to

learn to pray so you know what he sounds like. You may need healing from emotional damage so that you respond the way you were made rather than the way you were unmade. Which is why the shape of it is different in every person, and why it is done with the Spirit and with people around you.

A tent, not a building

► 1:43:34

The tabernacle was the tent of meeting — the place where they met with God. Jesus is that. And the portability was God's idea, not a limitation: not a temple of stone that stays put, but something you strike and carry. "Life with him is about movement. It's about transformation. If the kingdom's in us, everything we touch gets transformed." Being static, he said, is a reason to check the fuel gauge, because that is not the kingdom.

► 1:44:52

He is also the fulfillment of the law and the prophets —

"I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Jayson's read on the Ten Commandments: God gave a vision statement of what life looks like when you love and serve him, and we received it as a set of rules for staying in his good graces. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus clearing the fog off that vision.

So what will you do with him

► 1:45:26

He came back to the question in red letters. What are you seeking — what are you actually in church for, what are you longing for that you do not have, what are you searching for? "It's not a trick question. He wants a real answer." Answer it honestly and you meet the God who is *I am*, present tense. Don't negotiate the punctuation. Just hear him say *follow me*.

► 1:47:45

The options he laid out were unsentimental: debate him, dispute him, turn around and leave, discard him, be afraid of him — or be ruined for him. And faith, he insisted, is more than believing the historical claims. "Trusting in Jesus is trusting that he knows what he's doing. He knows how to live life. His words are true. The way he lives is right." He did not oversell the experience: "It will be an occasionally frightening ride to trust him. It will certainly be a ride that breaks you in the places you need to be broken." Then, twice, without qualification: trust him.

He closed by praying Paul's prayer over the room, and by pointing out that this is manna — you cannot bank it for tomorrow, so today is the day to answer.

“...that you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge... Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church.”

EPHESIANS 3:18-21 ↗

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [John 1:38–39](#)
- [John 1:43](#)
- [John 21:22](#)
- [Leviticus 23:34–36](#)
- [Numbers 20:8](#)
- [Exodus 16:15](#)
- [Ezekiel 47:1–9](#)
- [Mark 4:20](#)
- [John 6:1–15](#)
- [John 6:26–27](#)
- [John 6:28–29](#)
- [John 6:30–31](#)
- [John 6:35–36](#)
- [John 6:53](#)
- [John 6:60](#)
- [John 6:67–69](#)
- [John 7:1–5](#)
- [John 7:14–15](#)
- [John 7:37–38](#)
- [1 Corinthians 10:1–4](#)
- [John 7:39](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)
- [Isaiah 55:11](#)
- [Matthew 5:17](#)
- [Ephesians 3:18–21](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. The first thing Jesus says in John is “What are you seeking?” Jayson insisted it is not a trick question and that Jesus wants a real answer. What is yours right now?
2. Manna could not be stored overnight. Where are you living off an older season's provision instead of today's?
3. A crowd walked away from Jesus over a hard saying. Which of his words have you found hardest to stay for, and what kept you there?
4. If discipleship is removing whatever keeps you from obeying a Jesus you already love, name one impediment in your soul, mind or body — and who could help you with it.
5. Trusting Jesus means trusting that the way he lives is right. What would you do differently this week if you believed that about one specific decision in front of you?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Jayson Knox teaches the third and fourth grade Sunday school class at Hope Chapel, where the first rule, he says, is mandatory fun; for this message he traded rooms with Matt, who spent the morning with the third and fourth graders. He grew up in a small Texas town with a harvest festival of its own and still remembers winning the watermelon seed spitting contest at fifteen. He has been connected to Hope since his college years, and he credits Keith Atkinson for the line that love is the bottom line.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXK32dz1KDc&t=3813s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.